EMBODYING ETHICS: AT THE LIMITS OF THE AMERICAN LITERARY SUBJECT

by

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This dissertation inquires into ethical, embodied subjectivity in American literature since World War II. It demonstrates how texts that register embodiment operate at the limits of the human and the literary, exposing those limits. I argue that this exposure itself can function ethically, even as it calls into question conventional modes of and categories in literary work and epistemology more generally. Emmanuel Levinas comprehends this conflict between established forms of speech and the newness of ethical speech with his terms "said" and "saying." In Otherwise Than Being, Levinas argues that the vigilance of the subject's responsiveness to the Other, revealed in the renewal of language that is "saying," is crucial to ethical behavior. Levinas's structure of thinking, which I amend in dialogue with Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, and others, is applied to texts from a variety of genres--the novel, poetry, nature writing--and to texts that resist

generic categorization. Hybrid generic work, like situated subjectivity, is shown often to derive from the authors' ethical, worldly concerns.

My readings of Ernest Hemingway's later books connect his awareness of heterogeneous, embodied subjectivity to his ethical desires. Frequently in Hemingway, ethical action is enabled by awareness of the subject's physicality. Analysis of three participants at the 1955 Six Gallery poetry reading in San Francisco--Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Gary Snyder--demonstrates their uneasy efforts to bring abjected elements of American culture into the literary, thereby remaking both culture and literature. Their anxieties of identity center on the status of the body and the status of other marginalized identity attributes like race. Terry Tempest Williams's work in mixed genres is read as indicative or symptomatic of the unspeakable in embodied subjectivity. She reveals the ethical requirements of patience and silence implicit in the recognition that language can only ever partially communicate. Leslie Marmon Silko's revolutionary novel Almanac of the Dead reveals the transformative potential of stories. Silko's advocacy for hybrid subjectivity has its correlative in the hybrid novel/political tract/statement of sovereignty that is Almanac of the Dead, revealing (and renewing) how the literary utterance, embodied in text, forges identity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: A BREATH OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

> For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth so dieth the other; *yea,* they have all *one* breath; so that man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.
> (Ecclesiastes 3.19-20)

> The openness of space as an openness of self without a world, without a place, utopia, the not being walled in, inspiration to the end, even to expiration, is proximity of the other which is possible only as responsibility for the other, as substitution for him.
> (Emmanuel Levinas, Otherwise Than Being 182)

> Where we breathe, we bow.
> (Gary Snyder, Mountains and Rivers Without End 77)

Critical discourse, as announced by several recent works, has taken an ethical turn. Two collections of essays, in fact, use the figure of the turn to describe this change: The Turn to Ethics (2000) and Mapping the Ethical Turn (2001). In his recent article "Falling Towers and Postmodern Wild Children: Oliver Sacks, Don DeLillo, and Turns against Language," James Berger situates the resurgence of ethics in the theoretical landscape. The "ethical turn," he reminds us, follows on the heels of the linguistic turn that characterized much twentieth-century theory (343-44). Berger points out that the ethical turn evinces suspicion about language's capacity to fully constitute or describe the subject, and that this suspicion marks the difference between linguistic and ethical approaches. The ethical turn acknowledges the limitations of language. This suspicion

justifies Berger's term "counter-linguistic turn," which he believes characterizes the larger configuration of which the ethical turn is part (344-45). Also among that configuration are the studies focused on "materiality" and embodiment (344).

This recurrent phrase--the ethical turn--embodies in language the ethical ambivalence that many of its advocates believe it denotes. An "ethical turn" is a trope that figures discourse as a single body capable of turning. The trope thus reminds us of the embodiment and materiality of language in general_ Like all names, however, this term unites a plural and heterogeneous reality into a singular. The discourse that the term describes is precisely the set of conversations and disputes about what such a change might mean. The ethical turn, in other words, is a set of turns that happen in language. The phrase thus both gestures back to the Real beyond language and bears out Berger's eventual claim that the "counter-linguistic turn" does not so much overthrow the linguistic position as elaborate it (354).

This embodied, linguistic ambivalence characterizes the turn to ethics, as Geoffrey Galt Harpham explains, because it complicates the urge to universality that had earned ethics a bad name. In his 1995 entry for Critical Terms for Literary Study, "Ethics," Harpham writes that "For most of the "Theoretical Era (c. 1968-87), ethics, the discourse of 'respect for the law,' had no respect" (387).' Rather, the theoretical work of that period tended to make ethics "the proper name of power, hypocrisy, and unreality" (387).

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1 Lawrence Buell points out Harpham's "wittily self-conscious extravagance" in marking the changes of theoretical discourse with such specific dates ("What We Talk About When We Talk About Ethics" 11, note 4). Buell also presents a tentative sketch of this growing interest in ethics. He remarks on the growing number of conferences on ethics and *the* fact that "ethics" was added to Critical Terms for Literary Study in the 1995 edition, though it was absent from the 1990 edition.

Harpham continues, "sinister and silent collusion between particular, concrete arrangements of power and an abstract and 'universal' style of representation seemed to many the peculiar specialty of ethics," making ethics not the realm of "'respect,' but rather, quoting Derrida's terms, of Thonrespect.'" Harpham further reports that "virtually all joined Derrida in seeing ethics as a combination of mastery and delusion" (388, original emphasis).

However, Harpham rather wryly takes the 1987 revelation of Paul de Man's collaborational work with the Nazis to mark the turn in theory back toward ethics. That revelation raised doubts about the prevailing theoretical beliefs precisely on the grounds of how they translated into worldly practices. This concern is key, in some sense, to all versions of the ethical turn. Thus, Harpham finds that an ethical turn appeared in several areas of theory: in Derrida's work in the 80s and after (391), among French feminists like Kristeva (393), and in what Harpham calls Foucault's "conversion to ethical humanism" late in his life (394).[2] Importantly, these were all different understandings of ethics, which we have seen is a signal part of the ethical turn: it is a plural, consisting of turns.

The turn itself is also contested. Judith Butler's essay in The Turn to Ethics offers what she calls a "map" of her resistance to the ethical resurgence. For one thing, she worries that "the return to ethics has constituted an escape from politics," a somewhat ironic concern in light of Harpham's history (15). With politics in mind, much of Butler's essay is devoted to a comparative discussion of Nietzsche and Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas is one of the most frequently discussed theorists of the ethical turn, especially his

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2 Foucault discusses this change directly in the late interview "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom."

Otherwise Than Being. For Butler, Levinas's account of the subject produced in a traumatic encounter with the Other seems to indicate that "there is no becoming ethical save through a certain violence." If that is so, Butler asks, "how are we to gauge the value of such an ethics? Is it the only mode for ethics, and what becomes of an ethics of nonviolence?" (26). She suggests that "Certain kinds of values, such as generosity and forgiveness, may only be possible through a suspension of this ethicality and, indeed, by calling into question the value of ethics itself' (27). Finally, taking up this key figure and example in ethical discussions, breathing,' Butler remarks that the Levinasian account "puts the life of the ethical subject at risk," that his ethics "degrades the biological conditions of life" and may be a kind of "'bad air'" in seeming to deny essential human needs. In this way, she claims Levinas's work resembles the slave morality that Nietzsche criticized. Thus, she concludes, "it may still be necessary to continue to call for 'good air' and to find a place for the value of self-preservation, if one wants, for instance, to breathe and to sleep" (27).

The relationship between ethics and the biological conditions of life is indeed crucial, though not only in the way Butler suggests. Butler's worry about bad air reverses the use of Levinas's figure for ethics, breathlessness, importantly reminding us of humans' basic requirements. But her reversal is itself subject to another reversal in the age of air pollution and increasing environmental toxicity. It may be, if we want to breathe good

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3 Each of my three epigraphs relies on breathing to figure and to argue for an ethics. There are many other examples, including these three: Butler's use of breathing comes from Nietzsche's critique of Hegel (Butler 15); Beatrice Hanssen's essay in The Turn to Ethics begins with an epigraph from Frantz Fanon that associates breathlessness with an uncertain "moral law" (127); Derrida, *in* a passage quoted below, talks about animal genocide as taking "one's breath away."

air, that we will need the rather stringent account of ethics Levinas provides. A key problem, we will see more clearly below, is whether or how Levinas's ethics, predicated on human-to-human encounters, can be useful for theorization of human-to-nonhuman relationships, including those with the environment.

In this chapter, I argue that they can. My claim depends largely on the embodied and practical understanding of language that Butler implicitly utilized above. Her answer to Levinas's breathlessness makes that trope literal as a way of complicating the claim made by the trope. In effect, she returns language to the body to refresh its meaning, as I did above with regard to the "ethical turn." My readings of Levinas and of the other authors treated in this dissertation repeatedly rely on this same phenomenological strategy that restores language to the body. I argue that the effectiveness of this approach in cases like Butler's signifies the embodiment of understanding.' I also use "embodiment" to refer to texts. In collecting a set of ideas together in one unit, texts embody thoughts.

Butler's turn on the meaning of breathing also marks the limits of the ethical subject by reminding us that a subject must survive in order to perform ethical actions. Ethical systems are not boundless for the individual agent, though the desire for a boundlessness or a universality should not be too easily dismissed either. This dissertation approaches limits from several perspectives and with several different terms. Frequently I argue that ethics entail admitting an awareness of limits of some sort as well

4 Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work, such as Phenomenology of Perception and The Visible and the Invisible, demonstrates the embodiment of human perception. In Metaphors We Live By and Philosophy in the Flesh, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson also show reason's inherence in the body. Carol H. Cantrell in "'The Locus of Compossibilty': Viriginia Woolf, Modernism, and Place," and Louise Westling in "Virginia Woolf and the Flesh of the World" offer guiding examples of how these ideas can be applied in literary readings.

as shifts in actions. Thus, for example, a language user must recognize the limits of this form of communication and so adapt her or his linguistic usages and/or the character of nonlinguistic acts in response to this recognition. Or, an ethical agent, who is always embodied, must acknowledge the physiological limits that attend embodied status, as with Santiago in Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea, as we will see in Chapter II. With "limits," however, I also frequently characterize discourses that operate at the edges or limits of the subject: ethical discourses that acknowledge Others, sentimental discourses that recall the pathos of all modes of communication and so mark the limits of pure logic, environmental discourses that contextualize human activity in a broader world with Other beings, abject discourses that bring the unspeakable into language. These discourses frequently overlap (and there are other examples too, of course).

Discourses that operate at limits recall the limitations of language in general, as we have seen in Berger's discussion above. The meaning inherent in the sign therefore becomes less certain; it depends on context, speaker, the material circumstances more broadly. Butler's turn on Levinasian breathlessness, or her reframing of it, exemplifies this ambivalence of the sign. Such ambivalence--also made visible by her resisting and doubting approach to ethics named by the title to her essay, "Ethical Ambivalence"--itself functions in an ambivalent way in this dissertation: I acknowledge Butler's argument that the subject's needs must be recognized in any effective account of subjectivity, thereby complicating the Levinasian notions, but I will also take this very ambivalence itself to be ethical at times.

Subjecting the possibility of ethics to questioning is crucial for Derrida too. He claims that "casting doubt on responsibility, on decision, on one's own being-ethical" is

"the unrescindable essence of ethics" ("And Say the Animal Responded?" 128). "Doubt" is the key word here. In setting up this claim, Derrida asks, "Would an ethics be sufficient, as Levinas maintains, to remind the subject of its being-subject, its being-guest, host or hostage, that is to say its being-subjected-to-the-other, to the Wholly Other or to every single other?" (121). Derrida's answer: "I don't think so" (121). Harpham makes a similar point, suggesting that "every 'ethical' decision violates some law or other, and violates it precisely because it is 'ethical' (396). Harpham draws our attention here to the fact that ethical decisions always *issue* from a set of *choices* and *therefore* from contrasting sets of possible reasoning. To make one decision is to refuse another, or many others. Ultimately, then, the account of ethics taking shape here distinguishes it from a simpler morality that would have adherents obey a set of laws, the kind of ethics seen with suspicion in Harpham's "Theoretical Era." Ethics, then, will only make sense when held alongside doubt, deconstruction, ambivalence. Situated in this way, we will be able to discern the value of the term "ethics" in the context of doubt.

Levinas's conceptions of ethics also leave room for doubt by privileging alterity (and therefore ethics) over ontology. He understands philosophy as "a drama between philosophers and an intersubjective movement" (Otherwise Than Being 20). This view evokes the dialogical and therefore doubting character of philosophy: Real dialogue depends on an open listening that can be described as questioning one's own views. This is why, following Levinas, I generally do not mean by "ethics" "the science of morals," as one of the definitions in the Oxford English Dictionary defines the word, since it is precisely this reduction of regard for the Other to a set of rules, to a science, that concerns Levinas greatly. Closer to the idea of ethics at work here is the meaning derived from

Greek root of the word that points to "character." in this sense, those who behave ethically do so in accord with their good character and with their memberships. This definition is functional when we keep in mind contemporary analyses of the human subject, such as Levinas's, that have upset ideas of a permanent or unchanging character. If, following this idea, *we* recognize that the subject is situational, contingent, and fluid, then "character" and therefore ethics can be understood to share those characteristics.

The contingency of subjectivity includes the subject's embodiment. Judith Butler's work has been important here, especially Bodies that Matter, where she resists the view of the body as a "simple fact or static condition" (2). [5] Rather, she claims that the body is materialized through historical, social practices. Generally, this approach can be aligned with Levinas's treatment of the body. Levinas summarizes his position on the body in Ethics and Infinity (65-72). A key example in this discussion is erns, which he understands as "neither a struggle, nor a fusion, nor a knowledge" (68). The embodied communication in erns instead aligns with "mystery" and "the future" (68). This type of relationship begins to clear space for Levinas's later conceptions of ethics as "otherwise than being," a phrase that resonates with Butler's view in Bodies that Matter. Ewa Plonowska Ziarek emphasizes the importance of Levinas's conceptions of the body, arguing that his innovation "lies in his elaboration of ethical responsibility in terms of embodiment, passion, or even delirium" (78).

Conventionally, the body is associated with anxieties about irrationality, mortality, obscurity, animality, and the like, but, as Ziarek asserts, Levinas makes

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5 Another important text that complicates conceptions of embodiment is Elizabeth Grosz's Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism.

mystery and even irrationality potential signs of the ethical. Levinasian ethics, at the limits of knowledge, therefore aligns with sentimentality in underscoring the importance of the feeling body and pathos to ethical subjectivity.' I will apply Levinas's notion of an embodiment that is "neither a struggle, nor a fusion, nor a knowledge" to conceptions of physical nature more generally. This application is valuable because theories of nature figure importantly in questions of ethics: The common idea of nature as "red in tooth and claw" is often used (at least implicitly) to support the idea that ethics are unnatural. In Tennyson's stanza where these lines appear, he opposes "God [who] was love indeed" to "Nature, [that] red in tooth and claw / With ravine, shreiked against his creed" (In Memoriam, 56: 13-16). Indeed, Levinas himself felt it necessary to separate the human from the rest of nature in order to make a place for his ethical claims.

In an interview with three graduate students in 1986, Levinas makes this element of his work clear. The interviewers ask, "Is there something distinctive about the human face which, for example, sets it apart from that of an animal?" For Levinas, the face-to-face encounter is the key to ethical subjectivity.' Levinas responds, "One cannot entirely refuse the face of an animal. It is via the face that one understands, for example, a dog. Yet the priority here is not found in the animal, but in the human face" (Wright, Hughes, and Ainley 169). As I take it, Levinas means that (human) subjectivity begins in the encounter with the human face and that the characteristics of that encounter are thus

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6 This point is drawn partly from Suzanne Clark's argument that "The sentimental acts as a pivotal ground in a battle over literary and moral value" in Sentimental Modernism (2).

7 See Ethics and Infinity 85-92 for more discussion of this idea.

primary, or prior. In "Am I Obsessed by Bobby?" John Llewelyn reaches the same general conclusion about Levinas's notions of animals, tracing them back to Kant, whose ideas he believes Levinas's resemble.

But in the 1986 interview, Levinas momentarily leaves room for doubt. He explains, "I don't know if a snake has a face. I can't answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed." Further, he claims that "without considering animals as human beings, the ethical extends to all living beings" (172). Yet, when pressed, he marks the human/animal difference:

> I would say, on the contrary, that in relation to the animal, the human is a new phenomenon t. . I want to emphasize that the human breaks with pure being, which is always a persistence in being. This is my principal thesis. A being is something that is attached to being, to its own being. That is Darwin's idea. The being of animals is a struggle for life. A struggle for life without ethics. (172)

The ethical doubt that precedes this claim is important because it enables this chapter's complication of Levinasian *ethics* as a complication rather than as an overturning. Such an approach to criticism and discourse is attentive to doubts, suggestions, the unspoken and underspoken, in addition to the central message of discourse. It is therefore part of what I understand to'be an ethical criticism because it resists reducing the embodied and situated "saying" to a singular claim, to a "said" (to use Levinas's terms). However, I write "resists" here rather than *"refuses" because, in* certain situations, ethical uses of discourse demand a clarity that is a kind of reduction to a singular claim. Any number of everyday examples--"look out!"--can be adduced.

With Harpham's depiction of critical discourse from the late 60s to the late 80s in view, it seems understandable that Levinas took steps to earn his claims about ethics that *seem* less *necessary* now. He had to *consider* not only that ethics were widely understood as suspect, but also that nature was, and in a large measure is, considered unethical. If there were to be a place for ethics, it had to be outside of nature and it had to acknowledge the critiques of ethics as "nonrespectful." Thus, while animals deserve ethical treatment, Levinas claimed, they could not behave ethically. This tendency in Levinas's work led Roger Gottlieb and John Llewelyn to argue that Levinas's ideas do not easily transfer into environmental ethics discourse.

This view has been questioned by several recent analyses, however. An essential part of this challenge depends on how we approach the human/nonhuman differences (a point which recalls more generally the importance of our notions of identity to ethical conceptions). Cary Wolfe, for example, usefully situates Levinas's work in the contemporary theoretical landscape as he seeks grounds for a wider notion of ethics that would extend beyond the human. Wolfe remarks that Levinas's notion of ethics as "'total responsibility' to the Other 'without waiting for reciprocity"' has advantages over a social-contract, "fair-exchange" model of ethics because it creates a space for differences (Introduction xvii). It allows for ethics without expecting sameness or equivalence. Christian Diehm, answering more specifically to Levinasian ethics, argues that "the *tenderness* of the flesh calls to **me** from every direction" (183). This call *comes from* all sorts of nonhuman animals, plants, and even perhaps stones. Diehm locates the

vulnerability that (for Levinas) implies ethics in corporeality, in "the passivity of the body that is structurally destitute, of necessity 'capable' of being laid low, of being incapacitated" (177).

Revising Levinas's notion of nature allows Diehm to apply Levinas's account of ethics more broadly. Attending to the way plants and animals necessarily exchange and interrelate with their environments, Diehm resists the idea that all nonhumanity partakes of "pure being." He argues that "the organism does not simply 'undergo' change but actively participates in its changing, a point that can be expressed by saying that the organism is a selective system" (179, original emphasis). This leads him to conclude that "Through its metabolic activities, therefore, the organism breaks from a state of sheer material continuity with its environment," but that it practices "an activity that it must perform," a "needful freedom" (179, original emphasis).

Diehm pointedly writes these formulations of organisms' lives in key Levinasian terms like "needful freedom." Thus, he can further and more generally claim that "As soon as the body takes its stance at a distance from its environment, that distance is capable of being traversed, of falling under siege, and hence every body's 'strangeness' is at the same time destitution, naked vulnerability" (181). Diehrn marks difference itself as indicative of destitution and so of ethical responsibility. The permeability of boundaries that makes difference tenuous also implies that soil, even stone, call for ethical responsibility because what befalls them involves their Others, humans, animals, plants, stones. Erosion is a clear and serious example.

A brief reminder of Levinas's motive for writing Otherwise Than Being can also further problematize his human/nonhuman distinction. While he insists that ethics is

exclusively human, his impetus was the inhuman behavior of humans in the Holocaust. For Levinas, then, though ethics are inherently human, humans are not inherently, universally ethical. Levinas believed that this unethical behavior could be attributed partly to a philosophy of essence that misunderstands human subjectivity. He believed a better philosophy would show the ethical, relational nature of subjectivity and allow people to act in accordance with it. If humans can misperceive our own subjectivities, is it not likely humans misperceive animals' various subjectivities, indeed partly because of the conventional misunderstanding of human subjectivity?

What place do such concerns have in literary scholarship? Literary knowing is an important way for humans to enrich our ideas of nature. Lawrence Buell is an important advocate of this view. His approach to textuality by way of ecocriticism in Writing for an Endangered World and in its predecessor The Environmental Imagination is oriented by the task of understanding nature differently and more thoroughly. The central argument of both books is that a reimagining of nature facilitated partly by literary understanding is vital to improving human/environment relations. In The Environmental Imagination particularly, he considers how genre can enable or disable certain kinds of perceptions, which justifies his extended treatment of nature writing in that book. He also briefly gestures toward a wider application of Levinasian ethics in Writing for an Endangered World, though he does not indicate there how it might be done (202).' John Tallmadge presents similar thinking in "Toward a Natural History of Reading." He quotes what he

8 Buell's essay in The Turn to Ethics reiterates his desire to see more work on Levinas. He suggests connecting a Levinasian ethics with the conception of the text as friend, which is Wayne Booth's metaphor in The Company We Keep, as one possible way to do so.

calls Lopez's "famous statement" that nature writing would "provide the foundation for a reorganization of American political thought" (Tallmadge 283; Lopez "On Nature" 297). In an interview with David Thomas Sumner, Lopez makes an extended case for the importance of nature writing on these grounds (209-262, and especially 213 and 221). Central to these arguments is the more-than-human perspective typical in nature writing, which allows for more complex views of reality and even of the human.

More generally, considerations of genre function in this dissertation in two ways. For one, I argue that an ethical criticism must be concerned with its worldly applications in specific ways. Criticism oriented by generic conventions, however, can (and frequently does) de-emphasize the specificities of application in favor of formal interpretations.' At the very least, then, an ethical criticism should try to recognize how generic work can conflict with ethical work. Second, I read these limitations in the potential of generic conventions as an example of the behavior of language more generally. Any form of representation involves distance between the medium and what is represented. Recognizing this distance has multiple ethical implications. One of them, discussed in several places in ensuing chapters, involves including a measure of skepticism with ontological claims about Others and about nature more generally. Genre, because it both enables and disables types of perceptions, influences the types of claims that can be made about the Real.

Buell's, Lopez's, and Tallmadge's thoughts on nature writing can be described with the broad label vostliumanism, which is also practiced by critics like Donna

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9 I treat an example of this in Chapter VI on Silko. I find John Skow to belittle the political work of her text because of his generic expectations.

Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles. Posthumanism, though it takes many forms, consistently returns to the idea that the "human" is produced by and interdependent with the nonhuman. Derrida's recent writing has spelled out some of the primary elements of this thinking. For instance, in "The Animal That Therefore I Am {More to Follow)," a kind of animal autobiography, he treats the human/animal distinction with an aim "to multiply its figures, to complicate, thicken, delinearize, fold, and divide the line precisely by making it increase and multiply" (398). Further, in "'Eating Well': An Interview," Derrida explains that "the difference between 'animal' and 'vegetal' also remains problematic" and that "The question also comes back to the difference between the living and the nonliving" (106). The question of the animal thus proliferates into a whole set of questions. I take this to be a signal move that will help us read the literary treatments of human/nonhuman relations in the ensuing chapters.

Derrida points out the worldly consequences that can issue from such distinctions. A rigorous human/nonhuman divide enables human behaviors destructive of the nonhuman. Den-ida makes this point witheringly clear with reference to animals in "The Animal That Therefore I Am":

> (there are also animal genocides: the number of species endangered *because* of man takes one's breath away). One should neither abuse the figure of genocide nor consider it explained away. For it gets more complicated here {in application to animals]: the annihilation of certain species is indeed in progress, but it is occurring through the organization and exploitation of an artificial, infernal, virtually interminable survival, in conditions that previous generations would have judged monstrous,

> outside of every supposed norm of a life proper to animals that are thus exterminated by means of their continued existence or even their overpopulation. As if, for example, instead of throwing people into ovens or gas chambers (let's say the Nazi) doctors and geneticists had decided to organize the overproduction and overgeneration of Jews, gypsies, and homosexuals by means of artificial insemination, so that, being more numerous and better fed, they could be destined in always increasing numbers for the same hell, that of the imposition of genetic experimentation or extermination by gas or by fire. In the same abattoirs. (394-95)

While such behavior between humans has been condemned, Derrida recalls its persisting application to animals. Derrida's account of this behavior is meant to expose its unnatural and, indeed, inhuman character. The human/animal distinction has therefore strangely enabled a set of "infernal" procedures which remind us of the human/animal proximity: Relying on this distinction in this case muddies the distinction. Derrida's point about this human/animal nearness is brought home uncannily with the final reference to the "same abattoirs."'

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10 These structures are so entrenched that concerns for individual animal's rights can seem naive, especially when concerns for individuals weigh against species concerns more generally (debates about hunting overpopulated deer herds are an example). This problem recurs throughout Derrida's animal writings. Animals, like Derrida's better known concern of language, depend on, operate in, and are disciplined by systems, human and nonhuman. We need to do more to consider how these structural relations affect ethical questions and our applications of ethics. We will vividly see such conflicts in Hemingway's work.

This is not to say that Derrida refuses the differences between these categories of reality. In "The Animal That Therefore I Am," for example, Derrida strongly resists the simplistic idea that humans and animals are the same: "I have thus never believed in some homogeneous continuity between what calls itself man and what he calls the animal" (398, emphasis in original). Certainly a primary element of ethics is Derrida's recognition of difference (and of the politics of speaking). Yet Den-ida's work on the animal prevents us from forgetting the hybridity of all living relationships. His work reminds us to locate the constructed elements of the human/animal distinction, so that an ethics can orient our application of this distinction from situation to situation.

Also at stake for Derrida in his work on the animal is the status of philosophy. This is perhaps surprising at first. In "The Animal That Therefore I Am," he suggests that the usage "the animal," in which a heterogeneity of beings are designated under this singular noun, "seems to me to constitute philosophy as such" (408). When he upsets this singular with his analysis and with his playfully serious neologism "le animaux," a *term* which combines the sound and *article of the* singular with the spelling *of* the plural, Den-ida interrogates the discourse of philosophy as practiced in the west." Such interrogation of its very own premises is, of course, well suited to philosophy and so can be understood as a disruption that does not really break the rules. But it can be understood to exemplify this chapter's argument. Derrida's demonstration of the animality of philosophy exposes the (animal?) drives in reason's very bodies (where

11 For more on "1- animaux" see "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 409, and "And Say the Animal Responded" 143 and passim.

philosophical texts are bodies of reason). Den-ida thus shows that in the very thickness or unreasoning of philosophy is an animality (or, really, are animalities), an unthinking gesture, driven by desire, that refuses distinctions.

In other words, Derrida points out the animality of philosophy in its discursive treatment of the animal. This animality appears in two senses. First, reducing the multiplicity of actual animals in the world to a singular category--animal--is a form of unreasoning presumption. The very gesture is what it attempts to abject onto the animal. We notice this point in Den-ida as a critique of philosophy, but this point also leads to the second sense of animality here. We notice how philosophy (especially Derrida's philosophical claims) responds to the animal Other and depends on ideas of animality to make sense as a discourse. The body of reason therefore bears regard for the animal. Such regard, according to Levinas's accounts of human-to-human ethics, is always-already ethical; the question is whether or not we acknowledge it.

Derrida's effort to thicken the line dividing the human from the nonhuman, part of his explicit challenge to Levinasian ethics, as we saw above, also has literary implications. By materializing the boundary at work in systems of meaning, Derrida reminds us of the materiality of language. For Derrida, this reminder involves ethical concerns, for animals and beyond. **It** also lends his philosophical work a literary modality in the sense that literature is most clearly where language functions not as simple tool or transparent medium but as substance or density, itself subject to concern and analysis.

This is a general claim about discourse that entails some complications. Distinguishing language from the Real has sometimes been understood to mean words do not affect reality. Indeed, more specifically, the New Critical methods of Cold War

America produced a strong sense that literature is completely outside of the political and worldly." Recognizing language as a thick medium that inflects whatever it communicates, however, does not require sustaining the literary/worldly distinction. In fact, I am arguing the opposite. Recalling that language is material restores the production of language to embodied subjects who live in material, political circumstances. In such circumstances, then, literature can in fact function as a tool, but the tool itself has a history and a substantiality that effects its operation {it is not a simple tool).

More specifically, in my literary analyses, I likewise attend to moments when the subject's consciousness of embodiment enables ethical understandings and practices, as we have already seen above. Such moments are often presented in a liminal language, in a terminology of obscurity, blurring, doubt, or the like, which I read as language {and frequently subjectivity) operating at its limits. These moments admit the limits of ontology, an admission which is itself ethical. In most of the texts I interpret, this measure of intellectual humility, rather than inducing paralysis, also drives specific, worldly acts, revealing another dimension of the ethicality of acknowledging embodiment. The embodiment of language also often appears in the thickness of style, which materializes linguistic expression by adding to the "message" of discourse appeals to rhythm, temporality, pleasure, and so on. As Butler has reminded us above, appeals to pleasure are persistently opposed to ethics, but I will show ways **in** which style, even pleasurable style, can register an ethical regard for alterity.

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12 Suzanne Clark demonstrates and critiques these interpretive habits in Cold Warriors, a text important to many of this dissertation's readings and discussed more fully in ensuing chapters.

A literary approach to discourse suits this treatment of Levinas in another sense too. When Levinas privileges the "saying" over the "said" in his philosophy, he makes a case for a localized language--temporally, geographically, formally, culturally--that is characteristic of literature. The emphasis on the particularities of literary expression characteristic of literary judgments can be called a focus on the "saying." Literary practices, in other words, can be understood to register this need to say again that Levinas sees as the core of ethics.'

That conception of literature is opposite the one Levinas puts forth in his critique of art and of images in the 1948 essay "Reality and Its Shadow." Sean Hand reports that this essay suffered considerable rebuke when it was published in Les Temps Modernes; the editors prefaced the argument with their objections to it (129). **In** the essay, Levinas distinguishes art from criticism. He argues that the former uses images that efface life because they efface the context in which art lives. By freezing time in its images, art promotes an unthinking appreciation. It promotes "irresponsibility" (141). Criticism, on the other hand, "integrates the inhuman work of the artist into the human world" (142). Historical reality is not lost to criticism, or philosophy, in this account. Instead, "philosophy discovers, beyond the enchanted rock on which it [the artistic image] stands, all its possibles swarming about it. It grasps them by interpretation" (142).

For Levinas in 1948, philosophy avoids reifying a false image because it relies on concepts. While an image works by gathering substance and meaning to itself at the expense of its surroundings, a concept more clearly must be used in discourse, with evident context. The move away from the reification of an image helps criticism be more

13 Jill Robbins investigates this point in Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature.

responsible. But, as Levinas recognizes in ending "Reality and Its Shadow," artists such as Shakespeare have evinced self-consciousness about their production of images. Such artists not only produce more responsible works by Levinas's definition, they also erode the absolute distinction between the use of images and concepts his essay makes.

This distinction, indeed, has begun to erode even as it is formulated. When Levinas describes how philosophy moves beyond the "enchanted rock" of art, he must rely on images. Granted, this is a deliberate, self-conscious usage designed to mock art, but we can see nevertheless that philosophical discourse momentarily becomes imagistic. If it is to be responsible in such inevitable instances, we might say, philosophical discourse must have a responsible practitioner, in the same way that the category of art Levinas seems to condemn can be redeemed by a responsible artist. The problem Levinas saw as rooted in discourse (i.e. artistic discourse) can, thus, begin to appear rather as a personal one, an ethical one. Images or imagistic usages are not inherently flawed.

The danger that philosophy can congeal into a kind of conceptual image became a central concern for Levinas by the time he wrote Otherwise Than Being. That book applies directly to philosophical discourse his concern more crudely expressed in the above critique of images. To articulate this issue in Otherwise Than Being, Levinas relies on his distinction between the static or congealed "said" and the "saying," where the former applies to language or statements already formed, whether spoken or written, and the latter refers the very situation of speaking, to the conditions in which speaker addresses auditor. In his discussions with Philippe Nemo, for example, Levinas indicates that the "saying" "is important to me less through its informational contents than by the

fact that it is addressed to an interlocutor" (42). In Otherwise Than Being, Levinas explains, "Our whole purpose was to ask if subjectivity, despite its foreignness to the said, is not stated by an abuse of language through which in the indiscretion of the said everything is shown. Everything is shown by indeed betraying its meaning, but philosophy is called upon to reduce that betrayal [...J (156).

For Levinas, the beginning of subjectivity cannot be articulated, by definition. It is "anarchic," to use his term; it begins before it can possibly be stated or conceptually grasped ("arch" comes from the Greek "archein" meaning "begin" or "rule"). The 1948 critique of one mode of language thus appears as a general problem in the function of language itself. The magnitude of this problem registers at the level of style in Otherwise Than Beint, as Levinas writes his philosophy in what Buell calls a "rhapsodic" mode that circles around its argument, that rephrases and says again, but that cannot name what it seeks to describe: the origin of the subject (Writing for an Endangered World 202). Thus, as Levinas explains in the passage quoted above, the effort of philosophy must miss its own goal in the very achievement of **its** own expression, by showing, by beti its meaning.

This second word choice, "betraying," particularly conveys both senses suggested here. Meaning is betrayed in the sense of being revealed or uncovered from hiding, but that very uncovering'is inherently a betrayal in the sense of being false, a misrepresentation. The compression of language here, which at moments can be called poetic, recurs throughout Otherwise Than Being.' That characteristic can likewise be understood as a complication of the strident position against images and art in his early

14 Tina Chanter says Levinas "is a poet despite himself' (8).

essay. Levinas thus has widened his concern about freezing reality. He also recognizes that, despite this stylistic attention, his own philosophical book was being formulated as a "said." Throughout the text, he practices the ethical self-consciousness he recognizes in Shakespeare partly by pointing out the paradox of his effort--to describe an "abuse of language" by committing another betrayal, another abuse.

That Otherwise Than &in, cannot completely *succeed* in giving an account of *the* origins of subjectivity does not condemn the effort. Rather, its self-consciousness on this matter is part of its success. Self-consciousness, a doubled and uncanny sense of the writerly self, is crucial to ethical awareness. Otherwise Than Being enacts an understanding of philosophical discourse as an evolving conversation rather than as a *grasping* of essential truths. Indeed, as I mentioned above, Levinas follows Husserl to conclude the first chapter of Otherwise Than Being by arguing against the closure of philosophical discourse:

> Philosophy thus arouses a drama between philosophers and an intersubjective movement which does not resemble the dialogue of teamworkers *in science,* nor *even the* Platonic dialogue which *is* the reminiscence of a drama rather than the drama itself. It is sketched out in a different structure; empirically it is realized as the history of philosophy in which new interlocutors always enter who have to restate, but in which the former ones take up the floor to answer in the interpretations they arouse, and in which, nonetheless, despite this lack of "certainty in one's movements" or because of it, no one is allowed a relaxation of attention or a lack of strictness. (20)

In this conception, philosophy loses its comfortable distance from what it describes. It becomes the actual enactment of ideas, a real drama. Philosophy and art thus come closer together. Moreover, responsibility for the practice of discourse falls on its users, who are inheritors. With this move in particular, Levinas has earned David Wood's assertion that "Levinas's writing more than most lives only at the mercy of its reader" (2). A merciful reading of Levinas should locate his work in order to understand its limitations as "saids." Only in doing so, in reading toward its "saying" in the context of the drama of philosophy, can its full range of implications and applications be found.

Levinas's suing/said terminology is important to him, we saw above, because it evokes the exposure of the subject to the presence of the Other, in body, in the phenomenological terms of everyday speech. Julia Kristeva's work on language similarly distinguishes formalized language ("saids") from its living element ("saying"), but in a way that can enrich and complicate Levinas's terminology. She positions language in its broader context, pointing out how the development of the subject in language acquisition is accompanied by losses (especially the separation of the child from its mother) that leave a set of symptoms both in the subject and *in* language (see Powers of Horror). She resists the idea of language as a pure symbolic system, finding it to partake of both bodily, rhythmic characteristics she calls the semiotic, and the more traditional, representative characteristics she terms the symbolic (see The Kristeva Reader 89-136). Language is heterogeneous rather than pure ("The Speaking Subject is not Innocent" 155). In Powers of Horror, she argues that the *construction* of the symbolic depends *upon* the abjection of the bodily and of bodies. This abjection is at the root of the separating

function of language. Levinas's separation of the human and the nonhuman is a form of abjection that reduces the nonhuman to a pure self-interest, to a "persistence in being."

Kristeva's claim that symptoms of this fundamental abjection remain in language indicates the space between text and bodied life. Levinas's movement toward the "saying" beyond the "said" is comparable. For Levinas, this space between word and world is filled by ethics. Thus, the reading beyond Levinas's "saids" that I am arguing for requires us to complicate the very basis of Levinas's ethics on its own terms. We must answer his distinctions--the human/nonhuman divide, discursive separations (philosophy versus art), temporal separations ("saids" versus "sayings"), and so on--with the mercy of ethics.

The enactment of such a criticism in this dissertation I thus understand both to involve specific claims responsible to particular literary and worldly circumstances, and to suppose the ethical regard for interlocutors of saying. To summarize some of my primary arguments (or saids): Ernest Hemingway's thickening of the human/animal divide could not always be accurately described as merciful, even in the book often understood to be his most gentle, The Old Man and the Sea. That text is the subject of my second chapter, where I complicate the polarized readings that understand its protagonist Santiago either as a triumphant hero whose capacity is proven in his fishing quest or as a sign of the absolute failure of Hemingway's approach to human subjectivity. My reading demonstrates the heterogeneity of Hemingway's presentation of the bodied human subject. His depiction of Santiago's relationships with environment, language, and body are characteristically estranged in a way that acknowledges the importance of alterity in all relationships, as the synecdoche of the uncontrollable, *cramping* left hand

represents. While critics like *Glen* Love have read in the violence of Santiago's *fishing* a failure of ethics, I argue that the fishing trip actually represents the shock of ethical experience coming home to the subject. I am not concerned to defend Santiago's particular acts of killing in my chapter, though; rather, I resist an overly simple application of what ethics are, as I do throughout my literary analyses. My version of *ethical criticism acknowledges the appetite and* the needs of *the* bodied subject, and embodiment more generally, much as Butler encourages ethical thinkers to do. This criticism is not driven merely by theoretical concerns, then. Since the actual practice of ethical subjectivity requires this strict attention to local circumstances, ethical behavior, even when it derives from larger principles, can only be discerned in a situated way.

The importance of situation and place to human subjectivity are key to my third chapter, also on Hemingway. This chapter applies and expands the key claim from my treatment of The Old Man and the Sea under the title of Hemingway's term "homesickness." I take "homesickness" as a metaphor for ethical sensibility. "Homesickness," which I have also come to think of as the ethical uncanny, connotes the self-awareness central to ethical behavior that is an estrangement of one from one's self. It also connotes the desire for inhabiting one's body and home place in a way that permits self and world to flourish. I read Hemingway's later work with attention to the frequent conflicts between these two definitions of the term, claiming that Hemingway frequently relies on consciousness of his embodied life inmrder to drive his and his characters' ethical acts, but also that embodied life is frequently in conflict with the production of texts in Hemingway's late work. I read the pressure of this conflict between life and text as motivating Hemingway's use of multiple genres. I also read this pressure as a sign of

Hemingway's cultural critique of the overly strict separation between the literary and worldly. At stake is the possibility of the "true" text that can *present* or influence the world. Hemingway's writing lives in this space between the desire for the true text and the awareness of the gap between representation and the Real. That space is filled with homesickness.

My fourth chapter follows literary cultural critiques to the Beat writers. I treat three of the figures who appeared at the Six Gallery poetry reading in San Francisco in 1955, which is often taken as a foundational moment for the countercultural movement more generally. I argue that these writers, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Gary Snyder, bring abjected elements of American culture into the visible with their work, often by recourse to discussion of the body, and that each of them understands this task to be driven ethically. While I find Ginsberg's and Kerouac's revelations of the body to be fraught with anxiety, I claim Snyder's work reveals more ordinary possibilities for embodied *subjective* practice that he calls bioregionalism. The pragmatic approach *of* Snyder's work, I further claim, leads him to produce generically hybrid texts whose success is determined by their worldly work rather than by their adherence to conventions of genre.

If Hemingway's work is taken to articulate a homesickness that a writer like Snyder hopes to cure with his program of bioregionalism, in Terry Tempest Williams we find an especially sharp awareness of how the practice of a Snyderian ecological intersubjectivity can expose a person to greater risk in the age of environmental crisis. She testifies to greater homesickness. Williams's ironically titled book Refuge, I therefore argue, demonstrates the doubleness of embodiment at the level of language. In

its status as cultural critique, it renders pain and abject suffering legible, making them potential participants in cultural renewal, which several critics have recognized. I focus on the other side of this doubleness: As a generically hybrid autobiography of personal and ecological loss, Refuge stands as a symptom of cultural disease. It is an utterly singular account of pain. Such writing at the limits of possible communication reminds us, I further argue, of the position of all language use, both reducing the world and making possible new worlds. Ethical literary practice must keep both these characteristics of language in mind.

My final chapter, on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead, provides another perspective of the cultural work and cultural critiques housed in the texts of all the writers considered here. Silko shares the critical position of these writers, but inhabits a possibly even more marginal stance than the rest as an American Indian author. Her text, we might indeed say, is beyond the limits of the "American" literary altogether **in its** political critique of the cultural practices that made and sustain "America." I argue that, in her text, story takes a form of agency that subordinates speaker to story. For Silko, this conception of story entails a political potency: Stories can and will transform human life.

CHAPTER II

THE LEFT-HANDED CRAMP OF ETHICS IN THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

> He rubbed the cramped hand against his trousers and tried to gentle the fingers. But it would not open. Maybe it will open with the sun, he thought. Maybe it will open when the strong tuna is digested. If I have to have it, I will open it, cost whatever it costs. But I do not want to open it now by force. Let it open by itself and come back of its own accord. After all I abused it much in the night when it was necessary to *free* and untie the various lines. (Ernest Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea 60)

Readings of Ernest Herningway's The Old Man and the Sea are restrained on either *side* by opposite concerns in the criticism. On the *one hand,* many critics find it sentimental (which is to say, too sentimental), as I show below. On the other, some critics, looking to the text for an environmental ethics, find it too brutal. Between these positions, of course, is the body of the text itself, and it is most especially the relationship between body and text that can present a new approach to this keystone book. I hope the epigraph suggests a way. In this passage, Santiago is neither completely at home in his body nor able to inhabit some disembodied self. His ethical position with regard to his left hand--"let it open by itself'--is driven by the implicit understanding that the hand will function best when its needs are acknowledged, whatever the desires of the organizing subject who would have it do as he pleases.

In Santiago's cramping hand, Hemingway reveals the heterogeneity of the human subject. The relationships with language, the physical environment, human culture, and with the subject's own body in The Old Man and the Sea likewise demonstrate this

heterogeneity. They are relationships premised on alterity, on difference that cannot be reduced to a sameness. This chapter argues that in Santiago's encounter *with the* marlin, he is shocked into intensified awareness of this more general alterity. This is, after all, the fish that cannot be brought in or commodified in the novel. Yet, Santiago's traumatic, bodily exposure of himself to the fish and otherness more generally explicitly produces love. Such sentimentality, often disdained in the criticism, signifies an ethical awareness of the subject's limits and the limits of the literary. Thus, strangely (to use a key Hemingway word), Santiago's masculinist courage drives a sentimental and ethical inscription, a thick writing at the limits of the human. It is perhaps in the act of writing itself, like Levinas's "saying," that we can most clearly read Hemingway's ethical impulse because writing signals his awareness that, despite the impossibility of complete knowledge or representation, meaningful action, that is, writing, is still possible.

One way to understand the history of this book's criticism centers on the human subject's alterity from itself, the differences between the subject as body and the linguistic subject. Most initial reviews were celebratory and were often presented in terms of a Hemingway comeback, especially at the level of style. That later reviewers and critics demoted the book somewhat can be interpreted, at least in some cases, as an example of how artistic language can appeal to readers at the level of the body or instinct in a way that "reasonable" criticism cannot explicate. The book did something to many readers that they could not•identify, and this difficulty led some to moderate their initially purple praise.

This reading of the criticism, which I will present in closer detail momentarily, can seem to depend on a tacit claim for the text's greatness. I want to clarify that my

purpose is not so much a claim of "greatness" as it is to bring forth several of the accomplishments of the text that are, at most, dimly presented in the criticism. Doing this reinforces one of the larger claims in this dissertation that the heterogeneity of the human subject, the unrest of the subject in its own body, points to a need for an ethics of bodily inhabitation, an ethical relationship of the subject to the body. Why an ethics? Such circumstances show that the body can sometimes sense realities that reason is ill-equipped to address, or at least slower to address. An *ethics of the* sort advocated here would have the human subject admit this body/reason difference, but would encourage the subject to self-consciously keep reason and the body in dialogue. This dialogue improves both body and reason. In other words, an ethics marks the limits of the purely reasonable subject in much the same way that sentimentality does. This treatment of the criticism also substantiates the claim I have made above that noticing the rhetorical function of "reason" in circumstances like a text's critical history locates reason in a thick body, not transparent to itself or to the exterior world, and therefore reminds us of reasoning's dark spots, materiality, and blanknesses.

The Old Man and the Sea appeared at a moment when Hemingway's reputation was under attack. Harvey Breit, for example, reminds us in his review of the perception common in the early fifties that Hemingway was in "decline." Breit suggests that The Old Man and the Sea shows this to be untrue (Stephens 343)) He calls the book "momentous *and* heartening" and says it "reveals the artist as having gained stature" (344). Henry Seidel Canby opens his review with the sentence, "This is one of the best

1 Subsequent citations from reviews refer to the Stephens text, unless otherwise indicated.

stories that Ernest Hemingway ever wrote." He goes on to claim that "It has no superiors in the art of writing about the sea in any language I know, unless it is the great conclusion of Melville's Moby Dick" (339). Numerous, similarly laudatory claims can be found in other reviews. Many readers were happy to have their heroic writer back in fine form.

Philip Rahv's much less effusive review, published in October of 1952 (the earliest reviews came out in late August), states rather safely that "Though the merit of this new story is incontestable, so are its limitations" (360). Rahv says the story is "at its best in the supple and exact rendering of the sensory detail called for by its chosen theme," but it is partly because of this theme--a fishing trip--that Rahv finds the story limited. He goes on to say that "its quality of emotion [is] genuine but so elemental in its totality as to exact nothing from us beyond instant assent" (360). I doubt that the things Rahv imagined himself assenting to match what I understand the book to claim for readers. Also, the common position that nature and nature stories are simple seems to lurk here, especially in word choices like "elemental," though Rahv does not elaborate the claim. In any case, the brevity of this critique, probably required by the organ of publication, seems to elide a lacuna between the visceral response and the reasoned one.

The fascinating drama played out around Hemingway the man, to which Rahv alludes, contributes intensity both to the praise and its retraction. The lauding of Hemingway as a returned hero was bound to produce more skeptical responses like Rahv's that would look more reasonable. The critical circumstances thus establish what reasonability is. Rahv writes, "Publicity is the reward as well as the nemesis of celebrities, but it has nothing in common with judgment" (360). Rahv's use of "judgment," of course, appeals to reason in order to separate the common from the refined

response to the text. "Publicity" refers to what might be called the animal body of the population, whose opinions Rahv dismisses as underdeveloped. This dismissal simply on the grounds of popularity can be understood to resemble the dismissal of a fishing story as "elemental"--simple, physical, noncultural--in depending uncritically on the body/mind distinction. Critical attention to the operation of this distinction reveals a different set of interpretive possibilities.

We can see the agonized alternation of critical opinion happening in the same critic in Philip Young. His important doctoral dissertation was published as the book rnest Hemingway in two editions, first in 1952, and then again in 1966. This first edition had left Young very little time to consider his response to The Old Man and the Sea, since Hemingway's book came out the same year. In that edition, Young calls the book "unmistakable Hemingway," aligning it thematically and stylistically with previous texts. He goes on to say that "where characteristic methods and attitudes have on rare occasion failed him in the past, or have been only partly successful, this short novel is beyond any question a triumph" (125).

When Young revised and re-released his book in 1966, he explained his desire to "greatly tone down the praise for The Old Man and the Sea" (274). He writes, "The feeling is now that although the tale is here and there exciting it is itself drawn out a little far. Even the title seems an affectation of simplicity, and the realization that Hemingway was now trading on and no longer inventing the style that made him famous came just too late" (274). A *few pages* prior to this passage, Young agrees heartily with a quotation from Dwight Macdonald. Macdonald writes that, in The Old Man and the Sea, "Nothing is at stake except for the professional obligation to sound as much like Hemingway as

possible" (Young 271-72). Young fits all this discussion under the familiar belief in "the declination of Hemingway's powers--physical, mental, hence literary," which Young believed to be "clearer by hindsight than it was at the time" he first addressed The Old Man and the Sea (264).

These critics help us see how readings of content connect to and reinforce readings of style. Macdonald's feeling that little is at stake in this text underlies Harold Bloom's more recent dismissal (1999) of the book as sentimental, a claim which he supports partly with an interpretation of its style. Indeed, that connection is visible in Bloom's definition of sentimentality: "emotion in excess of the object" (3).[2] For Bloom, the pathos of The Old Man and the Sea derives not from legitimately artistic concerns but from the author's desire to present an "idealization of Hemingway himself' (2). Bloom roots this claim in the close association between Hemingway and Santiago and says that "Hemingway himself is so moved by Hemingway that his famous, laconic style yields to uncharacteristic overwriting" (3). This overwriting is most apparent in its "repetitive" character.

My concern is less whether Bloom's condemnation is wrong than what the grounds of the condemnation are. While few would disagree that self-praise is

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2 Other critics who view The Old Man and the Sea as sentimental include Robert P. Weeks, in "Fakery in The Old Man and the Sea," and James H. Justus. Weeks argues that, judging from factual errors in the text, Hemingway's style has "gone soft in The Old an and the Sea" (39). He goes on to claim that the novella is "tricked out in an effort to extort more feeling than a reasonable person would find there" (40). Weeks's argument relies on a view of the universe and nature as cold, and on a polarized rhetoric about the human subject, as we see in the key word "soft." Suzanne Clark reminds us in Cold Warriors that the boundaries of the subject were anxiously being policed in this period (Weeks's essay was first published in 1962), so that as the freestanding, independent subject came more and more into question, assertions for the coherence of the subject (a "hard" subject in Weeks's implicit logic) grew more vehement.

unattractive, this rejection--Hemingway's being moved by Hemingway-- seems tacitly to disavow the heterogeneity of the subject by recourse to the author/text divide characteristic of New Criticism. Moreover, because I see an association between a text's ethical work and its sentimentality, dismissing the latter can entail dismissal of the former.

In other words, in the context of my reading, Bloom's critique looks ironic. Bloom considers the self-consciousness in The Old Man and the Sea to be arrogant. I read the self-awareness of this book works in exactly the opposite way. Santiago's self-obsessed monologues, which Bloom understands as Hemingway being moved by himself, actually expose the limitations of the subject. To notice this, however, readers must recognize the difference between the words presented and their meaning as implied by context. In earlier works, Hemingway tended to use laconic speech and understatement to signal irony and complexity. The method here is less caustic or directly contrary, making it, in my view, harder to read. Obviously this reading stands in stark contrast to the feeling that this is a simple story. Moreover, in Hemingway's circumstances most particularly, the often invisible subject of power--in this case of power over animals--is coming into view, so a self-awareness here is very much a part of the point. It would not be unethical, but rather a sign of ethical regard, an acknowledgment of the alterity of the Other. It is an important example of ethical doubleness, of the ethical uncanny I discussed in Chapter 1. My readings of the text below will bear these points out.

Bloom's critique also returns us to Macdonald's claim that the book treats an insignificant theme. Glen Love is one of several critics, however, who find more value in

this treatment of human/world relationships.[3] Love points out that "Among the high praise for the novel is the claim that it is Hemingway's final testament of acceptance, his coming to peaceful terms with the natural world" (206). While Love agrees that the concern with "right relationships between self and earth" is crucially important to us and to Hemingway, and that it is very much at issue in The Old Man and the Sea, he disagrees that the text ultimately *presents* a peaceful relationship. He argues that Santiago's relationships with the lives of the sea are determined by "how they serve or hinder him" (207). This world view he calls "anthropocentrism" (207), and for Love the book is therefore valuable insofar as "it has dramatized to us how we have reached our precarious present" ecologically (210). At the core of Santiago's behavior is a "tragic individualism" that is too eager to live at the edge of death, to kill or be killed. While I accept many of Love's points, I am complicating his position somewhat by showing Santiago to have an ethical uneasiness in the text in his relationships with language, his body, and so on. Recognizing this enables us to read ethical significance in Santiago's thinking and Hemingway's act of writing.

Other critics have sought to complicate Love's view differently. Charlene Murphy, for example, answers Love's essay by arguing that it was possible for Hemingway to both sincerely love and kill the animals he hunted. In a sense, Love had acknowledged this view by admitting it is "unfair to hold Hemingway accountable to the ecological standards of a later time" (210). Love's hope, he explains, is to show the dissonance between Hemingway's strong feelings for nature and the practices *presented* in

3 Bickford Sylvester, Clinton S. Burhans, Jr., Susan F. Beegel, and most recently, Cary Wolfe also find this theme significant.

his texts. Further, Love points to various signs of a change in Hemingway's hunting practices "at about the time of the writing" of The Old Man and the Sea (209). Hemingway had published his belief that "it is a sin to kill any non-dangerous game animal except for meat" and had spoken against other wanton killing (qtd. in Love 209). Rose Marie Burwell corroborates this view. She explains that Hemingway's guide on his second African safari, Denis Zaphiro, reported Hemingway's preference for watching animals rather than killing them (137).[4] Love's concern was indeed Hemingway's concern. It is my concern too.

But, as I have suggested above, the question of ethics in The Old Man and the Sea is not so simple as whether or not to kill animals. Indeed, this question occurs to Santiago several times in the text. Relatively early *in* the ordeal he thinks, "Perhaps I should not have been a fisherman" (50). This thought is spurred by his regard for the marlin and for fish generally; it is a profession of an ethics strong enough to lead Santiago to potentially regret his whole life's work. Although the immediate answer to himself seems to contain the doubt--"But that was the thing I was born for"--this internal dialogue intensifies through the course of the book (50).

While Santiago's conflict does seem to indicate the change in Hemingway's own hunting practices, as Love asserts, it also marks how ethical regard can conflict with a moral code. We are encouraged to read into Santiago's reaffirming answer all the conditions of his life: his poverty, his cultural home in a Cuba that depended on such

4 Christopher Ondaatje also supports this characterization of Hemingway's second safari (see 179 for example), and Hemingway discusses his concerns with killing animals in his letters (see 772 for example).

fishing practices, and so on.' The necessities of his particular *life* force him into the experience of trauma that The Old Man and the Sea presents. The trauma of this experience signifies the role of ethics. If Santiago could easily say he would quit fishing, a clear moral code would be established. It is the conflict between the life he knows and the regard he has that necessitates the type of ethical sensibility under consideration in my argument. As I discussed in my first chapter, Derrida claims that this *very* "casting doubt on responsibility, on decision, on one's own being-ethical" is at the center of ethics (128).

This account of ethics enables a new perspective on Hemingway's relationship to trauma, which is at the center of Philip Young's book mentioned above. Young's biographical and psychoanalytic analysis claims that Hemingway's work persistently returns to his unusually traumatic *experiences,* especially his wounding in Italy during World War I. Young argues that Hemingway tries to contain and repress these experiences in his work: "life must be constantly forced under the most intense and rigorous control, and held in the tightest rein, for it is savage and can get out of hand" (209). This control characterizes Young's view of Hemingway's style, so that "Learning to write *well* was a way of learning *defense"* (209). Furthermore, Young claims that this "style the man" (210, original emphasis). These reductive accounts of style and language in Hemingway express the anxiety about war and trauma characteristic most especially of that period. In equating the style with "the man," Young reduces

5 Murphy's disassociation of a simple moral code (whether or not to kill) from an ethical impulse (Hemingway loved animals) seems to derive from a similar, implicit recognition.

Hemingway's work to literary artifice--style--and collapses the author into that artifice in order to dismiss or at least downgrade all of them--work, style, man. Hemingway's style was merely the defense mechanism of an injured psyche.

There are, of course, interpretive and linguistic frameworks other than those of war and conflict. In Cold Warriors, Suzanne Clark reminds us how dominant a war mentality was during the Cold War, helping us recognize those interpretive approaches as historical rather than universal. She discusses the rigid separation of the literary from the worldly during the period and alerts us to the tendency to disavow the worldly work of texts by "locating the political in the personal" (Cold Warriors 64). In such disavowals, the problems considered by texts are blamed on the writer rather than on the political situation or the wars and traumas produced by it. Making politically driven voices look aberrant is a way of containing those voices. Relatively disempowered groups of all sorts (women, ethnic peoples, and so on) have, of course, frequently been silenced in this way, often in bodily and/or animalistic terms. Clark argues that as the world and national political situation came under greater pressure during the Cold War, more and more voices were silenced. Her chapter on Hemingway shows that even this well-known, canonical author could be effectively silenced by reading approaches that contained political implications within the personal. This is true, Clark explains, in two ways: Political elements of his work were neutralized, or, worse, made invisible by the climate of literary reception; and Hemingway himself was literally silenced--he had difficulty writing--because of this climate. Clark shows how this approach to criticism also effectively silenced or contained many other writers of the Cold War period.

So while Young locates in trauma the failure of Hemingway's work, I look to its treatment of trauma to note one of its accomplishments. The style--to return to Young's point above--is indeed crucial to this issue of trauma. One of the ways The Old Man and the Sea draws attention to *style* is its plot. Though on the *surface level it* is *an exciting* tale of a fishing exploit, the looming failure of the trip is present from the first page, where Hemingway likens Santiago's sail to "the flag of permanent defeat" (9). In a careful reading, the plot thus seems predictable. Hemingway makes this failure explicit later, when Santiago, in the throes of exhaustion, addresses the marlin: "'Fish,' the old man said. 'Fish, you are going to have to die anyway. Do you have to kill me too?"' (92), After a paragraph break that emphasizes the following words, Hemingway then writes, "That way nothing is accomplished, he thought" {92). Of course this is precisely what happens. Both are killed.'

This type of plot reinforces the strong tendency to attend to Hemingway at the level of style and word. Here we find a deft stylist who is nonetheless alien to his words. This alienation appears at several levels in the book. One example *comes in* the form of Hemingway's reminders that his characters speak Spanish. Early on, for instance, Manolin asks Santiago to "'Tell me about the great John J. McGraw.' He said Jota for J" (22). Of course, this detail presents the scene more accurately. But the detail also upsets the narrative movement at the level of the word by reminding readers that, despite our listening in on this intimate talk, we are outsiders too. Language shows itself as alien to English readers; it shows its alterity.

6 Many readers have missed Hemingway's strong suggestion that Santiago will die at the end of this text. In "Hemingway's Extended Vision," Bickford Sylvester clarifies the case for this reading (see 91 especially).

This technique is used even more significantly in two key passages later in the text. First, Santiago ponders the significance of his left hand cramping, having already decided (in the passage quoted in the epigraph) to let it come back on its own: "I hate a cramp, he thought. It is a treachery of one's own body. It is humiliating before others to have a diarrhoea from ptomine poisoning or to vomit from it. But a cramp, he thought of it as a calambre, humiliates oneself especially when one is alone" (61-62). Here the alterity of language present in the strangeness of the Spanish word helps us notice how language is functioning more generally in the text.

Santiago has already decided to "let it open by itself," and this is what he ultimately does (60). Thus, despite his avowed hatred, Santiago practices a careful inhabitation of his body that recognizes the difference between his desire *for* its absolute strength and the reality of human weakness and mortality. The claim to hate his cramp, then, appears as a kind of overstatement to vent spleen. Almost opposite to the simple, macho posturing it is often read to be, Santiago's language acts as a comfort. Its function within the dramatic space of the story, speaking to no one, is not to convey meaning so much as to help him cope with his bodily limitations.' And *in* communication to readers, the frustrations of this passage show the space between Santiago the desiring subject and Santiago the body, just as the strange word alienates the story from itself by revealing the

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7 In this regard, language is positioned much as it is in "The Killers." The concluding lines of that story--"'you better not think about it"--in reference to Ole "waiting in the room and knowing he's going to get it," are sometimes read as Hemingway stoicism (The Complete Short Stories 222). But that reading ignores the fact that the whole story has been precisely the opposite of not thinking about it, and also ignores the earlier moment in the story, when Hemingway encourages us to understand Nick's tough talk ("'What the hell?'" he says) as his attempt "to swagger it off' after the killers leave (220). Tough talk indirectly reveals vulnerability.

layers implicit in it. It is Santiago's ethical response to the alterity of his own body that ultimately enables his hand to function again. Similarly, the key word "treachery" here was *used* a few pages prior to describe how the old man had hooked the fish. Neither form of exalting the self in this text--physical achievements like successful fishing or effective language use--provides a way for the subject to feel triumphant.

Presenting these forms of alterity--in language and in body--at the same moment in the text encourages us to find more than a casual or analogical association between them. Hemingway seems to be suggesting a subjectivity that is always out of phase with its world. The subject in this text is represented both by an account of Santiago, whose body is upset by cramps of alterity, and by the text more generally, which can be characterized to contain linguistic cramps. The likeness here between text and subject indicates Hemingway's desire for a close, honest, ethical correspondence between text and world, most particularly in the way the text presents the experience of the subject.' Yet, the prevalence of alterity shows that this desire for correspondence cannot be fully appeased.

Focus on alterity reveals the subject as a kind of trauma, which is Levinas's view of human subjectivity. Levinas argues that, because of the centrality of trauma to subjectivity, an ethics is necessary in which the subject always turns back to the world she or he is alienated from. Indeed, it is Levinas's view that the subject does not exist outside of trauma, because the subject is rooted in language and sensibilities that themselves are

8 This concern with text/world correspondence is presented with greater intensity, and in slightly different form, in *The Garden of Eden,* which I discuss in the next chapter.

traumatic.' Such an ethical return is apparent in Hemingway's writing at this point within the text because, as I mentioned above, Santiago has vowed to allow the hand to behave as it must. An ethical return is also implicit in the existence of the text itself, which Hemingway wrote in response to and inclusive of his awareness that the narrative could not fully present the story.

The Spanish interruptions of this English text are a synecdoche for all language in the book, and they resemble the cramped hand in representing alterity more generally. That is, this Spanish word is a kind of linguistic cramp that upsets the proper body of the narrative text. But Hemingway neither ignores the cramp nor succumbs to it; he writes the story in English while acknowledging the Spanish--really a Cuban--alterity. This is an ethical response to alterity. Thus, Hemingway's style, which Malcolm Cowley says is presented "as if English were a strange language that he had studied or invented for himself and was trying to write in its original purity" actually signifies engagement with a hybrid world (Stephens 346).

I will delay my related discussion of the book's ending, which centers on miscommunication, to further elaborate how Hemingway bodies forth the alterity of language and the subject. We have seen how Santiago's self-directed speech buoys him up at physically difficult moments or when he feels loneliness most keenly. In Derrida's terms, Santiago's language functions as a symptom of suffering in these moments. It does not communicate to anyone in the narrative; rather, it marks and emphasizes his misery.

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9 Labeling this situation a "trauma" conveys this alterity clearly, though the word is also problematic and begs complication, more of which below, and in Chapter

But, of course, such soliloquies are a conventional method for revealing the invisible interior of a character. In this sense, they are especially, even excessively, communicative. They extend the possibilities of language.

Thus, both extremes of the linguistic act are demonstrated in The Old Man and the Sea because the words both address no human (except Santiago in relation to himself), a pure subjectivism, and address, as it turned out, the book's millions of readers. This doubleness is revealed at the limits of language. As Derrida shows in The Work of Mourning, words responding to loss must fail to be lucid because they indicate the incommunicability of the mourner's pain, and they must be excessively lucid because they reduce the life of the lost to words. Any speech in the circumstances of loss is such a reduction and exaggeration. Derrida reminds us that this complex doubleness is the position of the speaking subject in general.' Here, then, is another instance of the ethical uncanny.

This doubleness in language appears at other moments in The Old Man and the Sea. Santiago first *speaks* aloud in the early morning *of* the first day, when he notices a man-of-war bird circling and diving at prey: "He's got something,' the old man said aloud. *'He's* not just looking' (33). This statement reveals the depth of Santiago's knowledge: Not only can he read the signs of birds, he can distinguish whether or not the bird actually has prey in sight. Or he thinks he can. As in the example of his hated cramp, and as will become clearer yet with additional examples below, every speech act

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10 See Chapter V for more on this element of Derrida's work.

must be understood with some caution and with attention to the context of its enunciation. In this case, Santiago is shortly proven correct when flying fish emerge from the water, under the pursuit of the bird.

But even here, when his speech act marks Santiago's competency, the limits of that competency are inscribed within it: He must rely on the bird to locate the fish. Thus, the speech act is driven by an encounter with difference, so that this characteristic act of the human subject--speaking--is motivated by a bird and by fish. The importance of this scenario becomes apparent when we take this text's species discourse seriously, as Cary Wolfe suggests we must do with The Garden of Eden ("Fathers, Lovers, and Friend Killers" 225 and passim). Language use here marks the porosity of the human/nonhuman boundary. Further, language itself seems to function as a difference within the subject, or at least to mark an internal division. Santiago speaks as if to encourage himself to pay attention to the bird. He is, in effect, encouraging himself to behave according to what part of him knows. Language, pointing to this doubleness or, perhaps more accurately, this heterogeneity, in his subjectivity, reminds us of the existence of choices and so of ethics. Ethics derives from the heterogeneous subject. Though he does not have to attend to the signs of the sea so carefully, he elects to, and speaking reinforces the possibility of his choice. Readers are alerted to Santiago's (and the human subject's) options on the previous page, where, via internal monologue, we hear Santiago think about how he keeps his lines "straighter than anyone" (32). "Others let them drift with the current," he considers, but "I keep them with *precision" (32).*

In this example, Santiago's language indicates his localized discipline developed from long-term observations. These habits have, in one way, confirmed him as a

champion among fishermen. In my view, though, central to Hemingway's task here is to indicate the relative insignificance of even exceptional subjective practices like Santiago's. The difficulty critics have had in discerning this reflects in the tendency to find this book either heroic or antiheroic. Leo Gurko, for instance, celebrates The Old Man and the Sea because it presents a "hero" who is willing to "dare more than other men" (66). Gurko finds this story significant in part because he believes it the "culmination of Hemingway's long search for disengagement from the social world and total entry into the natural" (69). Good technique is valuable in this search because it "is the quickest and surest way of understanding the physical processes of Nature, of getting into the thing itself' (68). For Gurko, this movement away from "society and its artifices is not motivated by the desire to escape but by the desire for liberation" (70).

Crucially at issue in Gurko's partly correct account is what this type of engagement with the natural means, both to Hemingway and more generally. Gurko's analysis, emphasizing a subject who is both confirmed and "liberated" by encounters with the natural world, who is able to "free his moral and emotional self' in such encounters, ignores the way Santiago, and so many of Hemingway's characters, are unsettled in their subjectivity by encounters with the world, whether cultural or natural (70). Exile, alterity, ultimately intersubjectivity--these might be better terms for this scenario. The kind of "liberation" that happens in the recognition of alterity and intersubjectivity arises from the clarity of specific, local relationships. It is not the kind of absolute liberation addressed by Gurko. This liberation is not opposed to culture generally, though it is opposed to certain types of culture in Hemingway.

Other readers do not take it to be heroic at all. Nemi D'Agostino, in a moslty unfavorable reading of the text, says The Old Man and the Sea is about "absolute failure" (42). James H. Justus makes a similar claim, but more broadly, titling his essay: "The Later Fiction: Hemingway and the Aesthetics of Failure." He argues that failure is a key theme in all of Hemingway, and especially in the late work. He warns us not to "accept too readily the notion of a mellow Hemingway in The Old Man and the Sea" (125-26). He explains, "the rhythms of mythic parallels, the quasi-biblical diction, and the stark Homeric courage of its protagonist cannot disguise the central fact of the fable: the grand victory is brief. Santiago loses the great fish [. . .]" (126, original emphasis). Justus delivers this last claim as though it were a surprise, indicating the persistence of the "mellow" Hemingway reading of The Old Man and the Sea (Justus's essay was first published in 1983). Justus makes the suggestion of duplicity, implicit in "disguise," more explicit later in his essay. He argues that the successes of The Old Man and the Sea and ^, Moveable Feast show how "Style [. . .] becomes one strategy of countering content" in the late work, since we all know, according to Justus, that Hemingway's late vision was dark (127). Indeed, "The work of the late Hemingway, like the early, reveals no satisfactory alternatives to the vision of failure" (127, original emphasis).

A complexity beyond mere, duplicitous polarity, is apparently not possible according to the codes of reader reception operating here. The paralysis of this reading climate is further emphasized when Justus goes on to say that Santiago, the "simple old fisherman," is "an explicit dalliance with sentimentality" (127). This, along with the "famous literary style that gives a patina of success" to "fables of failure" in The Old Man and the Sea leads Justus to claim that "The story of Hemingway's art is the spectacle of

failure both personal and existential" (127). The "unconscious" assumption that literary achievement is and must be divorced from reality has come to crisis in arguments like Justus's." For Justus, style and plot are in direct conflict because a plot that dramatizes the limits *of the* human subject could only be the antagonist to so sensitive a style.

A question left unasked throughout this criticism is what style does. How does it function in the world? I am arguing partly that the embodied sensitivity of Hemingway's style derives exactly from his sense of the human's limitation. Style as a mode of conveying rhythm and human sense literally operates at the boundaries of the self. The Old Man and the Sea dramatizes the intensity of sensibility that locates the individual in a much larger world and within a culture she or he depends upon, and this is key to the text's ethical work. Hemingway's code of honesty about experience perversely leads to accusations of "disguise" or dishonesty, as Justus shows us, because his honesty has, apparently, taken him beyond where at least some others can go, perhaps mostly because of prevailing reading codes.

In the perceptive essay "The Social **Basis** *of* Hemingway's Style," Larzer Ziff reverses some of these claims about style. He argues that Hemingway's early style, characterized by understatement and repetition, derived from "a disapproval of the sensibility that would want to express feeling directly in whatever language" (150). Ziff relates this suspicion toward language to social circumstances following the war, in which soldiers especially could not successfully convey their traumatic experiences to

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11 Clark suggests **in** Cold Warriors that "Hemingway's return to the problem of a 'real' defined in terms of death . . . may be seen as the very unconscious of criticism" during the Cold War (93).

those who had not shared them. This is language operating at its limits.' Ziff goes on to claim that the "blank," understated modifiers of this style depend on their context much more than is common: "the modifier is modified by what it presumably modifies rather than the reverse" (152). For Ziff, then, when Hemingway recommitted himself to the social and political world in his late work, his style became self-imitation because it clashed with its social aims (153). Though I will critique this particular point momentarily, Ziff s argument is an advance beyond Justus's in that it recognizes the social function of style.

Ziff s approach to language in his essay is rhetorical. In keeping with such an approach, he might not be surprised to see his final conclusions shifted when set in a new critical and historical context. While the idea that Hemingway has strengthened *his* social commitment in his later work is broadly accepted, this commitment should not be too strictly contrasted with his earlier work for two primary reasons. One, that earlier work relied on commitment for the strength of its critiques, as I discuss in the next chapter. Two, and more importantly for my purposes here, even in works broadly condemned for being antisocial, such as Green Hills of Africa, Hemingway is frequently measuring the human alongside the animal and the natural. What Gurko had called a search for "liberation" may well have begun in that spirit for Hemingway, but it does not end there. These investigations reach a critical point in The Old Man and the Sea.

Most frequently in Hemingway, the "liberated" self is a self not more alone but more in relation with specific elements of community, with a friend or a lover, with the

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12 As Ziff points out, Hemingway's style is an extension of Mark Twain's campaign against excessively rhetorical writing; Ziff reminds us that Twain was an important influence on Hemingway.

sea, with a trout stream. Hemingway characteristically mistrusts generalities of any kind, including large communities, but his characters attend carefully to actual relationships. Gurko, for instance, seems to dimly acknowledge this community element of The Old Man and the Sea when he points out the "sensation" made among the fishermen (and even in a vague way among the tourists) who look at the marlin's skeleton (66). Following this point, however, Gurko proceeds to make his arguments about escaping from society. Hemingway, however, makes us very aware of this social context, both with the opening and closing of the text that reveal Manolin's care for him, and with the key moment late in the story, when Santiago punctures any illusions of liberated independence. Musing the difficulty of his struggle, he thinks, "Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive. The boy keeps me alive, he thought. I must not deceive myself too much" (106).

Other critics recognize the social dependency indicated by such moments. But I suggested above that we should see human/nonhuman relationships in terms of community too. More specifically, it is especially important to note that Santiago lives and dies by his fishing here too. Hemingway is quite clear that Santiago regards himself as a member of the ocean community as *well* as the human. Recognizing this allows us to move beyond the notion of escaping society by entering nature because, especially in this text, the two are presented as interdependent. Fishing is participation in that community where society and nature interlace. The craft of fishing, then, reveals Santiago not as a purity of self but as consistency in practices that take him out of himself. These practices themselves, *we* can safely assume, were formulated by full-bodied observation, which is itself an encounter with others. One learns to watch the

birds hunting by noticing that birds find fish and are visible to a viewer on the surface of the water--or one's culture teaches this lesson learned in the past from observation.

Linguistic repetition is one of Hemingway's methods of revealing disciplinary practice developed in intimate relationships. Discipline, then, ultimately, signifies love. We will have to continue to work up to this last point. The following moment, just prior to Santiago's hooking the marlin, as Santiago surveys the scene, presents some of the functions of discipline:

> He could not see the green of the shore now but only the tops of the blue hills that showed white as though they were snow-capped and the clouds that looked like high snow mountains above them. The sea was very dark and the light made prisms in the water. The myriad *flecks of the* plankton were annulled now by the high sun and it was only the great deep prisms in the blue water that the old man saw now with his lines going straight down into the water that was a mile deep. (40)

He is too far out to see the shore, which suggests, of course, his immersion into the ocean-surface environment. The tremendous alterity of the ocean is *further* signaled by the repetitions of "deep" and "water" in a sentence crossed through with marks of sharp, practiced observation visually and physically (by way of craft). Santiago is simultaneously shown as knowledgeable and as relatively insignificant. The paratactical style conjures these things together, producing a textual environment not sorted hierarchically. Thus the qualifiers like "myriad" and "great" align with "straight" to

encourage us to see how the accurate fishing parallels and derives from Santiago's awareness of the unfathomable otherness of the ocean. Appreciating the greatness of the sea is keeping straight lines.

The understated affection here, which does not even seem like understatement (Bloom calls the book overwritten) until we recognize the effects of the style, is perhaps more technically achieved than the moments celebrated *by Ziff,* not only because it is more subtle, but also because it has larger implications. Ziff points out how Jake Barnes is able to celebrate the cafe in Bayonne in The Sun Also Rises with doubled intensity because he so underwrites the praise. Jake is an exile looking for a culture and a life that seems truer to him. The quotation above extends this technique by showing how a complex, cultured life-practice can signify long-term, ethical and loving inhabitation of places, without transforming those places into the simple familiarity. The thick language practice, furthermore, with its rhythmic repetition of simple words like "deep" and "water" makes the familiar of language strange too. Hemingway inhabits language like Santiago inhabits the sea.

It is not that Hemingway advocates escape from society, *then,* despite caricatures of him, nor that his more worldly committed, later work must conflict with his style, as Ziff and Justus argue. Rather, style enables him to acknowledge the complexity of relationships between the individual and society. Most of his characters resemble Santiago in being outsiders who value the society they critique. Frederick Henry leaves the war, to take a *key* example, but only when it is clear he *is* about to be killed. The deciding moment in that text depends on Henry recognizing that "The questioners had that beautiful detachment and devotion to stem justice of men dealing in death without

being in any danger of it" (224-25). Their simple conception of duty and of how social groups behave--in this case a group of soldiers harried by retreat--forces Henry into exile.

Santiago's exile is milder: He and Manolin "sat on the Terrace and many of the fishermen made fun of the old man and he was not angry. Others, of the older fishermen, looked at him and were sad" (11). His poor luck, his age, his traditional approach to fishing make him an outsider. But this sadness marks a mourning that is not just for a good man's decline_ Santiago embodies a different relationship with the sea, a relationship the older fishermen would be aware of partly from their own experiences. The rest of the text dramatizes this relationship and so functions as implicit social critique. His ordeal has proved his ability, since at the end, "Many fishermen were around the skiff looking at what was lashed beside it and one was in the water, *his* trousers rolled up, measuring the skeleton with a length of line" (122). His community recognizes him again. But it is a Pyrrhic proof, because this measured skeleton is only the barest remains of the whole trip embodied in the story.

Earlier critics of The Old Man and the Sea were not prepared to notice this complex treatment of nature and community *in* Hemingway's *work*. It is difficult not to hear in arguments like Gurko's the logic of separation, containment, and existentialism at work during the Cold War (Gurko's essay was first published in 1955). We have seen that other critics operating under the same general interpretive conditions reached less complimentary evaluations. Clinton S. Burhans, Jr., for another example, recognizes Santiago's *dependence* on community, but claims that the larger point of The Old Man arid the Sea is to show "Hemingway's mature view of the tragic irony of man's fate" (51).

Those who resisted readings like Burhans's tended to argue that The Old Man and the Sea is not really about community. Bickford Sylvester, for instance, in "Hemingway's Extended Vision: The Old Man and the Sea," challenges Burhans's view by pointing out that The Old Man and the Sea is a story about "man's experience of the rest of nature" and that, therefore, the community element of the story should be considered "somehow ancillary" (83). Sylvester instead restores the heroic approach to the book, arguing that "several species" among those Santiago encounters "include exceptional individual members" (84). Most notable here is the marlin, who proves to be Santiago's match. For Sylvester in this reading, "opposition to nature" is a necessity because nature itself functions according to a dramatic tension (85). Sylvester concludes by saying that "the need for extended effort in the face of inevitable darkness is not *merely* a man-made hypothesis, not a masochistic sop to the unmoored human ego, but the reflection of a natural law man is permitted to follow" (94).

It is especially telling that Sylvester's analysis finds a contradiction between community and natural concerns. This contrariety also surfaces in the way he theorizes Santiago's relationship with nature as a kind of *tension.* Nature gives us firm rules that we can either accept or reject, and "man," in the quotation above, if he is wise, will obey those rules. The organizing feature of this debate is a rigid conception of meaning. The text either concerns community or nature, but certainly not both because they are exclusive categories. The human is a "man" who must stoically, rigidly confront his world. Santiago is presented as tough, but also as good-humored and ironic. His jokes disrupt his stoicism, but it has been difficult for criticism to recognize both sides of this version of subjectivity.

Generally, then, Sylvester's approach to The Old Man and the Sea like many of the critics discussed in this chapter, begins to reveal the book's complex treatment of nature, community, and subjectivity. But these critics' interpretive frameworks tend to deny the possibility of interrelationships among these concerns. We should recognize in Sylvester's view a sense of the alterity of nature, an awareness of difference that enters into human/world relationships.[13] But Santiago's statements of contrariety and tension must be read alongside his love, his embodied conduct toward the world, which answers to alterity without denying it.

All of this is conveyed by Hemingway's self-consciously thick language, a language that bodies forth the materiality of the subject and of language. This materiality, like a cramped hand, demands acknowledgment. Ethically implored acknowledgment is a kind of partial recognition that sustains alterity. The presence of the Other is admitted without assuming full knowledge about the Other. This conception locates ethics outside the purely reasonable. Furthermore, in the example of Santiago's hand, ethical acknowledgment partakes of a natural necessity, like hunger or the basic drives that underlie language and other forms of communication. But The Old Man and the Sea also dramatizes the role of choice. Santiago did not have to let his hand open of its own accord; he could have forced it open, as he threatened to do, whatever the effects.

The cramped tissue of the sensing body driving to its limits, in short, demonstrates the embodiment and the thickness of the knowing subject. The intense desire of the

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13 The "kinship" approach to human/world relationships, to adopt Ted Toadvine's term, emphasizes continuity between people and environment (142). In "The Primacy of Desire and Its Ecological Consequences," Toadvine argues for complicating such a view by recognizing the "radical Outside" of nature (150).

subject exposes the inability to fully appease desire, all the more so as desire further intensifies. Noticing this can help us see how this book navigates between extremes. At the plot level, Hemingway sustains both the importance of worldly interaction like Santiago's, the kinds of journeys often taken to be heroic, and the recognition, present in all of his work, of the limits of the heroic human subject. Indeed, The Old Man and the Sea accentuates both these extremes: Santiago is one of Hemingway's most directly heroic characters whose very heroism exposes him to ridicule from others and from himself. We are encouraged, therefore, both to respect the impulse to heroism and to share in the critiques of it.

At the level of the word, in a parallel way, this book permits key terms to enter the text in a way Hemingway often avoided in earlier books. An example is the introduction of Manolin: "The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him" (10). This direct statement, early in the book, might seem simply to state what should be shown. Couple the seemingly unearned revelation of love with the theme of love and it becomes less surprising that Bloom and others might see such claims as relying on "emotion in excess of its object.""

But I do not think Hemingway has simply lost control of his language here. Rather, this characteristically paratactical Hemingway phrase functions as understatement because this brief revelation of their relationship balances against the long, fatally trying fishing trip in solitude. This phrase, to return to Ziffs point mentioned above about the earlier fiction, depends greatly on the full context of the book. These human exchanges

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14 Bloom does not actually specifically address this moment, nor does he provide examples of what he reads as this book's sentimentality in the introductory essay where he makes that claim.

locate Santiago in a living culture, but the fishing trip locates culture in a broader world of other species and of the ocean, the extent of which is signaled in part by length of the fishing accountand Santiago's persistent longing for Manolin's help. In this context, sentimentality signifies a human lineage that grows despite the limitations of the human subject. The direct revelation of love early in the book magnifies the presentation of Santiago's suffering. Sentimentality, then, rather than indicating a person gone "soft," is directly connected to and part of the courageous element of this tale. The love signifies beyond the self and can only be conjured with an inadequate, blurry language of regard, self-consciously, ironically simple and direct. Moreover, as we will now consider, precisely this type of language is important to the story's fight to the death.

The fight begins with Santiago's reiteration of his focus, which is difficult to sustain: "Now is the time to think of only one thing" (40). That he repeats this type of encouragement to himself connects to the previous line--"Now is no time to think of baseball"--to testify to the difficulty of focusing. Likewise, the claims to knowledge about the fish in this moment bridge desire and precision. Santiago keeps his lines carefully, so is better prepared to know "exactly what it was" *when* the hundred-fathom line shows a bite (41). However, this knowledge is immediately put into question on the next page:

> "Come on," the old man said aloud. "Make another turn. Just smell them. Aren't they lovely? Eat them good now and then there is the *tuna.* Hard and cold and lovely. Don't be shy, *fish.* Eat them."
>
> He waited with the line between his thumb and his finger, watching it and the other lines at the same time for the fish might have swum up or

> down. Then came the same delicate pulling touch again.
>
> "He'll take it," the old man said aloud. "God help him to take it."
>
> He did not take it though. He was gone and the old man felt nothing, (42)

These four final, parallel sentences mark the end of what Santiago knows about the fish, and encourage us, furthermore, to read some doubt into all his professions of knowledge. Not just awareness earned by craft but desire connects Santiago with the fish across a gulf of darkness. This desire is apparent in the pathos of Hemingway's rhythmic language, which states its points simply yet with parallel phrasing that circles and restates.

Temporality is crucial to this passage. Repetition in language marks out and fills narrative time with estranged sameness and appeals to a reader's sense of rhythm. Imploring the fish aloud to take the sardines he has prepared carefully on the hook, imagining what would appeal to the marlin, Santiago says, "'Make another turn. Just smell them. Aren't they lovely?" These circling thoughts duplicate what Santiago imagines the fish is doing, revealing the fish dimly by recourse to analogy between the turning of phrases and the turning of fish. "Just smell them" supposes the fish to likewise have a desire, a partial knowledge, and a fallibility. Both are making turns in time, a point reiterated by the paragraph break and the phrase "He waited with the line between his thumb and his finger [. .1." Here Hemingway presents a bodied subject of desire, connected to the fish across the possibility of sensation, of "the same delicate pulling touch." An especially relevant phrase *in* this regard is "and then there is the tuna," which imputes onto the fish this awareness of appetite's duration: The fish can sharpen its desire by imagining eating that will last over time, first sardines, then tuna. Perhaps this marks

again the limits of the likenesses between Santiago's and the marlin's thinking patterns, perhaps not.' The thickness of *desire* is signified, *in* any case, by the place-holding words "and then there is." This phrase understates desire and reminds us of the distance between desire and the desired Other because the simple words mostly mark time's passing (even if this is merely Santiago's expression of his desire to know what the fish wants). These are, that is to say, thick words that embody time without supposing to reveal all that happens in it.

The *likeness between* fish and man muddies the *differences* between them, *calling* into question both categories. They are related across a space of words that ethically acknowledges difference without easily or simply reducing difference into a category of knowledge. Such ethical language practice, aware of the physical or bodily dimensions of sense, can offer new revelations about the "objective" world and reveal the limits of knowing.

This border crossing, under the pressure of trauma and exhaustion as *the story* proceeds, leads to an essential inversion. After the cramps in his hand have been bothering him, and after the fish has shown itself by jumping, Santiago thinks, "I wish I could show him what sort of man I am. But then he would *see* the cramped hand. Let him think I am more man than I am and I will be so. I wish I was the fish, he thought [. . .1 " (64). Identity in this sequence of sentences moves from an expression of desire to

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15 We are learning more and more about complex thinking patterns and behaviors in animals. We know from several sources that great apes are capable of duplicity, which perhaps suggests an awareness of temporality. Whether a marlin is capable of this awareness is hard to discern largely, or perhaps entirely, because of the linguistic barriers between humans and fish. See Hillix and Rumbaugh for more on this, as well as Slater and Halliday.

a fiction. The desire--"I wish I could show him what sort of man I am"--is undercut by a realistic awareness of his crampy, old body, and that awareness inspires a fiction. Like speaking aloud, the fiction told to the fish over the line organizes and drives Santiago's activity. Santiago does not believe it to be true so much as potentially true from a certain perspective. But significantly, this acknowledgment of the fiction of the subject, rather than confirming the subject, drives Santiago's desire further outside *himself*. He wants to become the fish.

This pattern is replayed and its significance extended over the next several pages, as Santiago's exhaustion grows. After contemplating the size and strength of the fish, he insists,

> "I'll kill him though," he said. In all his greatness and his glory."
>
> Although it is unjust, he thought. But I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures.
>
> "I told the boy I was a strange old man," he said. "Now is when I must prove it."
>
> The thousand times that he had *proved it* meant nothing. Now he was proving it again. Each time was a new time and he never thought about the past when he was doing it.
>
> I wish he'd sleep and I could sleep and dream about the lions, he thought. Why are the lions the main thing that is left? (66)

This dialogue swings wildly from position to position, *even* in the sense that it alternates between words spoken aloud to the self and internal dialogue. The first spoken words make a brave claim that Santiago hopes to live up to--"'I'll kill him'"--and the thoughts,

like a Greek chorus internalized, immediately undercut the spoken words. The "thousand times" paragraph, however, which reasserts his purpose, is quieter than the first claim. By the "I wish" response, the fiction of the subject again has modulated into a surrender to the animal Other, a desire for dreaming that is a key to the story.

The dream motif not only evokes the subject's unconscious and so marks the limits of *will* and control, it also softens or "gentles" the depiction *of the* subject's limits. Thus, though the plot of this story can appear to be a trauma, the story's recourse to the involuntary appeal of animal dreams accompanies the pleasures of the book's style to show ethical intersubjectivity differently. More than a violence, the subject's limits are a liminal space, a bodied language of style or a rich and curious dream world. The end of the story, with the old man "dreaming about the lions," figures death not as a trauma, but quietly (for many readers, invisibly), and as a dream.

The prominence of lions certainly suggests the ferocity of appetite and of nature, but Santiago's dream lions "played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he loved the boy" (25). Surely for many readers such a suggestion is mere sentimentality. But our conduct toward nature hinges on the acknowledgment here that nature is more than merely "red in tooth and claw." It is vital to acknowledge that, in fact, lions do play as well as hunt. This dream of nature haunts the story, quietly encouraging Santiago's move beyond the exigencies of hunger toward love for his ostensible adversary the marlin. This movement is visible in the long passage quoted above (from page 66). Santiago is a hunter who recognizes his place in his world, who knows what he must do to survive, but he also recognizes how much more there is to nature than killing.

The passage following the quotation above reveals Santiago's sense of himself growing more diffuse. Feeling this way, he failingly turns to a whole series of "tricks" to sustain his activity. His attention moves from an imagined "picture" of "the fish swimming in the water" and wondering about how the fish sees at great depth, to thoughts of baseball, to "the great DiMaggio" (67-68). DiMaggio sharpens his focus briefly, but Santiago must again shift his thoughts to memories of his arm-wrestling tournament when he "was not an old man but was Santiago El Catppeon" (70), in order "to give himself more confidence" (68).

It is his utter exhaustion, caused by and so in physical acknowledgment *of* the fish that pushes Santiago's thinking another step: "There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behavior and his great dignity."`[6] Nonetheless, "his determination to kill him never relaxed in his sorrow for him" (75). Across the fishing line, the fish has interrupted Santiago's subjectivity and exposed another fiction as fiction--that of commodity value. This point is reiterated both comically and dramatically once he has killed the fish. Thinking that the marlin is "over fifteen hundred pounds" and wondering how much he is worth, Santiago says aloud, "'I need a pencil for that' (97). And when the sharks hit, the gradual stripping of the marlin is recognized piece by piece: The Mako shark, for example, takes "about forty pounds" (103). This reckoning is zeugmatic in reducing the magnificent fish to pounds of meat, yet the whole story hinges on the unavoidable reality of animal appetite that drives Santiago, the marlin, and the sharks, a reality that complicates a zeugmatic reading. Death, at the center of this story and crucial

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16 In Hemingway's e elephant-hunting tale, David likewise explains that "Tiredness brought the beginning of understanding" (182).

to all appetite, can flatten hypotactical modes of thinking into a parataxis, even *while* death reinscribes significance and difference in the subject by showing limits. These losses are practical, registered financially and in terms of the people they could feed, so that the irreducible beauty of the fish--the big one that cannot be brought in--is coupled tightly to all ordinary animal needs.

There is a strange doubleness, then, both in the worth of the fish and in the worth of Hemingway's other elusive prey: the story. The dignified fish itself can only endure in a compelling fiction, and there only partly. Thus, an effective, aesthetically pleasing story that accurately conveys the marlin is called for. But, conversely, part of sustaining that dignity requires an honest (i.e. an ethical) admission of the fish's unknowability. The fact that it cannot be brought in or possessed *in* the plot reminds us *of* this absolute alterity. Expressing this unknowable otherness drives Hemingway to the limits of language and Santiago to the limits of body, so that Santiago's suffering and Hemingway's thick language signify the alterity of the fish. We can read the pragmatic function of language for Santiago in a a similar way because his use of words as tools, another sign of the fishing trial's difficulty, *shifts* the *significance of* language itself. *Instead of indicating* humanity's superiority over other animals, language in this case is inflected by an animal Other. Moreover, art, the most triumphant of language uses, shows a lack of artfulness, a sheer utility and banality.

The description of killing the marlin reinforces the evasive character of story (and ontology), since Santiago *is* brought to the edge of death himself as the fish is. The suggestion that Santiago will ultimately die completes Hemingway's suggested parallel between man and fish, carried on from the first tentative bite at the bait to the final

landing of the skiff. This parallel also muddies the human/animal division. At these limits, Santiago makes *his fullest surrender* to *the* fish, "Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who," which leads him to the admission that "Now you are getting confused in the head [. .1. Keep your head clear and know how to suffer like a man. Or a fish, he thought" (92). The subject shows its limits in this text with suffering, the pressure of which causes the subject's identity to collapse. Or to nearly collapse. Santiago musters enough of himself to speak aloud, "in a voice he could hardly hear": "'Clear up, head,'" and despite repeatedly feeling "himself going" as he tries to finish the marlin, despite his "mushy" hands, his constructions and fictions and his will enable the kill (92-93). The blurriness, though, that characterizes this moment indicates the inexpressible and so links the moment *of* death with sentimentality. Both indicate limits of language and subjectivity.

The conclusion to The Old Man and the Sea bodies forth these limits a final time. Hemingway encourages us to notice that the tourists, who have asked the waiter about the marlin's skeleton, fail to understand because of linguistic, cultural, and experiential differences. They think the waiter has told them the marlin's skeleton is that of a shark. Their misinterpretation dramatizes how the whole story has been at risk all along. it may fail to come across even in the telling, even with the physical and textual evidence at hand. Meanwhile, the character who embodies wisdom, experience, and instruction is asleep "on *his* face," presumably at the edge of death (127).

From awareness of these limits comes Santiago's ethical claim: "'I shouldn't have gone out so far, fish,' he said. 'Neither for you nor for me. **rm** sorry, fish'" (110). This ethics derives from local, embodied experience that does not *disavow* death, either for the

fish or for Santiago. The "ethics" here reside not in a proscripted behavior or an application of truth so much as in an openness to the Other. Santiago's physical attention, his suffering and his bodily awareness, leads him to change his ethical stance, as well as his knowledge claims in the text. This is why it is crucial to notice how language functions in a thick, embodied way that can register difference on the human sensibility and so lead to ethical changes.

Several critics have begun to help us see what was at issue historically in Santiago's fishing practice, which he takes to be more ethical than the younger men's methods. Santiago did not have to use the more intimate and primitive methods of fishing. Ethics reside in the possibility of differences, and here those differences come down to technologies, techniques, and cultures. Hemingway makes us aware of the other fishermen who use elaborate tools, "those who used buoys as floats for their lines and had motorboats, bought *when* the shark *livers* had brought much money [. .1" (29-30). Susan F. Beegel argues that Santiago's approach to technology allows him "to uphold an ecological ethic diametrically opposed to Ahab's 'iron way' ("Santiago and the Eternal Feminine" 143). She points out that the younger fishermen, with all their gear, "are the ancestors of today's long-liners" (143). These boats, with much larger catches than small-scale, traditional fishing practices like Santiago's, have not only produced the decline in marine populations, they have radically changed the culture of fishing among humans."[17] The Old Man and the Sea marks that decline but also resists it with the counter lineage of Santiago and Manolin. In that counter lineage, it becomes clear that cultural and

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17 In "The Cuban Context of The Old Man and the Sea," Bickford Sylvester also points to the sea-change in fishing practices occurring in the 40s and 50s (e.g. 257).

technological questions may be more important ethically and ecologically than the sometimes reductive question about whether humans should ever kill animals.

The young men's understanding the sea as enemy, furthermore, recalls the military history associated with their wealth. Beegel informs us that "their motorboats were the fruits of war" insofar as the profitability of shark livers depended upon the German submarine blockade in the North Atlantic during World War II. Pharmaceuticals manufacturers, who required cod liver oil normally delivered from the Grand Banks, had to rely on shark liver oil from the factory at Cojimar until 1958, "when vitamin A was synthesized" (144). While it may not be the case that Santiago could have adopted all these tools, because he is presented as poor, the example of these fishermen indicates that a choice was available more generally. Certainly a choice was available at the *level* of attitude. In other words, there are various ways of living by fishing.

The younger men's failure to acknowledge the sea and its life as more than an enemy relates to a larger worldview that takes difference as a sign of conflict, which is the mentality of war, dependent on a logic of purity. In Santiago's embodied responsiveness to his wider community, Hemingway presents an alternative to such thinking. The differences of the world are allowed to play on the sensing body without reducing the world's alterity. This ethical openness is essential to Santiago's late revelation that he should have let the fish be. That idea grows out of an ethical, embodied practice that registers pleasure and the cramps of trauma. Our first ethical task may simply be to recognize these cramps in the body of *reason and* then to *let* that body come back to health of its own accord.

CHAPTER III

THE "HOMESICKNESS" OF LATER HEMINGWAY

> They had found the trail of the old bull finally and *when* it *turned* off onto a smaller elephant road Juma had looked at David's father and grinned showing his filed teeth and his father had nodded his head. They looked as though they had a dirty secret, just as they had looked when he had found them that night at the shamba.
>
> It was not very long before they came on the secret. It *was* off to the right in the forest and the tracks of the old bull led to it. It was a skull as high as David's chest and white from the sun and rains. There was a deep depression in the forehead and ridges ran from between the bare white eye sockets and flared out in empty broken holes where the tusks had been chopped away. (Ernest Hemingway, The Garden of Eden 180)

The previous chapter presented the cramping body as a figure for the shock of ethical alterity that has come home to the subject. This chapter pursues the same reading strategy more generally in Hemingway's late work, extending the argument that Hemingway's oeuvre constantly works to bring ostensibly external conflicts back to the subject. "Homesickness," in this sense, *represents* the body's recognition of ethical culpability, like the synecdoche of a cramping hand. Suffering, as a kind of sickness in the subject, signifies the exposure of the subject to the world and to the Other and is partly constitutive of the subject. The converse of this homesickness, equally important to acknowledge, is Hemingway's desire to thoroughly inhabit a place and a culture, to have a real marriage to a home (to borrow the marriage metaphor he uses, which I discuss below). This second meaning of homesickness also gains more dimension in this chapter. These apparently opposite sensibilities--suffering and desire--of course produce one

another, and *as each* intensifies, it strengthens the other. This relationship is *apparent* in the very ambivalence of the experiencing body, of sensory perception itself, exposed to pleasure or pain along the same neural network. Acknowledging the complex interrelationships between subject and world, in other words, produces both an estranging sense of responsibility and a feeling of desire for more careful, intimate inhabitation.

The subjectivity such relationships produce *in* Hemingway texts is therefore paradoxical. The inward or temporally backward movement toward roots, toward "home," persistently reveals sickness: the secret history of vicious, animal appetite, with its filed teeth and ivory hunger, the distrust of one's heritage so often apparently necessary in Hemingway's work partly because of his father's suicide. But this very distrust disables an innocent acceptance of the present cultural life. Ethical subjectivity can therefore seem impossible because of the absence of a trustworthy ethical code. I argue that Hemingway's solution to this dilemma depends on writing as exposure. Again, a doubleness attends this notion. First, writing exposes the darker sides of desire, as I have suggested. Hemingway, somewhat infamously, does not disavow appetite.[1] That exposure, as in the epigraph, eventually leads to abjection and to momento mori in The Garden of Eden, in which David and Catherine's relationship ends and David's manuscripts are made into waste by fire. Second, this exposure of the limits of the subject encourages in Hemingway a different inhabitation of writing. He uses a stylistically thick, embodied prose that appeals to the physiological home of the subject--the senses--without allowing the writer-subject to rest in this style, in this writing, in the

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1 For example, Molly Westling calls Hemingway a "game hog" in The Green Breast of the New World, citing Glen Love's essay on Hemingway discussed in the previous chapter (99).

senses. Writing sharpens sensitivity, which both locates the subject more firmly in the senses and, in precisely that locating, exposes the subject to the world via the senses, and necessitates a critique of writing itself. In this way Hemingway exposes the ethical impulse at the heart of writing, at the heart of what Levinas calls "saying." He reveals, as we will see most clearly in The Garden of Eden, writing as an ethical passion, a disciplined pathos that reveals and points beyond itself.

That uncanny doubleness can be seen as an ethical sensibility. It is the presence of the subject to itself, a self-consciousness that enables the ethical awareness beyond one's "animal" wants. The animality of this doubleness, however, is also part of what Hemingway helps us see. His tendency to animalize himself and the human in general has its counterpart in recognizing "human" behaviors *in* the animal. Indeed, his work evokes several, heterogeneous recognition scenes. As we will see below, for instance, the uncanny recognition between the elephant friends in The Garden of Eden pairs with Hemingway's narrator's recognition of the elephant. Further, it is not just that human and nonhumans recognize each other, but that the scenes of recognition, with their marks and traces of language, resemble each other: The elephant writing recalls and helps to produce its double that is The Garden of Eden, Hemingway's animal text.

The estrangement of the self from its home restores the more literal meaning of Freud's term unheirnlich. Normally translated as "uncanny," the German word translates more accurately as "unhomely" (Freud 193, note 1). Freud explains that the uncanny is "related to what is frightening--to what arouses dread and honor" (193). But the particular brand of horror that he defines as uncanny is that "which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (195). The doubleness of ethical awareness I discuss in

this chapter, seeing the very self again, accords with this definition of the uncanny, and also helps us better understand why Levinas theorizes ethical subjectivity as a kind of frightful trauma; a sense of the self develops from the traumatic invasion of the Other.

Homesickness is visible at several levels in much of Hemingway's work, perhaps most readily so at the level of plot. It is often pointed out that Jake in The Sun Also Rises, who loves Brett in spite of himself, who is socially engaged with close friendships, *is* nonetheless profoundly cut out of the social world by the war. hi this way, the whole book signifies trauma brought home to the subject at the level of the body. I mentioned in the previous chapter that Lieutenant Henry's earnest participation in the war effort leads him necessarily to a separate *peace.* Violence and the threat of violence cut him out of the social world too. f or Whom the Bell Tolls takes as one of its purposes, to borrow Robert Jordan's words, telling "What we did. Not what the others did to us" (134). This task is carried out perhaps most *clearly* in Pilar's account of killing the fascists in their village. But it is also apparent in Jordan accepting his role in the conflict. He considers, "You're a bridge-blower now. Not a thinker. Man, I'm hungry, he thought" (17). Carrying out his duty, with some but not many delusions about its *significance,* returns Jordan to the body and hunger in that passage, and leads ultimately to his becoming "completely integrated" in the mountains at the end of the narrative, "his heart beating against the pine *needle floor of the* forest" *(471).* Indeed, in For Whom the Bell Tolls more broadly, the move into the material or bodily balances against the difficulty of acknowledging the individual's place in the war; thinking about hunger saves Jordan from debilitating thoughts of what his position in this conflict means.

The night before the attack and the bridge-blowing, this economy within the subject--an exchange between sheer physicality and generalized significance--registers in Jordan's internal dialogue. As is common in Hemingway's novels especially,' Jordan at this moment is quietly panicking. He is self-conscious that this is happening, that he has "been concentrating so hard on something" that his "brain gets to racing like a flywheel with the weight gone" (340). He encourages *himself* to "Remember something concrete and practical. Remember Grandfather's saber, bright and well oiled in its dented scabbard [. . .]. Remember Grandfather's Smith and Wesson" (336). But this memory returns him inevitably to the trauma associated with the Civil War in which his grandfather fought with this sword and gun, and to his father's suicide with the same pistol. The limits and the materiality of the bodied *life* show both in the memories themselves and in the desire to remember something physical, which is described as a sanity-saving practice. Jordan's metaphor--"like a flywheel with the weight gone"--presents this accurately. "Weight" evokes sheer matter, and the need for this weight, like thinking about hunger, allows him to play the role he feels is required of him by his world. Recognizing the materiality of the subject enables ethical action.

In this case, the recognition also shows the limits of subjective agency, since, as with Santiago, Jordan is so clearly self-conscious that he is really tricking himself to some extent, that the whole set of circumstances seem somewhat absurd. This self-consciousness can therefore be read as a social critique. Other social worlds are possible, perhaps *ones* more like Santiago's in which human lineage in a rich world remains

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2 I discuss other examples of this below, but see also the moment of crisis in the night as Jake confronts his impossible love for Brett in The Sun Also Rises (149-53).

possible, *even* if *challenged,* and in which a person has a chance for a full life-cycle. A full life-cycle, in the conceptions of the subject I am discussing, would be important for more than the individual, of course, since this extended inhabitation of "home" is taken to strengthen ethical responsibility to culture and place. The subtle differences between the way Jordan and Santiago inhabit their homes are profoundly important to reading Hemingway's oeuvre carefully, but such *differences* tend to disappear under the vague critical charges of "sentimentality" or, in Philip Young's case, with the wound theory, discussed in the previous chapter. The question for Hemingway was not whether the subject would be wounded, but for what purpose. Santiago is wounded while participating socially and ecologically in a world that sustains a possibility of meaning and *value,* so that injuries signify an intense, intersubjective sensitivity that approaches love, physically and otherwise.

Characters like Lieutenant Henry also acknowledge intersubjectivity, but do so grudgingly because of the particular circumstances of their relationships. After his escape from near execution, Henry, "Lying on the floor of the flat-car," replays the events. He considers that his *new* knee

> had been very satisfactory. Valentini had done a fine job. I had done half the retreat on foot and swum part of the Tagliamento with his knee. It was his knee all right. The other knee was mine. Doctors did things to you and then it was not your body any more. The head was mine, and the inside of the belly. It was very hungry in there. I could feel it turn over on itself. The head was mine, but not to use, not to think with, only to remember and not too much remember. {231)

This injury points back to a conflict that Henry is, at the moment *of* this passage, deserting. The decision to do so was spurred by **his** rejecting the arbitrary "justice of men dealing in death without being in any danger of it," and the terms of that rejection register in the phrase "Doctors did things to you," and more clearly in the idea that he should "not too much remember" (225). The reality of the body's alterity from the subject, the heterogeneity of the subject, is revealed and augmented in this case, then, by a war trauma that signifies arbitrary violence.

However, that alterity also appears in the hunger that Henry tries to own for himself and to mark as distinct from his repaired knee. "The head" and "the inside of the belly" are his, he claims, but the phrasing, "hungry in there" and "I could feel it turn over on itself," points to appetite as a force that *has* its *own* kind of *agency* within the heterogeneous subject, like a cramp. The phrases, in other words, suggest that hunger is not entirely his, just as the dread of too much memory points to his limited ownership of his thought. Henry wants to own stomach and mind because, even though they also do things to him, they participate in a more fundamental economy of the subject that is not as corrupted by injustice. The revelation *here,* via style, of desire driving the subject rather than simple knowledge indicates the need for an ethics of bodily inhabitation.

Henry's relationship with Catherine is likewise outside, or mostly outside, of such corruption, and the text turns to her immediately following the passage quoted above. Henry allows that he "could remember Catherine," but not too much or he "would get crazy" with missing her (231). The right measure of memory weighs against the spinning flywheel of his thoughts. But they nonetheless commence to spinning in this critical moment of the book, which resembles the passage cited above from For Whom the Bell

Tolls. Henry considers that he "did not love the floor of a flat-car nor guns with canvas jackets" but that he

> loved some one else whom now you knew was not even to be pretended there; you seeing now very clearly and coldly--not so coldly as clearly and emptily. You saw emptily, lying on your stomach, having been present when one army moved back and another came forward. You had lost your cars and your men as a floorwalker loses the stock of his department in a fire. There was, however, no insurance. You were out of it now. You had no more obligation. (232)

This vision's clarity derives from awareness of the individual's place in modern war. Henry recognizes himself as a mere body in the conflict, a pawn in a larger *scheme* who had "been present." This passive construction, which is followed by an abstract account of the movement of armies that does not delineate allegiance, marks the reduction to simple body, as does the zeugmatic simile that likens losing men and cars to losing "stock." Henry's awareness of his bodily status, moreover, seems sharpened by his physical position, lying on his stomach, still at risk *of* death.

Trauma has brought the self/body alterity--a kind of homesickness--into view here, and has driven a narrative that reclaims the self by way of internal monologue. The self-as-body is acknowledged and then reinscribed in a different context: "Anger was washed away in the river along with any obligation" (232). Indeed, the description of that river swim *in* the previous chapter has already presented Henry's awareness of himself as mere physicality in a world separate from the war: "I was lucky to have a heavy timber to hold on to, and I lay in the icy water with my chin on the wood, holding as easily as I

could with both hands. I was afraid of cramps and I hoped we would move toward the shore. We went down the river in a long curve" (226). Henry aptly puts himself on the level of the timber he is floating with, and its company--this status of company is signaled by the repeated pronoun "we"--stands in contrast to the human, military companions he has just left. One is thus tempted to read the "we" here as ironic reinforcement of the sense that the human situation could not be endured. His only friend is a piece of driftwood.

However, more is happening in this moment. The saving company *of* "objects" here functions like the company of language, which, as 1 suggested in the previous chapter, can also be seen as an object. We should, that is, read this "we" seriously as well as ironically. Hemingway has recognized the war's lesson that the human can be mere body and is always partly body, but refuses the unjust application of this principle in war. The river flows beyond these human flaws, just as hunger and sexual desire partake of an older economy of the human. But immersion in the river, the surrender to hunger and desire, these also admit the alterity and physicality of the human. This acceptance of the body's physicality anticipates the equivalence between Santiago and the marlin.

Biographically, this acceptance also implores us to remember Hemingway's own treatment of the trees at the Finca in Cuba. Norberto Fuentes reports that Hemingway ordered his gardener'not to prune the plants on the estate, not even the grass, under the theory that "plants and trees should grow without restraint" (53; *see* also 51). Hemingway also forbade children to throw stones at the trees on the Finca and, according to stories, had a rather vehement dispute about the ceiba tree at the house entrance. Apparently, one of the tree's roots was lifting the house's floor tiles. Hemingway did not want the root cut

or removed, but Mary Hemingway convinced the gardener to cut out the root when Hemingway was away. The story has it that Hemingway appeared just after the root had been cut and chased the gardener off with a shotgun, firing rounds into the air (Fuentes 52-53).

This ceiba story exemplifies the homesickness of Hemingway's later life. This dispute perversely shows Hemingway's desire that home be a place for healing and for reinventing a conception of health, in a broad way that includes the place. Yet, the violent expression of this desire is characteristic of Hemingway at times and of his troubled era, when one violent act seemingly had to be answered by another. We can read in this violence the crisis of the subject, discussed at greater length in the previous chapter and in Suzanne Clark's Cold Warriors. Hemingway was quite aware that the times pervade people's subjectivity, as he reveals in one of his letters: "I think how we are is how the world has been" (698). To give the world--in this example in the form of a tree--permission to flourish in its own way is ultimately to help all flourish.

Thomas Hudson, in Islands in the Stream, reminds us again that such ethical regard or ethical acknowledgment, however, balances against an awareness of mortality and appetite. In that novel's opening, Hemingway uses driftwood as a figure for loss and mortality which are the book's key themes. Hudson "had a big *pile of* driftwood" that

> was whitened by the sun and sand-scoured by the wind and he would become fond of different pieces so that he would hate to burn them. But there was always more driftwood along the beach after the big storms and he found it was fun to burn even the pieces he was fond of. He knew the sea would sculpt more [. . .]. [H]e *could see* the line of the flame when it

> left the wood and it made him both sad and happy. All wood that burned affected him in this way. But burning driftwood did something to him that he could not define. He thought that it was probably wrong to burn it when he was so fond of it; but he felt no guilt about it. (11)

The key sentence for my argument, "He knew the sea would sculpt more," reveals Hudson's recognition of the larger ecology that produces the driftwood. It locates both wood and its burner in a world that, as Clark suggests in discussing this passage, "bums like driftwood, the more affecting as we are fond of what burns" (Cold Warriors 95). Hudson's familiarity with these longer-term processes is typical of Hemingway's later work, in which sustained and knowledgeable dwelling in a place helped to produce an ethics of inhabitation. But it is no easy ethics, since the simple practice of burning driftwood for Hudson figures individual mortality (the limits of the subject), which the remainder of the book reveals, as Hudson will lose his family and ultimately his own life.

The likeness between driftwood and human is made explicit late in Islands in the Stream, as Hudson contemplates the face of his ostensible enemy, the young German they find who is already in the throes of death: "[The German's] were old *eyes* now but they were in a young man's face gone old as driftwood and nearly as gray" (350). This attention to the German's face, and Hudson's crew's gentle treatment of the man, again circumscribe the events of war in a larger reality of loss and mortality. Hudson and crew do what they suppose they must, just as Santiago, Robert Jordan, and most of Hemingway's protagonists do, but they, and especially Hudson, sustain an ethical regard

for the Other derived from the recognition signified by the driftwood passage that opens the text. The weathered and well-traveled pieces of driftwood, like the story's humans, are thus justly mourned.

This sentimental attitude toward washed-up wood, then, far from revealing a writer "gone soft" (to cite again Weeks's characterization of later Hemingway), [3] shows Hemingway's applied awareness of difficult realities *in* the *most* ordinary of situations. This awareness often appears more dramatically in some of Hemingway's earliest work. Green Hills of Africa centers on Hemingway's own surrender to animality and appetite, which is made manifest at several points in the text. His desire to kill the sable bull, for example, leads Hemingway to shoot "at the whole animal instead of the right place and I was ashamed; but the outfit now were drunk excited. I would have walked but you could not hold them, they were like a pack of dogs as we ran" (259). Hemingway both acknowledges his animal excitement here and scapegoats it onto the others--"they were"--reinforcing the doubleness that this moment of ethical hunting already contains.

Hemingway's identification with animals is even more explicit at this earlier moment in Green Hills of Africa. He pities *lions* being molested by camel flies, which reminds him of horses being attacked by these same **flies. He explains,**

> That day of watching the camel flies working under the horse's tail, having had them myself, gave me more horror than anything I could remember except one time in a hospital with my right arm broken off short between the elbow and the shoulder, the back of the hand having hung down against my back, the points of the bone having cut up the flesh of the biceps until

3 See Chapter II for more on Weeks and sentimentality.

> it finally rotted, swelled, burst, and sloughed off in pus. Alone with the pain in the night in the fifth week of not sleeping I thought suddenly how a bull elk must feel if you break a shoulder and he gets away and in that night I lay and felt it all, the whole thing as it would happen from the shock of the bullet to the end of the business and, being a little out of my head, thought *perhaps* what I was going through was a punishment for all hunters. Then, getting well, decided if it was a punishment I had paid it and at least I knew what I was doing. I did nothing that had not been done to me. I had been shot and I had been crippled and gotten away. (147-48)

The trauma of injury, in an element of Hemingway's work familiar to us now, reveals the body to the subject. What changes over the trajectory of the oeuvre is Hemingway's response to the recognition of his own animality. The ethical shock presented here in the form of guilt does not deter Hemingway from hunting, as the ending of the above paragraph shows: "Since I still loved to hunt I resolved that I would only shoot as long as I could kill cleanly and as soon as I lost that ability I would stop" (148).

But as we saw above, later in his life, still, he claims, in possession of the skills to shoot accurately, Hemingway increasingly lost interest in the kill. This accompanies what I considered above to be increased consciousness of nature's dimensions beyond kill or be-killed, concisely presented in Santiago's dream of the lions. Just as Hudson in Islands in the Stream takes no pleasure in the young German's mortal pains, Hudson's acknowledgment of human animality sometimes takes the form of love in that book, perhaps most clearly in the often-discussed love affair with Boise the cat. This affair is described in the same (therefore oddly double) terms as the younger Hemingway's

appetite for the sable bull; **it** is a kind of uncontrollable passion: "The way he and Boise felt now, he thought, neither one wanted to outlive the other. I don't know how many people and animals have been in love before, he thought. It probably is a very comic situation. But 1 don't find it *comic* at all" (208).

Hemingway's repeated mention of the potentially comic appearance of this affair does not deter Roderick Nordell, in his generally favorable review of Islands in the Stream, from calling this "an unbelievable bout of sentimentality with a pet tomcat" (Stephens 443). Such a position, of course, simplifies this question of the animal that persists throughout Hemingway's work and that, I have been claiming, takes new form in the later texts. The recognition of animality that led to violence earlier in Hemingway's life here leads to a love that muddles the categories of human and animal. Hemingway writes, for instance, that "Sometimes, the servants said, he [Boise] would not eat for several days after the man was gone but his hunger always drove him to it" (208). Then, in the same paragraph: "He [Boise] always ate very quickly and then wanted to leave the cat room as soon as he had finished. There *was no* cat that he cared for **in** any *way"* (208). The next paragraph begins, "For a long time now the man thought that Boise had regarded himself as a human being" (209). The more generalized approach to the human/animal distinction is signaled by the broad terms used: "the man," "human being." Hudson's reference to himself in the third person can also be understood as adopting Boise's perspective, and it marks Hudson's recognition of the heterogeneity of the self that is determined situation by situation. Further, Hudson recognizes in Boise behaviors

typical of Hemingway human characters--a surrender to appetite, a skeptical attitude toward its own kind--and we are encouraged to see these likenesses as key to Hudson's love for Boise.'

Indeed, these likeness are crucial to reading the pages that follow the above passages, as the history of the cats presented there slowly modulates from thoughts about Princessa the cat into a consideration of Hudson's human love affair with an "Italian princess" on a ship. The subtle, hybrid, transgressive work of the words "Princessa"/"princess" here enables the transition. In the recollected story of the princess, their intensifying relationship is held *in check* by the *reality* that *she* is *married and* her husband sails on the same ship as they do. The comically serious effect of these circumstances must thus be read alongside the serious comedy of the love affair with the cat, so that Hudson can reveal and mock his own passionate appetite as he does Boise's. Human/animal relationships thereby stand for (or stand alongside) social alterity more generally. Love becomes an unfulfillable passion, an impossible union, the sentimentality and humor of which marks the limits of the knowing subject and of the union. Sentimentality, pathos, operates as erns does for Levinas: It is "neither a struggle, nor a fusion, nor a knowledge" (Ethics and Infinity 68).[5] Because it embodies the limits of pure knowing in a language that communicates, though, sentimentality also, importantly, sustains the possibility of the movement toward love, with cats or people. Calling a sentimental language more than reasonable, in other words, recognizes the limits of reasoning without surrendering the possibility of exchange and communication.

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4 it is important to recognize that, as Fuentes reports, Boise was a real cat that Hemingway did spoil (79).

5 See Chapter I, 8-9 for more on this idea.

To read such relationships under consideration of ethics may seem strange, since we are presented with two tales of uncontrollable animal passion, both verging on taboos. My point is not to condone either adultery or bestiality, of course, but rather to point out how Hudson's observations of Boise and of other cats enable him to recognize more about human behavior. This effort reaches a tragicomic apogee in Hudson's animalization of the aristocratic classes:

> Princessa was such a delicate and aristocratic cat, smoke gray, with golden eyes and beautiful manners, and such a great dignity that her periods of being in heat were like an introduction to, and explanation and finally exposition of, all the scandals of royal houses. Since he had seen Princessa *in* heat, not the *first* tragic time, but after she was grown and beautiful, and so suddenly changed from all her dignity and poise into wantonness, Thomas Hudson knew that he did not want to die without having made love to a princess as lovely as Princessa. (217)

This political claim or satire aligns with so much of Hemingway's work and interests, from his participation in the hunt to his interest in bullfighting and fishing. He mocks and acknowledges the alternation between grace and appetite, in Princessa and in himself. Actual, embodied contact with animals enables the recognition scenes that ensure over the course of Hemingway's work, which lead him toward the view of subjectivity embodied in The Old Man and the Sea_

But even the earlier texts, that have seemed to the criticism driven by a machismo, show signs of what Hemingway realizes more fully later. Jake finds in the bullfight a drama that acknowledges violence, but a successful bullfight is not mere opposition.

Indeed, as Hemingway shows more explicitly in Death in the Afternoon, without the bullfighter's careful application of craft and his deliberate risk of life, a bullfighter is a mere "assassin."[6] In this way, the bullfighter must level himself with the bull; he must approach the animal, both literally and in a more figurative sense. This distinction between an assassin and a craftsman is crucial to Hemingway's accounts of bullfighting and writing. Furthermore, the fact that the bullfight is an old cultural tradition *is* a key part of its appeal.

It is only the other side of this thinking that leads Hemingway to lose interest in the kill later. His refusal to find the kill itself valuable in bullfighting unless it is accompanied by risk and skill points to the value of the ritual and the culture surrounding the bullfight. Likewise, comparing his two safaris makes the development of Hemingway's esteem for craft and culture abundantly clear. The first safari, as described in Green Hills of Africa, finds much of its narrative drive in the competition to kill the best trophies (e.g. 86). In True at First Light,[7] Hemingway disowns that goal: "The time of shooting beasts for trophies was long past with me. I still loved to shoot and kill cleanly. But I was shooting for the meat we *needed* to eat and to back up Miss Mary and

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6 The word "assassination" and its cognates are used in Death in the Afternoon (e.g. 246). Hemingway also talks extensively about the false "tricks" bullfighters use at times (Death in the Afternoon 51, 163, 232-69, passim; The Sun Also Rises 171).

7 I recognize the textual problems with Scribner's published version of this book. As Cary Wolfe points out in "Fathers, Lovers, and Friend Killers: Rearticulating Gender and Race via Species in Hemingway," this text is "a diffuse and belabored piece of work culled from the vast body of late Hemingway manuscripts" (224). Another text drawn from the late African manuscripts, reportedly titled Under Kilimanjaro, is expected to be published soon. My claims here are true of the text I have seen.

against beasts that had been outlawed for cause [. .]" (98). Instead, killing is integrated into a life practice and is obedient to local cultural codes, laws, and causes.

In one sense, then, True at First Light extends and complicates the project of Green Hills of Africa, as Hemingway presents it in the Foreword to that earlier text: "The writer has attempted to write an absolutely true book to see whether the shape of a country and the pattern of a month's action can, if truly presented, compete with a work of the imagination." The greater focus on killing and the more evident trust in truth in Green Hills of Africa go together; they are replaced with more cautious interest in observation itself in True at First Light.[8] This change appears in the epigraph selected for the later book: "In Africa a thing is true at first light at first light and a lie by noon and you have no more respect for it than for the lovely, perfect weed-fringed lake you see across the sun-baked salt plain. You have walked across that plain in the morning and you know that no such lake is there" (5). Time is explicitly brought to bear on perception in this passage, which points to the importance of culture as a register of long-term, collective observation in a place. Hemingway makes this idea more explicit later in the text:

> I thought how lucky we were this time in Africa to be living long enough in one place so that we knew the individual animals and knew the snake holes and the snakes that lived **in** them. When I had first been in Africa we were always in a hurry to move from one place to another to hunt beasts for trophies. If you saw a cobra it was an accident as it would be to find a

8 Interest in observation is signaled by the words "shape" and "pattern" in the Preface to Green Hills of Africa, but True at First Light, takes this interest more seriously.

> rattler on the road in Wyoming. Now we knew many places where cobras lived. (97)

The month's perceptions mentioned in the Foreword to Green Hills of Africa seem more to organize and structure the text, much as does the text's professed parallel to imaginative works, or fiction. But time and perception in True at First Light put fiction and observation into question, and motivate the ethical shift from learning by killing to learning by watching and inhabiting. Temporality interrupts organization rather than enables it. The notion of bringing heads home to hang on the wall is replaced by the desire to join the local African culture in True at First Light, though this latter, as we saw above, also entailed killing.

Hemingway's obviously problematic desire to "go native" is perhaps most apparent in his plotted marriage to Debba, who is a Kamba woman. Their sustained courting is presented as obedient to Kamba customs (e.g. 36), which therefore makes Hemingway an at least partial participant in that culture. But ultimately Hemingway's outsider status and his marriage with Mary force him to expose the fantasy element of the Debba affair. By the end of the book, after Hemingway has taken to patrolling at night barefoot with a spear as the locals would, and when the Debba events have also *gone* on for some time, Mary's return from Nairobi leads him to "put the other Africa away somewhere." In its place, he and Mary "made our own *Africa* again. It *was* another Africa from where I had been and at first, I felt the red spilling up my chest and then I accepted it and did not think at all and felt only what I felt and Mary felt *lovely* in bed" (293). Loss and ethical acknowledgment, figured here as an internal bleeding, parallel Santiago's hand cramp. The inhabitation of a heterogeneous body figures the inhabitation

of culture, driven by desire but contained by alterity. The bawdy pun on "felt," furthermore, makes the ostensibly sincere feeling of loss for the "other Africa" look absurd. Humor destabilizes and ironizes Hemingway's desire.

Hemingway's desire for Africa plays against what he recognizes as ethical duty as well:

> [. . .] I had been a fool not to have stayed on in Africa [years before] and instead had gone back to America where I had killed my homesickness for Africa in different ways. Then before I could get back came the Spanish war and I became involved in what was happening to the world and I had stayed with that for better and for worse until I had finally come back. It had not been easy to get back nor to break the chains of responsibility that are built up, seemingly, as lightly as spiderwebs but that hold like steel cables. (161)

Marriage to his world, "for better and for worse," prevents his remaining in Africa, much as his marriage to Mary and his sense of responsibility prevent the complete border crossing that marrying Debba would have entailed. Despite this admission of responsibility, however, Hemingway's African fantasies clearly and disturbingly evoke imperialist and colonialist histories. Unfortunately, criticism tends to stop at the recognition of this imperialist pattern without acknowledging the useful cultural critiques embedded in such fantasies (see my discussion of Toni Morrison below, for instance). Hemingway's desire for Africa is a longing for a fuller inhabitation of the senses, for waking up happy every morning (19), for an honest participation in the ancient rite of the

hunt (e.g. 156), and these desires create his "homesickness" that bears a more complex relationship to imperialism than might first appear, as the rest of this chapter will show.

In a parallel fashion, the desire for truth that is evoked by True at First Light's title and epigraph, characteristic of so-called nonfiction genres like memoir or nature writing, is contained by a similar recognition about the complexity of knowledge. It is only via long-term inhabitation and culture that one can really approach the truth Hemingway always sought in his writing. *His* self-mocking, yet also sincere homesickness for Africa registers both his awareness of the complexity of truth and his outsider status to African cultures. Hemingway in Africa, then, resembles Santiago in body, in language, and at sea. The thick language practice of he Old Man and the Sea, rich with style, registers in fiction what True at First Light presents in memoir. Both texts present a heterogeneous subject, out of phase with itself, but still oriented by ethical impulses. Both texts also reveal Hemingway as a wary and suspicious lover of the word.

A strangely comic parody in tru e of an F. Scott Fitzgerald phrase demonstrates this point with its meditation on the word "soul." In the middle of the night after Mary has killed "her" lion, Hemingway has awakened to worries, to ethical shocks, first about Mary's disappointment in requiring shooting assistance and then about the lion, how it felt in life and what he supposes it felt in death. The time--three o'clock in the morning--and the disappointments of this hunt put Hemingway in mind of the Fitzgerald phrase: "'In a real dark night of the soul it is always three o'clock in the morning"' (172). But the abstract desperation of this phrase is immediately mocked with a worldly

pragmatism: "For many months three o'clock in the morning had been two hours, or an hour and a half, before you would get up and get dressed and put your boots on to hunt Miss Mary's lion" (171).

Nonetheless, he continues to mull the phrase: "And I thought sitting up awake in the African night that I knew nothing about the soul at all. People were always talking of it and writing of it but who knew about it?" (172). The situation of his thinking--African night--plays against the abstract word "soul" and reminds us that True at First Light is designed in large measure to interrogate what Hemingway sees as the false pieties of Western culture. He goes on to say that "I knew I would have a very difficult time trying to explain it to Ngui and Mthuka and the others even if I knew anything about it," reinforcing his implicit claim that the word is at least vague and perhaps nonsensical (172). The very next sentence, without a paragraph break, offers an alternative mode of understanding:

> Before I woke I had been dreaming and in the dream I had a horse's body but a man's head and shoulders and I had wondered why no one had known this before. It was a very logical dream and it dealt with the precise moment at which the change came about in the body so that they were human bodies. It seemed a very sound and good dream and I wondered what the others would think of it when I told it to them. I was awake now and the cider was cool and fresh but I could still feel the muscles I had in the dream when my body had been a horse's body. (172)

Thoughts of the soul become an animal dream that would make sense to the African locals and to his hunting companions. Abstraction modulates into physical sensibility, feeling "the muscles."

However, in the sentence that follows the above passage, Hemingway's narrative voice recognizes that "This was not helping me with the soul." He therefore tries to imagine the soul "in the *terms* that I believed." He decides it would likely be "a spring of clear fresh water that never diminished in the drought and never froze in the winter" (172). Again, the concreteness of this metaphor is key to the whole discussion and to Hemingway's work generally, and it points toward his conclusion about the soul. He decides he "could not believe" in an everlasting soul. Rather, if he and his companions had been killed, "we would all just have been dead, deader than the lion perhaps, and no one was worrying about his soul" (173). Hemingway's conclusions about the soul aside, it is crucial that he insistently considers it in terms of an animal Other. The lion's imagined experience informs Hemingway's own beliefs, much as the marlin's death foreshadows and expresses Santiago's death. The whole meditation in Truk at First Light, however, is animated by a wry humor that is reinforced by the chapter's ending: Hemingway and his friend share a beer first thing in the morning. Depending on how we read this, it either redoubles the critique of thoughts about the soul (replacing them with an Epicureanism) or ironizes the narrator's perspective, or, somewhat disjunctively and most interestingly, both.

In other words, as I suggested above, what happens at the level of the word in The O11Ma and t e Sea is attempted in terms of life practice in Trais .
However, it must also be recognized that much of the energy of The Old Man and the Sea

derives from Hemingway's even greater familiarity with Cuban culture and environment, so this distinction between a fictional world and a nonfictional one is false in the histories of these texts. In the later books, though, the influence of the actual on the textual *is* permitted to become more visible, to be explicitly at issue. Some of the work of the incomplete True at First Light text, for example, is at the level of genre, which is signaled by its selected title and epigraph. What exactly is true? Hemingway's interrogation of the fiction/nonfiction divide is also important to A Moveable Feast. The Preface states, "this book may be regarded as fiction." Gerry Brenner reports that the legitimacy of this Preface as presented in fact is in doubt, but Brenner explains that Hemingway stated "more assertively" that "This book is fiction" (298). 1 show below how the interaction between word and world is explored directly in The Garden of Ego. The approach to the Other--fish, culture, language, lover--produces a version of the self but also exposes the porosity and fluidity of the self. Relationships with animals are important catalysts for this recognition. Confronting the marlin or the lion requires an ethical admission of the Other's alterity. Recognizing this, especially with regard to True at First Light, offers a different view of the ostensibly masculinist practice of action in Hemingway's life and work. The sincere act, like the true sentence, shows itself as an important and enabling fiction. The desire for integrity of act and word can be seen to derive from an awareness, which becomes increasingly self-conscious through the oeuvre, of the intersubjective, hybrid, circumstantial production of identity. The insistence on honesty and sincerity implies the difficulty of both.

Indeed, recognizing the element *of desire* in the move to integrity helps us understand how Hemingway's humor fits into his ethical sincerity. Humor is quite

aPParent in True at First Light. But it is also important in earlier works like The Sun ALL) RIS&a.[9] In these texts, as in the passage discussed above, humor deflates claims to knowledge or seriousness much as sentimental impulses do. These moves mark the limits of the knowing subject. But the very marking itself also indicates a sincerity beyond knowledge. We can see this if we change the interpretive framework to ethics (here, under Levinas's theorization). Writing, saying, signifies an ethics. Self-effacing humor in Hemingway is not purely destructive, then. It signifies recognition of circumstances bigger than--and productive of--the self. It partly points toward community. The ethical call for an honesty more honest than discursive truth, that produces jokes as well as lyricism at the limit of the subject, is what can make cultures healthy. This ethical call contains within it the humor and playfulness of textual practices.

Playful and serious textual practices, and the differences between them, are precisely at issue in The Garden of Eden?' This is most readily apparent in Catherine's representational play, first with her own body, then with David's and Manta's bodies, and finally with David's stories. Several critics have recognized how this bodied textual play parallels and interrogates David's production of written texts, Kathy Willingham, in

9 James Hinkle, for one, unearths some of this often buried humor in his essay "What's Funny in The Sun Also Rises."

10 As with I e Lght, I am forced at this time to work with the problematic published version of this text. Burwell argues that there is "an enormous gap between Hemingway's intention for the book that can be recovered from the novel and the meaning readers can create without knowledge of the manuscripts" (99). While I recognize the need to consult the manuscripts, I also believe that careful reading can reveal more about The Garden of Eden than Burwell admits. Further, reading the published text importantly recognizes the importance that publication has on the meaning of a text.

"Hemingway's The Garden of Eden: Writing with the Body," for instance, aligns Catherine's bodied art with French feminism's conceptions of Ncriture feminine especially those of Helene Cixous. Willingham helps us begin to see that more is at issue in Catherine's bodily play than the jealousy (of David's writing) often cited in the criticism.

For Willingham, Hemingway's "treatment of Catherine reveals several surprising insights into the creative struggles of the female artist" (294). She claims that "Catherine compensates for her insecurities about expressing herself with language by asserting her creativity and ingenuity physically," and that this uneasy relationship to the symbolic is paralleled in the novel by Catherine's resistance to conventional western notions of economics (299). While, in David's "male economy [. . .] money is a commodity to be possessed and a signifier of power and sexual control," for Catherine, economics come back to a gift exchange (304). Willingham traces her ideas of economy as gift exchange back through George Bataille and Claude Levi-Strauss to Mauss's The Gift, also pointing out Cixous and Catherine Clement's contestation of "the idea of woman's passivity which forms the matrix of Levi-Strauss's interpretation of exchange relations" (304). Willingham aligns Catherine's actions with such challenges to male economics and the value system they depend on, explaining how Catherine clearly refuses a passive role economically and artistically in the novel.

Willingham's argument usefully identifies many of the issues interrogated in The Garden of Eden, but her focus *on* Catherine obscures the extent to which David recognizes and accepts the claims Catherine makes about art, the body, economics, and the symbolic. In this sense, Willingham's reading is akin to much of the criticism of this

book. Burwell, in her discussion of the manuscript from which the book was culled, likewise reduces the complexity *of* some of these issues to sexual experimentation that ends in a war of the sexes: She writes that "Eden is Hemingway's attempt to render aesthetic growth through sexual metamorphosis" (108). Burwell is of course right to recognize the body/text tension in The Garden of Eden, but her view that "When Catherine burns the stories, the androgynous vision is over," that "it is only the masculine mode of David's creative imagination which survives in the rewritten stories" is difficult to align with the fact that The Garden of Eden presents these body/text tensions as tendons in a narrative that recounts and re-presents them (112). And this is to say nothing of the elegiac feeling that pervades the book.

Burwell's sense that masculine art prevails *over* feminine embodiment follows from several of the critics whose work she cites favorably. Frank Scafella argues (in 1987) that, as Catherine undergoes her "crisis of identity" (26), David realizes "with a certainty deeper than reason that disaster lies ahead for them" (27). From this important observation about the dynamics of identity in the book, Scafella moves toward a conclusion that trusts David's frequent refrain that "the only thing left entire in David after the ravages of his sensual life with Catherine is his 'ability to write'" (27). Accordingly, Scafella has begun his article with the suggestion that David's garden in the novel "is story" (20): The text (the "said" in Levinas's terms) has sufficiently replaced the dangerous, ravening, living body in this account; the ideal is rescued and preserved from the visages of the body. Fascinatingly, this abjection of the body plays out in the course

of Scafella's article as he ends two paragraphs by repeating, with variations, the elegiac line from early in the novel: "his heart said goodbye Catherine goodbye my lovely girl goodbye and good luck and goodbye" (18).

Like most of this book's critics, Scafella trusts to the novel's surface explanation of events--that Catherine is going crazy (e.g. Scafella 21)--without considering how that opinion is interrogated by later events in the book. This reduction of complexity is akin to the likewise common tendency, mentioned above, to read these events simply as a conflict. Scafella characterizes the plot's events as "Catherine's gamble for David's soul" (22). There are signs of a deeper reading in Scafella's essay, such as when he recognizes David's commitment to 'stay with' Catherine in the story and in actuality," even though doing so "means feeling the changes that she wills 'so that it hurt him all through' (Scafella 26; The GardeDof Eden 20). This moment gestures toward what I will discuss below as the ethical impulse of The Garden of Eden, an impulse that centers on a shared acknowledgment of suffering and of vulnerability. The ostensibly external sickness is brought home to the subject. That ethical reading, rooted in shared pathos, subtends the conflict reading, in other words. Scafella's interpretation, on the other hand, does not follow his awareness of David's commitment out beyond the said of the text and so does not recognize the complexity of what Catherine introduces.

A similarly sensitive reading that nonetheless reifies the text, and especially the brief text, as the site of meaning and immortality appears in James Nagel's essay, "The Hunting Story in The Garden of Eden." Nagel recognizes David's awareness of how impossible it is to use language to bring the past back to life (e.g. Nagel 331, 334). This type of uneasy relationship between the speaking subject and language is implicit in

Nagel's acknowledgment that David's painfully dissolving marriage helps him understand and write about his earlier traumas presented in the hunting story (332). The difficult stories become approachable at the limits of the self, in pain, which Hemingway makes explicit later in the novel, describing young David being pressed into responding to the hunt: "Tiredness brought the beginning of understanding" (182). Further, Nagel is aware that both the hunting narrative and the love plot of The Garden of Eden are interdependent and "conclude in agony and emptiness, with irreparable loss and searing emotion" (336).

But the lessons of this experience are obscured by Nagel's insistence that "it is only in his writing that he [David] truly lives" (337). Writing here is the distillation of experience to its essential oils, so it is not surprising that Nagel seems to favor the African story contained in the novel to the larger novel itself. This preference is clearest on Nagel's concluding page: "The Garden of Eden is certainly a flawed novel. As a heavily edited text it belongs in the Hemingway canon in only a qualified sense, but it is, nevertheless, a valuable document that contains some of Hemingway's most intriguing observations about the creative process along with one of the finest stories he ever wrote" (337).

I recognize with Nagel the flawed editing of the book. But *we* need to consider that David's reassurances about writing as a refuge, much like those of Santiago discussed above, are self-consciously hollow, and increasingly so as the narrative proceeds and his reassurances multiply. David reassures too much. Recognizing this enables us to begin to see how the word and language are positioned in relation to the bodied life in this text, and therefore changes the terms of evaluation Nagel applies when he talks about the

"creative process." Indeed, we might say "lived culture" here more generally in place of "bodied *life,"* in order to connect *the* thinking happening in this text with the claims I make above about True at First Light's desire for genuine cultural and geographical inhabitation beyond the trophy hunting of Green Hills of Africa.

Reducing the complexity of the doubled plot to an aesthetically polished short story abjects the much more explicitly bodily elements of the longer story. Indeed, this move abjects Catherine and Marita altogether, as well as David's adult experiences of his body. Further, this reduction misreads both the short story and the novel. When viewed *in* its broader context, the much more didactic hunting story cannot mean what it seems to, and Hemingway repeatedly warns us away from making such a mistake. One of these cautions appears relatively early *in the book,* when David has just begun writing again: "He wrote it exactly and the sinister part only showed as the light feathering of a smooth swell on a calm day marking the reef beneath" (42)." Nagel, *we* saw above, recognizes this interdependency between stories, but still privileges the more legible, brief story.

Catherine is uncomfortable writing or producing aesthetic objects, as much as she likes them, as Willingham points out. I want to emphasize that David feels much the same. David's stance encourages us to recall Hemingway's familiar iceberg theory of prose, which acknowledges that leaving things unspoken can sometimes communicate more powerfully than what is actually said. Indeed, the very act of literary speech, of committing words to paper, is at *issue* in *this* story. David knows from the beginning that the honeymoon cannot last, that he would have to drive himself into "enforced loneliness"

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11 "[N]ever telling" (202) is also David's response to the events of the hunting story, after he has "betrayed" the elephant (174).

of writing soon enough, and he finds this "regrettable" (14). Labor and the written word are set against happy marital life, then, in the framing of the story. We soon also learn how anxiety-stricken David has been about the hunting story. He does not even keep the memory *of* "how *long* he had intended to write it" clearly in his head. He is forced to correct himself: "The story had not come to him in the past few days. His memory had been inaccurate in that. it was the necessity to write it that had come to him" (93).

This anxiety about producing texts is revealed in a complex scene that occurs just after David has begun writing again. Catherine has left him alone in the room to work and, having worked, David finds Catherine's writing left for him: "He opened the note which said, David, didn't want to disturb you am at the cafe love Catherine. He put on the old trench coat, found a boina *in* the pocket and walked out of the hotel into the rain" (38). The passage alludes, of course, to the concluding line of A Faxewell to Arwa: "After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain" (332). There it marks by mood and understatement the gulf of Henry's loss, In The Garden of Eden, the sentence and its marking of loss comes early in the narrative and attaches to writing. Catherine's underpunctuated, unpretentiously direct statement of their separation is not set in quotation marks in the novel, so that it could almost be David or Hemingway speaking. This shared speech thus stands exactly at the moment when voice and bodied life begin to separate. Her note reinforces how the act of writing on both David's and Catherine's parts replaces their lived union. Writing marks the *end* of the period in which "Everything was free" (31). The question the remainder of the novel pursues is what this loss and separation mean.

Catherine and David are both aware of how endings loom over their honeymoon union, then, from the very start. Catherine's art enacts this awareness as a form *of* critique in various ways through the remainder of the text. She pushes her inhabitation of the body and her sensibility about materiality to its limit, into abjection. Her first dramatic hair cut, "cropped as short as a boy's," we are told, "was cut with no compromises" (14-15). Catherine's unrest in *her* female body and feminine *gender* leads *her* to this writerly revision presented as a concise statement, shorn of its excesses. Bodily material is literally cut away and made abject, leaving only her innovative message. Catherine says, "'Stupid people will think it is strange. But we must be proud. I love to be proud."' David, in support of her art, *agrees:* "'We'll start being proud now'" (16).

A similar separation between the meaning and its waste matter is implied in the disagreement about David's press clippings. Catherine asks, "'Do you think I married you because you are a writer?'" marking a division between the husband she values and his public persona. Her *desire* to abject that persona hovers behind their fight. David explains his resentment of her clippings critique: "'It was you thinking about them when you were drinking. Bringing them up because you were drinking."' Catherine answers: "'It sounds like regurgitating,' she said. 'Awful. Actually my tongue just slipped making a joke' (40). Catherine is resisting the intervention of the social world into their marriage and shared selfhood, and marking the limits of their intimate identity by regarding even the words they exchange about the clippings as vomit or jokes or drunk talk, all forms of trauma to the proper and willful body. The fight, its abject terms and its implications, furthermore, tests the limits of their humanity, pointing toward the elephant story's complication of writing and of the human/animal divide. When David tells her to

"'Eat lunch by yourself,"' Catherine answers, "'We'll eat lunch together and behave like human beings' (41). They then exchange apologies, and Catherine closes the scene by repeating that "'It was really a joke,'" leaving the significance of these marital tests unstated and hanging over the chapter, despite the attempted disavowal.

David comes to the same recognition about the *press* clippings as Catherine had, shortly after this fight. He thinks, having just read them over again, that "They had been understanding and perceptive reviews but to him they had meant nothing. He read the letter from the publisher with the same detachment" (59). He continues in his internal monologue, repeating and mulling others of the things he has read, until his own judgment and cultural parody intervenes, again, resembling Catherine_ Here is the turn:

> It was an unusual summer in New York, cold and wet. Oh Christ, David thought, the hell with how it was in New York and the hell with that thin-lipped bastard Coolidge fishing for trout in a high stiff collar in a fish hatchery in the Black Hills we stole from the Sioux and the Cheyenne and bathtub-ginned-up writers wondering if their baby does the Charleston. And the hell with the promise he had validated. What promise to whom? To The Dial, to The Bookman, to The New Republic? No, he had shown it. Let me show you my promise that I'm going to validate it. What shit. (59-60)

David's rejection of the false pieties of public culture is closely parallel to Catherine's and leads him to the same abjecting move, transforming its texts, words, and world into "shit." "Promise," which weighs against the deceitful history of American conquest, is transformed by way of pun into a personal, ethical denotation. That **is,** the

standard of genuine, personal commitment like that of marriage is used to expose the false language of American culture. At the same time, this word play accentuates the explicit critique of the publishing world that seeks a writer whose value can be "validated," as though there were some single standard by which to judge. Surface meaning in the single word is paired with superficial evaluations of writing, and both are made by mockery and play into waste. Furthermore, this is all written on David's face, much as Catherine writes on *her* body, which the Colonel reveals with his question when he approaches and interrupts David's thoughts: "'What are you looking so indignant about?'" (60),

As textual play in the novel becomes more embodied, the approach to the limits of abjection becomes more general, moving from haircuts and press clippings to cuts more central to the marriage. Thus, just after Catherine has brought Marita to participate in their explorations, Catherine and David talk in bed and acknowledge this greater seriousness. Catherine says, "'I never should have let you in for any of it. Not for any part of it.'" David agrees, "'I wish we'd never seen her.'" Catherine: 'It might have been something worse. Maybe to go through with it and get rid of it that way is best"' (105). What is abjected here, or gotten "rid of," is the desire and curiosity that leads each of them out of their initially blissful union. That Marita *herself* is threatened with being scapegoated or abjected under the title of this dehumanizing pronoun "it" becomes clear when David responds to Catherine's "get rid of it" line: "'You could send her away' (105). But they then both agree they want her to stay. When Catherine ends the chapter by saying, "'Well *we* won't be solemn. I can already tell it's death if you're solemn,' all three are threatened by the pall of mortality because of their dalliance with desire. The

refusal to scapegoat anyone, central to the ethical work of this text, becomes explicit in the next chapter. Again it is Catherine (responding to Marita's statement to David that she is "happy the way you said to be") who writes (by speaking) the general justification for that happiness: "'We've shared all the guilt' (111). As in the hair salon scene discussed below, this sharing is apparent in their responsibility at the level of answering each other in language.

Catherine's characteristically quick comprehension of these events' significance shows its darker side in the next chapter. Marita explains to David that Catherine "feels terribly," so David makes Catherine a series of drinks. After making the first one,David toasts: "'Here's to us.'" Catherine pours it out on the bar, making the cure into waste, and says, "'There isn't any us, [. .1. Not anymore.'" When David hands her another drink, she says, "'It's all shit'" (117). What began as a dismissal of clippings and the external world they represent comes home here to the essence of David and Catherine's relationship.

Abjection permeates Catherine and David more completely as events proceed, registering in more physical terminology. Catherine explains that, after feeling happy, she suddenly felt old, "'older than my mother's old clothes and I won't outlive your dog. Not even in a story'" (163). Instead of a productive maternity, Catherine claims a doubly *(or even* triply) dead status. She is the dead bodily covering of her already dead mother, the body outside of the body that is itself already dead. Further, she has less longevity than an already dead dog in a story, and Catherine has criticized that story itself as "bestial" (157).

David's acknowledgment of their failing relationship is more understated but no less complete. As Catherine insults his stories, he recognizes more fully all the implications of her words, so that even "the lovely cold wine on the bright clear day in the pleasant, sunny room in the clean comfortable hotel" cannot "lift up his dead cold heart" (210). This death at the center of the feeling subject fittingly balances against Catherine's figuration of loss in terms of external physicality. Each of *these* expressions is consistent with the character's mode of artistic work. Catherine's attention to surfaces and bodies leads her to represent loss in terms of wasted exteriority, just as David's desire to communicate some core, vital message in writing suits his impression of loss as a dead heart.

Their desire has driven David and Catherine to the limit of things, to abjection, much as the elephant is driven to death and to its own expressions of loss in the hunting story. Indeed, it is crucial to the complex plotting of The Gar4en of Eden that Catherine and David's reach toward the limits of the subject, to death, drives David's writing the elephant story toward its strangely familiar momento mon presented in the epigraph of this chapter: an elephant skull with gaping holes where its ivory tusks once were. The elephant that David had led his father and Juma to, and that all three pursue, has fled back to the scene of a previous trauma, where Juma killed his "askari," his "friend" (askari is the plural of the Swahili word for "soldier," but Hemingway adds "friend" in the text after suggesting "askari"). Juma remembers the place, which provokes his grin and David's father's nodding head. Their shared knowledge, "the secret," goes without saying in these gestural exchanges. This body language parallels the elephant's tracks and traces, which signify his memory of the place. These are described in the passage quoted in my

epigraph and in what follows it:

> It was not very long before they came on the *secret.* It was off to the right in the forest and the tracks of the old bull led to it. It was a skull high as David's chest and white from the sun and the rains. There was a deep depression in the forehead and ridges ran from between the bare white eye sockets and flared out in empty broken holes where the tusks had been chopped away. Juma pointed out where the great elephant they were trailing had stood while he looked down at the skull and where his trunk had moved it a little way from the place it had rested on the ground and where the points of his tusks had touched the ground beside it. He showed David the single hole in the big depression in *the* white bone of the forehead and then the four holes close together in the bone around the ear hole. He grinned at David and his father and took a .303 solid from his pocket and fitted the nose into the hole in the bone of the forehead. (180)

The elephant has led the human trio, via tracks, to this recognition scene. At the center of the scene is the empty skull, shorn of its ivory appendages, so that the elephant has "written" a narrative line that leads to the same place that David's story does. As Cary Wolfe points out in "Fathers, Lovers, and Friend Killers," David identifies with the elephant, against his father and Juma (e.g. 249), so that his recognition of his heritage is tantamount to a rejection of it: sickness at home. That rejection is delivered to his father in perhaps the most taboo of curses: "'Fuck elephant hunting'" (181). Burwell reads this piece of diction as connecting the "orgiastic scene," where David had found his father and Juma cavorting with married women, to ivory hunting (122). This reading seems right.

We should add, however, that both these indulgences pervert the activities of reproduction--sexual and cultural—by extending them beyond necessity. Hence David's critique: "My father doesn't need to kill elephants to live." And "Juma," he thinks, "will drink his share of the ivory or just buy himself another god damned wife" (181). Indeed, if the killing was not enough, Juma re-enacts the earlier killing by fitting one of his bullets into the skull. This re-enactment foreshadows the actual re-enactment of the killing that is about to happen.

These indulgences overextend (or physically overreact to) desire, and they produce suffering in the elephant, in David, and in the indigenous culture. From here we can better see that David's curse, at the center of this story of paternity, describes paternity to itself with its own overstated version of what paternity is. "Fuck" mocks and abjects sexuality and reproduction just as David understands his father to be mocking them. We know David has stepped out of his former bounds when his father asks, "'What's that?"' in response to David's curse, then simply returns the curse: "'Be careful you don't fuck it up" (182). David immediately notes that his father recognizes David's position: "He's not stupid. He knows all about it now and he will never trust me again. That's good. I don't want him to because I'll *never ever* tell him or anybody anything again never anything again. Never ever never" (182). These mutual recognition *scenes* turn around the word itself, and David's sympathy with the elephant leads to his decision never to reveal anything again. He puts that decision to himself, in the passage just quoted, in a language that testifies to language's insufficiency with its repetition and overstatement. These failures in language are exactly parallel, furthermore, to the empty elephant skull, pointed

out by the living elephant. Both track and drive toward some final recognition scene that is ultimately only death, holes in a skull, a swearing off of communicable language in silence.

Knowledge of the impending death of the elephant, with all its significance in terms of David's understanding of his father, reveals the close proximity of death to desire. But David explains that he learned to distinguish them during this ordeal, and this lesson is what determines David's eventual rejection of his father. Ethics lives in the difference between necessity and desire: "David thought then in the night that the hollow way he felt as he remembered him [the elephant] was from waking hungry. But it was not and he found that out in the next three days" (166). David feelings closely parallel the elephant's expressions of loss; both are figured as holes or absences.

The youthful David's use of forceful language followed quickly by his rejection of language altogether presents in miniature what ultimately becomes Catherine's dramatic critique of David's writing. She begins, we have seen, with the clippings and the public persona, but then dismisses more and more of his work, ultimately burning all the stories except their honeymoon narrative. David's writing, leading back toward death and emptiness in the elephant story, couples with Catherine's writing the death of writing with fire. Significantly for the position of the word in this book, moreover, Catherine, the avowed non-writer, actually does write the letter she leaves for David that explains her actions.

The *significance* of this letter is underscored when David reads it through twice, thinking that "He had never read any other letters from Catherine because from the time they had met [. .] they had seen each other every day [. .] (237). Catherine returns the

issue of reproduction to the narrative with her letter's metaphor comparing burning the stories to killing a child in a car. But even such figurative language fails, as Catherine concludes the comparison by saying: "I did it and I knew I did it and I can't undo it. It's too awful to understand. But it happened" (237). Language and understanding cannot account for the events of the world. The next sentence, opening the next paragraph, redoubles the claim to incommunicability: "I'll cut this short." Echoing the many cuts of this narrative, these words point to what David believes explains all of the events. Catherine is 'Hurried,' he tells Marita (230). Her desire to completely understand desire and subjectivity leads her to rush to the end of things, in effect, to cut things short.

Catherine's letter concludes with *yet* another twist on her theory of language: "I won't *end as* I'd like to because it would sound too preposterous to believe but I will say it anyway since I was always rude and presumptuous and preposterous too lately as we both know. I love you and I always will and I am sorry. What a useless word" (237). The situation requires that she write even the preposterous-sounding vow of love, and even the useless apology. But she knows these words cannot convey her feeling. So what is conveyed in the simultaneous statement of her feeling and the critique of that statement is a pathos beyond what can be said. Her letter, precisely like David's short story, and then precisely like the larger narrative in which both are contained, regard language this way, making constant use of this trope occupatio, in which a speaker claims an inability to convey her or his thoughts, but then tries to do so anyway.

Now we can connect the above discussion of abjection with this novel's treatment *of* language. Death is a traumatic signifier for the Real's resistance to ontology. But, despite David's youthful decision never to tell anyone anything again, the move to convey

and to understand, when they are coupled with an ethical acknowledgment of understanding's failure, is shown throughout this novel to signify love. The fierce critiques of language can only happen in language, or in another kind of language (like body language). The fact of speaking, despite awareness of its insufficiency, renews language, but the speaker must suffer with that awareness. The same is true of social critiques and social actions as critiques. Social and linguistic renewal depend upon a kind of patience, then, that resists but also endures wrong.

This tension between renewal and endings is put in terms of experience itself early in the book, where it is connected to art. In a key moment, Catherine worries about preserving her satisfying experience of driving through the countryside: "'There's nothing except through yourself,' she said. 'And I don't want to die and it be gone'"(53). David assures her that she has the memory of that country, but Catherine forces him to acknowledge that death ends memory. Then she presents the upshot of their talk: "'When you start to live outside yourself,' Catherine said, 'it's all dangerous' (54). Experience demonstrates the limits of the subject; it endangers the coherent self.

This discussion transforms the paragraph that follows it, which apparently narrates an ordinary scene: "The salad came and then there was its greenness on the dark table and the sun on the plaza beyond the arcade" (54). However, normal, sensory perception here becomes charged with sharpness because its fleeting nature has been established, justifying the strange richness that often attends Hemingway's understated language and plain descriptions of the life of the senses. Perception and so the human subject have been put at risk by mortality, so that the turn to physical experiences--seeing the salad and thinking about eating it--both steadies Catherine and David and reveals their shakiness.

Further, Catherine's clarification of mortality indicates the importance of standard temporality and embodiment, signaled by this same phrase discussed in the previous chapter with regard to the marlin's appetite in he Old Man and the Sea: "and then *there* was." The concern with hurrying, made explicit by the end of The Garden of Eden, is present even in its beginning, and requires a return to the bodied self and to a bodied language practice for psychic survival.

Such practices are, of course, life, while hurrying toward understandings and endings is connected to death, as we saw above. In the elephant story, David's use of language to reveal or "betray" the elephant leads to the elephant's death, just as his insistence on writing as a solitary activity leads to the death of his relationship with Catherine and her equally potent artistic evocation of death in burning the manuscripts (181). Yet, Catherine ultimately wrote her letter. David insists on continuing to write. Hemingway wrote this novel in spite of his and its agonizing about writing itself. Furthermore, actual killing is not dismissed entirely in the novel, not even in what David calls his "very young boy's story" of the elephant hunt (201). As the threesome pursue the elephant, David kills "two spur fowl" with a slingshot without guilt (172). Cary Wolfe reads this moment as an example of the "novel's humanism" because David fails "to establish any ethical linkage between the multiplicity of animal others he encounters in the novel, such as the 'two spur fowl' David kills [. . (251). Wolfe then continues: "This systematic parsing of the animal other into quite different and discrete ontological and ethical categories would in turn evince the obsessive hierarchization and classification of the other so central to the Enlightenment project" (251-52).

Wolfe is relying here on a reductive account of ethics that forgets ethics' necessarily circumstantial quality. He is worried that recognizing some animals as worthy of ethical consideration while ignoring others simply restores a humanist or anthropomorphist understanding of animals. In this sense, his critique resembles Glen Love's critique of The Old Man and the Sea, discussed in the previous chapter (Love argues that Santiago only values animals insofar as they serve his interests and value systems). But we see in the terms of David's condemnation of his father and Juma's hunt his implicit expiation for his own killing of the spur fowls: necessity. The party was low on food, and having enough energy simply to cover the miles was very much at issue for David, whereas his father and Juma patently did not need the wealth from more ivory (e.g. 170). Acknowledging this need of appetite, rather than disavowing animality or reducing it to Enlightenment categories, brings animality home to the human subject. The ethical task is to both recognize this animality and sustain a possibility of ethical action, which is what makes an ethics circumstantial.

The supposition operating in Wolfe's argument seems to be that if one animal, like an elephant, deserves ethical treatment, then so should all others, including spur fowl. Otherwise, we return to Enlightenment categorization. Such categorization, though rightly critiqued by Wolfe and by many others, cannot be so easily dismissed in its entirety, however. At the root of categorization is a recognition of human interest or desire or need driving and therefore limiting knowledge. Indeed, it is on these grounds of narrowly human interest that ecological thinkers especially have tended to critique enlightenment categorization. In its place, this argument goes, we need an ecocentrism,

to use the term adopted by Lawrence Buell,' that encourages us to make ethical judgments based on a set of interests broader than a narrow humanism. This much seems correct, and indeed these claims fit with the rhetorical turn that has happened in philosophy over the past century that situates knowledge . [13] But the difficult question remains, How are we to understand such an ethical system? Derrida's work on animality that Wolfe relies on in his argument actually puts the very possibility of ethics at risk.'

So a simple application of the idea of ethics, as is happening in Wolfe, will not do. Indeed, Wolfe's notion of ethics that would ask for the same conduct toward different animals in different circumstances partakes of the very Oedipal economy of the subject that his essay seeks to overturn because it reduces the multiplicity and complexity of animality into a tacit notion that ethics means never harming anything. It restores to the word (in this case, the word "ethics") an apparently singular meaning, producing a unified signifier out of multiplicity. When Wolfe quotes the key phrase from Derrida that animal life is actually "a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living" and "a multiplicity of organizations of relations between the living and the dead," we should be reminded that ethical decisions must account for this multiplicity in complex, situated ways (Wolfe 249). This is why, as I take it, Derrida explains that "The moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the nonliving, man or animal, but since one must eat *in* any case and since it is and tastes

12 See The Environmental Imagination 1, and note 1, for more on this term.

13 Stanley Fish argues for this rhetorical turn in "Rhetoric." See especially 209-16. See also James Crosswhite, Th,u,s,o, of ut 3 and passim.

14 See my first chapter for more on this point.

good to eat, and since there's no other definition of the good (du bien), how for goodness sake should one eat well (bien manger)" ("Eating Well" 115; original emphases).

Ethical conduct toward animals, let *me* clarify, surely must account for the individual animals, each one we face, but it must also account for the larger organization of relationships the individual depends upon. This means that sometimes individual death can *be* accepted and even required. In terms of this story, for instance, at certain times and in certain regions, killing animals could be ethically permissible, even when our ethical system requires valuing animals' lives, if taking an animal's life to sustain one's own is gentler to the whole system of life than other options, In effect, this is admitting human animality and appetite.

What we might call the rhetoricity or circumstantiality of ethics I am putting forth here at first seems to undermine ethics. However, it is only ethics as a universal set of rules that is called to question. When we admit that ethical systems depend partly on "eating well," on the material satisfaction of needs, we refuse what Derrida discusses as the sacrifice of animality in the construction of the human.' Rather, we bring animality back to the human; we bring the multiplicity of the living and non-living, which is Derrida's complicating gloss of animality, home to the human subject. There is an ethical requirement to do this, to resist scapegoating human animality onto "the animal."

But admitting the animal in the human cannot be be used to condone all behaviors. Rather, this effort leads to situated conclusions about what is ethical. We may indeed end up condemning killing any animals in most any circumstances, but this decision, or really these decisions, must be made with as much awareness of the

15 See "Eating Well" 115, for example.

multiplicity of organizations of the living as possible, rather than by recourse to a single ethical rule about not harming individuals. Ethics, then, resides in this acknowledgment of the complex vulnerability of all living systems, which requires us to make new ethical decisions for each new situation.

What is ethical in Derrida's exposure of the scapegoating logic operating in the construction of the human is this very exposure. This is so for two reasons: First, it is a more precise account of both humans and animals, and working toward such precision or honesty is an ethical obligation. Second, the exposure restores responsibility to the individual agent. To further describe this second point: We have seen above that Derrida's complication *of the* human/animal *distinction* is not intended to indicate human/animal sameness. When he exposes the permeability of the distinction, however, Derrida restores some measure of desire to ontologies that are frequently understood as purely objective. This move, rather than destroying or "deconstructing" such ontological systems, enables us to deploy distinctions in ways tailored to particular situations. Otherwise, the dreadful acts committed in atrocities like the Holocaust could only point toward an ontology of a world "red in tooth and claw," bound to be continually and equally horrible.

This account of heterogeneous, material subjectivity, driven by animal desires, is key to The Garden of Eden not just because of the hunting story. It also gives us a new way to understand the bodily play that Catherine and David and eventually Marita undertake. Wolfe reports that this play, especially the obsessive tanning, is most often read as part of the return to Africa plot of The Garden of Eden, as a kind of going native (getting dark). He recalls Toni Morrison's critique of this element of the novel. She

argues that Hemingway understands Africa as a "blank, empty space" for conquest (Wolfe 253; Morrison 88-89). Wolfe rightly complicates this reading by showing how David does not think of Africa as empty, and further, that David sides against such conquests. For Wolfe, by recognizing the discourse of *species* operating in the novel (David's allegiance with the elephant, against his father and Juma), we become better able to read the book's critique of colonization and racism (e.g. Wolfe 254). This attention to species discourse is necessary in Wolfe's view because he reads Catherine and David's tanning together and their shared hair styling as tending to reduce difference, as disavowing the multiplicity or heterogeneity of the subject because their differences tend to be covered over by an ostensible similarity (250). For him, this is true even of their trading sexual roles. They look and act more and more alike.

But Wolfe's reading ignores the complex ethical relationship that enables the tanning and body play to go forward. While David and Catherine (and eventually Marita) are presented as looking alike, the narrative clearly reveals their different responses to that apparent likeness. It is crucial to recognize this because in so doing we note how narrativity itself undermines the apparent mimeticism of the word or image (Wolfe uses the term "mimetic" on 248-49). In this sense, the temporal duration and movement of narrative reveals this theme of The Garden of Eden--the impossibility of unity. This is perhaps the key lesson from the biblical story.

We can more clearly see how much artifice and temporality are at issue when Catherine first develops her plan for play with their hair. The plan is her response to and critique of David beginning to write again. Catherine explains that she has "'made a lot of plans.' She goes on: "I can tell it but it would be better to show it. We could do it

tomorrow. Will you go in with me?" (76). Showing rather than telling, of course, is Hemingway's (and many other artists') standard for good art, but Catherine radicalizes the phrase by treating it dramatically; she expects worthwhile artistic actions to be acted out, to be lived. She has gotten together with a "very good coiffure": "'I went to see him this morning while you *were* working and I explained and he studied it and understood and thought it would be fine. I told him I hadn't decided but that if I did I'd try to get you to have yours cut the same way" (77). Already we see Catherine's conception of art as a shared activity, produced in dialogue and collaboration. She further explains that the coiffure "'wants to lighten it [their hair] but we were afraid you might not like it.'" David answers: "The sun and the salt water lighten it" (77). The question here, which becomes clearer as the book proceeds, is the how the body should inhabit time. David prefers to let nature take its course with his hair; Catherine wants to intervene in the natural course to produce artifice. But, crucially, her intervention is exactly parallel to David's interruption of the happy time of their honeymoon with his return to writing. Both reductions are akin to reducing the wonderfully strange, living elephant to its ivory tusks and a heap of dead, gray matter.

Burwell, working to show that Catherine's hair work is a critique of David and of their relationship, argues that the published text denies Catherine ownership of that artistry "as the coiffure becomes the sculptor, deferring to David's judgment and comparing his metier with David's" (114). However, the dynamics of this exchange, in *my* view, *are more* complex. The narrative voice opens the *scene* by establishing that "It was very friendly and offhand at the coiffure's but very professional" (79). Then Monsieur Jean says to David, "'I will cut it as she asks. Do you agree, Monsieur?'

David's reply: "'I don't belong to the syndicate, - leave it to you two" (79). David's use of "syndicate" here indicates his awareness of the parallel between this activity and writing, so that the implications of the exchange carry over into The Garden of Eden's theory of writing. When Monsieur *Jean,* who has been "working like a sculptor, absorbed and serious," pauses for a moment to allow Catherine to see the progress, the following exchange occurs:

> "Do you want it cut that way above the ears?" she asked the coiffure.
>
> "As you like. I can make it more dógagë if *you* wish. But it will be beautiful as is if we are going to make it truly fair."
>
> "I want it *fair,"* Catherine said.
>
> He smiled. "Madame and I have spoken of it. But I said it must be Monsieur's decision."
>
> "Monsieur gave his decision," Catherine said. (80)

This exchange shows art as collaboration rather than, as Burwell argues, Catherine's surrender of control, not only in the *existence of* dialogue itself, but in Jean's admission that ""Madame and I have spoken of it."' Jean's questioning of David's will here is presented as a polite but also playful indication that David is being respected and that David recognizes how not only Catherine's hair but his own hair is in the hands of these collaborating artists. David's refusal to advise indicates his admission of their expertise and *his* acceptance of the shared will of marriage and artistic creation and even, *we* might say, of cultural life. Their speaking for David--physically via hair and literally--is further indicated by Catherine answering for David in the final lines quoted above.

Catherine's art and David's art involve both parties in its production and in its consequences, with attendant concerns about will and control present but not easily tipped in favor of one or the other. If art is the subject making and confirming itself, in this book the subject is always intersubjective. In other words, art does not exactly confirm the subject. This point is crucial to the ethical component of the book's events and to the hair styling scene. This recognition also fits within the broader constellation of Hemingway's life practices in which he recognized mistreatment of the world and of his home as a mistreatment of himself.

David's acknowledgment of his intersubjectivity is his ethical stance. It requires him to undergo Catherine's changes and experiments, even though they make him nervous. He puts it to himself this way: "We've been married three months and two weeks and I hope I make her happy always but in this I do not think anybody can take care of anybody. It's enough to stay in it" (57; see also 56). This understanding, and the many other moments like it presented in the novel, reveal the differing significance of what are ostensibly the same signs written on the character's bodies. When he does "stay in it" and has his hair cut like Catherine, he returns home for a (mis)recognition scene. He looks in the mirror and asks himself, "'How do you feel?'" (84). His answer: "'You like it' (84). His ethical commitment leads David to a new version of himself. Furthermore, admitting "liking it" to himself leads David to accept his own desire and to swear off scapegoating: "Now go through with the rest of it whatever it is and don't *ever* say anyone tempted you or that anyone bitched you'" (84). Finally, in the next paragraph we see that restoring agency to himself restores David's sense of being home in himself: "'You like it. Remember that. Keep that straight. You know exactly how you look now

and how you are"' (85). These repeated assurances, of course, communicate how much David actually feels uneasy, as does the inclusion of this entire scene in the narrative. The third-person intervention that concludes the vignette announces this clearly: "Of course he did not know exactly how he was. But he made an effort aided by what he had seen *in* the mirror" (85).

These scenes convey this book's tension about the materiality of the subject, about sex and *gender,* desire, appetite, and change. Above we saw Wolfe's claim that *the* tendency to discuss these physical changes in terms of racial discourse ignores the discourse of species operating in the novel (225 and passim). My contention, most particularly with Derrida's complications of the animal in mind (the animal is a heterogeneous mixture of the living and nonliving), is that even species discourse is too narrow to adequately address this novel's concerns. Its recognition and misrecognition scenes involve more than the play between people, more than the play between animals and people. They reveal the subject's alterity from itself in material ways. Conceptions of such alterity, I have been arguing, can itself benefit from an application of the Levinasian ethical system.

The consequences of such an application are, in one way, purely common sense. People must take care of themselves, eat well, and so on. This caring behavior is a way of recognizing the division between body and subject. But when applied to ethical theory, this acknowledgment has the potential to bridge common divides that have upset the possibility of ethics. Ethics can appear, then, not as a conflict between the self and the world, but as a recognition of alterity within the subject, between the subject and the world, and so on. The melodramatic sense of conflict between the needs and desires of

the subject on the one hand, and the world on the other, can be described and lived in more ethical and more reasonable ways.' The type of corporeal explorations that Catherine and David undergo, in other words, need not be understood or practiced so desperately. Indeed, I read their desperation not as a sign of moral failure, which is the type of ethical reading that Wayne Booth seems to be advocating in AnEthics of Fiction, but as a signal of the need to refine our conceptions and practices of ethics. This is the body, in other words, informing ethics.

Following this thinking, we can at least complicate and perhaps move beyond, for instance, Levinas's characterization of an ethical sensibility as traumatic, though it is trauma that characterizes Catherine and David's explorations. Trauma is a first stage in admitting the limitations of the subject, and can lead us toward an ethics, as the trajectory of these chapters on Hemingway has tried to show. Indeed, recognizing trauma as trauma already implies the ethics that can emerge because of trauma's acknowledgment of alterity and suffering in the subject. For Levinas, as we saw in Chapter such acknowledgment signifies ethics because it signifies a responsiveness to Others that cannot be denied.

Patience and this altered sense of how to inhabit the heterogeneous self has been at issue all along in the novel. We have seen this above with regard to the limits of the bodied self. It is also announced by David's perpetual concern with ending his stories. Having just finished a story for the first time "since they were married," he considers, "Finishing is what you have to do [. .1. If you don't finish, nothing is worth a damn"

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16 1 would characterize much of the criticism of The Old Man and the Sea in precisely this way--as melodramatic. See Chapter II.

(108)." Likewise, when he realizes he is ready to write the difficult African story, David thinks that "He knew how the story ended now" (93). Knowing the ending means understanding the story because the ending confers meaning and because form is indicated by conclusions.

It is of course significant here that Hemingway himself was not quite sure how to end this book, and that he was experiencing ending anxiety in general late in his life. Burwell explains that this book that "Hemingway could not complete" has two extant endings in manuscript, neither of which Tom Jenks selected in editing for the published version (105). In one, Catherine returns from a Swiss asylum. Burwell further explains, "Catherine notes that David can no longer take the intense sun in which they once spent hours deepening their tans, and that he would like to protect her from it, implying that their transformative adventures failed. They agree that if her madness returns, and she asks David to commit suicide with her, he will do it" (105). In the other ending, David rewrites his stories and Marita talks about how *"she* will handle David like a trainer handles a big race horse." Burwell further explains that, in this ending, "David does not sustain the confident voice he possesses in the ending Tom Jenks chose for the novel" (105).

Wolfe importantly reminds us, however, that *Jenks's* ostensibly confident ending only points back to the unsettled African narrative in a way that undermines that confidence (243). So all these endings reinforce the anxiety about ending itself because none *of them* conclude things neatly *or* comfortably. For me, then, this book's anxiety about endings and limits of many sorts signifies its ethical impulse, in all the ways I have

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17 See 112 also for more on this relationship between endings and good writing.

been suggesting that point back to suffering and bodied experience. Suffering marks the hole or negativity in the subject where she or he undergoes ethical responsiveness. Hemingway makes the relevance of suffering explicit at two moments in the published text when he mocks the idea of "comfort" (149, 224). But in both instances, he mocks and makes use of comfort, much as the whole book mocks and makes use of writing and its imposition of order.

Catherine's "madness," her tendency to push human experience to its limits and to rush time, then, really aligns with, criticizes, and exposes the pushing to the end that is fiction. Imposing endings on stories is exactly what Catherine does, literally. Her dramatic action and her letter lead David to admit that "he still could be, and was, moved by her" (237). This is a perfectly understated Hemingway vaguery that evokes all the pathos of the whole novel, that shows such pathos to sustain language production and, indeed, subordinates the importance of language production, since he is moved despite her destruction of the stories. As we saw above, the production of art and relationships is shown to revolve around control, ultimately a political issue, and it is pathos that enables each of them to surrender their drive toward control. Such a surrender is dramatized most clearly in Hemingway's proposed suicide ending to the novel.

Even in the published ending, adding complexity and greater tactility to his father does not mean changing the essential experience. Instead, the problems presented by that story and that experience are only made more vivid, *in* the same way that David's undergoing Catherine's changes, despite his awareness that they could not lead to good, only made the problems clearer and clearer. Against such forced clarification are David's suggestions about a greater physical patience, but David is only moved to make such

claims because Catherine recognizes and criticizes David's desire to write, to reduce their shared experience to a simpler and clearer form. Catherine's critique is embodied and rhetorical in that *she* makes use of their physical selves and circumstances to demonstrate her views on writing. This whole discussion about what Jenks's ending signifies, then, can be understood to turn on what writing signifies. Writing signifies suffering and desire. It is the body producing something beyond itself, and in its representative work, producing ideals from a physical being. All along, though, this second self is paralleled by Catherine's second selves, and both *together* amount to an exposure of the limitations of desire and its products. Both David and Catherine write themselves out of happiness.

The return to writing presented in Jenks's ending does show David backing off from other possible responses, such as the ones suggested by Hemingway's alternative endings. But when we recognize how thorough the critique of writing is in this book, how David recognizes the validity of Catherine's embodied claims, that ending does not. imply the neat restoration of paternal trust that some readers find.

Perhaps more importantly, as we approach the end of the book and the ostensible triumph of the written word according to several critics, David is instead forced to recognize its failure, at least in the conventional sense of re-presentation. When he first begins the hunting tale, David states the fundamental writing challenge to be making the text as though it could "be lived through and made to come alive" (108). Thus later, in the midst of writing that story, he thinks how he

> tried to make the elephant come alive again as he and Kibo had seen him in the night when the moon had risen. Maybe I can, David thought, maybe I can. But as he locked up the day's work and went out of the room and

> shut the door he told himself, No, you can't do it. The elephant was old and if it had not been your father it would have been someone else. There is nothing you can do except try to write it the way that it was. So you must write each day better than you possibly can and use the sorrow that you have now to make you know how the early sorrow came. And you must always remember the things you believed because if you know them they will be there in the writing and you won't betray them. The writing is the only progress you make. (166)

This final sentence seems to suggest the triumph of the word only if we ignore the preceding sentences (which move would be roughly the equivalent of reducing The Garden of Eden to a messy text with a really good short story in it). The preceding sentences make clear that David cannot "possibly" write as well as he must. Rather than words sufficing, then, Hemingway here claims that words can only begin to convey the loss when we acknowledge the gap between what they desire and what they do. Without the gap, without this sense of language's insufficiency, writing is only a "betrayal." This conception of writing is entirely akin to Levinas's insistence that the said be constantly renewed by saying again. For Levinas, the ethics at the heart of language reside here, in this renewal which signifies a regard for the Other that goes beyond what can be said for or about that Other. It is something like a pathos, or a sentimentality, or an ethics, or something Otherwise.

Furthermore, David recognizes the loss of the elephant to be a fundamental part of the reality of that time and place, with the values and behaviors that prevail there and then. And even if the elephant were not desired for its ivory, mortality and vulnerability

are presented as incontestable realities that must be recognized. It is not accidental, then, that the insight that he "can't" bring the elephant back to life comes to David just after he has locked away and thereby tried to secure his work. This attempt, like young David's desire that the elephant not die, is contravened by the larger narrative in which even these stories end in ashes, only to be rewritten, to be renewed in another saying. David's awareness of this looming ending even for his words is presented here by Hemingway as it first began to dawn in David, as David must have experienced it, going through the foolhardy motions of locking up his treasured words. But because this is part of what *is* "sinister" in this story and so is left more submerged, many readers have sailed right over it.

Does this mean Hemingway has surrendered the possibility of ethics to some kind of fatalistic ontology about death, a kind of existentialism? It does not. In the pathos of the presentation is the possibility *of* another understanding. The story does not communicate that stories can restore life. But it communicates the suffering of love and desire in the lived world, and especially how that suffering can be intensified by rushing toward endings and by reducing the lived world to what in the end of this story is only the waste matter of written language. In the long passage quoted above, this suffering is conveyed not only by David's unease with his failure, but also by the agonized account of honest speech or writing. Understanding presents itself to David as an ongoing process of becoming that cannot end in reification, and this sense of his passivity in the face of understanding underscores the strange evasiveness of serious knowing. Understanding is a sensitized exposure to the world, an unhoming of the self that must nevertheless acknowledge the need for a home and a sense of home. Furthermore, such understanding

and language in the broader world are inhabited not just by humans, but by animals too, as the elephant story shows. The elephant in this chapter's epigraph, returning to the home of companionship is, like the bull seeking a querencia in the ring, on the way to its own unhoming, despite its homing instinct. The elephant's awareness of such an ending's significance is indicated by the marks and tracks it left, pointing toward the skull of its friend, its double.

CHAPTER IV

THE ABJECT MOVEMENT OF THE BEATS

> I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by
> madness, starving hysterical naked, [. .]
> (Allen Ginsberg, Howl 1.1-2)

> Well, I thought, this is the end—I finally made the step and by God I paid her back for what she done to me—it had to come and this is it—ploop.
> (Jack Kerouac, The Subterraneans 101)

> In bearshit find it in August,
> Neat pile on the fragrant trail, in late
> August, perhaps by a Larch tree
> Bear has been eating the berries.
> (Gary Snyder, "A Berry Feast" 1.6-9)

David Perkins, in his account of the 1950s counterculture, explains the frustration felt by many in the milieu that became popularly known as the Beat generation. It was more than disaffection with war and the atom bomb.

> [It] *was* also related to pervasive features of the social and economic order, such as bureaucratic impersonality, huge populations, material glut and waste, the feeling of being manipulated by advertising and publicity, alienation from work, rootlessness, existential aimlessness [. . .]. To many poets it seemed that Western civilization and its cultural ideals were spiritually bankrupt. (541)

To a large degree, of course, these feelings had been shared by previous groups disaffected with America and Western culture, such as the "Lost Generation" of

expatriates who found themselves in Paris in the 1920s. Among the 1950s set, the intense feeling of alienation, the sense of a wasted culture, produced an equally strong desire for an alternative community. Gary Snyder, a prominent member of this *1950s* group, opens his essay "North Beach" by explaining, "In the spiritual and political loneliness of America of the fifties you'd hitch a thousand miles to meet a friend. Whatever lives needs a habitat, a culture of warmth and moisture to grow. West Coast of those days, San Francisco was the only city; and of San Francisco, our home port was North Beach" (A Place in Space 3)'.[1] One of the defining moments of this community was the 1955 Six Gallery poetry reading. Indeed, Michael Davidson reports that, for "most commentators, the San Francisco Renaissance 'began' on October 13," the night of this event (3).

This community was united by its desire to articulate and create, partly via writing, a more satisfactory way of living. The importance of the Six Gallery *event* as a community literary function registers the relationship between literature and this desire for social change. However, the counterculture was no utopia. The most frequently mentioned problem is the absence, or at least the apparent absence, of women among the well-known countercultural figures. In one sense, we can understand this as part of the larger cultural configuration that, *in* Suzanne Clark's analysis in Cold Warriors, severely contained the province of the literary. More especially, as Clark points out, "The Cold War silenced women writers on several levels, together with others excluded from the struggle over white male identity" (1). As critics and writers have recognized this

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1 "North Beach" was originally published in the 1977 text The Old Ways. I quote from the version Snyder reprinted **in** A Place in Space because he has made some minor but important wording changes there, even in the passage quoted (see The Old Ways 45).

silencing, we have begun to see more of the literary work that women and others actually did produce during the period. The 1996 anthology Women of the Beat Generation is one example of what Anne Waldman, in her Foreword to the book, calls "a kind of resurrection" (xi). Obviously such work is vital.

This chapter, in treating three of the best-known, white, male figures from the counterculture--Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Gary Snyder--partly reproduces the exclusions of others. But as *my* argument should help us see, these authors' work bears an uneasy relationship with the canon and even canonicity. Thus, to the extent that these writers have been adopted into an exclusive system of canonization, they can be understood to show the dissonances of such a system. Indeed, these texts, especially Ginsberg's and Kerouac's, make the breach of silence by the speech act itself, in whatever form, significant. Noticing this further indicates how pervasively literary silencing happened *in* this period. In other words, I believe a key part of the larger project of reconstructing the literary since World War II involves reevaluating how the literary functioned even among those who were recognized somewhat more broadly.

I argue that the texts under consideration here bring abjected *elements* of 1950s American culture into the literary. In doing so, they suggest new directions and possibilities for the countercultural community. These texts thus contest cultural possibilities by contesting the boundaries of the literary_ They do so, we will see, at the level of genre and at the level of the word. &:)v.A particularly came to represent a whole complex of cultural events and tendencies, so I read the poem attending more to these external circumstances than to its content, precisely the reverse of New Critical methods_

While I read Kerouac's roman a clef The Subterraneans in a more textual fashion, clearly its status as more "real" than a conventional "novel" bridges the literary/worldly distinction.

I also claim that these texts' interrogations of abjection and the literary bear an ethical component that involves acknowledgment of the bodied subject. These acknowledgments are uneasy, perhaps especially in Kerouac's and Ginsberg's cases, though to a certain extent in Snyder's case too. Fascination with and dread of the abject is important to the larger argument of this dissertation that seeks moments when the physical and physiological reveal themselves as ethical. Indeed, in these concerns, these writers resemble David and Catherine in Hemingway's The Garden of Eden, discussed in the previous chapter.

I present a version of ethical criticism distinct from Wayne Booth's account in The Company We Keep. His usefully rhetorical *model* there, which presents the book as a kind of friend that influences the reader, finds Kerouac's On the Road bad and dangerous company (228, 279). Though this seems generally true at a plot-level reading of On the Road and The Subterraneans, it reveals much about 1950s culture and literature to perceive an ethical impulse behind what seem to be "unethical" texts. Finding abjection, at the limits of language, to be at issue for these writers helps us understand some of the Cold War exclusions that, to use Kristeva's terms, abject from the social and literary body that which "cannot be assimilated" (Powers of Horror I). To put this in Levinasian terms, the constricted set of cultural possibilities require an ethical criticism that attends to the "saying" of the literary as *well* as the "saids,"where this latter seems more Booth's focus. In this chapter, attending to the "saying" partly involves reading the cultural context

surrounding the "saids" of the texts themselves. Analyzing the cultural circumstances surrounding texts is also a way of recognizing the material embodiment of the literary because doing so recalls the worldly attributes that nourished the texts. Culture is to text here as body is to thought.

Five male poets read and presented themselves at Six Gallery. The most famous was Allen Ginsberg's performance of Howl, the first of what would become his many recitations of that poem. David Perkins reminds us of the cultural significance this poem has taken: "It is often said that Howl influenced American poetry more than any poem since The Waste Land" (551). Though Perkins goes on to qualify this claim somewhat, indicating other work that could be credited with doing the same influential work as Howl, the generally accepted importance of this poem reveals something about the generally countercultural place of poetry in twentieth-century America.

Those in attendance registered and also helped to create Howl's significance. Jack Kerouac, who refused to read despite Ginsberg's encouragement,[2] bought wine for the crowd and also started the crowd chanting as Ginsberg read. In The Dharma Bums, Kerouac describes the scene as quite ebullient "by eleven o'clock when Alvah Goldbook [Ginsberg] was reading his, wailing his poem 'Wail' drunk with arms outspread everybody was yelling '*Go! Go!* Go!' (like a jam *session)* and old Rheinhold Cacoethes [Kenneth Rexroth, MC of the reading] the father of the Frisco poetry scene was wiping his tears in gladness" (14; qtd. also in Davidson 3). As Schumacher suggests, the success of Ginsberg's reading depended not only on the poem, but also on the community in San

2 Ginsberg organized the reading. Michael Schumacher describes Ginsberg's arrangements (210-16). See also Snyder, A Place in Space (7-18).

Francisco that was prepared to hear it (211). Rexroth makes a similar point in his early essay (1957) on this group: "San Francisco seems to have liberated Ginsberg" (161). Rexroth's teary response in the Kerouac passage also testifies that the feelings conveyed by the poem and by the atmosphere of the reading were not *restricted* to Ginsberg's generation. Indeed, Rexroth would become more and more critical of Ginsberg and other Beat writers later on (Schumacher 262) and so was no automatic partisan. His happiness on the night of the reading indicates what a breakthrough it was felt to be. Kerouac's own excitement, wine purchasing, and then recounting of the night just quoted in a book that itself became popular also *have* much to do with the importance that was eventually invested in the poem itself Many complex cultural events and desires are condensed into the celebration of Howl as a major poem.

At the level of the poem, of course, Ginsberg relied also on community influences. Ginsberg was always ready to admit that Kerouac's notions of spontaneous composition influenced him considerably, as Schumacher repeatedly makes clear throughout his biography of Ginsberg. In fact, Howl marked a break from Ginsberg's habitual, "deliberate" practice of writing poems longhand in a notebook (Schumacher 200). It was mostly written directly on a typewriter without conscious planning. This method derived from Kerouac's usual approach to writing. Ginsberg sent Kerouac an early copy of the poem, and when Kerouac was pleased, a gratified Ginsberg wrote to Kerouac about the latter's methods of composition: "How far advanced you are on this. I don't know what I'm doing with poetry. I need years of isolation and constant everyday writing to attain your volume & freedom & knowledge of the form" (qtd. in Schumacher 204).

Certainly Ginsberg's performance itself must be credited too. Michael McClure, who also read that night, corroborates Kerouac's account. He explains that Ginsberg "began in a small and intensely lucid voice. At some point Jack Kerouac began shouting 'GO' in cadence as Allen read it" (13). Schumacher further indicates that "Allen had been drinking wine throughout the evening and, by his own later admission, he was intoxicated by the time [. . .] he began his reading." After his quiet beginning, Schumacher reports that Ginsberg "gained confidence and began to sway rhythmically with the music of his poetry, responding to the enthusiasm of the audience {. . .1" (215). McClure further characterizes the impression the reading made: "In all of our memories no one had been so outspoken in poetry before--and we were ready for it, for a point of no return. None of us wanted to go back to the gray, chill, militaristic silence, to the intellectual void--to the land without poetry--to the spiritual drabness "(13). By this account, the possibility of poetic speech, of any sort, was at issue in this historical moment. Ginsberg broke the "militaristic silence." The act of speaking, especially in a lively cultural gathering, was as significant as the poem itself.

The importance of the sheer presence of words is reinscribed in McClure's text. The above description is followed by about two pages filled with the first twenty or so lines of Ginsberg's poem. Then McClure continues with his general explanation:

> Ginsberg read on to the end of the poem, which left us standing in wonder, or cheering and wondering, but knowing at the deepest level that a barrier had been broken, that a human voice and body had been hurled against the harsh wall of America and its supporting armies and navies and academies and institutions and ownership systems and power-support bases. (15)

McClure reduces the linguistic act to physical intervention, to a "voice" and a "body hurled against" a wall. McClure's repetition, in the space of a few pages, of the critique of American culture and particularly American militarism further indicates the perceived status of the speech act at this moment. That is, what McClure finds to say about Ginsberg's reading is that it broke a silence, and McClure's own repetition reenacts this sense of speaking not so much to convey ideas as to resist other forces and to break a silence. This sense of language use also *seems* implicit in the long, paratactic string of targets for McClure's critique, linked by ands. These targets accumulate as though language were substance being piled together.

It *is* obvious from the poem's agonized cultural reception that it did break taboos: When Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Shig Murao published Howl, they had to undergo trial for publishing obscene material. The judge ultimately found that the book was not obscene, partly because, in Schumacher's quotation of him, "'If the material is disgusting, revolting, or filthy, to use just a few adjectives, the antithesis of pleasurable sexual desires is born, and it cannot be obscene' (264).

Such strong reactions provoked counterreactions. Despite the judge's less-than-complimentary view of the poem, shared by several of those *who* testified, the publicity from the trial "certainly bolstered its sales figures," Schumacher reports (254). The definition of literature was on trial legally and publicly, and the vehemence of the positions excited interest. In another version of this point, Michael Davidson's Preface to The San Francisco Renaissance opens rather wryly with his explanation that his book

> owes a great deal to all those well-intentioned English teachers who never said a word about the literary movement going on in San Francisco during

> the late 1950s and early 1960s. Their silence meant that, as a student, growing up across the bay in Oakland, I had to learn about these events on my own through a kind of "vernacular pedagogy." (ix)

Davidson's terms again are simply silence or speech. The effects of this polarized literary climate are enduring enough to earn mention in his 1989 work of literary criticism.

Turning to Ginsberg's poem itself, we can see that it widely publicized a taboo and abject constellation of ideas. In Perkins's A History of Modern Poetry, what he finds "most original and instructive for other poets" is Howl's exploitation of "the intimate, painful, sensational, and shocking" (551). This becomes, indeed, Perkin's distillation of Ginsberg's oeuvre, since he treats ow as Ginsberg's only poem really worth discussing (for his project, a general history of modern poetry). I suggest that a central reason Ginsberg explores the "shocking" is to make an ethical claim of solidarity with these taboo elements of the human. This ethical work is what has given the poem more cultural resonance than it would have if it were merely shocking.

The long first section, however, begins with a slight evasion of the solidarity claim. Instead, it establishes the speaker as a witness: "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical, naked [. (1.1).3 This move externalizes the horror the poem describes to some extent. The long catalogue of misery and madness that follows, however, makes this distancing somewhat easy to forget. Structurally, moreover, the poem moves from that initial, externalizing gesture to the third section, where the autobiographical speaker declares, "Carl Solomon! I'm with you in Rockland / where you're madder than I am" (3. I). "I'm with you" is repeated to open

3 I cite section number, then line number.

each line throughout the third section, making the declaration of solidarity clear. "I'm with you" refers both to the literal level--Ginsberg was in the Psychiatric Institute with Solomon--and to the more figurative level of solidarity that I am discussing. The final, playfully serious "Footnote to Howl," which seems to allude to and mock The Waste Land's footnotes, completes this movement by claiming "Everything is holy!" (43). It names several of the people whose biographical experiences had been detailed above, including Ginsberg himself, and also unites the taboo language prevalent in the first two sections with claims to holiness: "The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy! The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and hand and asshole holy!" (4.2). The footnote seeks to redeem the suffering described in the poem itself by connecting the profane and the sacred. Its apparent, mocking allusion to the classic work of high modernism pursues this end intertextually by refusing the spiritual drought of Eliot's poem.

We can recognize, then, the somewhat ambivalent way that the poem *makes* Ginsberg's identity claim (even without the biographical knowledge that many of the experiences described in the first parts of the poem were Ginsberg's own). Much as Ginsberg himself had tried to fit in to the cultural norms of the 1950s before he became a key figure in the counterculture, the poem confesses to drug use, homosexuality, obscenity, and *more, seemingly* on the part of others_ It is really only by the end that Ginsberg announces his partisanship among those others, and even then with a measure of persisting anxiety.

In this way, the poem itself also resembles its cultural reception. The poem was first criticized and nearly silenced in terms of publication, then became a generally *recognized, even* if *less* generally praised, work of the century. By bringing a taboo

language and subject matter into the visible, and even into literary anthologies, the poem and its reception history helped make possible many of the cultural experiments that would ensue in the next decades. To do so, it relied on a form and method that had already gained acceptance in Whitman's practice of it--the long, biblical line and the catalogue. But unlike Whitman's tendency to use catalogues as a celebration of democratic inclusion, Ginsberg's long lines pile up language as marks of suffering, like cultural symptoms in need of curing. Howl thus haunts Whitman and mockingly answers to Eliot.

Kerouac's silence at *the* Six Gallery in terms *of his own* literary *speech* can be connected to his rather howl-like participatory role in the elevation of Ginsberg's poem to fame. Both are suspicious of nuanced communication. Like a howl, silence is also a form of transgression. His silence should also be read alongside the literary speech he did make public in The Subterraneans, which shares many of Ginsberg's confessional elements and shares Ginsberg's treatment of the abject in ethical terms. This experimental novel confesses to anxieties of identity akin to those Ginsberg presents. Jonathan Paul Eburne points out that the novel challenges the strictly limited cultural possibilities of 1950s America, but does so by "identifying with the 'otherness' of the American cultural margins" (55). Eburne explains that this move leads Kerouac to involve himself in "the same process of normativity and containment" he purports to move beyond by coopting the Other into his own identity project (55).

I partially concede Ebunie's point, finding that Kerouac is able to present the problems of his inherited sense of the subject without presenting solutions. However, in my view, the apparent "normativity and containment" of the novel are mocked by the

text's confessional element, at the levels both of form and content. Also, humor functions here much as it does in Hemingway's late work. In effect, the approach to the Other in The Subterraneans explodes the subjectivity *of* Kerouac's stand-in Leo, much as Julia Kristeva argues Celine writes himself out of his own subjectivity.' The turn to the body that surfaces in this book's approach to the Other becomes for Kerouac, ipso facto, a destruction of ethical regard and potential. Relying on Levinas's account of embodied ethics, though, I argue for signs of an ethical subjectivity in what Kerouac perceives to be hopelessness.

I also claim that Kerouac's treatment of place points to the anxieties of identity operating in the text. The desire to escape a constrictive subjectivity registers geographically. The novel's setting in San Francisco displaces New York, where the events described actually happened. This change reproduces in a different form the American narrative of westward *movement* and reveals concerns about the importance of place to the subject's identity.

While I resist Kerouac's interpretation of the bodily, I also suggest that his writing Leo into abjection hollows out the literary, upsets aesthetic standards and other methods of judgment, and thereby makes a place for cultural renewal.' This hollowing can be seen in the publication history of texts like Howl or The Subterraneans, where actual legal and economic struggles occurred over what could or could not be published.' Indeed, the

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4 See Powers of Horror.

5 **In** this interpretation of the effects of presenting abjection textually, I echo Kristeva's conclusion to Powers of Horror. See 210.

6 Kerouac's nonstandard punctuation was subject to dispute in this book's publication. When Donald Allen, editor at *Grove* Press, removed the frequent dashes, ellipsis, and the

greater inclusivity of the canon, or even more radically, the partial elimination of the canon that resulted in some degree from works like Kerouac's and Ginsberg's, made space for work like Silko's Almanac of the Dead, discussed in Chapter VI.

It is certainly neither new nor surprising to find an escapism in Kerouac's work, of course. On the Road makes the mythic, westward American journey a picaresque of crossing and recrossing the country for increasingly empty reasons. The Subterraneans internalizes this logic in at least three senses: The frenetic need to travel moves from overt theme in On the ., oad to the displacement of setting in The Subterreaneans; the latter depends on a more experimental style; and The Subterraneans is structured as a confession of guilt about Leo's failures in his relationship with Mardou. These last two attributes--its literary experimentation and its confessional work—can be understood in some sense as oppositional in the novel. Kerouac's narrator makes it quite clear that his writing ambitions conflict with his relationship to Mardou. He is frequently leaving Mardou to go home to write, discussing literature with literary friends, and blowing off steam after long days of writing, all in ways that afflict Mardou. Insofar as the book is a confession of how he failed in the relationship, furthermore, it is a confession of guilt and remorse about these failures. It therefore follows that the achievement of the novel, its style and content, conflicts with a guilty awareness of its costs. These tensions are presented simply in the book's final two lines, broken into separate paragraphs: "And I go home having lost her love. / And write this book" (111). The book replaces her love, insufficiently we suppose. The two cannot persist together.

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like, converting Kerouac's punctuation into a more conventional form, Kerouac prevented publication of the book until his punctuation was restored (Schumacher 251).

Because the book makes public Kerouac's private transgressions of cultural taboos, it functions culturally as a confession. This recognition further complicates its complex generic character; as a roman a clef, it has already muddied the world/text boundary. This work at the level of the world/text distinction also makes The Subterranean closely parallel to Hemingway's The Garden of Eden. In Kerouac's case, we can read his reliance on the fictional distancing of his experiences in order to confess them as an acknowledgment of the heterogeneous, ethical subject. Leo, the uncanny version of Kerouac, embodies *in* text the doubleness of ethical sensibility.

Most of the texts considered in this dissertation register their rhetorical work and their work on the subject at the level of form. A hybrid subjectivity is presented by way of hybrid forms. In Kerouac's novel, this hybridity induced a kind of panic and a sense of conflict between the proper and the improper. At the heart of Leo's anxiety about love is his mistrust of his own motives, most particularly at the *level* of the body. Leo worries that he is driven primarily by his own sexual drives, for one, and more especially, he expresses "doubts" about his interest in Mardou, which also focus on her bodily status. He wonders if he pursues her merely because of her mixed racial identity (African-American and Cherokee). This concern appears on the second page of the book and recurs throughout.

Leo's anxiety about and interest in Mardou's status as a mixed-blood outsider to white, male culture persist together and inform each other. His worries follow all the stereotypical, racist lines: Is she sexually more potent? Does she have wandering feet? Is she naturally messy? Is she really crazy? Is her body somehow irregular? The doubts *center* on her status as a representative of the abject in a Kristevan sense. By this I of

course do not mean that Mardou was in fact abject, but that in the 1950s, violently limited conception of normative subjectivity, she was exceptional. In Powers of Honor, Julia Kristeva defines the abject as that which is outside of "the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable." It is that which "cannot be assimilated" to hegemonic discourses, that which therefore, in its alterity, "beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire" (1). Thus, predictably according to Kristeva, Leo's questions about Mardou are answered by investigations that verge on pleasure and horror, that "fascinate desire."

Kerouac's treatment of this experience tends toward a *reduction of* Mardou *to* what seem to Leo to be essential bodily differences in terms of race and gender: the genitals. For example, at a key moment in Leo's paranoia, when Mardou insists they "confess everything," Leo explains of Mardou's genitals, "I thought I saw some kind of black thing I've never seen before, hanging, like it scared me" (45, original emphasis). Leo admits that "it must have stabbed her heart to hear" (45). But nonetheless, when *they* return to the house later, "we both of us childlike examined said body and looked closely [. and I was really and truly assured to actually see and make the study with her" (46). Mardou's perceived outsider status drives this sexual, pseudo-scientific inquiry, and Kerouac reports the incident with this strange mixture of romantic, scientific, and legal discourses that recapitulates *her* distance from him: Looking at her body is a "study," just as her body is distanced and objectified with the jarring term "said body" (though perhaps Kerouac meant this usage to be playfully humorous as well). Then, the expression of assurance is full of modifiers that revolve around ideas of truth: "really," "truly," "actually." All of this testifies to the distance Leo feels from Mardou's body, his concern about what *she* really is, a distance Leo himself acknowledges as paranoid.

The logic at work behind these paranoias becomes clearer just down the page from this "study," when Kerouac justifies the doubt and the writing of the novel as designed "to show how abstract the life in the city of the Talking Class to which we all belong [is], *the* Talking Class trying to rationalize itself I suppose out of a really base almost lecherous lustful materialism" (46). This *sentence conveys Kerouac*'s own guilt about his position of *privilege,* but it also *reveals* his sense that rationality and lustful materialism" must be at odds. Another way to put this is that Leo perceives a conflict between physical desire, pleasure, and moral behavior.

This conflict is exaggerated, or more precisely, misunderstood, in The Subterraneans. For one thing, the text itself, associated with work, rationality, confession, reproduces and intensifies the pleasure of the love affair, much in the way that Foucault shows that the confession and the strictures surrounding sexuality produce sexual discourse in the first volume of The History of Sexuality. Thus the act of describing the affair, the writing, at times becomes explicitly pleasurable in sexual terms, as when Kerouac writes, "--all those good things, good times we had, others I am now in the heat of my frenzy forgetting but I must tell all, [. . 1" (73). This phrasing is set off with the dashes that recur throughout the text, meant to mark spontaneity and sincerity, two attributes which can be understood to combine pleasure and morality. And this quotation moves directly from intense pleasure--a heat of frenzy--to an ethical command--"I must tell all." In this phrasing, the need to tell, at the root of confession, grows out of bodily experience. In other words, the experience of this pleasure provokes

a keener moral sense. Indeed, if we put this situation into the terms of Levinas's ethical subjectivity, we could argue that this encounter with the Other produces the morality at work in the text.

Such a claim may seem to justify Leo's behavior that is at times quite lousy, even by the narrator's own admission. Obviously this is not my point. The ethics at work in The Subterraneans are half formulated and confused. But it is precisely for such situations that Levinas wrote his ethical philosophy. Levinas's hope was to clarify some of the confusion at the heart of subjectivity in order to reveal the ethics at work there. In the revelation of a fuller ethical understanding that Levinas offers, the subject is always for-the-other, so much so that the subject is not itself. The ethical command is indeed at the root of whatever the subject might want, and understanding this can enable a subject not only to behave more ethically but, I add, to inhabit her or his own desires more carefully. This final step extends beyond Levinas's own view of his ethics.

For Levinas, this ethics appears in sensibility or embodiment itself. Even though, as I argue above, Levinas's own positions about the physical and the material have some inconsistencies, this view of sensibility provides a way to complicate Kerouac's simple and conventional division of the rational from the physical. Unlike Kerouac, Levinas argues that sensation produces the subject, yet that "sensation {, . I is not reducible to the clarity or the idea derived out of it" (Otherwise Than Being 63). Sensation is "vulnerability, enjoyment and suffering, whose status is not reducible to the fact of being put before a spectator subject" (63). This more-than-specular vulnerability is an openness to the Other, and an Other cannot be totalized into an entity_ Rather, "sensibility is being

affected by a non-phenomenon" (75). This "being effected" is physical experience, is the core of the subject, and the subject is always an ethical subject for Levinas.

I am *suggesting* that a dim awareness of this *exists in* Kerouac's work, appearing partly in the fact of the work itself. Even though this book is understood as antagonistic to his human relationships, especially his relationship with Mardou, I suggested above that the very character of this book, its texture and emotion, relies on that relationship. More than this, though, the trip underground, this going subterranean, is fundamentally a confrontation with an Other, as Kerouac admits explicitly and implicitly. Frequently in the history of western cultures in particular, confrontations with an Other produce anxieties, and anxieties lead to exertions of power and force. This is a well-rehearsed point. But Levinas's work offers a new way to understand the confrontation of difference, which, far from being exceptional and exotic, is the root of human experience itself. Levinas *brings home the often* melodramatic *voyage* of *discovery,* the trip subterranean, however we want to call it. In a sense, then, Levinasian ethics are to conquest narratives as he Subterraneans is to On the Road: The Subterraneans takes responsibility for the often harmful encounters with Others, the desire for which is the theme of On the Road.

We have already begun to see, in the odd "study" scene quoted above, how the Other is frequently reduced to a body in The Subterraneans. Materiality or embodiment in such encounters becomes manifest in large part because differences provoke awareness. This interest in the Other has been called a racist, "romantic primitivism" by Jon Panish, and for understandable reasons. The whole account of the affair alternates between an apparently sincere affection and the doubt that centers on the differences

between Leo and Mardou. An important example of this occurs toward the end of the text, when Leo gushes forth phrases of regard for Mardou, expressed in terms of the body, as he condemns himself for failing to live up to his regard: "--the warm lovemouth of the woman, the womb, being the place for men who love, not . . .this immature, drunkard and egomaniacal . . . this .. knowing as I do from past experience and interior sense, you've got to fall down on your knees and beg the woman's permission [. .1" (76). He continues in this fashion for several more phrases, only to interrupt with "--yes psychoanalysis, I hear (fearing secretly the few times I had come into contact with the rough stubble-like quality of the pubic, which *was* Negroid and therefore not enough to make any difference, [. .j)" (76). From here the account becomes excessively complimentary, only to shift back, still in such explicitly bodily terms, to stereotypical fears about Mardou's overpowering sexuality. Kerouac proceeds this way, vacillating between desire and horror, until Leo is described as reaching the limit, death, at the end of the paragraph: "till she threw me over a dead hulk that now I am--psychoanalyst, I'm serious" (76).

These final three words indicate the satirical side to this whole melodramatic alternation between *love* and fear. The next paragraph confirms this playful element by beginning, after an extra space that separates it from the previous paragraph, with the mocking sentence, "It's too much." This satire is in keeping with Leo's insistent chiding of psychoanalysis throughout The Subterraneans. Instead of a psychoanalytic understanding, this passage and this book place the blame on Leo himself. This sense of ethical responsibility at the level of the subject is the same reason, I think, that Levinas had reservations about psychoanalysis. To be clear, though: I do not mean

psychoanalysis lacks value; I only mean to point out this belief Kerouac and Levinas seem to share that puts the ethical responsibility of the subject at the fore. However, ultimately, an ethical sensibility is not in conflict with psychoanalytic understandings. Rather, a believable view of ethics must accommodate psychoanalysis. I would suggest Kerouac's view--and Levinas's to some extent--disavows the heterogeneity of the subject, which drives Kerouac to crisis in the plot of this book and undermines his ability to act ethically in general. Furthermore, as I mentioned in the previous chapter discussing the porosity of the human/animal boundary, part *of* ethics *requires* admitting complexity when that is warranted, which psychoanalysis does, even if that makes the enactment of ethics more difficult.

The movement toward Leo's own responsibility is paralleled by the shift of bodily attention from Mardou to Leo in the phrase "dead hulk that now I am." Just as this book can be read to expose the racist logic of scapegoating, only to return the blame to Leo, the end of this section brings back to its narrator the attention to the body that characterizes the long, paranoid, mocking section that precedes it. Indeed, the anxiety about Mardou's body produces a greater awareness in Leo of his own body throughout the novel. As their relationship becomes increasingly enervated, Leo's physical sensibility heightens. We are *aware* of this tendency from very early in the book, when Leo discusses "the pain which impels me to write this even while I don't want to, the pain which won't be eased by the writing of this but heightened, but which will be redeemed, and if only it were a dignified pain and could be placed somewhere other than in this black gutter of shame and loss and noisemaking folly in the night and poor sweat on my brow" (18). This account is classically abject. It presents substances like sweat that are neither quite internal nor

external to the body as substitutes for language. This move restores representationality to language by indicating language's failures. That is, Kerouac reminds us here of the gap in *representation* between the Real and language. Sweat *functions* as physical *proof of* feeling and suffering, beyond words. Furthermore, sweat stands for shame and its association with the instincts and nighttime, all part of the constellation of abjection.

This turn toward an embodied language as a kind of proof of Leo's feelings is reiterated each time the expression of pain grows severe. Mardou's telling Leo, "I have this balloon now--I don't *need* you any more," in *reference* to an ordinary balloon she had happened across in the hall, makes him "heavy as lead" (64). Absurdity is conjured in the comical contrast between heavy lead and a random, buoyant balloon, but that absurdity itself also signifies sorrow, since we normally hope relationships redeem the absurd in living. The logic of abjection, moreover, repeatedly pushes toward what Kristeva reminds us is its limit--the human corpse, the body as mere waste. Becoming "lead" is one example. An even more concrete example occurs at the level of the word, when Leo has fully narrated the relationship's end: "Well, I thought, this is the end--I finally made the step and by God I paid her back for what she done to me--it had to come and this is it--ploop" (101). Communicative language here translates across the dash into mere substance, excretion, corpse. The dash, indeed, has already begun to do this work by flouting grammatical convention.

We might understand this push to abjection and death as part of the physiological/ethical divide that Kerouac seems to assume. However, these lines themselves also bear a critique of the whole logic that makes embodiment sheer abjection. The idea of revenge in the lines is mocked, both by the switch in linguistic

register that indicates self-parody--"for what she done to me"--and by the larger context of the story that replaces vengeance with sadness and pain. Kerouac was able to articulate the problems with his view of alterity, the body, the Other. He exposes the empty consequences of scapegoating by restoring sadness to blaming. But he could not with full awareness see how a notion of embodied language and an embodied subject could, to use his language quoted above, redeem his experiences.

Locating the subject in the body produces tremendous anxiety, humor, and other disruptive emotions in this text, marking the limits of the subject. Embodiment reminds us of the locality of subjectivity in general; the subject inhabits a particularized body in dialogue with particular cultures, places, and so on. So, localizing the subject has a geographical component. In Leo's violent and strange departures, his frantic bodily mobility, therefore, we see his agonized reactions to this growing awareness of the subject's limits. In particular, Leo identifies his leap out of the taxi Leo and Mardou shared as the craziest and most disturbing of his actions. This action quietly violates Leo and Mardou's relationship and also enacts agonistic relationships with time and the body. Instead of making a place in the subject for embodied desire, Leo is forced to admit desire in these extreme ways that upset the time and order of his relationships and of his own subjectivity. This same type of displacement from the bodily and the local appears in the text's displacement of setting.

Indeed, a guilty awareness of geographical sin intrudes into the text itself through Mardou as well, since her father was Cherokee. Contemplating this genealogy, Kerouac, via Leo, "with a great amount of effort," realizes Indians "were the inhabitors of this land and under these huge skies they were the worriers and keeners and protectors of wives in

whole nations gathered around tents--" (20). Kerouac, in this text and in his life, was not able to resolve these feelings of guilt in large measure because of the physical/ethical divide he took to be fundamental.

This parallel between identity and geography continues in present theoretical solutions to these problems—hybridity, critical regionalism, bioregionalism'—all of which rely on a complex notion of locality or particularity. Such particularity, without giving itself over to an essentialism, nevertheless demonstrates a greater responsibility to the unique circumstances of each enactment of identity in each place. It helps to make possible an embodied subject that is not necessarily immoral or unethical. Gary Snyder has become an important spokesperson for these conceptions of ethics in the years since the Six Gallery reading, but already in the poem he presented there, "A Berry Feast," we can see his thought moving in that direction.

More generally, while Kerouac's and Ginsberg's work present defiance of cultural taboo partly by explorations of the abject, Snyder's treatment of alterity and the abject in "A Berry Feast" tends toward the anthropological. Another way to put this is that all three animalize language, but Snyder finds affirmation and potential renewal in that animalization while Kerouac and Ginsberg find mostly misery, anxiety, and sorrow.' Thus, while the word or the *sign* in Kerouac and Ginsberg reveals itself partly as a

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7 The case for hybridity can be found in Kristeva's Powers of Horror, in Edward Said's Culture and elsewhere in contemporary critical theory. Kenneth Frampton makes a case for critical regionalism. Snyder is a key figure in bioregionalism.

8 I am admittedly simplifying Kerouac and Ginsberg's work to make this point. Clearly both practice a lyricism that is joyful at times, and as I argue above, Ginsberg's "Footnote to Howl" finds affirmation in Ginsberg's avowed marginal status. Nonetheless, Snyder's affirms animality much more specifically and precisely, while the animal in Kerouac and Ginsberg tends to operate less deliberately, as a kind *of* unconscious.

symptom of pain, a response to suffering, like a howl, for Snyder the animalized word is more like a track to be followed. Snyder thereby restores a measure of agency and purpose to the subject, much as I argue Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea does. From this perspective, it seems appropriate that Snyder read last at the Six Gallery, as his work seems to answer to Howl in a grounded and pragmatic way. Snyder's presentation of himself to the audience apparently registered such differences. Schumacher explains,

> Reading in a voice that Kerouac later described as "deep and resonant and somehow brave, like the voice of oldtime American *heroes* and orators," Snyder effectively summarized the spirit of the evening, the feeling that the human race was losing sight of its own basic consciousness and spirituality [. . J. Unlike Robinson Jeffers, whose poetry could be characterized as pessimistic in its outlook, Snyder delivered a hopeful yet urgent message [. . (216)

The audience would have been positioned as trackers by Snyder's first lines:

> Fur the color of mud, the smooth loper
> Crapulous old man, a drifter,
> Praises! of Coyote the Nasty, the fat
> Puppy that abused *himself,* the ugly gambler,
> Bringer of goodies. (1.1-5)

The evocation of mixed substance ("mud"), together with the suggestion of motion in the first line, combine with the varied list of descriptions of coyote to render a figure that is evasive. The reader or auditor must try to keep up.

Tracking is also important ontologically, as it resists the idea that the animal Other, or any "object" really, can be easily or completely understood. In this way, it is part of Snyder's literary *ethics*. This element of Snyder's work bears resemblance to Derrida's work on the animal discussed above, especially in Chapter In some of Snyder's more didactic poems, discussed below, he makes similar claims about the animal and about "objective" reality more directly. We should notice that he was presenting such ideas more subtly earlier in his work because his growing didacticism reveals Snyder's changing ideas about the function of the literary '. He *becomes* less interested in subtlety on the page and more interested in the actualization of ideas in the world. The notion of a difficult poetry, inherited from the modernists who influenced him, had to be interrogated and revised on these grounds.'

The second stanza continues tracking, but shifts the object of pursuit: "In bearshit find it in August, / Neat pile on the fragrant trail, *in* late August, [. I (1. 6-8), These signs indicate that "Bear has been eating the berries" (1.9), but they also point beyond this natural fact to the cultural work of the poem:

> Blackbear
>
> eating berries, married
>
> To a woman whose breasts bleed
>
> From nursing the half-human cubs.

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9 It is beyond the range of this chapter to show this trajectory in Snyder's work, but in the relatively recent poem "Word Basket Woman," published in the "No Nature" section of o Nature (the "new poems" section of the book), he writes, "Robinson Jeffers, his tall cold view / quite true in a way, but why did he say it / as though he alone / stood above our delusions, he also / feared death, insignificance, / and was not quite up to the inhuman beauty / of parsnips or diapers, the deathless / nobility at the core of all ordinary things" (lines 9-16).

Somewhere of course there are people

collecting and junking, gibbering all day, [. . .] (1.11-16)

The bears' adherence to the laws of the seasons--eating berries when they are ripe in August--begins to show here as a model for the human who might mix with bear, as signified also by Snyder's reference to the traditional story of bear/human hybridity.[10] That model for living, that source of values, contrasts with the reality presented by the offset acknowledgment of what other people are doing "somewhere": collecting junk and "gibbering." The casual presentation of the critique indicates that articulating another possible way to live, in a more pointed fashion than Ginsberg or Kerouac do, is at least as important as the critique.

The remainder of the poem repeats and accentuates the methods and substance of this cultural critique. *In* one world *we* find that "The Chainsaw falls for boards of pine, / Suburban bedrooms, block on block" (1.24-25), so that "Each morning when commuters wake" (118), they find themselves in "a box to catch the biped in" (1.30). The alliterative diction that makes tract housing a trap for "bipeds" animalizes the human. Human animality is a plain fact in Snyder's work. The question for him is how the individual (and culture) understands and inhabits that animality. The suburban world is contrasted with the more natural world, presented again with reference to berries in the next stanza :

and shadow swings around the tree

Shifting on the berrybush

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10 Snyder presents a fuller account of these stories in Practice of the Wild 155-74.

from leaf to leaf across each day

The shadow swings around the tree. {1.31-34)

As with the animal signs discussed above, in these lines Snyder presents the reader with only the objects themselves, as time swings around them, calling attention to the alterity of these "objects." In the case of the berrybush and the animal signs, alterity functions both as ethical acknowledgment of difference, then, and as cultural critique. We are encouraged by juxtaposition to register the differences between worlds, differences implicit also in the banality and sense of entrapment conveyed by the suburban culture as compared to the more harmonious picture of the berry bush in its proper place, living in what Snyder sees as its proper way. A better culture, he is suggesting, would live more in accord with these larger patterns and temporalities of nature.

Another element of Snyder's suggested cultural solution involves hearing animal voices more clearly. In the first section, we see two primary methods for doing this in poetry:

"*Where* I shoot my arrows

"There is the sunflower's shade

--song of the rattlesnake

coiled in the boulder's groin

"K'ak, k'ak, k'ak!

sang Coyote. Mating with

humankind-- (1.17-23)

In the first instance, Snyder translates the rattlesnake song into English, thereby more directly rendering animal signs. This move makes those signs legible and therefore useful

for cultural revisions. But the purely sonic transcription of the Coyote's call reminds us also to read transliterations skeptically, in keeping with the *sense* throughout the poem that the animal can be followed but not fully known. Thus, in these moments Snyder both brings the animal Other into human discourse, rendering animals as potential teachers, and registers the alterity of animals by way of estranged language. Indeed, for Snyder, Coyote is an archetypal figure of the inscrutable animal.

The duality in Snyder's treatment of the animal contests a common reading that he is excessively optimistic about poetry's ability to represent the world. In Greening the Lyre, for instance, David Gilcrest takes Snyder as an example of a tendency an individual can have to be "eminently sanguine about his or her ability to ascertain the ontological conditions of nature" (31). This moment in Gilcrest's analysis treats one of Snyder's more optimistic poems, "For All," in which Snyder works to articulate a positive direction for culture. But this poem, and Gilcrest's analysis of Snyder more generally, treats only a limited part of Snyder's *larger* work. Important to the ethical component of that work is Snyder's acknowledgment of the inscrutable animality of the human and of human language."

Snyder's approach differs considerably from Kerouac's uncomfortably fascinated approach to the Other because Kerouac's recognitions of difference lead him to crisis. This difference, in fact, returns us to Judith Butler's response to Levinas, centering on the nature of ethics, discussed in the opening of this dissertation. If ethical acknowledgment can only lead to crisis, a kind of apocalypticism seems to result. The concrete version of

I I There are many additional examples to cite, beyond those explicitly discussed in this chapter. Some key instances appear in The Practice of the Wild 15-18, and passim.

this in Kerouac's The Subterraneans is the end of his relationship with Mardou. Butler's call for acknowledgment of the subject's *needs,* including good air and peace, is an acknowledgment of the embodiment of the subject, the subject's thickness. In Snyder's work, awareness of these needs translates not only into the trackable animality of his writing, but also, at times, into the pragmatism of his poetry. Such pragmatism recognizes the utility of language as a tool that human animals use, hopefully, to better. inhabit the world. In this way, Snyder's use of poetry resembles Santiago's use of language in Hemingway's The Old Man and *the* Sea (see Chapter II).

However, there are other ethical concerns with Snyder's "A Berry Feast." McClure reports "Snyder's gloss" that it derives from "'a first-fruits celebration that consumes a week of mid-August on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Oregon. Coyote is the name of the Trickster-Hero of the mythology of that region"' (McClure 20-21). This fact reminds us *of* considerations of cultural appropriation that can be as harmful to the cultures being borrowed from as Kerouac's behavior was to Mardou. Indeed, Snyder's Pulitzer Prize in 1975 for Turtle Island prompted Leslie Silko's response, "An Old-Time Indian Attack Conducted in Two Parts." In this essay, Silko first generally criticizes "white poets and writers who romanticize their 'power' as writers to inhabit souls and consciousness far beyond the realms of their own knowledge or experience" (78). Then, more specifically, she criticizes Snyder as "occupying stolen property" in his inhabitation, careful and deliberate or not, of North America (83). She also criticizes his use of native peoples' mythologies.

Silko's critique resonates with many other critics' work on this issue of appropriation. Shari Huhndorf, in Going Native, demonstrates how ostensibly

sympathetic depictions of native peoples can reinforce European-American hegemony, especially when such depictions reinforce stereotypes of native peoples while presenting the regeneration of white culture at the expense of natives. The opening example in her book is Kevin Costner's 1991 Academy Award-winning film Dances with Wolves, which depicts a disgruntled Civil War veteran whose contact with a band of Sioux reaffirms his vitality and teaches him the nobility of the Indians. Huhndorf shows that, despite this positive depiction of the Sioux, the film mostly focuses on the nobility of the white character while presenting the ultimate decline of traditional Sioux life. Snyder, as a white, European-American, can be understood similarly in his reception of attention and accolade because he uses Native ideas and even native identity in order to propose better ways of living on "Turtle Island," his adopted name for North America.

There are no simple resolutions to this ethical problem, as we also saw in Hemingway's case. But a *few* important responses to it in Snyder's work should be pointed out before we proceed. For one, Snyder has acknowledged the sources of poems like "A Berry Feast" and of terminology like "Turtle Island." This obviously necessary step does not answer to the more pointed concern Huhndorf mentions, however. Huhndorf demonstrates the need for more direct political awareness and even political commitment.

Snyder's work shows signs of this. in **his** 1977 collection of essays The Old Ways, for instance, Snyder seeks to rearticulate contemporary human cultures with older, and in Snyder's view more essentially human practices (see "Re-inhabitation" especially). Importantly, Snyder holds that task alongside a keen awareness of "The Politics of Ethnopoetics," the title of one of the *essays.* That essay directly treats the problem

Huhndorf enunciates by recognizing that people who study other cultures are also responsible to those cultures. Snyder tells his audience of ethnopoetics scholars that *"we* should ally ourselves to peoples' struggles everywhere" (23).[12] In a 1977 interview with Paul Geneson, Snyder broadens and underscores the necessity of political commitment in terms of how democracy might be practiced:

> We all see what democracy means, too. It means that the Navajo should get their own nation, that Rosebud and Pine Ridge maybe should be separate nation, that the Indians of Puget Sound *have* fishing rights, that trees and rocks should be able to vote in Congress, that whales should be able to vote--that's democracy. (The Real Work 74)

Snyder makes clear his concern for the political situation of nonwhites and does real advocacy work in addressing an audience of people who work on these issues. His claim about rocks voting may sound flippant or quixotic, but as the interview proceeds, Snyder argues for its practicality by referring to Christopher Stone's 1972 book _ hould Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects. Stone presents a legal argument for the idea Snyder advocates.

Snyder's political point derives partly from his awareness of the possibility that "anthropology is always imperialism" (The Old Ways 22). At issue in this question of imperialism *are* the politics of knowledge more generally. What *are* the worldly effects 'of cultural epistemologies? Snyder explores this question in the remainder of "The Politics of Ethnopoetics," measuring cultures' knowledges against the lived experiences, so far as

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12 Snyder's essay was originally delivered at an Ethnopoetics conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1975 (see The Old Ways 43).

we know them, of members of those cultures. A key moment in that discussion for our purposes here is Snyder's report of Levi-Strauss's view that "writing systems have served largely throughout history to enslave men rather than to serve any useful religious, spiritual or esthetic purpose, since the original use of writing was to write down lists of slaves and to keep an account of what you had in your warehouse, and only much later became used in these other ways" (34).' For Snyder, it is not enough to celebrate the achievements of writing technologies or disciplines like ethnopoetics. We must measure these forms of understanding against the effects on all people and all life more generally. Knowledge cannot be divorced from questions of its use, and these questions (obviously) entail ethical concerns. Snyder's approach, then, repositions language in the physical world. His oeuvre insistently considers ecological effects of cultural activities.

The pragmatic animality of Snyder's poetry thus signifies an ethical awareness of the function of language and knowledge in the world. Some of his poems work in apparently simple fashion to reveal this insight, like epigrammatic teaching tools. The final lines of his 1970 book of poetry Regarding Wave, for instance, position poetry *in* relation to work and culture:

> When creeks are full
>
> The poems flow
>
> When creeks are down

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13 This question of *the* material function *of* language, key to much contemporary critical discourse, generally involves questions of ethics too. Kristeva's account of abjection encourages us to attend to the worldly effects of the development of the subject as it attains language. In The Spell of the Sensuous, David Abram argues that the technology of written language has separated humans from the physical world. He makes an (ethical) argument for a return to an embodied awareness.

We heap stones. (page 84, lines 18-21)

Poems can be written *when* the broader worldly conditions permit. The context of these lines makes this point clearer; the poem they conclude is entitled "CIVILIZATION" and is a critique of how "civilized" people behave. It is broken into three related parts. It begins with the direct claim, "Those are the people who do complicated things," who "grab us by the thousands *land* put us to work" (1-3). Civilization is criticized from without, then, for the labor practices that support it. Snyder continues,

World's going to hell, with all these
villages and trails.
Wild duck flocks aren't
what they used to be.
Aurochs grow rare. (4-8)

Here the measure of civilization's "success" is its effects on animals.

The middle section of the poem uses animals again as a measure, but in a different way. We are presented with a more concrete situation:

A small cricket
on the typescript page of
"Kyoto born in spring song"
grooms himself
in time with The Well-Tempered Clavier,
I quit typing and watch him through a glass.
How well articulated! How neat!

Nobody understands the ANIMAL KINGDOM. (10-17)

A worldly event interrupts textual activity and complicates what textuality itself is by making animal activity a version of intertextuality. This cricket lands on the manuscript of another poem, also published in Regarding Wave. "Kyoto born in spring song" positions human rebirth in the larger rebirth of spring, which includes "melons," "bamboo," mice, and other living beings (page 18). "Kyoto born in spring song" thus restores to human activities the world that enables them, and it reminds readers more generally of the vitality of the nonhuman. The cricket reiterates the point of the poem on which it has landed in a direct, compelling, embodied way for the speaker, as *we see* in the enthusiastic observations conveyed with exclamation points. This tableau demonstrates how texts respond to the world as well as to each other because this event has inspired a new and, I am arguing, pragmatically oriented poem, which further underscores this worldly conception of the word. Moreover, to some extent the "poem" of this middle portion is the cricket itself, a point emphasized by the isolation of the line "A small cricket."

The last line of section two anticipates the epigrammatic four lines of the third section discussed above. The poem's final four lines suggest individual action--"heap stones"--based on this poem's observations, much as the declaration of ignorance about animals suggests a policy for humanity more generally (a policy that the poem has begun to enact by attending closely to a cricket). In that sense, Snyder elects a pragmatic goal for his poem rather than a purely aesthetic one, but in a way that is concerned with the roots of aesthesis--embodied, worldly experience. This pragmatism is reinforced by the title of the larger section that houses this poem, "Target Practice," which presents poetry

as a kind of training for the real task of living. Even so, the poem's final lines are more subtle than they may seem. "When creeks are full / The poems flow" removes agency from the poet by eliding the poet as subject. Instead, "poems" are said to flow, seemingly of their own volition, in parallel with the healthy creek. This move naturalizes poetry in addition to showing the ecological intersubjectivity of the "human." That type of subjective practice, that enables a fuller intersubjectivity with the nonhuman world, contrasts with the ethical work of piling stones, in which the awareness of ecological illness requires also the self-awareness of the ethical subject, the ethical uncanny perhaps, signaled by the use of the pronoun "we."

Many critics have taken Snyder's inquiry into and effacement of hubristic or controlling human will to be one of his key achievements as a poet. A prominent example appears in Lawrence Buell's Environmental Imagination, where he argues that Snyder made "an inspired *choice" when* he elected "to follow traditional Chinese poetics by effacing the 'I"' in a section of Myths and Texts (166).[14] Buell shows how Snyder's speaker "has allowed his body to become permeable to the point that [. . inside and outside can no longer be distinguished" (167). For Buell, however, a key failure of this poem is Snyder's introduction of "a piece of exotic pedantry": the phrase "congestion of

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14 An important early version of this reading of Snyder's work that highlights Snyder's occlusion of the "I" appears in *Charles* Altieri's Enlargiig the Temple (see 133-38 for example). Patrick Murphy points to other examples in his Introduction to his collection of critical essays on Snyder (6-15). Helen Vendler likewise reads Snyder this way in Soul Says. Finally, Julia Martin has recently renewed this point in "Seeing a Corner of the Sky **in** Gary Snyder's Mountains and Rivers without End" (e.g. 61, 62, and passim).

karma," which generalizes the point the rest of the poem renders concretely. This moment reveals for Buell "the heroic difficulty of achieving a thoroughgoing redefinition of the self in environmental terms" (167).

Buell is not wrong in this assessment of the difficulty of environmental selfhood, but Snyder's use of this term "karma" can be understood differently, as well: It reveals the limits of poetic literary practice as a method of shifting worldly behavior.' One way to see this is to recognize that "karma" is a very familiar term for students of Buddhism and Hinduism. This usage, then, like a citation, recognizes the cultural debt Snyder's specific practices have to Buddhism and the East more generally. It thus resists the aesthetic/worldly duality that might be seen in Buell's apparent desire for a more purely poetic discourse.' Furthermore, the use of a conventional religious term with considerable cultural history gives the specific practices presented in the poem a general language. It restores a traditional category for concrete experience. It thereby can be seen to familiarize (or enculturate) the strange (or the wild), despite Buell's suggestion of the opposite in calling this usage "exotic pedantry."

Snyder's use of a conventional religious term also indicates one of the ways language functions more generally, much as I argue in Chapters II and HI that Hemingway's self-conscious language use does. Conventional language or terminology,

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15 Terry Gifford makes a similar claim **in his** essay, "Gary Snyder and the Post-Pastoral." He answers to Jonathan Bate's critique of some Snyder work as "embarrassingly unpoetic" (Gifford 84) by pointing to Snyder's effort to push "at the whole range of what poetry can do on the page" (85).

16 Elsewhere in Buell's Environmental Imagination, he recognizes how genre imposes limitations on the environmental imagining a writer might do (see 4-5, 57, 84, and passim for examples). Thus, his critique of Snyder can be read to embody some of the tensions an ethical criticism produces.

often taken as the bane of aesthetic discourse, is pragmatic because of its very familiarity. Conventional language is to original language, then, as language in general is to new experience. Language generally imposes some measure of order on what can seem disorderly. In the destabilization of the subject that contemporary theoretical and ecological circumstances seem to require, the use of language, or of conventional language, can thus be interpreted to signify that very destabilization because it indicates the desire for some measure of order. Like Hemingway's Santiago talking to himself to keep his focus, Snyder's turn to conventional or pragmatic language is a synecdoche for the function of language among humans in our moment.

For Snyder, then, a pure poesis is replaced by use of a mixed form that does practical, "religious," and aesthetic work.' His move toward epigram in "CIVILIZATION" and the move toward didacticism in some of his poetry also signal this commitment. Indeed, one of his more broadly recognized books, The Practice of the Wild," can be characterized as a kind of etiquette manual for human life (the first chapter indicates this orientation with its title: "The Etiquette of Freedom"). This book mixes story, essay, and dense, poetic writing in order to present ways a culture and a person

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17 "Work" has been a key word throughout Snyder's career, marking his commitment to practical, worldly efforts. The title of his collected interviews and talks, The Real Work (1980), points to the importance of this orientation and inquiry. That eponymous phrase derives from the title to a poem in Turtle Island (1974).

18 One measure of this recognition is The Practice of the Wild's place among the top fifteen recommended books on ecocriticism in a list compiled from a poll of 150 members of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). See [illegible] (393, 397).

might practice or embody the wild. It is practice that proves the value of the book, rather than its success according the standards of some generic or purely literary measure.

This focus *on* practical, situated, local subjectivity is crucial *more* generally to the mixing of categories this chapter has been treating: [9] A localized perspective shifts the way a thinker approaches questions. Such perspective tends toward the phenomenological philosophically, reorienting ontology by inductive rather than deductive thinking.' These elements of Snyder's work as they bear on language and animality *are condensed in the* poem "Claws Cause" from his most recent book Danger on Peaks, quoted here in full:

"Graph" is the claw-curve, carve--

grammar a weaving

paw track, lizard-slither, tumble of

a single boulder down. Glacier scrapes across the bedrock,

wave-lines on the beach.

19 This word "mixing" is preferable for this discussion of Snyder to other, roughly synonymous terms that might be used: "deconstruction," "disruption," "traumatization." Snyder's work acknowledges ideas akin to those recognized by poststructuralism, but I am arguing that his work goes beyond the trauma of those intellectual insights (radically new ideas often reach human cultures as a trauma at first). Snyder's work to make these traumatic insights *more* ordinary enables an ethical practice that acknowledges embodiment.

20 Many of the ecocritical books concerned with local, ethical action, have been influenced by phenomenology. Some treat it directly. See Abram, Brown and Toadvine, Louise Westling's "Virginia Woolf and the Flesh *of* the World," among *others.*

Saying, "this was me"

scat sign of time and mood and place

language is breath, claw, or tongue

"tongue" with all its flickers

might be a word for

hot love, and fate.

A single kiss a tiny cause [cause]

--such grand effects [texts].

The title, "Claws / Cause," employs the slash that indicates the ambivalence central to embodied physicality and also central to the poem: An apparent consequence of natural evolution—claws--is revealed also as a cause of nature as it is. The rhyme heightens ambivalence by drawing on the sense of hearing to reinforce the poem's intellectual point. This work with sound is further accented in the first line with the string of words, "claw-*curve,* carve," which evokes the *curving* graphs familiar to newspaper and *sociology* text readers at the same time that it evokes the violence of marking and carving. Language and the violence of predation thus are signified together by this string.

The poem does not resolve this ambivalence into policy or judgment, however; instead, it holds these ambivalent realities together with appropriately synecdochic images like claws and tongue. The poem embodies these realities. The somewhat wild

"flickers" of the tongue in its natural behaviors of speech, eating, and sexuality are shown both to indicate "hot love" and the delivery of "fate," perhaps by way of sentencing, of edict. "Tongue" must also of course be read back into the animality of the poem's claws motif, so that "tongue" signifies taste and animal appetite more generally. The poem's analysis of causes and fate, beginnings and endings, lends significance to the geological events alluded to--rockfall, glacial gouging. These events and the marks they leave can both cause significant results, as in fatal rockslides, and can signify global events, as with glacial retreat due to global warming.

Snyder understands those marks, to return to the distinction between Snyder and his friends Ginsberg and Kerouac, as a kind of waste matter, but he does not seem especially troubled by the admission. Writing, "Saying, 'this was me,"' indicates an identity enacted in each "time and mood and place." That writing, a "scat sign," is left behind even as it may amount to a "tiny cause [claws]" with such "grand effects [text]." These final, rhyming words reenact the whole ambivalence of the poem via sound and meaning. "Grand effects" can diminish into mere "text," waste matter that nonetheless can be cause to future significant events. The editorial brackets used to sustain the ambivalent posture of the poem dramatize the heterogeneous identity of the writing subject, lover and killer, and remind us why "character" is crucial to ethics and its root "ethos." The ambivalence of the self and of knowable reality can render ethical action difficult to discern, yet an ethical awareness requires admission of ambivalence.

Snyder's poem thus returns us to the dialogue with which this dissertation begins: How are we to understand the embodiment of language? Levinas's suspicion of images discussed in his 1948 essay, which I argue becomes his more general wariness of "saids,"

of static language, becomes his way of arguing for the necessity of ethics. Judith Butler's return to the body's needs and the ambivalence that attends these needs answers to Levinas with an approach akin to Derrida's work *on* the animal. This approach prevents the surrender of embodied language. "Claws / Cause," one of Snyder's less didactic poems, complicates notions of ethical action and implicitly makes a case for the embodiment of understanding that is poetry. Poetry in such usages, we might indeed add, can be read as a synecdoche for embodied, linguistic understanding because of its connection between form and content. The generic conventions of showing rather than telling, frequently understood as epitomized in poetry, are often appeals to localized or particularized, inductive modes of knowing. Such attendance to bodied details complicates but also improves and extends ethical action. The best we can expect of ethics is that it grow out of as keen and accurate an understanding of as much of the world as possible, always derived from local attention and applied *in* locally cognizant ways.

Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Snyder all acknowledge the animality of language, and take literary discourse toward the edge of abjection. However, *1* have suggested that Ginsberg and Kerouac register more terror and dread in their work than Snyder. Restoring these texts to their involvement in the communal presentation at the Six Gallery, to the cultural milieu that nourished them, allows us to read these differences more complexly. Their awareness of social loss and possibility helped make room for writers like Terry Tempest Williams and Leslie Marmon Silko, who would follow some of their cues as well as dispute many of their claims and literary practices. Remembering

the community context allows us to read or at least acknowledge more of the cultural and human embodiment of the literary texts, and to see them as a group of complimentary voices, speaking toward new cultural and literary embodiments.

CHAPTER V

TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS BEARING LOSS

> I have felt the pain that arises from recognition of beauty, pain we hold to remember what we are connected to and the delicacy of our relations. It is this tenderness born out of a connection to place that fuels my writing. Writing becomes an act of compassion toward life, the life we so often refuse to see because if we look too closely or feel too deeply, there may be no end to our suffering. But words empower us, move us beyond our suffering, and set us free.
>
> (Terry Tempest Williams, An Unspoken Hunger 57)

This chapter, like much of Terry Tempest Williams's work, is written at a loss. It is written in place of it, and moves toward a collective response to it, but the loss is nonetheless fundamental. Criticism points to aporia, and in it we conventionally speak with assurance about those vacancies, often implying the possibility of a final resting. But criticism does not ever rest. To be sure, the approach toward fuller understanding of texts and contexts is productive. It can serve a social good. But a central claim of this chapter is our need to acknowledge loss and opacity in texts and in our critical practices.

Certainly the criticism of Terry Tempest Williams's work has acknowledged the importance of loss, frequently with reference to her best-known book, Refuge, a mourning text. Virtually every essay in the 2003 collection Surveying the Literary Landscapes est Williams mentions loss and mourning. John Tallmadge, in an earlier essay "Beyond the Excursion," argues that Williams extends the work of Annie Dillard's Pilgrim at Tinker Creek. Tallmadge understands Dillard to rework nature

writing conventions. She emphasizes horror and pain in nature as much as beauty by writing the violation of self/nature borders, as in the famous tomcat scene that opens the book.' Williams, Tallmadge holds, writes a still more thorough suffering in Refuge. Her painful experience, as many critics have noted along with Tallmadge, leads Williams to an activism by the book's close.' I agree that the move to activism is an important achievement of Williams's published work. This move also appears at the level of genre and form, since she publishes essays on timely social issues in newspapers and magazines that *engage audiences* daily on a more pragmatic level.

But the concept of textual activism should also be understood to complicate both text and activism. Though an activism is indeed crucial to the meaning of her oeuvre, how does that activism function? What does it mean to protest military actions with marches and peaceful demonstrations, and with the pen? What does it mean to practice an embodied subjectivity? Mary Newell, for one, gives an important answer to this last question in finding Williams's erotics of place an antidote to her suffering. Sharon A. Reynolds similarly claims that Williams's experiences of landscapes depend on "humility, not dominance" and lead her "to find reciprocity, not transcendence" (47). Mai Saj Schmidt attests that Williams's writing brings private suffering into the social and discursive by writing it, making the personal political. These claims tend to emphasize the transformation of suffering.

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1 Suzanne Clark argues in Sentimental Modernism that Dillard's hybrid generic work interrogates the status of the knowing author and knowing subject by recalling the fictionality of even non-fictional genres. This is true, I add, of Williams's work too.

2 Other writers to make this claim include Maia Saj Schmidt, Karl Zuelke, and Tina Richardson.

This chapter emphasizes a patience in the face of suffering, a waiting, even an inevitability of suffering as part of texts' ethical work.' Alexander J. Hunt prepares the way for this by connecting Williams with Julia Kristeva's work in his dissertation. He understands Refuge "as a reclaiming of the abject" (145). He reminds us that the suffering and dying bodies in Refuge, both human and non-human, are testimony to what military and economic policies ignore. This position outside official and legal sanction, this abjection, gives special insight into those powerful systems of government and order by offering a new perspective of them, as Kristeva's work has demonstrated. I am reminding us, though, that the work of this testimony is not only insight. Williams, writing *in* the throes of loss, relies on a thick language practice, a team I draw from Jacques Derrida, as I discuss below and in Chapter This practice reveals the embodied character of language and admits an otherness within itself. We have seen in Hemingway, Kerouac, and Snyder how acknowledging the thickness of language also has a strong ethical component. This chapter emphasizes that the practice of ethical intersubjectivity exposes the self to greater pain in this age of ecological trauma. Further, Williams's writing, like Derrida's, reminds us of the necessity of embodied sentimentality for reasonable discourse.

Williams's approach to embodied understanding unsettles and innovates nature writing as a genre. Key to this innovation are her methods of perception themselves. Her notion of the erotics of experience, mentioned above, is rooted in Williams's practice of interacting physically with her surroundings. She does not merely "see" the world in an

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3 Lisa Diedrich's essay makes a related claim in emphasizing the ethics of witnessing in Williams's Refuse.

ocular fashion, though she is capable of sharp vision; she meets it bodily, generally without surrendering her ethical concerns. In her writing, this practice tends to disrupt ideas of a discrete, external object.

A moment in her essay "In the Country of Grasses," from An Unspoken Hunger, dramatizes this bodily disruption of visual, objective perception. The essay describes traveling on the African Serengeti with a Maasai companion, Samuel, hoping particularly to see some rhinoceroses. Since rhinoceroses are endangered and not always easy to find, Williams has doubts about their chances. However, with luck, Samuel points two out. Describing the moment, Williams writes, "My vision blurs. Who would kill a rhinoceros? It seems clear that the true aphrodisiac is not found in their horns but in simply knowing they exist" (11).

The sympathetic tearing intercedes between her and the rhinoceroses, and marks her seeing as particular, subjective, and blurry' It also belongs to a long tradition of sentimental women's writing.' In this passage, a bodily fluid interrupts the visual experience in a narrative that has concentrated on Williams herself being out of place on the Serengeti and thus being unable to discern the animals that Samuel, who is much more intimate with this region, can see. Thus, for Williams the approach to the

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4 Donna Haraway argues for "situated knowledges" in Simians. Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature, an essay Mary Newell applies to Terry Tempest Williams's work. Haraway understands situated knowledges not only to be a more accurate theory of understanding but to have an ethical component.

5 Suzanne Clark's Sentimental Modernism makes a sustained case against critical dismissal of sentimentality and pathos in literature. Crucially, Clark reminds us that "no discourse can escape appealing to the emotions of its audience" (6).

rhinoceroses "is like crossing the threshold of a dream"; as they depart, the rhinoceroses "have become outcroppings of stone" (11). The experience of vision itself is circumscribed with obscurity.

In this context, the tear simultaneously works in divergent ways. It represents a sublime awe of the rhinoceroses; it shows sympathy for their endangered status; and it signifies perceptual blurriness right at the moment of perception. The blurriness indicates the otherness of this *place* and these animals, *yet* that alterity fuels Williams's punning turn on aphrodisiac. Their very strangeness, in other words, drives Williams's sympathy for their plight. In this way, Williams practices an ethical regard for a heterogeneous community. Under a conventional sign of sentimentality, she allows their radical otherness to remain Other, much as I argue in Chapter II that the sentimentality of Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea actually signals the ocean's alterity.

One might interject here that her trip into the desert to see the rhinoceroses itself disturbs their lives and so is unethical. There is substance to this objection. The problem here is the problem anyone faces in a difficult situation, when action must be undertaken. Is it more important to leave the rhinoceroses in their own presence, to respect their otherness enough to avoid bothering them at all, or to learn more about them **in** order to better protect them? The move to protection always carries some measure of intrusion into the lives of others, whatever one's intentions. Whether one agrees with Williams's decision to visit the rhinoceroses or not, I want to claim that this tear, with its blurring, signifies Williams's acknowledgment of the limitations of her position and her sense of the grave danger to the rhinoceroses. It signifies her imperfect but sincere desire to help

them. It also physically intrudes between her and them, and makes present the thickness of perception. Perhaps her experience, rendered thickly into a public text, can atone for her interruption of their lives, perhaps not.

Though we might condemn Williams's intrusion on the rhinoceroses, it is important to notice that, unlike animals in many other accounts, the rhinoceroses in this narrative are not drugged or handled. The nature writing genre is here showing an ethical advance.' This moment should also be read inside a women's literary tradition that demonstrates resistance to objectification, as in texts like Sarah Orne Jewett's "A White Heron," Mary Austin's The Land of Little Rain, and others. Lorraine Anderson's Sisters of the Earth anthologizes many other examples.

Furthermore, Williams's resistance to objectifying the rhinoceroses or to reducing them to commodity status is an interruption of abstract values imposed on the natural world by economic schemes. Part of what enables this disruption is exactly Williams's status as a middle-class tourist, it must be admitted_ Yet, such concern appears throughout Williams's work, often in ways that offer another perspective on the economics of her view of nature. An example is the account in Refuge of Lake Wasatch plans. This was the proposition to dike off fresh-water flows into Salt Lake in order to create a recreation area and to develop shoreline real estate. Williams was especially worried about the effects this action would have on animal life associated with the lake. She resists the plan in terms of its logic of commodification, saying sarcastically that,

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6 John James Audubon killed birds in order to collect them. More contemporary examples of nature writers writing about killed or drugged animals include Barry Lopez **in** Arctic Dreams, though he is critical of the practice (see 105-06 especially), and, of course, Hemingway in Green Hills of Africa (see my Chapter III for more).

once diked, "the Great Salt Lake would be worth something." She then asks rhetorically in demonstration against that abstract worth, "'How do you quantify the wildness of birds . . . ?'" (265). To the extent that this plan is driven by profit motivations, then, her critique conveys self-consciousness about bourgeois sensibilities, advocating instead for classes of life whose interests are inadequately addressed.

Williams's stand against the dike recognizes the interdependence or heterogeneity of living systems, in the terms Derrida presented. She resists the kind of purification entailed by excessive conversion of nature into commodity. Doing this work in an autobiography, furthermore, brings such concerns back to the subject in a way that can interestingly be compared to theoretical work on subjectivity. Kristeva's account of the subject's development in Powers of Horror, for another instance, returns us to a key word from Williams's passage about the rhinoceros: "One must conclude, and phobic adults confirm this, that within the symbolic law accruing to the function of the father, something remains blurred in the Oedipal triangle constituting the subject" (35, my emphasis). Kristeva's central claim in that text points to fear and anxiety as markers of this blurring. Kristeva complicates the usual story of the Oedipal triangle, in which the symbolic gives the subject the idea of objects, which helps to confirm the independence of the subject and the subject's separation from her or his mother. Kristeva's work thus upsets the subject/object dualism. The blurriness at the core of the subject, Kristeva says above, enters into and remains in the symbolic. The symbolic retains traces then of the subject's trauma and loss in attaining language, showing language to be always infused with this blur of pain. Language itself thus remains partly a symptom of fear. Even when language works effectively as representation, it acts partly to calm this fundamental dread

in loss. The symbolic cannot be seen, therefore, as a purely rational faculty, and it behaves in ways fundamentally similar to those which Levinas proposes, discussed above. Language, in other words, remains partly physical, a point fundamental to Kristeva's work, as we see in her semiotic/symbolic pairing.[7]

Kristeva's discussion of Hans in Powers of Horror, whose phobia Freud discussed, demonstrates further how she understands language to act partly as a symptom of trauma. She reads Hans's fear of being bitten by horses as a dramatization of the tension between remaining safe with the mother's body, which she calls "incorporation" (39), and movement away from the mother driven by the symbolic system that the father conventionally represents. Originally-comforting incorporation thus assumes an otherness and a dread, demonstrating indirectly how in these early stages of the subject the mother is made into a non-object, the border-line entity that is feared, the abject.

Having demonstrated that Hans's experience is only an exaggerated version of the common movement into language, Kristeva goes on to claim that "Hans has quite simply written earlier than others, or rather he has been stage director within a scription that encompassed his living space with all its extras, putting into flesh (a horse) those logical constructs that set us up as beings of abjection and/or as symbolic beings" (42-3, original emphasis). Williams's writing of her encounter with the rhinoceroses can be understood to uncover these fundamental elements of language use. Like the inchoate subject, Williams is a subject in a state of crisis, both as a person concerned with the possible extinction of these rhinoceroses and more generally as someone whose experiences of loss *in* her family and home place have led her to reconfigure her ideas of selfhood. Most

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7 See The Kristeva Reader (89-136) for more on this.

broadly, we might say, returning to another of Kristeva's claims made in an interview, Williams is a postmodern subject living "in permanent crisis" (Clark and Hulley 160). As a person aware of this condition, Williams interrogates core assumptions in our systems of meaning and language. In her experience of the rhinoceroses, the thickness that intrudes is a thickness of her own experiencing body. It is thus a thickness in the symbolic incorporation of those experiences. Another way to put this is that the rhinoceroses' status as objects is unsettled.

This sense that language is a "putting into flesh" appears all through Williams's work, as has been frequently noted in the criticism.' She often makes use of concrete language, both in poetry and prose, that signifies by position on the page and by juxtaposition. All these attributes appear in this passage from Refuge that describes an experience at the Great Salt Lake:

> Wind and waves. Wind and waves. The smell of brine is burning in my lungs. I can taste it on my lips. I want more brine, more salt. Wet hands. I lick my fingers, until I am sucking them dry. I close my eyes. The smell and taste combined reminds me of making love in the Basin; flesh slippery with sweat in the heat of the desert. Wind and waves. A sigh and a surge.

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8 In addition to Mary Newell's essay, cited above, see other essays in Surveying the Literary Landscapes, including Bart H. Welling's and Melissa A. Goldthwaite's. Welling claims that Williams's Leap "succeeds in the Helene Cixous-inspired enterprise of 'writing out of the body"' (134). Goldthwaite likewise argues that Williams's work connects an embodied, feminist aesthetic practice to her religious *beliefs.*

> I pull away from the lake, pause, and rest easily in the sanctuary of sage.
>
> Ten miles east, General Conference is adjourned. (240)

Enclosing the first paragraph with repeated, rhythmic phrases encourages the reader to hear the sound of the onomatopoeic words. The more embodied, less abstract language thus earns the transition into Williams's suggestion of sexual union with the place. The passage depicting that union reveals an indistinctly bound body: the external sea conjures sweat that begins internally; sweat and salty air are not easily distinguished either.

Further, Williams contrasts her sexual experience of the lake with the events of the General Conference, a Mormon gathering, by reminding us of their simultaneity, a fact indicated also by their parallel placement on the page. Indeed, in this case, the parallel amounts to a critique of the conference, which Williams clarifies a few lines later by asking of Mormon theology, "Where is the Motherbody?" (240). She goes on to argue that "the Holy Ghost is female, although she has remained hidden, deprived of a body [. .1" (240). In <u>Refuge,</u> restoring that body means not only acknowledging her own embodied experiences, it means accepting the intersubjectivity that includes the birds, the lake, and the environment more broadly.

Williams's nature writing thus operates as a cultural critique, and interestingly aligns with Kristeva's account of Hans's language practice. Kristeva calls Hans's "writing" a "scription that encompassed his living space with all its extras." Hans's fear of the horse is a way of making sense of his dread of nothing, his dread of that which is outside representation, Kristeva explains (<u>Powers of Horror</u> 42-43). Nature writing, as texts that bring the lives of nonhuman beings into language and the symbolic, complicates

anthropocentric understandings of the nonhuman. As "scriptions," nature writings recognize the extras of our cultural living spaces. But nature writing has the potentially opposite effect of Hans's tendency to scapegoat his fears onto the horse, to make it symbolic of his dread, which resembles the more general denigration of the "animal" addressed throughout this dissertation. Writing the animal can render what is often abjected visible, and can thereby factor animality into rational decisions (a literal example of this is Williams's concern about the effects the Salt Lake dike plan would have on the birds). Simultaneously, Williams's version of nature *writing,* which problematizes not only the exterior world seen, but also the experiences of the seer, shows that the symbolic functions partly as symptom, as a marker of loss and thickness. Williams brings her fears home to her own subjective practice, refusing, for instance, the idea of using rhinoceros horns as an aphrodisiac.

In making fundamental inquiries into the character of language, Williams turns to other originary human experiences like birth for analogies. The notion of birth gone awry is key throughout Refuge in particular. In the dream she describes in the Prologue, for example, a doctor tells Williams, "'You have cancer in your blood and you have nine months to heal yourself" (4). The idea of growing a thickness in this place of injury, of perverse creation, *is an* apt figure for the book itself, appropriate to its introduction. This particular figure will' be used repeatedly in the remainder of the book to describe the cancerous growths in Williams's loved ones.

Another important example of this birth figure occurs near the end of the text, when her paternal grandmother Mimi has been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Narrating a conversation with Mimi during which she had watched her grandmother stand,

Williams explains, "I could not *help* but notice *her* distended belly, pregnant with tumor" (263). Their discussion is highly relevant to Williams's observation. Williams has told of being unnerved by the display of hollow eggs at the Museum of Natural History where she works: "It dawns on me, eggs are not meant to be seen. This collection is a sacrilege, the exposed medicine bundles of a tribe" (262). She has sought Mimi for counsel on the matter, explaining to her grandmother that "'The hollow eggs translated into hollow wombs. The Earth is not well and neither are we" (262-3). Mimi agrees, "'It's all related' (263).

This rejection of the display returns us to the concern with objectification discussed above, but set now in a wider context. Williams draws together her critique of a worldview that produces wars (and hence the nuclear tests that Williams suspects to be the cause of the cancers in Refugel with this very tendency to remove eggs from their living world, to render them into objects to be viewed. This comparison is further implied in Williams's labeling the collection a "stockpile" (262). Calling the bird eggs "medicine bundles" also puts birds on a level with humans, a practice implicit and explicit throughout the text. This appellation, furthermore, suggests a critique of another primary function of such museums--housing human artifacts that are frequently sacred to violently displaced cultures. In the course of conquest, such cultures were often animalized and thereby dismissed from the realm of the human in order to justify their displacement and murder. Such reductions of Others are an element in war psychology more generally.'

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9 Elaine Scarry's The Body in Pain demonstrates how the enemy is dehumanized in warfare and torture; a central concern of Levinas' Otherwise Than Being is this disregard for the other person, especially as dramatized in the Holocaust and the World Wars.

These eggs thus become artifacts of loss in their very status as artifacts. As I have suggested above, this view of the object and the text is typical of Refuge. We can, therefore, again notice the resemblance between Williams's work and the concerns with abject textuality that are especially strong in Hemingway and Kerouac. Williams presents a slightly different critique of created objects in a significant passage often cited in the criticism:

> The cancer process is not unlike the creative process. Ideas emerge slowly, quietly, invisibly at first. They are most often abnormal thoughts, thoughts that disrupt the quotidian, the accustomed. They divide and multiply, become invasive. With time, they congeal, consolidate, and make themselves conscious. An idea surfaces and demands total attention. I take it from my body and give it away. (44)

As Elizabeth Dodd indicates, this passage belongs to the "desire to embrace the cancer, to embrace one's death as part of one's self, part of the whole of one's life" that is an important to the work Refuge does (10). Such effort is necessary to soften Williams's mother's suffering as well as her own, and is thus part of the text's sympathetic work. However, Dodd wrongly assumes the conventional derogation of the sentimental here, when she claims this passage contradicts the larger trajectory of Refuge. Dodd argues that this passage implies a submission to cancer and thus perhaps to its causes. She reminds us that Williams moves from this type of passive endurance toward resistance to and action against the causes of her family's suffering, signaled perhaps most clearly in the book's final chapter, "The Clan of One-Breasted Women." We can make this claim without surrendering the importance of the text's sympathetic work.

Nonetheless, I certainly agree that one of the driving energies of the book is its critique of this tendency to suffer in silence that Williams finds especially prevalent among Mormon women. With this project in mind, the above passage can seem especially disturbing because it naturalizes cancer in order to accept it, and even goes so far as to include the creative process as part of this natural suffering. Thus, as Dodd reminds us, "'Death' may be natural, but these specific cases of terminal cancer are unnatural" (10). However, in the next section of Dodd's essay, she quotes Williams's significant belief that "it is a point of disaster or deep pain that propels us from one era into the next" (Dodd 10). This idea reminds us that the traumatic experience of cancer, though its causes should certainly be resisted, also offers significant insights, a point that might be made about traumatic experiences more generally. The ethical practices and conclusions drawn from these experiences at the limits of pain are indeed the central concern of my larger argument.

In Williams's case, those insights include but go beyond the lesson that political action is necessary. This passage quoted above, for instance, highlights the theme of loss in creation that runs throughout Refuge. Another fundamental statement of this idea appears in Williams's interrogation, "What it is about the relationship of a mother that can heal or hurt us?" (50). In this section, Williams answers that "Her womb is the first landscape we inhabit" that is "perfectly safe," but that it is a place we must, of course, leave_ She continues, "The umbilical cord is cut--not at our request. Separation is immediate. A mother reclaims her body, for her own life. Not ours. Minutes old, our first death is our own birth" (50). Suffering from the consequences of the logic of this original separation in losing her mother again, with the terrible finality of death this time,

Williams is persistently led to investigations of loss. Such loss invades her home, even at the level of the word. For instance, she begins her account of a family gathering early in her mother's ovarian cancer ordeal with the one-word sentence "Home" (28). What follows is an unsettling of that word's meaning for her family in the face of illness.

Williams's heterogeneous sense of home and self, involving the birds and landscapes of Utah, is also disturbed. The invasion is actualized and symbolized with strange, dramatic, coincidental rise of Salt Lake and the flooding of Bear River Refuge. Williams's knowledge and experience of her home place, her skill as a naturalist, her practice of intersubjectivity of the sort Snyder advocates, adds depth and thoroughness to her experience of loss as it floods through these knowiedges.

This is why her awareness of larger geological processes, for instance, has such poignancy. in an autobiography of loss, the account of the rise and fall of Lake Bonneville (30-32), familiar to Williams since her childhood shell hunts on the bench of land where her family lived, becomes overwhelming proof of fluctuation and loss in all of nature. Indeed, when Williams exclaims of Halley's Comet that "It hung in the sky like a tear" (130), she offers an image that extends her experience of loss beyond the terrestrial.

It is an accurate comparison, since comets do take that shape. But this accuracy also earns the sentimentality of the word "tear," since the fact of endless motion and change in nature is presented incontrovertibly with her view of the comet. It functions as an image of the loss she is enduring. This becomes clearer in the lines immediately following the tear comparison: "As the morning light leached into darkness, the comet vanished. / 'One more time ... I kept whispering under my breath. 'Let me see it one more time' (130). The flux of night giving itself into day produces one kind of

experiential loss, while the sense of her own impending mortality intensifies her prayer for longevity. Human life is thus humbled when measured against this sign of cosmic *time, which* is a conventional theme of nature writing. But Williams compellingly adds pathos to the theme, writing a natural occurrence into its place in a human story of loss. In this figure, we see her connection of the women's diary tradition to the nature writing tradition.

This sequence can be understood as a synecdoche for the function of writing in Refu g e more *generally*. Williams first puts the comet *into* a familial context, printing the letter she received from her grandmother Mimi instructing her where to find the comet. She then narrates her experience of seeing it, and finally offers words to replace its disappearance. The distance of loss, the removal of words from the experiences they narrate is signified by the quotation marks that surround the spoken words of prayer, words she was driven to pronounce by that sense of loss looming over this text. This printed prayer thus implies a kind of double removal.

So these marks on the page replace the experience of the comet, just as the whole text stands in for as well as represents Williams's loss of her mother. Again we see how language functions as an incorporation of the sort discussed by Kristeva above. I have mentioned the thickness of such language, and here we sense the quality of opacity **in that** thickness insofar as the words describing the comet do not replace the original experience Williams had. Narrating her experience surely enriches Williams's sense of **its meaning,** even raising it into the realm of shared, public discourse that can be read and that, indeed, critics can address. Writing therefore gives the experience a kind of lucidity, which is the "clarity" that reasonable writing is often said to possess. But that clarity is not entire.

The opacity, the density, the weight of loss is also implicit in the writing. An awareness of this tendency in writing is necessary to a rigorous, embodied conception of language, and perhaps especially to ethical claims about language use. Williams's exposure of this reality in language use is thus closely parallel to Levinas's skeptical claims about knowledge discussed in Chapter I.

We have seen language similarly exposed in each of the writers considered in previous chapters. The process of language gathering in a place of loss is analogous to the writing on and of the body throughout Williams's work especially. Scars are a recurring example. At one moment in Refuge, having just returned from the hospital, where she had a small cyst removed from her breast, Williams writes, "My scars portend my lineage. I look at Mother and I see myself' (97). This thought triggers memories at a further remove: "As a child, I was aware that my grandmother, Lettie, had only one breast. It was not a shocking sight. It was her body" (97). These words mark the place of that memory like scars, portending lineage. A self-consciousness of lineage is crucial to the intersubjectivity under discussion in this dissertation, but in this case that awareness sharpens Williams's sense of loss. This view across generations points to a notion addressed more fully below, that both bodies and words acquire greater thickness and opacity in time. New words must be produced in response to new circumstances, like scars performing the body's natural defense against injury. Both mark the trauma of time and demonstrate the fluidity of the subject which is a fluidity present in the world itself. These marks, on this strange border between the subject who is writing memories and the subject who experienced the memories, are *themselves* a kind of abject, neither the subject precisely nor objects.

It is his own experience of the trauma of time that provokes Jacques Derrida's The Work of Mourning, written about the far side of the subject's trajectory. It reads from death backwards, into the life of the subject, This book, which is my source for the term thickness, houses Derrida's eulogies for such intellectuals as Roland Barthes, Sarah Kofman, Michel Foucault, and Emmanuel Levinas. Like Kristeva's Powers of Horror, it is a text that complicates the distinction between the personal and the theoretical.' Indeed, this complication is one of the animating issues in Derrida's book. In each mourning essay, he is driven to respond both personally and generally as a eulogist, demonstrating (and enacting) the tension in the eulogy genre between an individual's mourning, an *utterly* solitary experience in one sense, and the shared, public version of mourning. These particular eulogies present this tension with special intensity, since the individuals being mourned have so public a public side as well-known theorists. In marking the general loss, Den-ida is obliged to take up and commend their intellectual contributions, to mourn theoretically. And yet Derrida remains painfully aware that each eulogistic word testifies to the personal loss that motivates them, as though they were marks of pain, symptoms, hardly reasonable words at all.

A different way of framing this tension is to set it between clarity and obscurity, as Derrida shows when writing "The Deaths of Roland Barthes": "These thoughts are for him, for Roland Barthes, meaning that I think of him and about him, not only of or about his work. 'For him' also suggests that I would like to dedicate these thoughts to him, give them to him, and destine them for him" (35, original emphasis). The rhythmed

10 For instance, Thea Harrington points out that Kristeva shifts between the theoretical "we" and the personal "I" in Powers of Horror.

repetition of the objective pronoun him, as well as the italics, emphasize Derrida's gesture here towards Barthes the man, the physical being who has been lost. That pronoun "him" is thus a kind of thickness in the writing, an acknowledgment of Barthes's otherness, now complete: "Yet they will no longer reach and this must be the starting point of my reflection; they can no longer reach him, reach all the way to him, assuming they ever could have while he was still living." Derrida explains further, "We must hold fast to this evidence, to its excessive clarity, and continually return to it as if to the simplest thing, to that alone which, while withdrawing into the impossible, still leaves us to think and gives us occasion for thought" (35). .

It is death, then, that gives this "excessive clarity" to his thoughts, that provides the stark truth and the sense of meaning to his discourse. But, death is also proof of meaning's obscurity and singularity, of the fact that the person Roland Barthes can no longer be reached, that he can no longer be asked what a given sentence or idea means to him. It reminds Derrida that each mourner will suffer differently and to some extent alone, and that Derrida's words must respect those differences in deference to his audience and as part of his respect even for Barthes himself. For the value of Barthes's ideas, who or what Barthes is at the time of Derrida's writing, lives in those differences partly.

Working, then, between his own sense of loss and his desire to recognize the social importance of Barthes's work, Derrida turns to the texts that embody that work. His discussion of Barthes's work alternates between intellectual clarity and personal obscurity. The very method of discussion, tending to be a phenomenology of his reading experience in preparation for this eulogistic writing, emphasizes the particularity of that

reading and its personal inflection, its thickness. In the mourning situation, the ethical element of the thickness in language becomes especially clear, since Derrida is responding with language to a highly significant moment. This thickness, which often as here shows itself as a sentimentality, is crucial to his language having any meaning worth the occasion. A purely rational discussion of these thinkers lost to us would be, as Derrida says, "saying and exchanging nothing," as though, Barthes, say, were pure theorist, pure ideas, not a person, a human, a loved friend. But recognition of this thickness is also itself admission of further loss. The opacity of language, I have been claiming, ironically becomes clearer in moments of trauma and crisis, but the fact of the trauma itself, the "excessive clarity" of the death, brings a thickness to reasoning. Thus Den-ida worries--in the rich, embodied sense—about what happens to Barthes's writings now that he has died. Derrida himself takes up Barthes's first and last books in place of his lost friend, and self-consciously reduces person to oeuvre, oeuvre to milestone texts, and those texts to points of significance for him as a reader. Thus Derrida thickens as he clarifies Barthes's work, and Barthes as a person, thereby. Here again we have this ethical uncanny, the doubleness of ethical discourse. But as he makes clear throughout, there is no other choice but to speak carefully, ethically, *since* the only type of speaking that would not impose some kind of reduction onto Barthes would be silence, which is a respectfulness more killing than speech.

The shared eulogistic circumstances of Williams's and Derrida's writings explains why their texts speak to one another. But these texts' lessons do not apply only in trauma and loss. The traumatic circumstances, the approach toward limits, reveals how language functions more generally. Like Williams, Derrida states clearly in the beginning of his

remarks on Barthes that language itself always moves between these poles of memory and loss, of clarity and obscurity, of damage and regard. He glosses the plural in his title "The Deaths of Roland Barthes" as acknowledgment of the plurality of loss, acknowledgment that this one event is a loss for many people, and different for each one; yet, he points out that "the proper name [. . .] alone and by itself says death, all deaths in one. It says death even while the bearer of it is still living" (34). This naming, which here can be understood as a synecdoche for language itself, is "the unique disappearance of the unique" (34). The move to give even a unique label to this complex and multiple being will simplify and reduce in the same way Derrida shows death to reduce the living person. But the key point is that this reduction is necessary in life as it is in confronting death. Without the reduction of the world's complexity that language provides, there can be no shared understanding via language, no shared speech.

The tortured constraints of the mourning eulogist, Derrida insistently implies, are really the constraints of all language users, who must speak to reach across the divides between people, but who must do so with infinite care, as much care as they can possibly manage. This **is,** of course, precisely the situation of Terry Tempest Williams, writing for the women in her family, for the suffering of birds and snakes, for sickness in the land. Williams's wariness of such reduction appears particularly in her resistance to objectification, discussed above, but she has made general statements that testify more broadly to her awareness of the association between suffering and writing. In the opening essay of Red, "Home Work," she says, "The region of the American West shares common ground with the South: each has found its voice in loss" (7). Later in that essay she refers to political policy she disagrees with as leaving an "open wound" in the West (10).

The close association between loss and writing persists throughout Williams's work. And while Derrida acknowledges this loss as a thickness in more theoretical terms, even while attending to the personal, Williams emphasizes such opacity at the level of the body. Thus, Derrida's ethical balance between the theoretical and the subjective is parallel to Williams's more embodied ethical balance between the personal and the political. This is partly why Alexander Hunt's claim that Williams raises the abject into *view* is so important. Her texts testify to the thickness that bodies, like language, take on. Her testimony signals this weight in the human subject, this body essential to vitality, life, meaning.

To put this idea broadly, we can say language and bodies are always in relation to one another, and must answer each to the other, and keep answering. There is an ethical component both in the reserve and humility this awareness requires--be careful not to say or to assume too much--and in the obligation to speak out, to keep renewing the language and the ideas it embodies. Language use appears thus, in Derrida's words, as "the gift and the revocation of the gift, just try to choose" (38, original emphasis).

Williams's work helps us better understand what more such bodily awareness can be or mean. She brings the loss of her mother into clarity, telling the story of the disruptions that this experience sent through her life, so that her mother's life and her body must factor into our social renewal, into the changes of our present social living; but she also marks out the pain and loss she experienced that escapes representation. In Williams's work, such experience beyond representation appears in the life of the subject as well as in the death. In Refuge, she sits with her mother as she suffers, putting their bodies together to ease their pain (e.g. 162, 230); she returns to consciously inhabit her

own body as a way of enduring her loss, often by putting it into relation with the physical earth, as we saw above (e.g. 240). She also works in more affirmative fashion, hoping to better understand birds by seeing in the ways and from the places they do. At one moment in Refuge, for instance, she goes on a count of breeding pelicans in an airplane. Her treatment of the experience recognizes the importance of flying as birds do in order to better understand them (103-07). This is embodied understanding. These efforts amount to her notion of an erotics of place, practiced most especially in texts like An Unspoken Hunger and Desert Quartet. Such experiences cannot be fully conveyed, as the first of these two titles indicates. Furthermore, bodily awareness in each of these instances of Williams's larger oeuvre acts as an interruption of the coherent subject, wounding her and informing her, always altering her, unsettling her.

So what of Williams bringing this understanding of the subject into the public arena with *her* writing and with her activism? Testimonies of pain upset the policies that produced them and drive the improvement of those policies. Their sentimentality goads us to become better at our rational work, not worse. They also goad us to persist in revelations of the bodily and the sentimental. They ask us to acknowledge the thickness, the loss, even the horror central to the life of the subject. Much of this problematic is presented, again in synecdoche, in the demonstration at the Nevada Test Site for which Williams is arrested 'in protest against that testing. This form of activism makes literal the idea that bodies accompany the subject **at** every stage. Putting the body in the way of policy is a *form* of dramatization, an incorporation of a rational and emotional *response* to those policies. The drama is a kind of complex language and an example of how language works, marking the place of pain, moving toward the social good. These

interruptions do disturb, but without violence. They are a relatively speechless speaking-out, the negotiating that intercedes before violence, a thickness that is peaceful.

The subject, if it is rational at all, is precisely this ability to "be there" for the Other, to respond. It is, to return to this chapter's epigraph, "to remember," to come to terms with the body, with the enervation of body whose sensitivity has been structured by shocks and losses in the world, and which produces a language and a reasoning. More than any one belief or word or body, what lasts is this position, this orientation, this pathos. The texts or the bodies that remain behind will always gather more thickness, will perhaps dry up to leave small, thick marks behind, like a salt residue, as from a tear.

CHAPTER VI

THE REBIRTH OF STORY IN SILKO'S ALMANAC OF THE DEAD

> "We don't believe in boundaries. Borders. Nothing like that. We are here thousands of years before the first whites. We are here before maps or quit *claims. We* know *where* we *belong on* this earth. We always moved freely. North-south. East-west. We pay no attention to what isn't real. Imaginary lines. Imaginary minutes and hours. Written law. We recognize none of that."
> {Leslie Marmon Silko, Almanac of the Dead 216)

This chapter calls into question the national designation meant to organize this dissertation. Can Leslie Marmon Silko be positioned in the American literary sphere? Her work interrupts such designations, as the passage cited above indicates. Writing from the margins of the "American" literary, Silko helps us see the constructedness of that category. Indeed, her work, while in one sense on the boundary of the literary, in another sense denies the literary/worldly distinction altogether. Her stories function partly as political doctrines, as declarations of sovereignty, which reverse the center/margin polarity as well. The stories of Almanac of the Dead attenuate *America* and the American literary by positioning them in a larger historical context. Indeed, this text reveals the political contestation involved in story creation in general. Its dramatic enactment of competing stories therefore represents the political effects of literature.

Silko's perspective is importantly earned by her own "hybrid" identity status. Though her Laguna Pueblo heritage is very important, Silko's background also includes

white and Mexican ancestors) As Louis Owens points out in Other Destinies, this "mixedblood" status positions Silko between worlds. This uncertain identity status underscores the importance of identity in American Indian fiction more generally.' Indeed, Owens claims that "The recovering or rearticulation of an identity, a process dependent upon a rediscovered sense of place as well as community [. . is at the center of American Indian fiction" (5). All of the authors treated in this dissertation have shared these concerns. What the situation of Silko, and American Indian authors more generally, makes clearer is the political element of this concern with identity. Owens demonstrates this idea by discussing how the discursive innovations of Indian novels involve and create political changes (8-9 especially). He shows how Indian novelists frequently write toward "another destiny or another plot," outside the too common idea of the vanishing (or vanished) Indian.' This overtly political conception of literature reveals how questions of literary subjectivity, questions of identity, relate directly to questions of ethics, as we saw with Beat writers, and as I suggest in Chapter I.

The American Indian literary work of writing "another destiny," probably most important in its actual effects for Native peoples, also helps us understand writers like Hemingway or Kerouac in new ways. Ultimately, such revisions of more canonical

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I Silko discusses her ethnic identity in many places. See, for examples, Yellow Woman and a lkauty of the Spirit 17, and passim. See also Louis Owens's treatment of this issue in his chapter on Silko in Other Destinies (especially 167).

2 Owens uses the term "American Indian." I follow his lead here, as well as Shari Huhndorfs in Going Native. Huhndorf explains that "Native" is a more general term that includes indigenous groups like Eskimos who are not included in the more specific term "Indian" (1, note 2).

3 Owens quotes Balchtin in this passage. See 18.

interpretations return to affect readings of and the future possibilities of Native or other marginalized literatures. My own interpretive trajectory, I should note, has moved anachronistically in this fashion, from Silko backwards. Some of the reading strategies I learned in dialogue with Silko's work, especially Almanac of the Dead, I later applied to readings of earlier writers like Hemingway.

The importance of acknowledging hybrid identity aligns with the formal hybridity involved in renewing the novel *genre.* Both acts *have* political ramifications. Owens demonstrates this with regard to Silko's earlier novel Ceremony, claiming that "The dissolution of generic distinctions effected by Silko's interweaving of poetry and prose throughout the novel further underscores the permeability of all boundaries, the interpenetrability of 'conceptual horizons' within all discourse" (171). Such resistance to generic distinctions appears in different and perhaps more vigorous form in Almanac of the Dead., a 763-page novel, considering over five hundred years of history, that took over ten years to write, and which hosts, by Yvonne Reineke's count, more than eighty characters. It earns a status as hybrid in these very characteristics, and Silko names this generic resistance in the book's title. An almanac is a collection of facts and interpretations from many discourses, oriented toward daily actions_ Joni Adamson claims that "almanacs challenge the very notion of authoritative discourse" because of this mixture {134).

Silko makes other significant challenges to prevailing modes of understanding. Reineke asserts that Almanac of the Dead contests historical and continued colonialism (that now *tends* to take the form of transnational capitalism rather than blatant colonial nationalism) by redescribing time and space in Mayan, and more generally Native

American, terms. These terms spell out a circularity of events and of time, in which predictions presage European arrival and announce, before the arrival itself, the eventual departure of European life-styles and worldviews. Linear conceptions of time and European mappings of space are both shown to be impermanent parts of a larger and longer story in which Native inhabitation and control of the Americas continues.'

Reineke established the background for her essay by arguing that Western philosophical conceptions of linear time correspond directly to abstract ideas of space expressed in the modern, Western nation-state. She reminds us, following Jonathan Boyarin, that particularly modem conceptions of the state developed since the Renaissance in Europe alongside the theorization of time in terms of "Cartesian coordinates" (66). As time became a demarcated line, maps marked discrete boundaries around spaces. Of course, all this was involved practically, politically, and philosophically in colonization. European nation-states drew boundaries around their territories and identities, then competed to apply this process to other places like the Americas.

1 argue below that in Almanac of the Dead, Silko asks stories to do this work of resistance by imputing them with agency. This notion of story as something more than simple text appears in the critical responses to her book, though in rather general terms. Describing both the Almanac within the novel and the novel itself, Reineke remarks on "the living nature of the book" {74). David Moore describes Almanac of the Dead's "open-endedness" (164). Joy Harjo indicates a sense of excessiveness that I equate with

4 Alex Hunt's recent essay on Almanac of the Dead also attends to Silko's remapping of space, arguing that the very establishment itself of boundaries calls for their transgression.

stories that go beyond themselves when she says the book "is larger than the five hundred years it encompasses, larger than the story or the storyteller" (210). All these formulations evoke the resistance to containment theme of Almanac of the Dead.

Tread containment to represent generally the hopes of the "Destroyers" that Silko works against in the novel. In the text's affirmative stories, boundary-breaking liberatory narratives counter the drive to contain and control, a drive that Donna Haraway identifies in Primate Visions as promoting a culture of death. This epistemological work parallels and produces the text's depictions of worldly events: border crossings, prison riots, movements across class boundaries, even the breeching of Glen Canyon Dam. Even Silko's sometimes gruesome presentation of murderous stories, *often* explicitly circling around abjection and dread of the abject, exposes the consequences of narratives of control.

The worldly work of this exposure--it disturbs most readers--corroborates Silko's notion of the power of stories. This work also reminds us of the ethical potential of texts that can seem to be "bad company," to return to Wayne Booth's figure of the book as a friend.' John Skow's review of Almanac of the Dead, published in Time magazine, provides an example of a disturbed response. Skow calls Silko a "very angry author" and makes frequent use of words like "vengeful" to describe the book (86). Skow's summarizing characterization of Almanac of the Dead, though, is even more germane here:

> The author's sentences have a drive and a sting to them. But the receptacle of her crowded, raging, enormously long book swirls with half-

5 See Booth's The Company We Keep and my previous chapter.

> digested revulsion, half-explained characters and, a white elitist must add, more than a little self-righteousness. (86)

This dismissal touches on several elements that are key to reading the text. His accusation of "self-righteousness" on Silko's part is accompanied by his own *self*-conscious and perhaps ironic admission of possessing that very attribute in the words "white elitist." This complex moment foregrounds the importance of identity and politics for this book and for Indian literatures more generally. Skow shows an awareness that his identity status is likely to be connected to his dismissal of the book by those who disagree with his judgment. Identity is therefore connected to aesthetic standards.

The terms of Skow's review, such as "half-digested revulsion," also recall the (sometimes unconsciously) contested state of the abject in contemporary literature. Skow is frustrated by the book's unruliness, by its enormity and its open-endedness. He refers to the whole as a "receptacle," with overtones, in so negative a review, of a trash receptacle. His dismissal contains this book's obviously revolutionary ideas by recourse to generic expectations. Its generic hybridity gives Skow a way to dismiss both the text and its political ambitions.

Our critical response to this text indicates our political position. The question is not so much whether Almanac of the Dead is full of revulsion and awfulness. It is. Skow is right on this count. The question is whether to read such revulsion as indicative of actual, worldly conditions, or, as Skow does, as the angry and messy scratchings of a misguided individual. Of course, a nuanced criticism should be able to do some of both of these options where appropriate, but Skow leaves little room for nuance. Skow's aesthetic dismissal of the book also supports his personal critique of its author, and vice-

versa. His characterizations of Silko define bel: as outside the acceptable culture, as abject. For instance, we might suspect racist overtones when he refers to Lecha and Zeta as "half-breed witches," an ethnic appellation that could also be applied to Silko. This mixed-blood status defies conventional categories, much as the text itself does, provoking anxieties of identity that connect to aesthetic judgments. Furthermore, in this context, Skow's critique of Silko's "rage" and "fury" racializes and abjects political upheaval. Edward Said explains in Culture and Imperialism that the operation of criticism delineates culture (and therefore cultural identity) by making a "protective enclosure" that excludes certain kinds of beliefs and practices (xiv). Skow is excluding Silko and her political text.

I read Almanac of the Dead, therefore, in much the same vein as Howl. Both texts are so preoccupied with destructive, worldly realities that the possibility of traditional artfulness becomes problematic; both texts are thus partly symptoms of the status of the literary at their moments in American culture. This status, reflected in Silko's case with generic hybridity and more especially with the unreliability of sincere speech in her text (more on this below), functions therefore as a form of cultural critique. Reviews like Skow's suffer from an anxious separation between the political and the literary that is conventional but inappropriate to much contemporary writing, especially American Indian writing. Skow clearly recognizes the identity politics of his judgments, but feels compelled within his critical framework to make those judgments anyway.

Silko reveals how policing the boundaries of culture produced many of the problems Almanac of the Dean considers. While the United States carried on its policies of containment on fronts in Korea and elsewhere, this containment worldview brought the

Jackpile uranium mine to the Laguna Pueblos in 1949, as depicted in Almanac of the Dead (and in Ceremony). Sterling decides early in Almanac of the Dead that the mine had "destroyed" his life because it brought out the stone snake that ultimately got him banished (35). In other words, he ultimately learns that his banishment story is rooted in U.S. foreign policy. Furthermore, Silko has argued for a connection between the mine and the actual occurrence of a teenage suicide pact in Laguna (Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit 130-31).

Clearly, the World Wars and the conflicts that followed disrupted the Laguna community. Silko explains that when community members began working at the mine, it provoked contention. The elders particularly resisted the mine, putting young and old at odds (131). Disruption also came into the community with the loss of men in war and with the psychic trauma of veterans who returned. The mine symbolically and actually represents all these changes.

Sterling's education process over the course of the novel indicates how global anxiety about national identity, as revealed in containment policies, cannot be disconnected from individual experiences. He first explains his banishment by considering only immediate, local circumstances: He blames the snake, the *mine,* and himself. His later and more informed position recognizes the effects of broader events in the world on his life. Sterling's trajectory through the novel from the reductive, early account of his banishment to his more experienced view of it at the conclusion models the learning process occasioned by this book's stories for all those who experience them, including Silko.

Silko's own account of writing this novel, then, importantly parallels Sterling's experience. She explains in an interview with Laura Coltelli that she "started out with the idea of writing about Tucson." She "meant to write a novel about the spiritual identity of a place, a location" (119). Silko's initial sense of the story, like Sterling's sense of his own story, was primarily local, particular to her homeland. But as she wrote the book, she found herself considering stories that interweave tremendously various histories. Silko's history of a particular place became a nearly global history seen through a place. As she describes it, the stories refused to be contained either by a local geography or by an author's intentions.6

While many writers feel that their stories produce themselves, this feeling is especially valuable in relation to this novel, which, I have suggested, thematizes the agency of stories. The last of the "Fragments from the Ancient Notebooks" announces this:

> One day a story will arrive in your town. There will always be disagreement over direction—whether the story came from the southwest or the southeast. The story may arrive with a stranger, a traveler thrown out of his home country months ago. Or the story may be brought by an

6 Silko's book can therefore be likened to what Terry Gifford calls the "post-pastoral," a mode of considering text/environment relations "that transcends the closed circle of the pastoral and anti-pastoral modes" (78). Silko values the local, "spiritual identity" of places in keeping with pastoral conventions, but recognizes the broader circumstances that impinge on the local. Gifford uses Gary Snyder as his test case in putting forth this claim, a fact which appropriately reminds us of similarities in the type of literary work Snyder and Silko do.

> old friend, perhaps the parrot trader. But after you hear the story, you and the others prepare by the new moon to rise up against the slave masters. (578)

The story's arrival is the real interest in this passage; the bearers' arrival is only incidental. Further, a story that "will arrive" is one that apparently has its own will. Indeed, the story can come from different directions and with different company, reinforcing the notion that it travels with its own volition. In this way, the relationship between story and its bearer is much like the relationship between poem and creek that Snyder describes, as we saw in Chapter IV. The unknown status of the story's bearers also enables a hybrid, cross-fertilizing conception of culture.

This passage also implicitly justifies the larger narrative in which it appears. Silko's notion of an Almanac, she has said, comes partly from surviving Mayan codices (Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit 136). Those codices are stories that have come from another culture in the south to Silko, who is rendering them into signs of a coming (and ongoing) uprising. The stories cross cultural and geographical boundaries in the above description, as would the potential "stranger" who might be carrying them, In short, this passage instructs its reader to open to a wider set of circumstances, as Sterling is forced to do in the text, and as Silko has claimed the stories made her do.

A second example of the agency of stories explains more directly that

> Yoeme had believed power resides within certain stories; this power ensures the story to be retold, and with each retelling a slight but permanent shift took place_ Yoeme's story of her deliverance changed forever the odds against all captives; each time a revolutionist escaped

> death in one century, two revolutionists escaped certain death in the following century even if they had never heard such an escape story [...] (581)

This passage underscores Silko's point that the narratives are themselves a kind of power, beyond being simply relational tools or merely fictive creations. The power implicit in enunciation, furthermore, implies an ethics of speech, comparable to Levinas's insistence on the ethics of "saying" anew.

But liberating stories are not the only ones with power. Much of the book is dominated by other stories of murder, destruction, and desolation, stories which also perpetuate themselves. Constructive and destructive stories are one of many pairings in Almanac of the Dead. Trigg's craven Diaries, for example, can be understood as an inversion of Yoeme's Almanac. The ending of Trigg's Diaries reveals elements of his bioproducts plan that would absolutely commodity humans by selling their body parts. His diaries are therefore an abject version of the book's affirmative stories, and the differences are apparent in the nature of the texts themselves. The diaries reveal self-interest, while the more affirmative stones bear as many interests in mind as possible.'

The "Destroyers'" stories consistently reveal an aspiration to contain forces and beings in the world. Beaufrey is one of the best examples of a malicious, self-interested, conniving character.' Silko's presents him as a kind of type, whose characteristics are exaggerated enough for us to read his description going beyond critique into parody: "Even as child, Beaufrey had realized he was different from the other children. He had

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7 We might further suggest that the power Trigg's plan has over him reveals a heterogeneous subjectivity that Trigg seems to disavow because his actions being driven by his own foul stories reveal how will is determined partly by forces beyond it.

always loved himself, only himself. [. .] He disliked noise and disruptions in his perfect, drowsy pleasure and daydreams" (533). His ideal world is self-contained, pure, undiluted. This isolationist solipsism makes Beaufrey's obsession with pure blood, sancri ura, unsurprising. As Silko expounds his theories about blood purity, taking her descriptions further toward caricature as she often does in this novel, she aligns his thinking with class systems, particularly those in Europe:

> As Beaufrey had read European history *in* college, he had *realized* there had always been a connection between human cannibals and the aristocracy. Members of European aristocracy were simply more inclined to hunger and crave human flesh and blood because centuries of le droit du seigneur had corrupted them absolutely. Beaufrey was bored by anything less than the absolute; of course "blue bloods" such as himself were different. Bluebeard in his castle hung "his" wives from meat hooks in the tower; the "wives" had been the brides of serfs raped by the master on the evening of their wedding night. (534-35)

As one in a lineage of such thinking, Beaufrey is made into a type, a representative. As such, he also appears to be subject to the stories, which persist through this history of numerous believers.

Silko's history seems partly sincere criticism and partly exaggerated, unstable discourse in which she has allowed the stories to drive themselves. It is difficult to separate the two. In a text that is quite critical of Europeans and European culture, this critique of Beaufrey's lineage can be read as serious, but we should also recognize that Silko means Beaufrey to be seen as insane. Because of this, it is hard to accept his

account of European history as standing more generally for European beliefs. Such moments characterize Silko's strangely unstable text, and that instability can be read to signify the uneasy and political position of literary discourse more generally, much as I suggested of Ginsberg's and Kerouac's texts in Chapter III.

The destructiveness Silko attributes to characters like Beaufrey in this historical passage also appears in the mocking creation story Silko attributes to Beaufrey:

> In the beginning, European aristocracy had risen above the common soil; the royalty had been superior beings who had survived the test of combat's fire and steel. But two world wars had consumed Europe's best blood; after the First World War, true aristocracy had virtually been annihilated. {535)

We recognize the opposition to the earth--rising "above the common soil"--as part of what Silko's work sincerely criticizes. But this passage also reveals itself as unstable and insane discourse by moving so quickly from creation to destruction, from "rising above" to annihilation. In that sense, the paragraph models Silko's larger argument about the eventual destruction of all things European by mocking European creation stories, especially this tale of blood purity.

Silko's critique becomes more pronounced and parodic in the paragraph that follows the previous quotation: "So much for the blue blood. Those with sangre pura were entirely different beings, on a far higher plane, inconceivable to commoners. They might crave human flesh. What of it?" (535). With this addition of cannibalism, Silko puts the humanity of such adherents into question. Rather than confronting his selfishness, Beaufrey is depicted as a character who will excuse any horror with this

separatist blood logic, He never grows out of his childhood love of solitude, instead producing a story to understand world history that justifies his desires and that accounts for his identity. The story confirms his identity, and identity enables unethical action.

This habit of believing his own invented stories translates into Beaufrey's gruesome treatment of his "rough trade" lovers, as we see particularly in David's case:

> Beaufrey loved the theater. Players such as Eric or David and the cunt were a dime a dozen; Beaufrey was the director and the author; he was the producer. One act followed another; Eric had performed the last act of his life farce perfectly; uncanny how Eric's blood and flesh had become a medium consumed by a single performance. (537)

The language is meant to reveal Beaufrey's fantasy of himself as God (director, author, and producer). People are thus reduced to and contained by the dramatic roles he invents for them. They have no other value. Likewise, the acceptance in the previous quotation of aristocratic cannibalism echoes in the word "consumed" above, where Beaufrey understands his dramatic stories to eat the likes of Eric. Indeed, when Beaufrey thinks approvingly of David, he considers him "delectable" (535). This reading aligns with numerous other details: Beaufrey's interest in the torture films that render lives into consumable commodities; his marketing of David's pictures of Eric's suicide, which preys on the most abject of David's and his audience's desires; and the transformation of ,David's death into the controlled frames of photographs.

The culmination of the David plot dramatizes the story Beaufrey has devised as that story reproduces itself in both the photographs that will undoubtedly find a place among the torture documentaries and in David's own thought process just prior to his

death. David seems in certain ways to have accepted Beaufrey's views of the world, to be living by his story: "For weeks David had ridden the mare to practice control. He had practiced to please Beaufrey, but also to prove to himself he could control the mare. Sports and games were always about control; control was everything" (564). Yet, as the horse runs faster, David's "arms ached from fighting the mare. He hated the fever of the mare's need to run. He hated Beaufrey's gibe that the rider must 'husband' his horse" (564).

Ultimately, David rejects the ethic of control and lets the horse run freely. Silko's description of this moment fuses horse and rider as they break out of a repressive philosophy: "David felt a great sense of relief and freedom as he let the reins go slack. He crouched low over the neck and clutched mane and reins in both hands" {564). But having long submitted to that philosophy, horse and rider take their departure from it too far. In their escape, the animal and the human are joined in their response to the same system of control, pushed here to the point of crisis, then to death and abjection. David's naive liberation, moreover, mocks simplistic accounts of the "free" subject. It is another example of Silko's unstable discourse in Almanac of the Dead. This story, then, indicates story's position M general in the novel. It strains under formal and political limits and then explodes into the abject consequences of those systems. Part of the abject element of this particular story is its gruesome absurdity.

Other characters are capable of recognizing the malevolence of these stories in time to respond against them more constructively. These characters dramatize the role of criticism in a book that is metaliterary in its concern for what story does. Clinton, for example, is described as a character outraged by a controlling culture in which "white

man's words were always being shoved in the black man's mouth" (405). He develops first a "pure contempt for any authority but his own" (404), and then begins to apply his authority: "Clinton no longer felt himself choking on anguish—on the rage and pain he had felt every day of his life, even in the army. What had made the difference were the spirits, and the army he and Rambo were putting together" (426). He also finds an outlet in his radio broadcasts, where he formulates an account of slavery that highlights its effort to contain: "Wealth from slavery buys storehouses of food and armies and the finest physicians. Wealth obtains more slaves and more property to barricade the Master in the world of the living" (428, my emphasis).

Several other characters in the novel bear Clinton's theory out. Menardo and Alegria are the most blatant examples. It is key that Menardo runs an insurance empire, a business that is oriented by the attempt to control risks. Menardo's forays into the security business also indicate his obsession with danger. The failure of this philosophical system to bring the desired comfort is attested to by Menardo's absurd demise. He so wants an absolute safety that he provokes his own death by commanding Tacho to shoot him in order to try out his bulletproof vest.

Root comes to a critical view of the stories that had oriented his life through physical trauma. While his motorcycle crash brings him close to death, he prefers to think "that all his family had died in his accident" (169). He explains to Lecha, "all they cared about was how much I was going to cost them [. . .1" (170). This view is substantiated when we learn that the insurance company compensated Root for the

accident, but that his mother had invested that money as she saw fit, apparently ignoring his will along with what the doctors said about Root's still fully *present* mental capacities (205-6).

Essentially disowned by this family that had made its fortune by selling whiskey during the Indian wars, Root is accepted into Calabazas's business. Root explains,

> Being around Mexicans and Indians or black people, had not made him *feel* uncomfortable. Not as his own family had. *Because if* you weren't born white, you were forced to see differences; or if you weren't born what they called normal, or if you got injured, then you were left to explore the world of the different. (202-3)

Root learns to listen to Calabazas's stories, even though they first "drove Root crazy" with their indirect mode of expression (215).

Root's border crossing offers him access to the type of theoretical position Silko advocates generally in Almanac of the Dead, here presented in a Calabaza lecture:

> "We don't believe in boundaries. Borders. Nothing like that. We are here thousands of years before the first whites. We are here before maps or quit claims. We *know* where we belong on this earth. *We* always moved freely. North-south. East-west. We pay no attention to what isn't real. Imaginary lines. Imaginary minutes and hours. Written law. We recognize none of that." (216)

This passage stakes Calabaza's and his people's claim to ownership of the land. This "novel," this "story," is acting as a political declaration of sovereignty. It does this partly with its deliberate confounding of English grammar. When Calabazas says we have been

here for thousands *of* years, using the present tense of "to be," he justifies his ostensibly illegal conduct (carrying drugs across the border) by showing it consistent with a much older, and ongoing, cultural system. The "thousands of years" equals "we are"; identity is linked to long-term inhabitation. This present-tense construction also makes room for newcomers like Root who elect to (and are permitted to) share this identity status. Moreover, Root's position as an open-minded outsider makes him a model for many of Silko's readers, particularly those unfamiliar with the method or message of Calabaza's talk. His process of learning how to listen can be the readers' too.

Root's (and the reader's) initiation into Calabaza's stories is exactly opposite the education process modeled with Beaufrey and David. While Beaufrey excludes David from his treasured blue-blood status and ultimately destroys him, his physical "lover," Calabazas decides to trust a man he would have every right to revile as a descendant of those who took advantage of the colonialist situation. Root has seemingly enacted part of the prophecy that all things European will leave the Americas by driving out (and having knocked out) his own European habits of mind. The violence of his education aptly parallels the unstable discourse typical of the whole novel. Yet, it is vitally important to the logic of this book that Root earns his place and listens to stories that are traditional from those who have a right to tell them. Those who produce purely fantastic stories, stories that narrowly account for the world, do so in their own interests, and do so always at the expense of others.

Silko's novel identifies this drive to contain as a leitmotif of this larger historical moment, what she calls the Reign of Death-Eye Dog. Thinking broadly and openly this way, and privileging stories as agents of history, *confounds* our "normal" expectations of

literary texts. This is one reason, I suspect, Silko's book has seen mixed and often nervous critical responses. The hybrid and political work she asks story to do answers to the literary anxieties we have seen in writers ranging from Hemingway to Terry Tempest Williams by renewing the purpose of texts for culture. For Silko, literature that merely confirms an unjust cultural life is not satisfactory. Rather, concern for the just practice of culture in the larger world, for the collective embodiment of heterogeneous life, drives the birth of this political almanac.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: UNIQUELY COMMON, POLITICAL ANIMALS

> It is difficult to connect these different realms, to show the involvements of culture with expanding empires, to make observations about art that preserve its unique endowments and at the same time map its affiliations, but, I submit, *we* must attempt this, and set the art in the global, earthly context. Territory and possessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human history is rooted in the earth j. . .]
> (Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism 7)

One of the main roots of this dissertation traces back to my uncanny experience of reading Emmanuel Levinas's Otherwise Than Being around four years ago. In another part of my thinking at that time, which I imagined to be entirely separate from the work on Levinas, *I* was re-reading Gary Snyder's 1990 book The Practice of the Wild and following some of his leads into Buddhist literatures. Snyder, though he is a syncretic thinker, takes most of his influence from Asia and the East, and from his experiences in wild nature. Levinas, born in Lithuania and a long-time professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne in France before passing away in 1995, was very much a Western thinker. Despite these rather significant differences in orientation, I noticed fundamental likenesses between these thinkers' ethical conceptions.

Both are strongly committed to ideas of an ethical subjectivity estranged from itself. Both, indeed, find in estrangement a sign or indication of ethics. The important access to this version of subjectivity for Levinas is speech. The possibility of exchanging meaningful words, of signification, indicates the self s invasion by the Other. The Other

speaks us, speaks through us in language, which is why speech is a sign of ethics. Thus it is that, as Levinas writes in Otherwise Than Being, "The command," and this is the ethical command, "is stated by the mouth of him it commands" (147). The speaker is not at home even in her or his *own* words.

Snyder's account of human subjectivity shows perhaps as much of this Levinasian strangeness, this estrangement from the home of the self. True to Snyder's lifelong interest in nonhuman nature, to the physical world, though, he presents his version of ethicality in terms of physical bodies (as we have seen, Levinas also finds signs of ethics in embodied subjectivity). Snyder makes this case most fully and clearly in The Practice of the Wild. The following is one significant passage:

> It would appear that the common conception of evolution is that of competing species running a sort of race through time on planet earth, all on the same running field, some dropping out, some flagging, some victoriously in front. If the background and foreground are reversed, and we look at it from the side of the "conditions" and their creative possibilities, we can see these multitudes of interactions through hundreds of other eyes. We could say a food brings a form into existence. Huckleberries and salmon call for bears, the clouds of plankton of the North Pacific call for salmon, and salmon call for seals and thus orcas. The Sperm Whale is sucked into existence by the pulsing, fluctuating pastures of squid, and the open niches of the Galapagos Islands sucked a diversity of bird forms and functions out of one line of finch. (109; see also 15-17, 27, 29 and passim)

In Snyder's account, animals, human and nonhuman, are urged into particular physical forms by the Others of and in their environments, much as Levinas describes the Other urging the subject into subjectivity. The Snyder passage also reminds us of the key difference between these thinkers: the status of the animal. For Levinas, ethics are characteristically human, while for Snyder, ethics can be discerned more generally in nature.

Though I think the types of ethical reversals effected by Levinas and Snyder have much in common, significant questions remain about the value of calling either account "ethical." For one, the temptation is strong in reading a passage like Snyder's to suggest that all of nature behaves ethically. This is the type of argument that Christian Diehm has published, which I address in my Introduction. Such an idea raises a set of questions, however, that put the whole ethics discourse at risk. Most directly, the risk is this: If all of nature is ethical, is not the idea of ethics entirely meaningless? Is not everything that happens part of nature and therefore ethical? A short-hand answer to this question might be that each form of ethics is unique, that, indeed, uniqueness is crucial to the very notion of ethics. Much as individual people are uniquely called to ethical actions, then, what can be called ethical with reference to other living beings is utterly unique. A predator's ethical acts, then, would differ significantly from a deer's (or, for that matter, a human's). However, this answer restores the problem of what "ethical" means in general.

Indeed, as we have seen, many questions have been raised about even Levinas's more constricted conception of ethics that applies only to humanity. I treat many of these in my Introduction, too. For instance, as Judith Butler asks, if being ethical involves this somewhat violent invasion of the self by the Other, what room can there be for peace, for,

indeed, calm breathing itself? Butler's interrogation reminds us that a Levinasian ethics can seem to restore an account of nature and reality as inherently violent. Derrida, in a related, skeptical attitude, suggests that an "ethics" cannot adequately describe the subjection of the subject to the Other. For him, doubt is in fact more essential to subjectivity and even to ethicality than "ethics." I connect Butler's concerns about the ordinary needs of the human, like breathing, to Derrida's argument for doubt by recourse to Derrida's term "thickness." "Thickness" usefully conjures the materiality, the embodiment of the subject and the attendant consequences of that status for reasoning. Thickness acknowledges the material, situated, rhetorical character of knowledge, making room for doubt.

In other words, for now, my best resolution to this dilemma of the value and meaning of this word "ethics" depends partly on the inability to resolve the question in any final way. I would rely on a heterogeneous account of reason that admits some measure of contradiction, without, I hope, resting in that contradiction in a comfortable way. Reason's thickness must be acknowledged such that these various accounts cannot be expected to be perfectly resolved, or perhaps dissolved, into some transparent solvent that passes all light through it. The particularity of each of these accounts requires that we allow them to sustain their differences from each other, and this is an ethical command of critical work.

More specifically, I mean by this that holding Levinas and Snyder together (and the other thinkers doing similar work) can provide two parallel, yet persistently differing accounts of subjectivity and ethicality. Part of what I take from Levinas is that an ethical subjectivity must always take as much responsibility as possible. Responsibility must

come home to the subject in an utterly unique way in each unique situation. Utter uniqueness, the singularity of each physical being, is one way to gloss the meaning of embodiment. The consequences of this uniqueness are not only that each person must be open to each Other, but also that a person must make new choices about behavior moment to moment. This is necessary not just for the possibility of ethics, but also for the well-being of the individual who would be responsible in a genuine fashion. Similar conclusions can be drawn from Snyder about individual ethicality.

But Snyder's greater attention to nature and to the prevalence of natural intersubjectivity can mollify the stringency of Levinasian ethical subjectivity. Snyder can help us hold our uniqueness (and therefore our ethical responsibility) next to an awareness that much is common among all living and nonliving systems, making room for embodied peacefulness as part of nature. Snyder's perspective resembles Derrida's notion of the living as a combination of the living and the nonliving. Remembering such intersubjectivity restores the other perspective to embodiment: Living in a unique body means being utterly singular, yet the boundaries of the body are porous, with the very material of the body being replaced in our interactions with our food and environment. My reading of the trajectory of Hemingway's work also *finds* him presenting a more complex view of nature later in his life that has room for lions playing as well as killing. Likewise, I argued above that Terry Tempest Williams's Refuee reminds us of the ethical call for peaceful inhabitation of the body as part of our obligations to Others.

Admitting to contradiction can seem to be a surrender in reasonable work. It can *seem to be* the easy way out. But, on the contrary, I would argue that a rhetorical conception of reasoning, concerned with its applications, makes the acceptance of

contradiction a laborious task. The thinker cannot rest in the resolution of a single, lucid idea, but must labor, situation to situation, to apply the various sets of ideas in specific ways suited to particular circumstances. This is also what an ethical, intellectual practice means to me. This approach, in my view, confirms much of what already tends to happen in literary studies. Literary scholars pay attention to the details, to the way experiences, emotions, and ideas are embodied in unique ways, but in language that also makes uniqueness communicable.

Other important, specific questions are raised, or left unresolved, by this dissertation that I should mention: I have only begun to address the questions of identity that have come to seem more and more essential to ethical inquiries. In the Introduction, I mention that the Greek roots of the word "ethics" trace back to identity by way of "character." One's character is a sign of one's ethics. In Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism, Edward Said has helped us see the political and worldly implications of the identity-confirming work of literature, especially in the post-Renaissance age of nation-states. If an ethical identity entails an openness to Others, and to Others whom we have tended to become more and more wary of characterizing or assuming knowledge about, identity itself has become an increasingly evasive notion. I believe this has made ethical action more difficult in many cases. If one does not know who she or he **is,** how can one know how to act? Such anxieties of identity, I argued above, destabilize the word itself in Silko's Almanac of the Dead. We also saw how Kerouac's The Subterraneans focuses its ethical questions on anxieties of identity.

Yet, clearly, the unsettling of identity in philosophy and critical discourse is driven partly by ethical impulses. For instance, the construction of hegemonic identity at the

expense of Others has been importantly criticized and therefore unsettled. Even with these critiques in view, though, it has become clearer and clearer that identity is always constructed with reference to Others. Our task is to theorize relations with alterity in an ethical way, which is why Levinas seems so useful.

More questions then arise: How are we to understand an American literature that is necessarily open to many identities, and how can we understand ethics in such situations? We should think more about the idea that American identity depends heavily on this kind of openness to process because it is democracy, itself a political process, that unites America as a coherent category. This recognition entails destabilizing firm ideas of national identity. The political scientist Anne Norton pushes such destabilization, I think, beyond the bounds of the ethical, indicating ways that openness to process and to saying anew can potentially conflict with ethical sensibility. Norton argues in Republic of Signs that at the core of democracy is desire, a remaking of the self dependent on the possibility *of* renewing one's identity. The problem is to align this type of recognition with Levinas's notion of "saying," which involves a similar type of perpetual renewal, without losing sight of the ethical and ecological consequences of such renewals. Literature is one way to keep such consequences in view. For example, Silko's and Ginsberg's texts discussed above register some of the consequences of more narrow applications of desire when coupled with power. Ginsberg raises the abject into view, while Silko exposes the politics of stories.

Other questions that might be further pursued: How do landscape and environment play into this construction of the self and of ethics? What role does gender play in these questions? Gender is an important to many of the texts I have analyzed, but

I have not had room to work out these issues. Also, how might acknowledging our physicality not only imply the ethically controlled conduct toward environment that many discourses, including ecocriticisni, have asked for, but also indicate new, more constructive possibilities? How might literature not only help us rein in harmful practices of mastery, but also present new potential for enriching practices of intersubjectivity? The possibility of perpetual identity renewal must be put in dialogue with greater awareness of our responsibility to Others, human and nonhuman.

Applying these ideas to literary discourse partly involves acknowledging the alterity within it. This means not only the alterity of relationships with Other groups frequently discussed as marginalized: non-European ethnic groups, marginal gender groups, and so on, but also, clearly and importantly, with the nonhuman. This is where I locate many of this dissertation's analyses, beginning with Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea. Hemingway does not exactly present an ethical relationship with nonhuman, but he does, quite clearly, disrupt accepted notions of what such ethical relationships might be. He upsets the absolute human/animal distinction. Such disruptions from within are precisely what Said says are so often missing from imperialist literature (e.g. Culture and Imperialism 82). Snyder and Terry Tempest Williams move beyond disruption, articulating ways that posthuman cultures might be practices in localized, embodied fashion, without restoring an imperialistic subject.

To conclude with a final example representing many of these concerns: Hemingway's importance to American literary identity is so strongly felt that, as Paul Hendrickson reported in the New York Times on Sunday, August 7th, Hemingway's house in Cuba, which is in considerable disrepair, "was named was named to the 2005 list

of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington." It is a strange irony that Hemingway, one of America's most famous ex-patriots, would be adopted into the American identity such that his Cuban home (Finca Vigia), standing on soil forbidden for Americans to tread, would be so highly valued by the National Trust. In Kristeva's terms, Hemingway's foreign house thus appears as an incorporation of American identity, one that indicates the homesickness operating *in* that identity system.

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