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Queer utopian geographies and Cold War poetry

Brigitte Natalie McCray

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, bmcra4@lsu.edu

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QUEER UTOPIAN GEOGRAPHIES AND COLD WAR POETRY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Brigitte Natalie McCray
B.A., Emory & Henry College, 1999
M.A. and M.F.A., Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006
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Dedication

In memory of my grandmother Betty Sue, who taught me
the power of empathy and compassion.

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Abstract

Queer Utopian Geographies and Cold War Poetry intervenes in the general narrative about Cold War culture, made even more famous by such recent popular shows like *Mad Men* and *Pan Am*, that describes the era as a repressed society in desperate need of liberation. While indeed Cold War America was a time of paranoia and loyalty oaths, even before the Stonewall Riots of 1969 gay men and lesbians found subtle ways to resist popular media and government discourse that perpetuated the myth that the homosexual was the anti-citizen. A number of gay men and lesbians traveled extensively to escape this Cold War culture, and it is through the trope of geography in the terrain of Cold War poetry that readers recognize that resistance is able to occur under authority's nose and outside closely controlled places. This forces us to confront the assumption that resistance needs to be violent and highly visible in order to be successful. For instance, my project argues that the poetry of W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop, Frank O'Hara, and Allen Ginsberg represents utopian concepts. Not only do the poets depict geographical space as offering utopian possibility, but they also reveal how daily moments and experiences provide hope, what I refer to as utopian practice throughout the project. Furthermore, these practices and spaces typically conjure queer specters of the past and these hauntings also point to a hopeful future. This dissertation claims that, while scholars and readers cannot ignore the negativity of Cold War homophobia, these poets actively worked to reshape the world at the literal level and through lyric subjectivity.

Introduction

Queer Utopian Geographies and Cold War Poetry

Where in the older society . . . Utopian thought represented a diversion of revolutionary energy into idle wish-fulfillments and imaginary satisfactions, in our own time the very nature of the Utopian concept has undergone a dialectical reversal. Now it is practical thinking which everywhere represents a capitulation to the system itself, and stands as a testimony to the power of the system to transform even its adversaries into its own mirror image. The Utopian idea, on the contrary, keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one and takes the form of a stubborn negation of all that is. —Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*

During his lunch break on September 29, 2010, Manhattan resident Jim Swimm walked through Inwood Hill Park and came across a body floating in the Hudson River. The police discovered the body was that of gay Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi, who had committed suicide by jumping from the George Washington Bridge after being taunted for weeks by his college roommate through the use of a webcam and social media. In a recent *New Yorker* article about Clementi's death and the trial of his roommate, Ravi Pazhani, the writer, Ian Parker, notes that Swimm is also gay and quotes him as saying, "Not to sound metaphysical about it, but I feel as if [Clementi] was speaking to me that day—saying, people need to pay attention to what's happening" (23).

Swimm's use of the word "metaphysical" is pertinent because it indicates the way, as scholar José Esteban Muñoz argues, we carry our dead with us into battle (47). This will become a running theme throughout this project. We are haunted by the traumas of the past; however, Swimm's comment also provides hope that the future will be transformed. Queer specters in particular allow us to conceive of a world that is better than our present one because, as ghostly presences, they burn into our memories, reminding us that we must put right what is off balance in the present.

That Swimm found Clementi's body in a river is also, I think, significant. Geographies are often painful reminders of the limits of the here and now and are often the symbolic representation of the body. Through the mapping of space, geography parallels the control and surveillance of the body, but maps also enable us to envision new and better spaces. In *For Space*, geographer Doreen Massey uses the term "taming of the spatial" to refer to maps. She writes:

Faced with a need to know . . . you reach for the map and lay it out upon the table. Here is 'space' as a flat surface, a continuous surface. Space as the completed product. As a coherent closed system. Here space is completely and instantaneously interconnected; space you can walk across. The map works in the manner of the synchronies of the structuralists. It tells of an order in things. With the map we can locate ourselves and find our way. And we know where others are as well. So yes, this map can set me dreaming, let my imagination run. (106)

Maps are used to control, or, like Massey suggests, they also enable our imagination. The love for maps is obvious in this quotation from Massey, and I too love maps. When I visit a new city, the first item on my to-do list is to obtain a map. I take a Sharpie and trace my routes. This grounding of the body in space and time allows me to enter new and confusing worlds on my own terms. I am able to imagine myself belonging in the neighborhoods and fitting-in with the communities and people. This movement is important because, while places are static and unchanging, space, as cultural geographers frequently remind us, is changed when we enter it. The imagined belonging is transformed into literal connections between people in those spaces. Marginalized individuals then see geographies not just in the negative but also as offering the possibility of positive transformation.

This is what triggers Cold War poet Frank O'Hara, in his poem "Second Avenue," to use the phrase "map of ecstasy" (196) and in "Snedden's Landing Variations," "map of love" (79). O'Hara's poetry illustrates that places on maps may become hopeful sites. Although Swimm

located Clementi's body in the Hudson River, that he found him and managed to turn the fact of Clementi's suicide into a reminder of our ethical obligation to the student shows how the spaces within geography, haunted by ghostly presences, may be used for social and political purposes.

The particular here and now that this project analyzes is that of the Cold War era, when stereotypical beliefs about homosexuality led gay men and lesbians to fear for their safety and livelihoods. Cold War discourse from the popular media and governmental bureaucracies identified homosexuals as weak-minded, and government officials argued this "trait" would result in communists easily turning homosexuals into spies. Purges of suspected homosexuals from numerous branches of government at the federal to the local level occurred frequently during the early 1950s. This time of paranoia, loyalty oaths, and suspicion made America a place in need of escape. The literary representation of geography became the ultimate utopian symbol.

As poets traveled, however, disappointment replaced hope as the new spaces they entered failed to meet ideal expectations. Instead, the poems became the spaces where new maps were imagined and created and where the disappointment became transformed into renewed hope. "Both landscape and map are strongly pictorial terms, and this connects them with . . . vision," says Denis Cosgrove in his *Geography and Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World*. He adds, "Mapping remains a way of representing the world; the map remains a visible image of the (or at least a) world" (1-2). The worlds and spaces, as well as the described practices that occur within those worlds and spaces, counter the homophobia and negativity present in the political and social worlds. Maps "make the world present and absent, erasing as well as inscribing space, making some places and dismantling or destroying others" (xxx), say Stephen Daniels, Dydia DeLyser, J. Nicholas Entrikin and Douglas Richardson, in their introduction to *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds: Geography and the Humanities*. The

poems of Frank O'Hara, Allen Ginsberg, W.H. Auden, and Elizabeth Bishop remake the then present (and our own present) by forging new spaces and imagining other spaces anew within these poetic maps. Oscar Wilde once said, "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing (141). I argue throughout this study that this is precisely what these Cold War poets attempted: to write in and mark spaces on a poetic map that would present hope for a better life. In doing so, they offered a stark contrast to the bleak, Cold War maps that circulated throughout the era's system of power and oppression. These maps divided individuals from others and divided nations from other nations.

Queer Utopian Geographies and Cold War Poetry intervenes then in the general narrative about Cold War culture, made even more famous by such recent popular shows like *Mad Men* and *Pan Am*, that describes the era as a repressed society in desperate need of liberation. While indeed Cold War America was a time of paranoia and loyalty oaths, even before the Stonewall Riots of 1969 gay men and lesbians found subtle ways to resist popular media and government discourse that perpetuated the myth that the homosexual was the anti-citizen. A number of gay men and lesbians traveled extensively to escape this Cold War culture, and it is through the trope of geography in the terrain of Cold War poetry that readers recognize that resistance is able to occur under authority's nose and outside closely controlled places. This forces us to confront the assumption that resistance needs to be violent and highly visible in order to be successful. For instance, my project argues that the poetry of Auden, Bishop, O'Hara, and Ginsberg represents utopian concepts. Not only do the poets depict geographical space as offering utopian possibility, but they also reveal how daily moments and experiences provide hope, what I refer to as utopian practice throughout the study. Furthermore, these practices and

spaces typically conjure queer specters of the past, and these hauntings also point to a hopeful future. This dissertation claims that, while scholars and readers cannot ignore the negativity of Cold War homophobia, these poets actively worked to reshape the world at the literal level and through lyric subjectivity.

American poetry has a long history of representing utopian possibility. In his 1988 book *The Utopian Moment in Contemporary American Poetry*, Norman Finkelstein argues that moments of utopian promise are found throughout postwar American poetry. By studying both the formal aesthetics and thematic elements in the works of a number of poets like O'Hara, John Ashbery, William Carlos Williams, and Louis Zukofsky, Finkelstein reveals how the poets propose a “different order of experience” (28). Poetry, in particular, according to Finkelstein, makes moments appear as if they are happening in the reader's immediate present. Utopian anticipation is then more readily and easily expressed, since it is contrasted to the linear nature of most prose (13).

Furthermore, Thomas Yingling's essay “Homosexuality and Utopian Discourse in American Poetry” appeared in the 1996 text *Breaking Bounds: Whitman & American Cultural Studies*. The essay examines the paradoxical relationship between American poetry and homosexuality. Yingling argues that America has often been associated with utopian ideals, and the identification of America with such promise is marked throughout the nation's poetry; however, homosexuality has never been a part of America's utopian promise. When American poets like Walt Whitman, Hart Crane, and Allen Ginsberg utilize utopian language in their poetry, they counter a nationalism that has excluded them while, at the same time, inserting utopian ideals in an effort to be included (138). Yingling maintains, “Homosexuality has always had to imagine the world other than as it is, reorganized socially, politically, and (sometimes)

economically in order to award centrality and significance to the terms of the lives of gay men and women. This had not always led the homosexual writer into utopian questions, but in the case of American poets, where the utopian promise of America is a standard topos, the collision of the two has been remarkable” (137). Yingling grounds his analysis in, mostly, the poetry of Walt Whitman. Although he attempts to analyze the work of other poets, like Hart Crane and Allen Ginsberg, Yingling’s essay feels incomplete, as if he ran out of time before he could perform revisions. In fact, the essay is one of the last he wrote; he passed away from complications from AIDS in 1992. Like the poets he writes about, Yingling becomes another ghostly figure who haunts us in the present.

The haunting of absent people, according to Muñoz, forces us to realize that “something is missing” and what is here is “not enough” (45), making us long for Utopia. Like Muñoz’s own work, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, which uses Ernst Bloch’s theories of the utopian function of art as a theoretical backdrop, this project also uses Bloch as a framework. In particular, his analysis of traveling and geography is especially useful. In *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch notes that simply traveling to exotic, foreign lands will not offer utopian possibility; the expectation is never fulfilled, thus resulting in disappointment (371). As a matter of fact, the poets’ travels caused them to realize that it was not the traveling itself that would bring joy. Bloch adds that the traveler “is in a position, thanks to his own defamiliarization which he passes on to . . . objects, not to experience any of the deadening effect of everyday life and possibly to see meanings in the objects which in everyday life only a competent painter would discover. Defamiliarization is here the exact opposite of alienation A kind of subjective temporalization of space, subjective spatialization of time arises out of this, especially when the scenery changes quickly” (371). Bloch’s stress on finding “meanings in the

objects . . . in everyday life” means that utopia is found in the quotidian. This is not unusual for a theorist. In fact, the same utopian theory is argued by Roland Barthes in *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (23), and it is even carried through in a number of Frederic Jameson’s texts, found especially in the quotation that serves as the epigraph to this introduction.

The instinct for travel, however, came out of a desire for human connection and community, and poets like Auden realized that communities and connections would be forged from the quotidian. Auden famously coined the word “homintern,” a word meant to illicit a positive connotation for a homosexual community. Later, as homosexuality in Cold War America, and within many nations, was seen as a threat to national security, Auden’s term, a satirical stab at the Red Scare, as well as the fear of a homosexual community, lost Auden’s intended use. Grounded in contagion theory, politicians and Cold War leaders believed that, like the Comintern, an international homosexual community worked in a similar way to communist spies. Historian David K. Johnson explains, “Like the Comintern, or Communist International, homosexuals were thought to make up a worldwide network, or ‘homintern.’ . . . By the 1950s, fear that American culture was increasingly dominated by this community . . . [led to a fear that] homosexuals and their sympathizers would” [corrupt] “all aspects of American culture” (34-35). Having lived in Berlin during the late 1920s, with literary friends Christopher Isherwood and Stephen Spender, Auden understood the importance of community, especially when individuals felt like outsiders from society (Page 79). A romantic idea of community, however, would not serve utopian purposes; instead, daily experience taught Auden that communities are never perfect. A utopian *ideal* of community would only lead to failed relationships and totalitarian states; instead, utopian practice is portrayed in Auden’s poetry as a way to form more inclusive communities.

Despite this movement between nations and cultures found throughout gay and lesbian Cold War poetry, scholarly works on travel and literature in the twentieth century are few and far between. Jeffrey Gray, one of the few scholars who writes about travel and literature in the twentieth century, argues in his book *Mastery's End: Travel and Postwar American Poetry*, that the majority of criticism centered on literature and travel focuses on nineteenth-century travel narratives. Even then, he says, those critical works analyze travel narratives instead of other forms of writing, like poetry. Furthermore, travel narrative analysis typically claims that travel is tied to hegemony, mastery, and exploitation. Gray asks if such a critical lens also applies for twentieth-century literature. In the postwar era, the accessibility of travel, through less expensive rates and quicker modes of transportation, suggests a different reading. Gray explains that travel in the twentieth century, because of this accessibility, means shuttling “between multiple overlapping and sometimes mutually canceling discursive communities” (12). Instead of a postcolonial mode of inquiry to analyze twentieth-century travel, Gray says that this shuttling between spaces needs to be analyzed based on vulnerability and disorientation, a theory very similar to Bloch’s own. According to Gray, instead of seeing postwar writers guilty of irresponsibility for their self-imposed exile, scholars must explore the shifting nature of subjectivity (12). This shifting subjectivity opened the way for utopian practice.

Along with Gray, another recent work that performs an analysis in this way is Todd Tietchen’s *The Cubalogues: Beat Writers in Revolutionary Havana*. In this 2010 text, Tietchen argues that the Cubalogues, a subgenre of Beat travel narrative produced while those writers visited the country before travel restrictions to Cuba were imposed, reveal that early revolutionary culture perceived Cuba as an experiment in cross-cultural collaboration. Such visionary idealism would be challenged as Castro’s restrictive policies would test the writers’

revolutionary ideals. This resulted in a questioning of both American and Cuban politics. For instance, Ginsberg became disheartened over Castro's attack on homosexuality. Like those analyzing the nineteenth-century travel narratives, Tietchen, even when discussing a writer like Ginsberg, focuses mainly on the travel narratives and virtually ignores the poetry Ginsberg wrote in response to his travels to Cuba. Gray, on the other hand, argues in his study that poetry offers a speaking subject that is not as stable as a travel narrative; this prompts "provocative reasons to look at travel in the poem and to find other categories of discovery . . ." (17). Indeed, Ginsberg's viewpoints about Cuba changed from the earliest poem written about Cuba, "Havana 1953," to the later poems, such as his elegy for Che Guevara.

Analyzing such a shifting notion of subjectivity in relation to travel is not new to a mode of inquiry like queer theory. In fact, many cultural geographers frequently argue that, depending on the space that queer bodies inhabit, gender and sexuality alter. Influenced by such spatial theorists like Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, texts from the mid-to-late 1990s argue that the spatial and the sexual are linked in ways that shape both the geography and the people located in that particular geography. These texts include *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexuality*, edited by David Bell and Gill Valentine, the first book to investigate sexualities from a geographical view, and *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, edited by Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter. Early work in this field of study revealed how gay communities in urban settings impacted particular neighborhoods like West Hollywood or Greenwich Village; scholars argue that identities are bound up with the memories of these places. Also, cultural geographers studied gay neighborhoods to analyze contemporary, Western urbanization. Furthermore, *Queers in Space* illuminates the way various spaces embody the very literal structures of homophobia. For example, they detail how home

design, beaches, streets, and public advertisements limit privacy, freedom, movement, and expression for LGBT individuals. More recently, in 2010, Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst, in their book *Space, Place, and Sex: Geographies of Sexualities*, claim that “it matters that bodies occupy particular positions marked in time and space” because the relationship between body and place that is played out on a daily basis is inherently political (2). All these texts argue that the body is sometimes fixed and, yet, adaptable in spaces.

Even though queer theory has taken on the subject of diaspora, gay and lesbian Americans crossing borders into other countries, however, have been overlooked. In their book on queer diasporas, Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler conclude that issues of movement, migration, and border crossings reveal further aspects of sexuality and gender identity (2). Depending on how transient figures shift identities within various locations, homosexual acts and bodies change meanings; this, they argue, results in the “labors of reinvention and renegotiation in new places” (3). For example, spatial theorist Michel de Certeau says, “Thus a North African living in Paris or Roubaix (France) insinuates into the system imposed on him by the construction of low-income housing development or of the French language the ways of ‘dwelling’ (in a house or a language) peculiar to his native Kabylia. He superimposes them and, by that combination, creates for himself a space in which he can find ways of using the constraining order of the place or of the language” (qtd. in Patton and Sánchez-Eppler 5-6). This is a perfect description of utopian practice at work.

Poets like Auden, Ginsberg, and Bishop consistently traveled abroad in search of better spaces. Scholars have failed to consider how such queer escapist desire conforms to and challenges a homonationalist perspective as well as upholds it. This study considers how the desire for escape troubles the scholarly conversation. Poetry too, because of its lack of

connection to popular culture and popular discourse, best represents these various themes within gay and lesbian writing the best. Writings serve as artifacts, indicating not only subversive Cold War queerness, but, at the same time, how Cold War contradictions perpetuated normative ideals of gender and sexuality. Gay men and lesbian writers unconsciously upheld such ideals. Ginsberg, for example, as subversive as he is usually seen, idolized Fidel Castro's masculinity, which, ironically, paralleled American, Cold War constructions of masculinity.

Scholars theorizing the queer diaspora are indebted to *Queer Diasporas* by Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Ebbler and *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings*, edited by Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú. The editors of these collections argue that identity is formed by both real and imaginary places, but border crossing during the Cold War resulted in difficulty as immigration and border bureaucracies threatened deportation or denied entry to gays and lesbians, not only in America but in other countries as well. Deported from both Cuba and Czechoslovakia at the height of the Cold War, Allen Ginsberg is a perfect example. Margot Canady's recent book *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* examines the immigration bureaucracy in America and argues that the figure of the transient in American immigration history has been seen as a figure of "unrestrained sexuality" (98-99). It is interesting too that, despite such a firmly established binary between democracy and communism during the Cold War, borders under both political umbrellas enacted very similar immigration policies against gays and lesbians. In America, such bureaucracies like immigration enabled the definition of a "normative" sexual character.

I use the phrase "sexual character" to refer to Miriam G. Reumann's work on the *American Sexual Character*. In that text, Reumann argues that writings like the Kinsey Reports and discussions within the culture at large about sexuality "functioned to harness and rework

notions of national identity” and were “anchored by the concept of American sexual character” (3). I argue that this sexual character discourse, during the Cold War, led many gay and lesbian individuals to find escape. Escapist migration is grounded in the utopian hope of locating others like oneself, and it is a search to understand one’s identity. In “Rethinking Queer Migration through the Body,” Andrew Gorman-Murray argues that “queer migration should be understood as *an embodied search for sexual identity* (111). Similarly, Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler argue that queer bodies “seek out an ‘imagined community’ of intrinsic queerness” (10). This queer escapism is further articulated by Larry Knopp in his essay “Ontologies of Place, Placeness, and Movement.” He says queer journeys are “about the search for an integrated wholeness as individual humans living in some kind of community (if not society). . . . Specifically, it is an effort to create order out of the chaos that is fractured identity combined with structures of power that disciplines” (123).

I identify the particular chaos for these writers in the Cold War ideology that resulted in direct punishment for same-sex desire and same-sex behavior. According to queer theorist Henry Abelove, same-sex sexual acts were illegal throughout the United States. He says that “during the 1950s, California revoked licenses for queers who practiced as doctors, dentists, lawyers, pharmacists or morticians. From about 1950 until about 1961, even those colleges and universities that were willing to hire queers were almost always disposed to fire any of them, including any tenured faculty member, who was arrested on a sex charge, and such arrests were made” (74-75). Escapist movement from such restrictions within the United States meant moving to a city, since the city offered various methods of disguise. For American poets, traveling meant escaping not just to the city but from the country to places like Cuba, Brazil, France, Greece, Mexico, India, and various European countries. As members of the middle class,

or the upper middle class, they had the means and money to travel abroad. They knew, too, that moving as far away as possible offered even more abilities, depending on the country, to pass in heterosexual society. And some countries, in contrast to America, failed to be as shocked about homosexuality. For instance, in Bill Morgan's biography of Ginsberg, *I Celebrate Myself*, he says that while in Greece, it was "a revelation for [Ginsberg] to be in a place where homosexuality wasn't frowned upon" (338). Also, Bishop found the residents of Ouro Preto, in Brazil, to be inviting.

However, only a handful of scholarly texts have focused on analyzing this queer movement by American writers to other countries. Ablove, in his 2003 text *Deep Gossip*, has a brief chapter entitled "New York City Gay Liberation and the Queer Commuters" that describes how writers, driven out of the United States during the Cold War (he focuses on Ginsberg, Bishop, O'Hara, James Baldwin, William Burroughs, Paul Bowles, Jane Bowles, Paul Goodman, and Ned Rorem), critiqued colonization in their writings after witnessing it during their travels. That their writings suggest decolonization was a dire need for the world, Ablove argues, indicates their concern for world-wide liberation, not just in terms of race, culture, and nation, but sexual and gender liberation as well. Ablove provides them with the name the "Queer Commuters":

As for the term "commuter," I take that from [James] Baldwin, who apparently preferred it as a self-description to the terms "exile" and "expatriate." He seems to have thought that "commuter" was more nearly accurate than either of those other terms. For like all these others, he did not stay away from the United States continuously but traveled back and forth. I believe that Baldwin preferred the term "commuter" for another reason as well: "commuter" was an ironic allusion to the fifties mainstream in America. Although I follow Baldwin in using and preferring the term "commuter," I should perhaps also say that there was a sense in which all of these writers might feel like exiles, both when they were in the United States and when they were away. (79)

While Ablove's contribution to queerness and travel in the twentieth century is paramount, he neglects in his short chapter to explore the importance of poetry within this issue of escapist migration. Most importantly, he fails to observe the significance of landscape and space in relation to political and social justice. I hope to remedy this with my own project.

Queer Utopian Geographies' first move examines the utopian potential of velocity. Through an analysis of the thematic elements of transportation and the architecture of bridges, I argue that the elements reveal how, in particular, Frank O'Hara's poetry is haunted by the presence of Walt Whitman and, especially, Hart Crane. Because Crane committed suicide by jumping from a ship, O'Hara's representation of transportation mourns Crane's death while also foreshadowing O'Hara's own death on a beach by a vehicle. While the mourning indicates the impossibility of Utopia, O'Hara's imagery and language also reveals the possibility of Utopia.

If the first chapter looks forward to Utopia, then the second chapter anticipates a future Utopia by first holding back and analyzing false utopias. In order to see a queer utopia on the horizon, to use a phrase from Muñoz, we must be able to understand how utopian promises uphold ideals that are unattainable. Through an examination of the contrast between Allen Ginsberg and W.H. Auden, the chapter maintains that their differing views of pleasure reveal how even some gay men were excluded from utopian promises within the gay community. In particular, Ginsberg's trip to the island nation of Cuba presents us with fantasies that, while Ginsberg believed they were utopian, actually uphold heteronormative constructions of masculinity. Moreover, Auden's residence on the Italian island Ischia shows Auden forming an ethics of pleasure that actually brings us closer to a more inclusive Utopia.

Moving closer to a more fully imagined Utopia, the third move of this study analyzes the utopian practice depicted in W.H. Auden's poetry. In particular, Auden's movement to a small

village in Austria and his purchase of a farmhouse led to his observations of the daily experiences in his house. The quotidian depicted in Auden's poems, I argue, embody utopian promise. Furthermore, Auden's visions of an all-inclusive Christian community, formulated throughout the poems he wrote during this era of his life, point to a joyful promise. These poems enable us to respond to the contemporary religious discourse surrounding the issue of homosexuality and reveal the specter of Auden haunting us in the present.

The final chapter looks at how space is represented in the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop. I begin by analyzing the poems Bishop wrote during her time period in Washington, D.C. While serving as the National Poetry Chair, Bishop worked in an office that had a clear view of the Capitol building. As she worked, the federal government busied itself with purging gay men and lesbians from their federal positions. Windows, architecture, spaces, dwellings, and geography are found throughout these poems and even her later poetry. Bishop's imagery reveals her working through the dichotomy of private and public, a dichotomy that was being rewritten during the Cold War. Through her poems we understand that the division between "see" and "seen" is not as distinct as we like to think. Bishop's imagining of new and better spaces leads us to rethink the public and private sphere, especially how the "public" excludes marginalized individuals. Furthermore, Bishop leads us to the only space where a queer utopia could be fully realized during the Cold War: the poetic imagination.

The poets analyzed in this study, despite the fact that they were not activists but were writers, show how even the smallest everyday experiences and moments are political and social. Their movement between cultures, places, and spaces indicates how border crossing during the Cold War was an attempt to seek out liberation. Even if some of these poets did not march and become full-fledged members of the gay liberation movement, their travel presents the

difficulties and discrimination of being gay or lesbian during an unstable and uncertain era; however, their experiences also point to a hopeful future.

Ultimately, of course, the world was not remade. However, through the realization and analysis of the poets' visions of a better life, readers are able to formulate a stronger politics and response to our own era's despair, like the recent suicide of Tyler Clementi and the suicides of other gay and lesbian teenagers. If the poets, living in an era that witnessed massive destruction from the atomic bomb and intense scrutiny because of one's sexuality, were able to locate moments of utopian possibility that envisioned human liberation, then we too need to look for a queer utopia. What are the moments in the contemporary present where utopia can be seen just on the horizon? Like the poets, we must look for them so as not to submit to hopelessness.

Chapter One

“To Be Sure to Reach You”: The Utopian Potential of Velocity

Jumping off the gw bridge sorry. –gay Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi’s Facebook status, September 20, 2010

In 1931, the poet Hart Crane traveled to Mexico on a Guggenheim Fellowship with his only heterosexual partner, Peggy Cowley. Throughout his life Crane viewed his homosexuality as both a benefit and a curse. Raised as a Christian Scientist by his mother, he was never able to believe that his sexual orientation was moral; however, he thought the alienation he felt because of his sexuality made him a stronger poet (Mariani 60-61). Despite his relationship with Cowley, Crane continued to have male sexual partners (Mariani 394-398). An alcoholic, Crane apparently went on a drinking binge during his return trip home to New York in 1932 on the steamship SS *Orizaba*. After twenty-four hours had passed, Crane vaulted over the ship’s railing and jumped into the sea (Unterecker 753-754). According to John Unterecker, one of Crane’s biographers, it is unclear what happened during those hours that led to Crane’s suicide. He says the hours are “tangled in rumor [and] blurred in memories.” He writes, “There had been a wild escapade—in one version, with an unidentified member of the ship’s personnel; in another version, with a cabin boy; in another, with one of the sailors; and in still another, with several men” (756). That Crane committed suicide by jumping from a ship is an important fact for understanding gay and lesbian life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Gays and lesbians have often traveled to escape social norms within places that made them feel estranged. This estrangement would result in a desire for connection with other individuals. Crane committed suicide two minutes before noon on April 30, 1932 and life preservers were immediately thrown overboard. Unterecker says, “Those who had seen him leap overboard debated if the hand that had shot to the surface had

been clutching for a life preserver or had been signaling goodbye” (758). The image of Crane’s hand rising from the ocean is another important fact for understanding gay and lesbian life; it represents the desire to touch and connect with other marginalized individuals across space and time, a key theme throughout this project.

Crane’s death assumed mythic qualities within American poetry circles, especially during the Second World War and the Cold War period. In “Words for Hart Crane,” from the 1959 collection *Life Studies*, Robert Lowell gives voice to Crane while offering an explanation not only of Crane’s death, but also the literary criticism that debated the value of Crane’s poetry following that death:

“When the Pulitzers showered on some dope
or screw who flushed our dry mouths out with soap,
few people would consider why I took
to stalking sailors, and scattered Uncle Sam’s
phoney gold-plated laurels to the birds.
Because I knew my Whitman like a book,
stranger in America, tell my country: I,
Catullus redivivus, once the rage
of the Village and Paris, used to play my role
of homosexual, wolfing the stray lambs
who hungered by the Place de la Concorde.
My profit was a pocket with a hole.
Who asks for me, the Shelley of my age,
must lay his heart out for my bed and board.” (1-14)

“Stranger in America, tell my country” captures the physical and emotional experiences of living as a homosexual in American society. On the one hand, citizenship is conferred on those simply born in the country. On the other hand, national identity and civil rights granted by that birth are not easily offered if one fails to meet societal expectations. In other words, one may belong to a country while feeling as if one is a stranger within that country. Furthermore, Lowell’s imagery precisely reveals the paradox that Thomas Yingling articulated in his final essay, “Homosexuality and Utopian Discourse in American Poetry.” As noted in the introduction,

Yingling argues that America is equated with the utopian; however, to be homosexual in American society is viewed as antithetical to that ideal. As a poetic figure then, Crane represents both promise and despair, which resulted in Crane repeatedly rising from the dead during the postwar period; in fact, Lowell's elegy is not the only example of mourning. Fellow poet John Berryman wrote Crane one of his famous elegies found in his collection *Dream Songs*. Tennessee Williams wrote *Steps Must Be Gentle*, a ghost play about Crane and his mother. Williams also requested to have his ashes scattered at sea, near the location where Crane committed suicide (Pagan 75). Also, just as the Brooklyn Bridge is frozen in time in Crane's epic poem *The Bridge*, Jasper Johns, a friend of the poet Frank O'Hara, utilized Crane's image in a number of paintings. In particular, "Diver," currently housed in the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, is a seven foot tall charcoal and pastel painting that details an imprint of Johns's hands and feet that hints at the shape of a swan dive. Johns is quoted as saying that the painting has "an ambiguous quality that can suggest either life or death" ("Jasper Johns: A Retrospective"). Even in Johns's comment, the impossibility of living evokes possibility. Johns's friend Frank O'Hara, in his poem "Cornkind," a humorous poem about the meaning of kinship, asks, "What of Hart Crane" (*Selected Poems* line 26), claiming kinship to Crane despite the fact that during O'Hara's time period Crane's poetry underwent disputed evaluations as to his status within the literary cannon.

During his own time, Crane was disheartened over a negative review of *The Bridge* in *Poetry* magazine, written by Yvor Winters. Even Crane's friend Allen Tate, responding to the allusions to Walt Whitman in Crane's *The Bridge*, explained that the "tribute to Whitman, was, while not excessive, certainly sentimental in places" (qtd. in Unterecker 621). On the one hand, the criticism of Crane's poetry is rooted in the fact that Crane had aligned himself with the

romantics when the literary atmosphere idolized T.S. Eliot and the new critics. On the other hand, Tate and other critics failed to understand the importance of such literary associations: it was not merely literary but also a desperate desire to connect with other gay figures. The connection made one feel included and part of a community. In fact, Crane and Winters corresponded frequently, and one of Crane's letters points to Winters's homophobia. Winters's letter is lost; however, as critic Thomas Parkinson observes, in *Hart Crane and Yvor Winters: Their Literary Correspondence*, "It seems evident that [Winters] was volunteering moral counsel to Crane on sexual and literary matters" (84). In his response to Winters, Crane opens his letter by saying, "You need a good drubbing for all your recent easy talk about 'the complete man,' the poet and his ethical place in society, etc" (qtd. in Parkinson 86). It is a lengthy letter, and Crane goes on to say, "I agree with you of course, that the poet should in as large a measure as possible adjust himself to society. But the question always will remain as to how far the conscience is justified in compromising with the age's demands" (qtd. in Parkinson 87).

Lowell's first two lines of "Words for Hart Crane" are meant to acknowledge the homophobic criticism that Crane's poetry provoked. Crane's homosexuality was frequently tied to his presumed failure and/or difficulty of his poetry. He was resurrected, however, by O'Hara and by Allen Ginsberg. Ginsberg even claimed that Crane was an influence on his long poem, *Howl* (Miles 48). When Ginsberg read *Howl* at the Six Gallery in 1955, he was described by Gregory Corso as restoring "to American poetry the prophetic consciousness it had lost since the conclusion of Hart Crane's *The Bridge*" (Ginsberg *Deliberate Prose* 241). Additionally, in a 1953 letter to Robert Lowell, Elizabeth Bishop told Lowell that she "suffered reading Hart Crane" (*Words in Air* 148). While the reading of Crane by postwar poets is paramount to this chapter, I would like to return to Lowell's poem and also note Lowell's observation of poetic

influence: Crane's reading of Walt Whitman. No other American poet has articulated the country's utopian promise as much as Whitman. For Whitman, an American utopia very much includes homosexuality and this is articulated throughout his early poetry.

These ideals that were formulated by Whitman and that were carried forward by Crane became more urgent for a Cold War poet like Frank O'Hara. Cold War nationalism rejected homosexuality in such a way that remembering Crane's death evoked the Cold War attempt to erase the existence of homosexuality. This chapter argues then that key figures in American poetry haunt the Cold War literary landscape. It is through the trope of space and time over geographical boundaries that such haunting occurs in the lives of the poets and within the bounded lines of poetry. Walt Whitman's, Hart Crane's, and Frank O'Hara's ghostly presences reveal how the homosexual in American society desperately wanted to escape history, a history that typically meant death. Their poetry reveals that such haunting, ironically, points to a liberated future. To use a word of Jasper Johns's, the "ambiguous" quality of haunting was found by these poets in transportation. The erotic and political nature of speed, found through the language and tropes of mass transportation, as well as the liminal space between two static points, all parallel human desire; the poets then viewed transportation as heterotopias that acted as microcosms for the future possibility of a queer utopia that would allow for multiple gender differences and a variety of pleasures. Furthermore, the poetry reveals the paradox of gay history: the desire to escape history only reinforces the fact that history is never truly escapable.

Utilizing recent queer theorists Judith/Jack Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, and Elizabeth Freeman's concepts of queer time, queer space, and queer utopia, this chapter will foreground their theories in relation to modes of transportation and, in particular, Frank O'Hara's poetry, which exemplifies the theories in relation to transportation. The specter of Crane reminds

O'Hara to not slip into pessimism; instead, joy must be cultivated. With the increased availability of travel and the faster modes of transportation, the Cold War is an apt time period to analyze through such a theoretical lens.

First, Halberstam, Muñoz, and Freeman make a distinction between straight time and queer time. Temporality is typically structured according to the heterosexual norms of family life and governed by the biological clock of reproduction; however, queer time disrupts such temporality through a variety of non-normative behavior that challenges conceptions of straight time. These disruptions cause “a hiccup,” Freeman argues, “in sequential time [that] has the capacity to connect a group of people” (3). Similarly, queer space, Halberstam argues, “refers to the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage; it also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics” (6). The conception of queerness they employ, although focused on gay and lesbian subjects, is not merely about sexual acts. Halberstam says that queer time and queer space “develop according to other logics of location, movement, and identification. If we try to think about queerness as an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices, we detach queerness from sexual identity and come closer to understanding Foucault’s comment in ‘Friendship as a Way of Life’ that ‘homosexuality threatens people as a ‘way of life’ rather than as ‘a way of having sex’” (1). Centering his theory of queer utopia through Frankfurt School social theorist Ernst Bloch’s philosophy of the utopian function of art, Muñoz argues that such queer acts of disruption critique the limits and barriers of the present moment and via such a critique imagines a utopia beyond heteronormativity.

Seeing an intersection of utopian theory, space and time, and American poetry is effortless if an analysis takes Whitman into consideration as a starting point. Whitman’s ideal

utopia is not only founded on homosexuality but also thought of as a concrete geographical location. “In Paths Untrodden,” the first poem in his cycle of homosexual poems *Calamus*, says, “In this secluded spot I can respond as I / would not dare elsewhere” (9-10). “Paths” in the title is also crucial. For gays and lesbian poets, at least since Whitman, as these lines indicate, Utopia was thought of as a location one must travel to reach. Even during the Cold War, gay and lesbian poets traveled frequently to seek out queer spaces, despite the fact that traveling meant leaving behind lovers, friends, and family.

Furthermore, in conjuring Whitman, I wish to reveal the way that haunting during the postwar period, and even presently, extended to Whitman just as it did to Crane. Crane’s suicide, however, intensified his ghostly presence. In her 2010 text *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Elizabeth Freeman maintains that, especially in relation to queer time and queer space, Derrida’s hauntology is important for new developments in queer theory (10). In *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, Derrida places Marx within, what Freeman says, is “an ethics of responsibility toward the other across time—toward the dead or toward that which was impossible in a given historical moment, each understood as calls for a different future to which we cannot but answer with imperfect and incomplete reparations” (10). The dead of the past find their way into the present moment. A haunting, according to Derrida, is an absence that makes a presence known. At the end of *Specters of Marx*, Derrida writes, “They are always *there*, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet. They give us to rethink the ‘there’” (176). Such haunting helps explain the peculiar feelings we experience in certain spaces. It also helps us to understand how it seems we are unable to escape our past. More to the point, Carla Freccero, in her chapter “Queer Spectrality” in *Queer/Early/Modern* argues that Derrida’s hauntology is “a

mode of historicity: it describes the way . . . the past or the future presses upon us with a kind of insistence or demand, a demand to which we must somehow respond. ‘Hauntology’ as the practice of attending to the spectral, is then a way of thinking ethics in relation to the project of historiography” (70). Attending to the past indicates that a hopeful future is possible. In terms of transportation, gay and lesbian poets during the Cold War were particularly haunted by the poet Hart Crane, and it is his presence that enables the poets to understand the queer utopian potential of speed and transportation.

In fact, hauntology, according to Freccero, is a sign of mourning trauma, what Derrida calls the “politico-logic of trauma” (Freccero 76). Within American poetry, not only in poems but also in critical writing, Hart Crane has become the figure par excellence of such mourning and trauma. In his essay “Cruising Among Ghosts: Hart Crane’s Friends,” Jacques Khalip analyzes elegies written for Hart Crane and even argues that such mourning signals a friendship with an absent figure that one need not have met: “Death . . . [is] the inaugural catalyst for friendship. In other words, death doesn’t permit us the retrospective privilege of imagining friendship with the dead friend; rather, it already asks us to accept the finitude of our relation to one another—that we are friends insofar as we are ineluctably mortal” (76). Mourning Hart Crane, which is the desire to befriend him, American poets, it would seem, attempt to atone for his death. But what if Hart Crane’s poetry acts in the same way? What if Crane’s poetry acts as self-elegy? In “Figurations of the Writer’s Death: Freud and Hart Crane,” John T. Irwin applies Freud’s theory of the uncanny to argue that Crane predicted his own death. In “To Brooklyn Bridge,” Crane writes, “Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft / A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets, / Tilting there momentarily, shrill shirt ballooning, / A jest falls from the speechless caravan” (17-20). The image of the fall does indeed evoke an eerily similar act to a jump from a

ship. But the significance is more than this; for Irwin adds, “*The Bridge* seems prefigurative not only of Crane’s fate but of the fate of a certain type of lyric poet in twentieth-century America” (218-19). Irwin fails to articulate what this “certain type” could possibly be, except to imply that the type is merely suicidal; I would add that perhaps it is not so much a type of poet but the particular nature of lyric poetry itself. Through language, imagery, and metaphor, lines and stanzas recall the poetic past by summoning numerous influences, even the writer’s own work and life.

Irwin is correct in saying it is uncanny how many poets have leapt to their deaths from bridges: Weldon Kees in 1955 from the Golden Gate Bridge and Berryman’s leap from the bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis in 1972 (218). One is forced to wonder if Crane had docked in New York, if the Brooklyn Bridge would have been his choice. Even in the absence of a bridge, however, Crane’s jump, because the image it evokes is of a dive or fall into water, is uncanny in that it results in numerous parallels. In Crane’s case, the railing takes on figurative importance in the absence of the bridge. Through the very act of letting go of the railing, hope turns to anguish. To account for this past, O’Hara’s poetry transforms the image of the bridge into the ideal symbol of hope, even of love, and homoerotic desire.

We are led back to Whitman. In his “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” the crowds on the ferry represent democracy. He writes, “I see you face to face” (1). The use of the second person not only allows Whitman to locate the democratic ideal on the ferry in the then present, but to cross time and space: “It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not, / I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so / many generations hence, / Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky” (3.20-23). And he goes on to add the image of the “you” standing and leaning on the rail (3.27). The rail could, even though Whitman uses the definite article, be any rail,

absent of historical specificity. Whitman then comes to haunt Crane, whose use of the Brooklyn Bridge acts in a very similar way to Whitman's ferry. It is the back and forth movement that occurs in both images that represents a haunting that reaches for friendship across historical distance. Whitman's reach across time and space turns the Bridge into an object of love and desire for Crane. In fact, in Jennifer Terry's essay "Loving Objects," she explains that objects can indeed take on such power, even becoming reciprocal, that "objects [can have] the presence of a soul or spirit" (35). Objectum Sexuality, according to Terry, reveals how even non-human objects can be part of a wider gender and sexual axis (49). She adds too, via an analysis of the Berlin Wall and the Twin Towers as objects of love, that "declaring abiding love for [a particular object shows how] personal trauma [folds] into national or historical trauma" (54). Indeed, like the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge is tied to American identity, and, because of the social stigmatism placed on homosexuality, the bridge takes on paradoxical meaning. Not only does it represent desire and hope, but the bridge, I argue, also becomes the ultimate site of American homosexual despair in the twentieth century and even into the twenty-first century. This symbolic representation of the bridge was painfully renewed in 2010 when Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi committed suicide by jumping from the George Washington Bridge after his roommate and other students taunted him repeatedly.

Crane's epic, optimistic poem *The Bridge* meant to cancel T.S. Eliot's despair of *The Waste Land*, and the long poem opens with "To Brooklyn Bridge." While bridges are typically seen as static images, the philosopher Georg Simmel notes that such infrastructures are exemplary human achievements because they result in "a 'path' that links two particular places . . . such visible impressions of path-building create a permanent 'connection' between such places . . . having the effect . . . of 'freezing movement in solid structure,'" thus granting humans

greater control over space itself (qtd. in Urry 20). Crane, who lived in Brooklyn and could easily view the Bridge from his apartment window, says to the Bridge, towards the end of the poem, “Bending thy path—condense eternity” (35), signaling Simmel’s notion of freezing. This is after the opening of the poem describes numerous examples of movement:

How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest
The seagull’s wings shall dip and pivot him,
Shedding white rings of tumult, building high
Over the chained bay waters Liberty—

Then, with inviolate curve, forsake our eyes
As apparitional as sails that cross
Some page of figures to be filed away;
--Till elevators drop us from our day . . .

I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights
With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene
Never disclosed, but hastened to again,
Foretold to other eyes on the same screen;

And Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced
As though the sun took step of thee, yet left
Some motion ever unspent in thy stride, --
Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!

Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft
A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets,
Tilting there momentarily, shrill shirt ballooning,
A jest falls from the speechless caravan. (1-20).

The Bridge is an example of freedom, found in the image of “Liberty,” because, in its freezing of movement, allows those on subways, elevators, and other spaces to move to yet another space. More importantly, the poem ends by saying, “Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend / And of the curvship lend a myth to God” (43-44). The pronoun “us” describes the connection the Bridge offers.

This similar representation of a bridge occurs yet again in Frank O’Hara. The ghostly bridge presence appears in his “On Seeing Larry Rivers’ *Washington Crossing the Delaware* at

the Museum of Modern Art.” A friend of O’Hara’s, Rivers’s 1953 painting imagines the Delaware scene anew and is both inspired by and a commentary on Emanuel Leutze’s famous 1851 painting of the same name. In “Frank O’Hara Nude with Boots: Queer Ekphrasis and the Statuesque Poet,” Brian Glavey explains, “Many were baffled by Rivers’s apparent embrace of an image that had long since become cliché” (796). In the context of the Cold War, however, the painting makes perfect sense. Rivers’s painting, now housed at the Museum of Modern Art, places Washington and the other figures in the piece face forward, instead of Leutze’s side view. Moreover, the facial features are indistinguishable; the colors blend and bleed into one another as the figures also seem to meld. If not for the title of the painting, a viewer would possibly find it difficult to determine the central figure is Washington (“Larry Rivers Collection”). National identity becomes less specific and more universal, but O’Hara, in his poem, cannot forget the specific because it is the history that haunts:

Now that our hero has come back to us
in his white pants and we know his nose
trembling like a flag under fire,
we see the calm cold river is supporting
our forces, the beautiful history.

To be more revolutionary than a nun
is our desire, to be secular and intimate
as, when sighting a redcoat, you smile
and pull the trigger. Anxieties
and animosities, flaming and feeding

on theoretical considerations and
the jealous spiritualities of the abstract,
the robot? they’re smoke, billows above
the physical event. They have burned up.
See how free we are! as a nation of persons.

Dear father of our country, so alive
you must have lied incessantly to be
immediate, here are your bones crossed
on my breast like a rusty flintlock,

a pirate's flag, bravely specific

and ever so light in the misty glare
of a crossing by water in winter to a shore
other than that the bridge reaches for.
Don't shoot until, the white of freedom glinting
on your gun barrel, you see the general fear. (1-25)

Freedom is on the horizon. Washington is continually crossing the Delaware because the future (utopia) is not yet here. O'Hara opens the poem by noting that, as a viewer of the painting, despite Rivers's style, he knows the figure of Washington. The lines imply that we all know Washington because he is continually present for us, a ghostly presence just like the bridge: "here are your bones crossed / on my breast." "See how free we are! as a nation of persons" has an ironic tone that signals O'Hara's despair. However, the irony mixes humor with the despair, a biting humor that seems to say, "If we are not all free, if America is not utopian yet, what was the point of the 'anxieties and animosities, flaming and feeding'?" Washington's shore, O'Hara notes in the final lines, is not what the bridge reaches for. The definite article points to the represented bridge discussed above in regards to Hart Crane. The bridge does not reach for the shore because it is a shore that, overtime, has come to represent not the original utopian ideal of freedom for all, but a polluted shore.

In O'Hara's "Poem (I to you and you to me the endless oceans of)," the trope of crossing is repeated once again; this time, however, O'Hara acknowledges that the poem is haunted by Crane:

I to you and you to me the endless oceans of
everybody up
never the cool free call of the brink
is getting to be another poem about Hart Crane (1-8)

dilapidated crossing
the stench of whoopee steerage and candy
cane, for
but cut it out this

Crossing in these lines refers to the continual reaching across time and space for gay friendship; the temporality is indicated by O'Hara's use of "endless oceans." Furthermore, "ocean" is a direct reference to Crane's suicide. Also, the tone in the eighth line exhibits weariness, a tone that signals despair. At the same time, however, that tone is light-hearted. The bridge, throughout O'Hara's poetry, holds the ability to reach toward love, desire, and hope. In "Now that I am in Madrid and Can Think," O'Hara's speaker says to the addressee that he "see[s] a vast bridge stretching to the humbled outskirts with only you / standing on the edge of the purple like an only tree" (6-7). The bridge contains utopian possibility.

While the bridge held such symbolic importance during the twentieth-century, the modes of transportation that crossed over bridges became just as significant. In *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism*, Enda Duffy claims that twentieth-century modernity had the greatest new pleasure in speed; the experiences of roller coasters, airplanes, and the automobile were not just, he says, tied to the enjoyable nature of velocity but speed also held great political power (1). Duffy explains that the eroticism of speed is tied to the way the shock of moving at a speed faster than normal is "visceral" and "potentially addictive" (5). Also, it is political, he says, because most means of transportation, like cars, were meant for "the masses" (6). Furthermore, the flow of traffic, whether automobile traffic or airplane traffic, is handled very much like the governmental management of territories (24). Duffy writes, "Speed, intimately woven into a new paradigm of the modern subject's nexus of desires, becomes the new opiate and the new (after) taste of movement as power" (35). I would add, however, that the language "opiate" and "(after) taste" implies a wholly negative impression of speed. Pleasure and the political have the ability to positively generate utopian aspects in day-to-day moments and experiences. In fact, these are the elements of speed that give movement its power.

The recent mobility turn has brought together social scientists, cultural geographers, those of us in the humanities, and more, to create, according to social scientist and theorist John Urry in his book *Mobilities*, “a different way of thinking through the character of economic, social and political relationships,” and, in particular, he adds, this new analysis improves one that has “been historically static, fixed and concerned with predominantly aspatial ‘social structures’” (6). Urry describes four main senses of the mobile and mobility. In the most general sense, mobile refers to something that has movement, but mobile can also refer to the mob, an unruly crowd that is perceived as disorderly; mobility refers to upward or downward social mobility, but mobility can also refer to migration or of being “on the move” (7). This study of gay and lesbian Cold War poets will touch on all of these aspects of the mobile and mobility; however, I am most interested in how poets during this time period found themselves “on the move.” While evident from the example of Hart Crane above, gays and lesbians have often found themselves mobile throughout history. The Cold War, however, ushered in a phase that resulted in faster methods and easier accessibility.

During the Cold War, mobility was deeply tied to scientific progress, and this progress was often rooted in nationalism. In particular, the competition between America and the Soviet Union hinged on the mobility structured around heteronormativity. A healthy and stable family life meant a stronger nation, and Cold War transportation advertisements detailed how family vacations would result in that health and stability. For example, in a 1949 American Export Lines ad in *The New Yorker*, the described “ships of tomorrow” are revealed as a heterosexual space. In the ships’ ball room, a man and woman in dress attire sit side-by-side conversing. And in a 1946 Cuba mail Line ad, the ad reads, “We’ll sail in style!” and “Picture us dining here!” (“Ships: 1946-1949”). A photograph of a man and woman clearly implies the “we” is

heterosexual. Similar advertisements for airlines like Northwest Orient Airlines and the Greyhound bus company appear in magazines throughout the Cold War (“Airlines: 1946-1949”).

“Ships of tomorrow” signifies the progress that could propel America to the forefront of technological advancement. Progress of this kind has typically been associated as heteronormative, according to Heather Love in her recent book *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. She writes, “Whether understood as throwbacks to an earlier stage of human development or as children who refuse to grow up, queers have been seen across the twentieth century as a backward race. Perverse, immature, sterile, and melancholic: even when they provoke fears about the future, they somehow also recall the past” (6). If the Cold War then resulted in faster and more accessible technological development, then more was at stake for heteronormativity. Love adds,

Given that such links are deployed against gays and lesbians so regularly, we have an obligation to counter them, which is not altogether easy. One must insist on the modernity of the queer; like any claim about modernity, though, the argument actually turns on backwardness—a backwardness disavowed or overcome. For queers, having been branded as nonmodern or as a drag on the progress of civilization, the desire to be recognized as part of the modern social order is strong. Narratives of gay and lesbian progress inevitably recall the painful history of the homosexual’s birth as one of modernity’s backward children. (6-7)

To insist on the modernity of the queer in relation to the Cold War is easy enough. The traveling of W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop, Frank O’Hara, and Allen Ginsberg associates them with such modes of transportation as ships, airplanes, buses, and cars. More to the point, Frank O’Hara in particular exemplifies, both in his daily life and in his poetry, the way movement and speed contain the possibility of utopia.

Throughout his life, O’Hara was known for his walks through the city and his rushing to and from his job at the Museum of Modern Art. According to Brian Glavey, O’Hara’s reputation is of a “postmodern poet of restless mobility, spinning out odes and elegies in the odd moment of

his lunch break, always open to the life of the city around him and to the works of art that were his passion” (781). This is an elegant and excellent statement because it does indeed summarize O’Hara’s lively personality. Indeed, O’Hara wrote a number of poems centered on the image of walking, a movement that is often connected to love and belonging (to a person as well as the city): “Let’s take a walk, you / and I in spite of the / weather if it rains hard / on our toes // we’ll stroll like poodles / and be washed down a / gigantic scenic gutter / that will be // exciting!” (1-9), O’Hara writes in “Poem (Let’s take a walk, you).” However, through an analysis of two contrasting images of O’Hara, Glavery explains that, ironically, while O’Hara was known as such a mobile figure, he spent a number of hours sitting or standing still for portraits. Through his work at MOMA, O’Hara’s friendships with a number of artists resulted in a plethora of O’Hara images. First, in Fred W. McDarrah’s photograph “Frank O’Hara at the Museum of Modern Art,” the camera captured O’Hara as he moved through the revolving door at the front of MOMA, a perfect example of his mobility. On the contrary, in McDarrah’s “Frank O’Hara in the Museum of Modern Art’s Sculpture Garden,” the camera captured O’Hara frozen next to Rodin’s “St John the Baptist Preaching.” In the picture, O’Hara mimics the statue’s posture and positioning. Glavery argues that scholars must not only pay attention to O’Hara’s mobility but also to “the *statuesque* O’Hara.” The significance of this other O’Hara is that it shows us he was very much aware of his own body and that he knew this stillness made his homosexuality visible. Such stillness then challenged Cold War heteronormativity (784). I would add the statuesque O’Hara is significant not just because of homosexual visibility but because the stillness, like a bridge, represents a longing to remain; it signals the anticipation of a queer utopia.

This is shown yet again in a pointed memorial piece by Frank O'Hara's friend Jasper Johns. Entitled "Memory Piece (Frank O'Hara)," Johns began the project in 1961 and completed it in 1970. According to art critic Roberta Bernstein:

A rubber cast of O'Hara's foot (made in 1961 when the study was done) is centered on the inside flap of a lid hinged to the top of a wooden box construction with drawers. When the lid is closed, the foot presses against a layer of sand so that when it is opened we see both the cast and the footprint it has made in the sand. The foot brings the image of a figure into the work. (qtd. in Gray 553)

The piece recalls a poem that O'Hara wrote, enclosing it in a letter to Johns in 1963, after Johns made the mold of his foot. In the poem, "Dear Jap," O'Hara writes, "When I think of you in South Carolina I think of my foot in the sand" (18). According to critic Timothy Gray, in his essay "Semiotic Shepherds: Gary Snyder, Frank O'Hara, and the Embodiment of an Urban Pastoral," "[Johns and O'Hara] loved walking the beach, which for them served as a (more traditionally pastoral) retreat from the hectic New York pace. Whereas Johns walked the beaches near Edisto, South Carolina, O'Hara walked the beaches along Fire Island . . ." (554). O'Hara's casting then marks him in the world, especially in the poetic world of memory, and makes him yet another ghostly presence like Whitman and Crane. Footprints in sand clearly reveal the binary of absence/presence that hauntology seeks to deconstruct, and, moreover, the line from O'Hara's "Dear Jap," like Crane before him, is yet another instance of self-elegy. A beach is where O'Hara would be severely and fatally injured, a death that will be unraveled in a later section of this chapter.

Certainly transportation during the Cold War exemplified a paradox. Typical Cold War imagery ("ships of tomorrow") used transportation to evoke utopian-like ideals. Throughout the twentieth century, progress and technology became an important area of inquiry for philosophers. During a conversation about utopia, printed as "Something's Missing: A

Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing” in Bloch’s *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, for instance, the philosophers both argue that the connection between progress and technology and Utopia has resulted in the dishonor of Utopia. Adorno says “that numerous so-called utopian dreams—for example, television, the possibility of traveling to other planets, moving faster than sound—have been fulfilled. However, insofar as these dreams have been realized, the dreams themselves have assumed a peculiar character of sobriety, of the spirit of positivism, and beyond that, of boredom” (1). Continuing to explain this reflection of utopia through the technological world, Bloch says, “There is a great deal that is not fulfilled and made banal through the fulfillment . . . So, the fulfillment is not yet real or imaginable or postulatable without residue” (2). It brings about, he says, the “depreciation of utopia.” Bloch goes on to define other ways the depreciation occurs; however, the connection here with transportation is fitting. Transportation is not the example of queer utopia; instead, it *enables* the bringing forth of that utopia. The poet Hart Crane understood this very well, and through his ghostly presence during the Cold War, O’Hara’s poetry affirms it again; elegy then blends into self-elegy.

Known primarily in his own era as a modernist failure, Crane attempted to rectify T.S. Eliot’s pessimistic *The Waste Land*. He wanted *The Bridge* to provide the modern era hope. Critics, however, were not impressed, and Eliot’s so called vision of despair remained the one that other poets were meant to idolize. What is especially interesting for the purposes of thinking about the vision of a queer utopia is that Crane was known as a failure *partly* because of his hopeful optimism. In a letter to Gorham Munson, Crane said he believed especially that Eliot’s poem failed to see “certain spiritual events and possibilities” (*Unterecker* 272). It is this word *possibility* that is used by both Bloch and Adorno during their conversation about Utopia. In

attempting to take Utopia from the realm of the merely abstract, wishful thinking of an ideal into the realm of the concrete, Bloch argues, “But [utopia] is not something like nonsense or absolute fancy; rather it is not *yet* in the sense of a possibility; *that* it could be there if we could only do something for it” (3). In Adorno’s response to Bloch’s description, he agrees, saying, “My thesis about [Utopia] would be that all humans deep down, whether they admit this or not, know that it would be possible or it could be different. Not only could they live without hunger and probably without anxiety, but they would also live as free human beings” (4). Crane located such possibility of human freedom in liminal spaces that held, again, the possibility to connect individuals. However, his own despair over his homosexuality resulted in the impossibility of even living; he committed suicide by jumping into the most liminal of spaces, the sea.

Strangely, like O’Hara’s poetry, Crane’s poetry foretells his death at sea while, at the same time, detailing the erotic power of those liminal spaces that are free from the confines of heterosexuality. For instance, in “Voyages,” a poem written out of his love for Emil Opffer, a Danish merchant marine (Mariani 152-154), Crane writes in the third section of the poem,

Infinite consanguinity it bears—
 This tendered theme of you that light
 Retrieves from sea plains where the sky
 Resigns a breast that every wave enthrones;
 While ribboned water lanes I wind
 Are laved and scattered with no stroke
 Wide from your side, whereto this hour
 The sea lifts, also, reliquary hands.

And so, admitted through black swollen gates
 That must arrest all distance otherwise,—
 Past whirling pillars and lithe pediments,
 Light wrestling there incessantly with light,
 Star kissing star through wave on wave unto
 Your body rocking!

and where death, if shed,
 Presumes no carnage, but this single change,—
 Upon the steep floor flung from dawn to dawn

The silken skilled transmemberment of song;
Permit me voyage, love, into your hands (1-19)

The speaker associates the addressee with the sea and the body with the imagery of waves; this connects “love” with the ocean space. Love making too is seen as the movement of the body through water. Despite the erotic nature of the poem though, the line “and where death, if shed, / Presume no carnage” causes the later reader to think of Crane’s future (his ocean suicide). Through the poem’s intermingling of the past, present, and future, readers are offered a glance of a queer utopia. Queer theorist Jose Muñoz argues that we are able to see a queer utopia on the “horizon.” Muñoz grounds his claims in Bloch’s theory of anticipatory illumination. This illumination is an image/object/action that represents our utopian hope and belief; Bloch frequently argued that our reading or viewing of such an image results in our working toward bringing forth the utopia in the present. Muñoz argues that “we gain a greater conceptual and theoretical leverage if we see queerness as something that is not yet here. In this sense it is useful to consider Edmund Husserl, phenomenology’s founder, and his invitation to look to horizons of being. Indeed to access queer visibility we may need to squint, to strain our vision and force it to see otherwise, beyond the limited vista of the here and now” (22). Anticipatory illumination is found in the last line of Crane’s poem: his speaker asks the lover’s permission to be held in the addressee’s hands. The erotic pleasure that will be found at the moment of touch is where the utopian becomes concrete.

For Crane, the ocean space was not the only liminal space that allowed true freedom. Such possibility was also found in traveling motifs like the New York City subway system, which, like Whitman’s ferry image, Crane saw as connecting human beings. In his subway poem “The Tunnel,” Crane suggests the utopian aspect of space by depicting the connection between those who are frequently disconnected. Throughout the poem, Crane describes the subway as a

Dantesque vision of hell. This has led critics to conceive of “The Tunnel” as portraying the subway in a simply negative light. Crane writes, “Avoid the glass doors gyring at your right, / Where boxed alone a second, eyes take fright / --Quite unprepared rush naked back to light: / And down beside the turnstile press the coin / Into the slot. The gongs already rattle” (26-30). He describes too, just four lines later, “the overtone of motion/ underground, the monotone / of motion is the sound / of other faces, also underground—” (34-37). However, I would argue that, indeed, the subway is wholly negative because of its tie, for Crane, to heteronormativity through its function in regards to work schedules and time schedules. As Thomas Yingling argues in *Hart Crane and the Homosexual Text: New Thresholds, New Anatomies*:

Given the closeted nature of homosexuality in Crane’s era, it is not surprising that we find the more literal figure of the enclosed space as homosexual refuge in a number of his poems. More interestingly, Crane’s text often gestures quite dramatically toward a utopian site of order, meaning, and significance. Other places become the locus of a union and meaning unattainable in this ‘broken world’ . . . the utopian space in Crane is a transformation of historical space, often a homosexual and limited space, but it usually marks an escape from rather than a fulfillment of homosexual desire. Thus, although it is often approached through love or quite explicitly through orgasm, the utopian in Crane signifies a desire to escape history and becomes a site on which homosexuality—as a historical, material condition of modernity—is annihilated. (42)

I would agree partly with his statement; however, I would argue that it is not the annihilation of homosexuality that Crane depicts, but the annihilation of a world where sexuality seems to identify an individual as other. Desire can be found in a world that is not defined through heterosexuality or homosexuality. In fact, the freedom to explore a variety of pleasures is precisely what is desirable. The subway is an apt image because, during a busy day, of the closeness between human beings. Everyday experiences become erotic: “Our tongues recant like beaten vanes” (46) is used to describe conversation. He adds too:

And why do I often meet your visage here,
Your eyes like agate lanterns—on and on

Below the toothpaste and the dandruff ads?
--And did their riding eyes right through your side,
And did their eyes like unwashed platters ride?
And Death, aloft,--gigantically down
Probing through you—toward me, O evermore!
And when they dragged your retching flesh,
Your trembling hands that night through Baltimore—
That last night on the ballot rounds, did you,
Shaking, did you deny the ticket, Poe? (72-82)

The power for the speaker is found in the connection to the literary past, with Poe, and is described in both erotic language and despair. The erotic is found in the pleasurable identification with the memory of Poe as a literary forbearer who struggled to forge human connections just as much as the speaker. It is through connection that the speaker says, near the end of the poem, that those on the subway are like “Lazarus,” moving from this liminal space back to the other world outside of the subway system (119). Moreover, the use of the second person is very similar to Whitman’s use of “you” in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” Crane too wishes to not only befriend the absent Poe, but other suffering writers of the past, present, and future.

Crane haunts O’Hara’s poetry through the use of the subway image as well. It is a dominant image in O’Hara’s “3rd Avenue El” and “You are Gorgeous and I’m Coming.” In particular, “Poem (Although I am half an hour),” details again the summoning of the absent friend through the use of the second person:

Although I am half an hour
early I just missed you:
the keys are dustless on
the table and the toilet

is still bubbling. What
minute on the subway should
have been a proper goodbye?
If connections had been

better would your sore
throat have let you whisper
“Adieu, sagesse, I’ll
stay with you forever”?

I am alone now. Only
my face stares back
from the window, the
record, this white paper.

I put on my black shirt
and my sneakers, whistle
Glasounoff and try to
pick up the dirty room.

Last night I said “I’m
sick.” Today is very windy.
The curtains are pulled
back but the sun goes

somewhere else. I’ve
seen all the movies. I
think I’m going to cry.
Yes. To kill the time. (1-28)

In the first and second stanzas, the missing friendship and love has occurred via the subway; however, in lines 8-12, the speaker makes it clear that it is not the fault of the subway. Instead, the connections that fail in daily American life are the result of the miss. The absence causes sadness throughout the final stanzas, yet the last line is an interesting one. “To kill time” suggests that the tedious activities being performed are mere tasks to pass the time while the speaker waits for the connection: utopian possibility then is embedded in the final lines of the poem. Furthermore, although it is unsaid, the reader is aware that it is the subway that will return the love to the apartment.

This looking backward to a poet like Crane in the then present moment of the Cold War is politically and emotionally significant. As philosophers Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, argue, looking backward “liberate[s] the present moment

from the power of the past by banishing the latter beyond the absolute boundary of the irrecoverable and placing it, as usable knowledge, in the service of the present” (25). The poets uncover the possibility of living on to a future where homosexuality did not equal death. In fact, as Jose Muñoz argues:

The double ontology of ghosts and ghostliness, the manner in which ghosts exist inside and out and traverse categorical distinctions, seems especially useful for a queer criticism that attempts to understand communal mourning, group psychologies, and the need for a politics that ‘carries’ our dead with us into battles for the present and future. (46)

Carrying Crane enabled O’Hara to consider how best to live within the moment, a particular moment when homosexuality seemed under siege by those holding power in Cold War society.

The poetic moments that show us how to live are embedded in the powerful images of transportation that exhibit utopian potential. Michel Foucault’s theory of heterotopias, formulated in his essay “Of Other Spaces,” is noteworthy for such literary analysis. In the essay, Foucault distinguishes between ideal utopias and heterotopias; he defines ideal utopias as unreal spaces and heterotopias as real spaces that act as counter-sites; they are, he says, “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites . . . are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (24). Examples he provides include festivals, fairgrounds, and holiday villages. At the end of the essay, Foucault argues that boats and ships are yet another example of heterotopias. A boat, he says, is

a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens . . . the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the heterotopias par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates. (27)

For Foucault, a heterotopia is a powerful construction forged by human beings in response to negative realities. Such concerns over the spatial within philosophy have propelled scholars to reflect on the way space is represented within literature. In *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism*, Andrew Thacker traces images of space and movement in a number of key modernist texts. Reflecting on Foucault's theory, he says, "We should be aware . . . when reading modernist heterotopias to indicate the ambivalent strategies of power informing their spatial practices." For example, he says that while Joseph Conrad's boat in *Heart of Darkness* very well may act as a heterotopia, "it is still a ship registered and engaged in . . . imperialist practices" (29). Indeed, a mode of transportation is not so much a heterotopia by means of its very existence, but, in terms of a queer utopia, it is that the transportation space is transformed by the queer body.

If we begin with the queer body of Hart Crane, then the logical mode of transportation to analyze first is that of the boat or ship. A mixture of despair and hope is embodied in the structure of the boat. In fact, no matter the time period, the ocean liner is used to convey the movement to and from love and relationships. When a ship is not a heterotopia for gay poets, it is because it is a vessel that takes them away from love; however, departure always means arrival and the back and forth movement of travel reveals both the impossibility and possibility of continual homosexual love and homoerotic friendship. For instance, in Frank O'Hara's "To the Harbormaster," he writes:

I wanted to be sure to reach you;
though my ship was on the way it got caught
in some moorings. I am always tying up
and then deciding to depart. In storms and
at sunset, with the metallic coils of the tide
around my fathomless arms, I am unable
to understand the forms of my vanity
or I am hard alee with my Polish rudder

in my hand and the sun sinking. To
you I offer my hull and the tattered cordage
of my will. The terrible channels where
the wind drives me against the brown lips
of the reeds are not all behind me. Yet
I trust the sanity of my vessel; and
if it sinks, it may well be in answer
to the reasoning of the eternal voices,
the waves which have kept me from reaching you. (1-17)

O'Hara's extended metaphor opens with the movement between lovers. "Reach" and the verb "to be" suggest difficulty in that movement, a fear that the reach may not reach far enough. And, as the poem also moves, O'Hara's use of similar language like "caught" and "tying up" reveals the anxiety is mutual for both the speaker and the addressee. Uncertain feelings in love and relationships are given the metaphor of the ship; this shows how the heart and the body also move back and forth because of the brain's confusion. The ending of the poem appeals to the ships to comment on the issue of human will. Placing the poem in a Cold War queer escapist migration context, O'Hara suggests that journeys, both literal and of the body and heart, offer nothing but confusion and frustration. Yet it is the movement away from the love that results in such understanding. In fact, very much like Crane's third section of "Voyages," Crane's poem here ends with queer utopian possibility: the reach is not complete, but there is knowledge that it will happen. Despite the utopian possibility embedded in the poem, to use the language of O'Hara, the poem very much seems like yet another poem about Hart Crane. The homosexual desire and love of the poem is also easily read as the desire to reach out and catch Crane as he jumps: "I wanted to be sure to reach you." The urgency of the opening line becomes the reader's urgency as well. Moreover, the speaker could be Crane and the addressee could also be Crane.

A journey, either a literal one or a journey of the heart and body like in O'Hara's poem, disrupts the static life of the individual and transforms the location once the individual arrives.

Ships are the greatest image of such emotion because of the associations they have developed throughout history. For instance, they are often seen in a romantic light because they were the first means of traversing great distances. Furthermore, as they are surrounded by the sea, they are the ultimate symbol of risk or danger. However, the ordinariness and necessity of travel became more pronounced as the modes of transportation shifted from ships to airplanes and automobiles.

In the early twentieth century, airplane demonstrations were considered mythical and miraculous events, according to Joseph J. Corn in his book *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-1950*. By the postwar era, however, as the sky became “dominated by giant corporations just like in the heyday of railroads” (111), “aircraft were already a key component of transportation and the lifeline of a global defense establishment” (139), making flights ordinary events. And, in fact, Ernst Bloch mentions flying as one way Utopia has become depreciated. Our wish dreams hold Utopia for us, and one of those dreams are usually associated with flying. He says, “If I recall correctly, Dehmel wrote a poem concerning this in which he said, ‘And to be as free as the birds’—the wish is in there . . .” By the mid to late twentieth century, flying, however, had become so usual as to make Utopia seem “banal” (2). The distinction between flights and ships too is that airplanes, because of their tight quarters and inability for passengers to move around easily, made them less likely to act as heterotopias. Instead, airplanes took on a contradictory meaning in the postwar era. The speed guaranteed instant gratification—the ability to escape on a whim to find happiness, love, and difference; however, like traveling by ship, the escape seemed destined to fail.

In O'Hara's “The Unfinished,” for example, unhappiness is tied to flight. He opens the poem by writing, “As happiness takes off . . . / it's so depressing, / so I will be as unhappy as I damn well / please and not make too much of it because I am / really here and not in a novel or

anything or a jet plane” (1, 5-8). Throughout the first few lines of the poem, O’Hara details how the desire to escape is futile because trauma surrounds the world. “Everything becomes history,” he says in line 35, and it is inescapable. Despite this, we try to escape by flying to cities we believe will help us be happy. O’Hara shows this by describing a visit with his writer friends in Paris:

At the Paris branch of contemporary depression, I
Am dropping through the famous blueness like a pearl diver, I am
Looking for Gregory who lives on Heart-Bed Street and I sit with Ashbery
In the Flore because of his poem about himself in a flower-bed
And we look for Gregory in the Deux Magots because I want to cry with him
About a dear dead friend, it’s always about dying, never about death
I sometimes think it’s the only reason that any of us love each other. (39-45)

Sadness follows because, as O’Hara writes, the emotion has become typical. Dying, no matter the age of the speakers and actors, has been so predictable that it is equated with love. Dying too implies an ongoing process instead of the finality of mortality; however, near the end of the poem, once the writer friends described in the poem have returned home, O’Hara suggests the homecoming makes the speaker realize that history and life are not depressing because, in fact, the depression is shared (72-73). The shared experiences, whether positive or negative, create the possibility of a future utopia through the connectedness. This is evident in the poem’s final stanza through the use of phrases and words such as “stares into the future” (76), “foreseeing” (78), and “when one day” (79). This realization is one the speaker would not have come to if it had not been for the flight to a foreign place and the return flight home.

For O’Hara, Utopia is forged when one is able to transform the ordinary into a space of liberation, especially when the original use of the space is not utopian. In both “An Airplane Whistle (After Heine)” and “Enemy Planes Approaching” airplanes undergo such transformation. The first poem is inspired by the German poet Heinrich Heine, who, writing in

the nineteenth century, was forced into exile from Germany to France because of his radicalism.

In particular, Heine held a strong belief in a classless, utopian society. O'Hara writes,

The rose, the lily and the dove got withered
In your sunlight or in the soot, maybe, of New York
And ceased to be lovable as odd sounds are lovable
Say blowing on a little airplane's slot
Which is the color of the back of your knee
A particular sound, fine, light and slightly hoarse (1-6)

Although this poem details how love often withers and fades, it also reveals hope. This short, lyric poem uses the sound of an airplane to illustrate how physical action of a body changes the negative (odd sounds) to the positive. Furthermore, the sexual desire exhibited in the poem creates a queer utopian moment that shows how even the smallest action is powerful. Also, Heine's ghostly figure hovers over the poem and intensifies the transformative utopian moment. He is a poet who was so controversial in his own country that a memorial statue had to be constructed in the Bronx, New York instead of Germany. A Jewish writer, his books were burned by the Nazis during the Second World War. However, like all the ghostly presences discussed throughout this chapter, Heine remains too, waiting for a utopian world.

O'Hara's summoning of Heine is an indication of the desire for connection across time and space that seemed absent during the Cold War period. The lack of connection to fellow human beings, especially depicted in gay and lesbian poetry, would become an increasing concern as Cold War culture attempted to extinguish any semblance of a gay and lesbian community in the United States. Speed seemed like the best option to usher in a queer utopia where such connections could exist. Travel over land would come to symbolize the erotic nature of a queer utopia. This is, of course, why O'Hara frequently used travel as a metaphor for love, sex, and the body. For example, his poem "Travel" uses a train as a metaphor for the body:

Sometimes I know I love you better
than all the others I kiss it's funny

but it's true and I wouldn't roll
from one to the next so fast if you

hadn't knocked them all down like
ninepins when you roared by my bed

I keep trying to race ahead and catch
you at the newest station or whistle

stop but you are flighty about
schedules and always soar away just

as leaning from my taxicab my breath
reaches for the back of your neck. (1-12)

Fastness (“fast” and “race” and “soar”) is associated with same-sex love and acts. Furthermore, the speaker’s mention of the partner’s “flighty” behavior contrasts to the strict time schedules of heteronormative society. The movement between partners also challenges the Cold War image of a nuclear family. While the indecisiveness of love is one theme of the poem, O’Hara’s use of trains as a metaphor reveals how he is not as wavering as the poem suggests.

The erotic nature of speed is detailed again by O’Hara in “Grand Central,” a poem that compares the body to a train: “The wheels are inside me thundering” (1); he adds, “Then the enormous bullets / streak towards me with their black tracers / and bury themselves deep in my muscles. / They won’t be taken out, I can still / move. Now I am going to lie down / like an expanse of marble floor / covered with commuters and information: / it is my vocation, you believe that, / don’t you?” (5-13). He ends the poem by saying, “It will be / my blood, I think, that dominates the trains” (40-41). Here, the train is equated with pleasure because of its speed (“streak”). Jeffrey T. Schnapp, in his essay “Crash (Speed as Engine of Individuation),” says, “A few features of rapid motion’s association with pleasure, power, and joyous fear, that is, appear

to qualify as transhistorical and transcultural facts. Since time immemorial children have felt the fascination of fast-moving objects: spun themselves dizzy and silly; achieved rapture by means of rocking, swinging, sliding, and running; simulated crashes and smash-ups. Such childhood intoxications may be vascular, muscular, perceptual or erotic in nature” (3). Although Schnapp focuses mostly on early modernism in his essay, in the postwar years, this rapid motion became more intense and seemed to preoccupy national and international imagination as Pan Am pilots and astronauts took on hero-like status. The flight associated with space travel, especially with the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, also used erotic language. Transportation then became increasingly sexualized, and, during the Cold War, such sexuality was typically heterosexual. Because of the frequent use of transportation, the modes are also used to reveal the daily life of living as a gay man or lesbian. For example, in O’Hara’s poem “Biotherm (For Bill Berkson),” he says, “I was walking through a train with my suitcase and I overheard someone say ‘speaking of faggots’ / now isn’t life difficult enough without that / and why am I always carrying something / well it was a shitty looking person anyway / better a faggot than a farthead / or as fathers have often said to friends of mine / ‘better dead than a dope’ ‘if I thought you were queer I’d kill you’ / you’d be right to, DAD, daddio, addled annie pad-lark (Brit. 19 c.) // well everything can’t be perfect / you said it” (192-202). The incident on the train highlights the difficulty of living in a homophobic society. Despite the utopian promise offered by transportation, the modes are not immune from the negative realities. Transportation then parallels the space gay men and lesbians had to live within: between utopian impossibility and utopian possibility.

For example, trains can offer anticipatory illumination while also evoking melancholy. In “Joe’s Jacket,” O’Hara takes the reader through the speaker’s weekend and opens with the

departure on the Long Island Railroad to Southampton. Written for his friend Joe LeSueur, the poem also mentions other friends like Jasper Johns, Kenneth Koch, and Vincent Warren. In *Frank O'Hara: Poet among Painters*, Margorie Perloff explains, "Given his intense relationships with people, he naturally tended to prefer whatever poem he had just written because it could remind him of a particular person or incident. All his best poems grow out of personal relationships" (117). In fact, the first line of the poem describes the train ride with "Jap and Vincent" (1). The poem then quickly moves to detailing a blow-out party, the morning after hangover, the return trip home, and the Monday following the party. Perloff argues, "The whole 'story' is told as if in one long breath. The poem's long (13-20-syllable) lines are almost wholly unpunctuated and almost all run-on; there is not a single full stop in the space of fifty-two lines. Once we have 'entertained' with Frank, Jap, and Vincent, therefore, we cannot really stop until the whirlwind weekend is over. Yet this 'action poem' simulates speed and acceleration by careful structural means" (148). Indeed, each episode is given its own highly descriptive stanza. While the structural speed of the poem is important, I am interested too in O'Hara's use of various images of transportation. He not only mentions the train, but a car and ship are both referred to throughout the poem as well. The partying and heavy drinking described in the poem does not result in happiness for the speaker; instead, the tone of the poem is very different. In the stanza that describes the morning after, the speaker tells the reader he is reading D.H. Lawrence's poem "The Ship of Death." Yet another self-elegy, written shortly before Lawrence died in 1930, the poem uses the ship's journey as a metaphor for the stages of life and dying. "Joe's Jacket" then can be read as O'Hara's own poem about the journey of death and is also another poem that acts as a self-elegy. The poem, written about a journey to Long Island, foreshadows O'Hara's death, which occurred on Fire Island. However, the death's journey image

needed to be changed during the Cold War from the ship to the train and automobile. The speaker also subverts the belief that homosexuality meant death: “my bed . . . softly declined to become a ship” (44). In fact, in Lawrence’s poem, the ship allows the soul to live on. Similarly, O’Hara realizes that transportation returns the body to friends. Through friendship, he is and will remain tied to the world. The image of Joe’s jacket ends the poem, offering a symbolic representation of queer utopia: “it is all enormity and life [the jacket] has protected me and kept me here on / many occasions as a symbol does when the heart is full and risks no speech / a precaution I loathe as the pheasant loathes the season and is preserved / it will not be need, it will be just what it is and just what happens” (49-52). Perloff suggests the jacket takes on an ominous quality because of the speaker’s loathing; she goes so far as to call it a “straitjacket” (152). However, I would argue that it is not the jacket that the speaker loathes but the sadness of the world that causes him to need the protection of the jacket. The lack of punctuation at the end of the poem changes the tone and so points to the coming of a queer utopia. The language of the final line mingles possibility with impossibility. The jacket will not be needed with Utopia on the horizon. The final words, however, reveal that the closeness of that horizon is uncertain.

While trains and planes were identified as a loss of power, the automobile held the ultimate possibility for a queer utopia; it seemed to restore power and offer a sense of freedom. If, as Foucault argues, ships and boats are the ultimate heterotopias, then the car too, as Andrew Thacker suggests, might act as yet another. Examining the car in E.M. Forster’s novel *Howard’s End*, he writes that the car is “a real site but one which will not stay put, a ‘placeless place’ that constantly unsettles an acceptable spatial ordering of modernity” (29). Forster’s novel, set in the early twentieth-century, anticipates the freedom that the automobile would come to exhibit in the Cold War, but that same freedom would teeter on the edge of chaos.

In “[On the Vast Highway]” O’Hara again uses imagery of transportation to reveal the theme of death; this time, however, through the use of the automobile, he reveals how the emergence of the car crash in the twentieth-century made human beings realize the immensity and indeterminate nature of death. He writes,

On the vast highway
where death streams cheerfully
in the sunlight and the enormous spans
cast their 4 o’clock suspensions
over the harbor I am told
of the infidelities of the Puerto Ricans
and the meanness of the Jews
by an Irish cab driver
It is good that there are so many kinds of us
so death can choose
and even perhaps prefer
he who casts the first shadow of the day
on those who are trying to live till dark (1-13)

The use of imagery like “4 O’clock” and the cab propels the reader into straight time instead of queer time. But, like “Joe’s Jacket,” this poem too ends without a period; it is open-ended; O’Hara suggests then that queer time and queer space is possible. In fact, death is democratic and will come to us all, even the bigoted cabbie.

Car crashes would figure predominately in O’Hara’s poetry because of his passion and appreciation for the actor James Dean. According to biographer Brad Gooch, O’Hara had his own brush with acting at the age twenty-four when he performed in *Julius Caesar* at the Brattle Street Theatre in Boston, which he details in the poem “Thinking of James Dean.” O’Hara was a fixture at the stage door for a number of summers at the Red Barn Theatre because, as Gooch says, “Actors and actresses held a great fascination for him. He loved their shuttling between reality and fantasy” (159). For O’Hara, escapism came to be associated with the figure of James Dean. While on a trip in Great Spruce Head Island in Maine, O’Hara wrote “To An Actor Who

Died.” As Gooch maintains, “The subject O’Hara was fascinated with that fall was the death of James Dean, aged twenty-four, on September 30, 1955, in a crash in his Porsche Spyder near Paso Robles on his way to Salinas for a race” (266). O’Hara opens “To An Actor Who Died,” by saying:

As the days go, and they go fast on this island
where the firs grow blue and the golden seaweed
clanders up the rocks, I think of you, and death
comes not, except a sea urchin’s dropped and cracked

on the rocks and falling bird eats him to rise
more strongly into fog or luminous purple wind. So
to be used and rest, the spiny thing is empty, still
increasing decoration on the craggy slopes above

the barnacles. Lightly falls the grieving light
over the heel of Great Spruce Head Island, like cool
words turning their back on the bayness of the bay
and open water where the swell says heavy things (1-12)

The poem details waves, surf, beaches, and sky; these aspects of nature remind the speaker of both the painful slowness of death as well as the sudden quickness of death. The natural imagery is contrasted to the speed of a car that drives too quickly and crashes. What hovers over the poem, however, is the erotic nature of speed. Despite Dean’s death, the attractiveness rests on the very speed that resulted in that death. Speed does not just end in death but also in a release that parallels an orgasm. In fact, the speaker feels intimately connected to Dean:

And after hours of lying in nature, to nature,
and simulated death in the crushing waves, their shells and heart
pounding me naked on the shingle: had I died at twenty-four as he, but
in Boston, robbed of these suns and knowledges, a corpse more whole,

less deeply torn, less bruised and less alive, perhaps backstage
at the Brattle Theatre amidst the cold cream and the familiar lice
in my red-gold costume for a bit in *Julius Caesar*, would I be
smaller now in the vastness of light?” (17-24).

The death of James Dean distressed O'Hara because it could have just as easily been his own death. Joe Lesueur, O'Hara's partner for a number of years, explains, in his book *Digressions on Some Poems by Frank O'Hara*,

. . . [James Dean] was the embodiment and idealization of youth at bay—difficult, sensitive, and gorgeous, of course. And if you happened to be queer and had not had an easy relationship with one of your parents, or with both of them, it was somehow thrilling to identify with James Dean's Cal, whose confusion seemed more that of an incipient gay adolescent than a straight kid with growing-up problems. . . . if a youth as bright, good-looking, and personable as the James Dean character were straight, he would have nothing to rebel against: he'd be popular at school, he'd have a girlfriend, he and not the goody-two-shoes Aaron would be the favorite son. How could he possibly be a miserable loner if he were straight? (65-66)

The car crash then became a painful reminder of the way homosexuality was frequently tied to death.

In fact, we are led back to ghosts and ghostliness. The poem eerily predicts O'Hara's own death by a vehicle. In the summer of 1966, O'Hara traveled with friends to Fire Island from New York City. Late in the evening on July 23, O'Hara and his friend J.J. Mitchell took a beach taxi home from a party. They became stranded on the beach after the taxi had a flat tire. Local Kenneth Ruzicka, who worked on taxis and did other odd jobs on the island, drove a four-cylinder jeep on the beach with his girlfriend in the passenger seat. As O'Hara tried to walk and turn out of the way of the oncoming vehicle, Ruzicka's vehicle crashed into the poet. The driver later claimed he was blinded by the stopped taxi's headlights. Witnesses say Ruzicka's jeep was traveling at a high speed while Ruzicka argued he was driving slowly. O'Hara died from internal injuries two days later. Negligent homicide charges failed to be brought against Ruzicka. Later, as O'Hara's biographer, Gooch, explains, "O'Hara's friends [believed] that the accident was covered up because of loyalty among local workers who perhaps were less than sympathetic with 'summer people,' or homosexuals from the city" (458-466).

In his essay on speed, Jeffrey T. Schnapp argues that, during the modern era, “it became possible to envisage speed as a kind of drug, an intensified, an *excitant moderne*,” and “the human subject of speed—typically the driver—whom I . . . refer to . . . as the *kinematic subject*, once reshaped by repeated experiences of this stimulant finds himself caught in an addiction loop, threatened, on the one hand, by monotony, and, on the other, by the need for ever new stimuli in order to maintain the same level of intensity.” Furthermore, he argues that “the crash becomes a necessary feature of this loop structure, at once vouching for its legitimacy (by crystallizing the very intensity for which it stands), serving as a regenerative device (by initiating a new cycle of hyperstimulation), and marking an absolute limit (death)” (2-3). Car crashes, Schnapp says, reveal how “man and machine are ripped asunder; the thrill of speed gives way to terror and paralysis” (4). And, in O’Hara’s case, even death. However, throughout the essay, the imagery of travel and transportation reveals that gay and lesbian poets also associated speed with freedom. In fact, that O’Hara haunted other poets after his death and that he haunts us now, indicates that death is not the end.

In his 1958 poem dedicated to Frank O’Hara, “My Sad Self,” Allen Ginsberg illustrates, through detailing an erotic encounter with O’Hara’s absent presence, how human connection is able to occur when we are touched by the past in the present moment. Ginsberg’s poem then also predicts his friend’s death. The poem reminds us of how O’Hara was well known for walking the New York City streets and was a frequent fixture on the sidewalks. Ginsberg writes:

Sad,
I take the elevator and go
down, pondering,
and walk on the pavements staring into all man’s
plateglass, faces,
questioning after who loves,
and stop, bemused
in front of an automobile shopwindow

standing lost in calm thought,
traffic moving up & down 5th Avenue blocks behind me
waiting for a moment when . . .
Time to go home & cook supper & listen to
the romantic war news on the radio
. . . all movement stops
& I walk in the timeless sadness of existence . . .” (23-37)

The tone of this poem contrasts to O’Hara’s own poetry, which mostly offers humor, spirit, and joy. It is through thinking of O’Hara though that the speaker is able to push through an overwhelming existence. Movement results in stillness as Ginsberg communes with O’Hara’s absent figure.

In his elegy for O’Hara, “City Midnight Junk Strains,” Ginsberg also recognizes that when movement stops, the body does as well. Yet the spirit lives on in the present, offering us, like Hart Crane’s ghost, the possibility of a queer utopia. He writes, “. . . chattering Frank / stopped forever— / Faithful drunken adorers, mourn. / The busfare’s a nickel more / past his old apartment 9th Street by the park” (10-14). O’Hara’s apartment remains and so his spirit does as well, providing us with an example of how Utopia can be seen just on the horizon. Indeed, by using the word “spirit,” I refer not just to O’Hara’s ghostly spirit but the joyful and humorous tone found in many of his poems. For O’Hara, Utopia is not an ideal location; instead, it is often a state-of-mind that enables us to live in the here and now while we wait for a queer utopia.

Chapter Two

The Shore Knows About Dying: Fantasy Ideals, the Cult of Pleasure, and False Utopias

Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises, / Sounds, and sweet airs that give delight
and hurt not. / Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments / Will hum about
mine ears; and sometime voices / That, if I then had waked after long sleep, / Will
make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming, / The clouds methought would open
and show riches / Ready to drop upon me, that, when I waked, / I cried to dream
again. –Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Act III, scene 2

In the last chapter I argued that the imagery of transportation and bridges present both the possibility and impossibility of a concrete queer utopia. Similarly, despite O’Hara’s fatal accident on a shore, island geography during the Cold War became a space that ushered forth two contrasting visions of utopian ideals found in the poetry of the era. Allen Ginsberg’s travels to islands and the Mediterranean region and the texts written in response to those travels focused on pleasure. Utopia was simply constructed as a fantasy that, I argue, in reality could never be seen on the horizon; however, W.H. Auden critiqued fantasy and the cult of pleasure as false ideals and failed utopian visions and so brings us closer to a queer utopia. Such a contrast over Utopia is highlighted in an episode of literary history.

In 1957, while traveling throughout Europe, Ginsberg stopped in Italy and paid a fisherman to take him to the isle of Ischia where he hoped to see Auden. Auden had been living on the island every summer for ten years (Miles 230). While a student at Columbia in 1946, Ginsberg met Auden, who befriended the young student, and they discussed poetry, and, at a later meeting, Auden recommended open verse poet David Jones as a model, since Ginsberg’s poetry was heading in that direction (Miles 452). That year, 1946, Ginsberg struggled to confront his homosexuality after his father, Louis Ginsberg, failed to accept it. Not just a tremendous poet in the student’s eyes, Auden, moderately public about his homosexuality, also represented the

life Ginsberg hoped to have: a successful reputation as an openly gay poet. However, at the meeting in Ischia during 1957, Ginsberg had a different experience with Auden.

On the Italian island, Ginsberg located Auden at Marie's Bar; Auden sat with a group of friends at an outside table. One aspect of Auden's personality that the young Beat did not quite understand was that, brought up a proper Englishman, Auden perhaps felt the young poet a bit rude for showing up unannounced and uninvited. Sitting down with the group, Ginsberg felt the tension. The conversation, of course, turned to poetry; Ginsberg and Auden argued over Whitman, Ginsberg's idol. In a letter to his father, Ginsberg wrote, "I quoted the first line of Whitman, 'I celebrate myself,' etc., and Auden said, 'Oh but my dear! That's so *wrong* and so *shameless*, it's an utterly bad line – when I hear that I feel I must say please don't include me (re – 'what I shall assume you shall assume') . . .'" (*Family Business* 70). The meeting ended with Ginsberg shouting and storming off. As he left, he told them they were "a bunch of shits," and, in the letter to his father, added that they seemed "a tableful of dull chatty literary old fairies" (*Family Business* 69). On the surface, this episode of twentieth-century literary history could easily be read as an argument between the Romantic sensibility (Ginsberg) and the Modern sensibility (Auden). Furthermore, the episode may be seen as an example of the national divide within poetry. Although Auden was granted American citizenship, he was British when it came to his art. Auden once said that American poets think of poetry as defining their being whereas British poets think of poetry as a craft (*The Dyer's Hand* 354-368). Or, it can be read as, the way Ginsberg did, a shift in American poetry. He ended the letter to his father by saying, "All this gives me the conviction, or strengthens the conviction I have had, that the republic of poetry needs a full-scale revolution and upsetting of 'values' (and a return to a kind of imagination of

life in Whitman's *Democratic Vistas* that I've been reading in Venice)" (70). This episode though reveals more than a mere disagreement over theme and aesthetics.

Three details about this meeting between Ginsberg and Auden are important. First, Ginsberg had been reading Whitman in Venice, which seems to have propelled him to search out Auden. The second important point is that they argued over Whitman, and, thirdly, that this argument took place on an island in the Mediterranean. Italy and the entire region of the Mediterranean have often been associated with homosexual freedom. Venice in particular, throughout the centuries, has been a site where gay men traveled to escape strict, heterosexual social restrictions. Ginsberg's reading of Whitman, especially in Venice, may be read as his attempt to, like the previous chapter argued in relation to bridges, reach out across time and space for homoerotic and poetic friendship. Whitman's ghostly presence made Ginsberg aware that such friendship could be found in the present. Ginsberg's vision of Utopia, however, is a fantastical construction. On the surface, Auden and Ginsberg's meeting shows the desire for an international homosexual community, one that was indeed needed during an era that sought to dismantle and intimidate such a community. Their inability to connect in that particular moment would seem that an international community, similar no matter the place, was a utopian illusion. In fact, what Ginsberg failed to understand is that a queer utopia did not mean a space or community where each individual was the same and believed in the same poetic and queer visions; instead, queer utopia allows for a plethora of differences and multiplicities. Ginsberg's writing argues for such a plethora, yet his actions contradicted such a goal.

Ginsberg's and Auden's contrast then is between fantasy and a more concrete Utopia that held actual possibility. Fantasy is tied to beauty and pleasure and the concrete Utopia to an ethics of seeing the world as it is and could be. Islands and the Mediterranean, for both Auden and

Ginsberg, represent an ideal landscape, what Ernst Bloch calls the wishful landscape, and it is through the representation that a vision of human liberation is articulated. Islands showcased for the poets the way the world can be made and unmade, just as poetry hinges on the making and unmaking of the world. Auden's poetry reveals how a concrete Utopia should include those who were excluded even within gay culture. Whitman's presence haunted Ginsberg; however, he failed to ethically redeem the past.

Whitman's long essay "Democratic Vistas" does indeed look forward to a utopian society through the very use of "vistas" in the title. Even the first few paragraphs are riddled with words and phrases that identify him waiting patiently for such a society. He opens the essay with a discussion of John Stuart Mill's "Liberty in the Future," yet another title that signals anticipation. Whitman says, in the second paragraph, "America, filling the present with greatest deeds and problems, cheerfully accepting the past, including feudalism (as, indeed, the present is but the legitimate birth of the past, including feudalism,) counts, as I reckon, for her justification and success, (for who, as yet, dare claim success?) almost entirely on the future. Nor is that hope unwarranted" (1). The historical context of American slavery reveals how the essay is concerned with redeeming the past, not merely in the present, but in America's future as well. The issue of temporality, so much a part of hauntology, is also important in Whitman's understanding of Utopia. The world must settle debts and remember the past in the present in order to have a hopeful future. Whitman's vision of America is not of *one* harmonious entity. Instead, he argues that "these States" are "parts [that are] harmoniously blended" (1). Plurality is central to American unity. He even says, "For there are opposite sides to the great question of democracy, as to every great question" (1). This would even be proven in the future during the quarrel between Ginsberg and Auden about Whitman's own work. Like Ginsberg, however, Whitman

contradicts himself. For example, Whitman hopes that “our western world” will have a “nationality superior to any hither known” and that it should contain “perfect personalities and sociologies, original, transcendental. . .” (2). In order for such a utopia to become possible, a number of equally viable (non-Western) identities would have to be excluded. Furthermore, “perfect” is unattainable in a concrete reality. Instead of critiquing Whitman’s and Ginsberg’s contradictory ideals, I would say instead that such contradiction is evidence of the desperate desire for a better life when inequality surrounded them. The concern for a more viable world and the hope that it would come about are points where they contrast to Auden.

The desire for Utopia is precisely why so many gay men traveled and explored the Mediterranean region for centuries. In *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy*, Robert Aldrich details the long history of exploration of the region by gay men. Throughout his text he explains that northern gay men visiting the South for sexual pleasure not only occurred in actual history but became a pattern within literature as well. Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice* is provided as the example par excellence. Moreover, he argues that the connection between the Mediterranean and homosexuality is founded in the erotic life from Ancient Greece. The relationship of pederasty to social status became a model for later homosexual relationships. The sanctions against homosexuality in later periods resulted in gay men upholding the Greek model; they did so despite the fact that relationships were built on a hierarchy of power (4-18). In his essay about sexual relations during Greek antiquity, “Is There a History of Sexuality?” David M. Halperin argues that contemporary individuals misunderstand ancient Greek sexual relations; they believe them to be similar to that of our own modern era as “behavior [that] reflects or expresses an individual’s ‘sexuality’” (417). Instead, he argues, “The social body precedes the sexual body” during antiquity (420). While writers like Whitman and

Ginsberg associated Greek relationships with a utopian, democratic ideal, they seem to have failed to recognize that adult men could only have sex with individuals (women, men, or boys) who had inferior social status to that of the adult male (418).

Ginsberg, very much a part of a gay culture that envisioned the Mediterranean as a queer utopia, spent a great deal of time in Italy during 1957; as letters to his father indicate, he visited museums and tourist sites while also taking off on his own to explore every day life in a number of Italian cities. One letter to his father stands out in particular, from August 10th. He wrote:

Next day went to the Vatican museums, saw Michelangelo—and they've painted drapery over all his naked bodies in *Last Judgment*. Then to their great collection of classical statuary—and there again, everybody has a figleaf. I never saw the Church in such vulgar & ugly relief. After Florence & its classical openness, & after seeing the statuary in the forum & various state museums, to go in Vatican & see them desecrating the very significance & point of ancient sculpture—idealized human bodies, but real ones—they even put a figleaf on poor old Laocöon & his prepubescent sons. How they get away with it I don't know: I mean, it's so opposite to what you see everywhere else in Italy, it stands out like the piece of dirty-mindedness that it is. (*Family Business* 65)

His annoyance over Catholic purity says much about the context in which he wrote; two months before his visit to Italy began, San Francisco Police officers purchased copies of *Howl* in City Lights Bookstore, an action that led to one of the most famous pornography and literary censorship trials of the twentieth century. Moreover, about a month before his visit to Auden on the isle of Ischia, Ginsberg traveled with his partner, Peter Orlovsky. In Assisi, short on cash, they stopped for shelter at the Franciscan monastery where St. Francis of Assisi once lived. They were refused after Ginsberg made his anger over the covering of naked bodies in the Vatican perfectly clear. Ginsberg and Orlovsky slept on the lawn of the monastery (Miles 228).

According to Barry Miles, Ginsberg would write a poem three years later that detailed the brief time spent on the lawn. In “History of Visions—A List,” a poem not included in *The Collected Poems*, Ginsberg writes, “With Peter in Assisi, the clouds afright over the Umbrian plains in

moonlite; cocksucking in the darkness on the grass in front of the cathedral doors” (228-229). Ginsberg’s exasperation over the conservative view of sexuality is avenged through symbolic action. Despite how radical the action appears, it is an action that disregards other ideals simply because they do not match his own.

The question over conservative sexuality would come full circle when Ginsberg visited Auden. In the letter to his father describing his visit to Ischia, Ginsberg explained, “I doubt if [Auden] respects his own feelings anymore—I think his long sexual history has been relatively unfortunate and made him very orthodox and conservative and merciless in an offhand way” (*Family Business* 69). As an Anglican, Auden did indeed experience powerful guilt about his sexuality. Unfortunately, Auden would die a number of years before the LGBT movement would find its way into churches and debates over the rigid doctrines about sexuality. At the same time, however, Ginsberg’s inability to see orthodoxy as another option reveals his own utopian failings. Ginsberg’s short, 1974 essay “Remembering Auden,” written soon after Auden’s death, shows how Ginsberg matured. His frustration changed to pity. He says of his meeting with him in Ischia, “I was outraged, intemperate, tipsy and self-righteous. Oddly, years later, he apologized to me for having been too off-handed with me.” Later in the essay, Ginsberg adds:

I think he got a little bit silly. When he was last in New York he was doing some work with a cartoonist making some funny little poems. . . . he wanted me to look at those. I was full of big serious mantras and [William] Blake and spiritual trippiness and he wanted me to look at all those funny little household domestic verses about how silly and comfy the Victorians were. . . . he read some very great poems saying farewell to his body, farewell to his eyes, to his senses one by one. . . . He must have been lonely, because he said he was afraid he’d drop dead in his apartment and have a heart attack and nobody would find him. Quite true because he did have a final heart attack. (*Deliberate Prose* 451-52)

The poems Auden probably read to Ginsberg were “Talking to Dogs,” “Talking to Mice,” and “Talking to Myself.” In “Talking to Myself,” Auden addresses his body by saying,

I'm always amazed at how little I know You.
Your coasts and outgates I know, for I govern there,
but what goes on inland, the rites, the social codes,
Your torrents, salt and sunless, remain enigmas:
what I believe is on doctors' hearsay only. (41-45)

The speaker feels as if he does not know his body; however, this lack of knowledge actually provides him with amazement, another form of pleasure. It may not be the same type of pleasure that Ginsberg privileges, but it is pleasure nevertheless. Auden's stanza presents two aspects of the body: what we can know about it and what we cannot know about it. The mysterious aspect of the body has the ability to surprise us, an affect that has just as much power as an affect like shame. Furthermore, in the final stanza of the poem, he writes,

Time, we both know, will decay you, and already
I'm scared of our divorce: I've seen some horrid ones.
Remember: when *Le Bon Dieu* says to You *Leave him!*,
please, please, for His sake and mine, pay no attention
to my piteous *Don'ts*, but bugger off quickly. (71-75)

I would go so far as to argue that someone unaware of his body would not feel fear about the "divorce" of the soul from the body. Indeed, these lines indicate the speaker is aware that his personality is tied to the flesh.

Even though Ginsberg's anger seems to have eased into relaxation, the pity he feels for Auden still reveals Ginsberg's own rigid definitions of sexuality and Utopia. Based on the reading of the two stanzas, pity for Auden was not necessary. The contrast between one writer aware and shameless about his body and the other aware and attempting to find balance between his guilt and pride is most important. This desire to find balance drove Auden to critique the form of pleasure that Ginsberg very much cherished.

Auden, during the forties and fifties, kept his apartment in New York but began staying the winter months on Ischia. Balance is a key theme in the poems that detail the geography of the

Island. Critic Paula Marchetti argues, “Poems of this period voice a relationship with the landscape perceived as the physical context nurturing the lives and cultures of its inhabitants. The carved and chiseled limestone of Tuscan cities transforms the material world of nature into artful and urbane visions of order. The landscape seems to have been magically and effortlessly transformed into garden, vineyard, fountain, temple, palace and city” (208-209). The physical world results in a connection with individuals as well as offers restoration. Auden found, however, that while islands can be refuges, they can also conceal reality. Despite the order that Auden saw represented in the landscape, the beauty had the ability to offer up mere fantasy in the viewer’s mind. This would become accentuated as Italy began to heal from the trauma of the Second World War. In the poem “Ischia,” Auden presents the difficulty of viewing the landscape beyond the destruction of the War. While the poem details the end of Mussolini’s era, the ending does “occasion song,” and Auden suggests a lingering inability to move beyond the reality of the past horror: “Your ambient peace / in any case is a cure for, ceasing to think / of a way to get on” (33-35). For Auden, however, it is important to remember the past in the present. The landscape may very well be a “cure” but it is a cure that will fail to offer an ethical future. In “An Island Cemetery,” Auden details how the beauty of the island distracts the viewer from confronting the ugliness of the past. It is precisely this ability to confront the past that leads to destructive nationalism, a nationalism during the Cold War that perpetuated fears and resulted in disconnection between human beings.

One of Auden’s most famous poems, “In Praise of Limestone,” appears immediately before “Ischia” in his *Collected Poems*, and the month and year of composition, May of 1948, reveals that the poem was one of the first Auden wrote while he lived on the Italian island. Throughout the poem Auden presents the theme of moderation by describing how landscape has

the potential to both ground us in reality as well as seduce us into its illusion. The island's beauty very much made Auden aware of landscape's ability to distract; however, the memory of the limestone landscape of his childhood in England reminds him that landscape does not *always* enable forgetting. Instead, landscape's power may also be in the soil because it ties us to the dead (line 46); landscape then represents human sin and the bodies and memories buried there.

According to Richard Bozorth, in *Auden's Games of Knowledge: Poetry and the Meanings of Homosexuality*, "[The] Mediterranean landscape is geologically kin to the limestone cliffs of northern England" (245). Memory and the past tie the individual to the present, even when one is isolated on a remote island. The past must be confronted in order for events to not be repeated again in the future. The formation of joy with shame will lead one to a less repressive world.

Auden, middle-aged by the Cold War, furthermore saw that the paradise-like aspect of islands, while beautiful, resulted in the preoccupation with unrestrained pleasure. The emphasis on pleasure and beauty, especially in regards to the body, within gay culture seems to have made Auden feel like an outsider within a community that already held outsider status during the Cold War. His anxiety over his own fading youth is revealed in the poem "Pleasure Island," which he started on Ischia but finished on Fire Island where, according to critic Edward Mendelson, Auden shared a summer cottage with friends James and Tania Stern (300). Islands have a tendency to make us believe that beauty and pleasure are the most important aspects of life; while in a paradise-like locale, surrounded by exotic trees and weather, we forget that life is more than the sum of ecstasy. Auden came to understand that the seduction of islands had ethical implications. Yet Auden also understood the desire for such a locale as a gay man. Where indeed could a gay man live his life in openness?

Cherry Grove and the Pines, two gay and lesbian communities on Fire Island, were, and still are, two areas known as havens for gay and lesbian vacationers. In her cultural history of Fire Island, *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's First Gay and Lesbian Town*, Esther Newton explains, "The Grove was a resort, a place where people flocked in their leisure time if they could afford it, but it was also much, much more. Resorts like Provincetown, Massachusetts, Key West, Florida, and the Grove were (and to a large degree still are) the *only* public places gays could socialize and assemble without constant fear of hostile straight society" (2). While Auden did seemingly appreciate the isolation and protection, the middle-aged man found the emphasis on sunbathing and the body disconcerting. He writes, "The ocean / Stares right past us as though / No one here was worth drowning, and the eye, true / Blue all summer, of the sky / Would not miss a huddle of huts related / By planks, a dock, a state / Of undress and improvised abandon / Upon unshadowed sand" (3-10). The emphasis on pleasure and the body, Auden suggests, causes us to believe that death will not come. This is a key theme throughout many of Auden's late poems, especially "In Praise of Limestone," a poem that will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Furthermore, the political implications are also significant. Ignoring the possibility of death results in forgetting the dead who went before us, like Hart Crane. He continues by saying, "The coast is a blur and without meaning / The churches and routines / Which stopped there and never cared or dare to / Cross over to interfere / With this outpost where nothing is wicked / But to be sorry or sick, / But one thing unneighbourly, work" (19-25). "Meaning" is the key word here; the lines indicate that it is not so much pleasure that Auden critiques but pleasure that lacks significance. Pleasure then obviously has the ability to contain multiple forms and meanings. Furthermore, the speaker argues that while paradise-like locales offer a life of daily pleasure, the absence of routine and ritual leads to an inability to

know right from wrong and thus an inability to live an ethical life. Richard Bozorth argues, “The appeal of this place is that it is hardly a place at all—a strip of sand before an ocean . . . Nature plainly, unapologetically does not care. It bears the nonchalant, impervious look of the stranger to whom we aren’t worth eye contact” (240). Bozorth’s understanding of Auden’s lines is significant. While Utopia is indeed typically thought of as “no place,” the theory of Utopia that Ernst Bloch offers is concrete; images, objects, and experiences in daily life were more important to Auden than an unattainable ideal.

Auden’s poetic strength lies in his ability to critique a false conception of Utopia. This is also found in other lines of the poem. The speaker of the poem describes an individual reading and thinking on the beach; he says the individual changes positions, “And lies, like us, on his stomach watching / As bosom, backside, crotch / Or other sacred trophy is borne in triumph / Past his adoring by / Souls he does not try to like; then, getting / Up, gives all to the wet / Clasp of the sea or surrenders his scruples / To some great gross braying group / That will be drunk till Fall” (43-51). The elements of the body are described in detail. The speaker critiques the viewing of the bodies as “sacred” and implies that a more viable sacredness is yet to be discovered. The worship of the body causes the speaker to worry. Bozorth says, “This place, one feels, is peopled by outcasts going nowhere and not particularly fast, but neither are they ever quite at rest” (240-241). The inability to rest is an apt reading of Auden’s lines. According to Auden, the emphasis on the body leads to anxiety. Moreover, the irony of the atmosphere, provided by Auden’s description, is that while gays and lesbians were being persecuted and thus isolated from the rest of society, those on Fire Island are still isolated from one another. Auden writes, “Our / Lenient amusing shore / Knows in fact about all the dyings, is in / Fact our place, namely this / Place of a skull, a place where the rose of / Self-punishment will grow” (55-60). Auden’s criticism is

grounded in his Christianity. Mendelson says, “Fire Island is a Golgotha because the predawn sufferings of loneliness that occur there are chosen freely by the sufferers, thanks to an unconstraining grace” (300). And Bozorth adds:

The shock of this passage comes in its abrupt shift from casual satire of pagan fantasy to unironized Christian mythos, in which life devoted to ‘all the dyings’ of sexual bliss is not paradise but hell. In terms of worldly, historical geography, this is Golgotha—that site where the embodiments of the divine is killed. By calling it ‘our place,’ Auden reads it as an emblem of universal human guilt but also as the particular, self-chosen damnation of his own tribe, whose rites involve not just worship of the body but humiliation. (242)

Despite this, Auden’s critique of pleasure gets us closer to a better utopian ideal. “Pleasure” excludes others, like the middle-aged Auden, from a cult of youth and beauty.

Auden’s representation of Fire Island challenges the typical conception of it as a gay and lesbian haven. According to David Bergman, in his essay “Beauty and the Beach: Representing Fire Island,” the many “representations of Fire Island, which include some of the more famous works of gay literature, were not merely mirrors of gay life on the island, but ways of projecting the image of the liberated gay man, a personage newly minted and never before circulated, and of critiquing that life and image as it was developing” (95). He continues by saying that Fire Island “represented a way of life for certain gay men in which they were free from the most overt forms of surveillance and policing from straight people. More than any place else, Fire Island was a world made by gay men and lesbians for gay men and lesbians” (98). The making of a world and the manufacturing of pleasure is utopian; however, the narrow definition of pleasure makes it less so. The focus on the beautiful body made not only gays and lesbians but heterosexuals anxious. Bergman quotes Midge Decter’s essay, “The Boys on the Beach” in which she writes that “flesh [was never] permitted to betray any of the ordinary signs of encroaching mortality, such as excess fat or flabbiness or on the other hand the kind of

muscularity that suggests some activity whose end is not beauty” (96). Bergman explains, “To a greater or lesser extent all the beauty on Fire Island is ingrown and claustrophobic. The lushness of the island is all artificial, since as an extended sandbar it could boast nothing more fertile than various grasses—and even these have had to be meticulously planted and maintained. The wild, overgrown feel of the place is the work of decades of dedicated homeowners and well-paid gardeners who have made a kind of faux-tropics east of New York” (104). Islands, like all places and spaces, are unstable and frequently shift meaning depending on the viewer and the individual experiencing the location. For Auden, it is not problematic that Fire Island is a “faux-tropics”; instead, the problem is the construction of an island for only pleasurable purposes. How the island is created and used, according to Auden’s poetry, is what must be examined.

Auden consistently critiqued pastoral poetry; his criticism of the pastoral stemmed from an acknowledgement that the nostalgic turn to the past fails to observe the significant moments, events, and details of the immediate present. Auden realized that even his own movement to the paradise-like Ischia was a failure at constructing a utopian ideal. For example, in the poem “Ischia,” he writes that despite the beauty of the island that allows one to forget the “soiled productive cities” (17-24), the island still reminds “the happy / stranger that all is never well” (55-56). Instead, a utopian space should merge and recognize the past within the present as well as enable a preparation for the future.

The importance of beauty and pleasure can be traced back to Greek antiquity, and Allen Ginsberg would go in search of both in a number of locales. According to Robert Aldrich, the sexual relationship between a man and an adolescent boy in ancient Greek society was a lengthy relationship that consisted of courtship, mentorship, and friendship. The older man, called an *erastes*, and the younger, called an *eromenos*, ended their relationship when the *eromenos*

reached adulthood and took an *eromenos* of his own. Most importantly, the sign of adulthood for the *eromenos* was when he first began to grow a beard (15-16). The beard is an important image to understand Ginsberg's search and attraction to places, but especially for his attraction to the island nation of Cuba. He visited the country twice during his life.

Until recently critics have neglected Ginsberg's time in Cuba. Todd F. Tietchen's 2010 text *The Cubalogues: Beat Writers in Revolutionary Havana* attempts to rectify the absence. In fact, despite the Beats' numerous travels abroad, only a few pieces of scholarship have reflected on the travels. In Tietchen's work, he offers a chapter on Ginsberg's time in Cuba and argues that Ginsberg challenged the Cuban Revolution to have a humanist approach that would include sexual minorities within the fight, which Tietchen claims proves Ginsberg accepted various identities. He hinges his argument on an analysis of Ginsberg's essay "Prose Contribution to Cuban Revolution." The chapter does not consider Ginsberg's poetry. Because Tietchen merely looks at the prose, he misses the complexity of gender and sexual issues that Ginsberg's time in Cuba exposes.

In 1965, during his second trip to Cuba, Ginsberg slept soundly in his hotel room but awoke when interrupted by a knock. Three soldiers and a government official forced him to pack; at the immigration building, they told him he was being deported and placed him on the next plane. Seven years later, during an interview, Ginsberg explained his deportation, saying, "Well the worst thing I said was that I'd heard, by rumor, that Raúl Castro was gay. And the second worst thing I said was that Che Guevara was cute" (Young 20). Despite this humorous deflection of the incident, Ginsberg's time in Cuba, sponsored by the literary organization the Casa de las Américas, was controversial. Frequently outspoken, Ginsberg learned about the details of the Castro government's extreme crackdown on homosexuality when he met Manuel

Ballgas and José Mario, two young writers and publishers of the literary journal *El Puente*. Their stories led the American poet to complain about the government numerous times during his stay. At first, the Castro government overlooked the comments; however, Ginsberg began a sexual relationship with Ballgas and two days after the relationship began, the American's time in Cuba ended (Morgan 401-402). According to a letter Ginsberg later wrote to Chilean poet Nicanor Parra, Ginsberg told the Cuban officials on the way to the airport that he "was simpatico with the revolution" (*Letters* 301). However, Castro believed "homosexuality was the distilled essence of the 'bourgeois decadence' that led to the exploitation of the poor and to the growth of prostitution" and so homosexuals were "against the Revolution" (Howe 29). This literary history episode hints at the similarity between Cuban and American Cold War ideologies. In particular, while Ginsberg viewed Cuba as a utopian ideal, the North American mainland was just as hostile to homosexuals as Cuba.

For Ginsberg, paradise seemed to mean unrestrained sexuality and a lack of inhibitions. In Bill Morgan's biography of Ginsberg, *I Celebrate Myself*, he says that while in Greece, another paradise-like location, it was "a revelation for [Ginsberg] to be in a place where homosexuality wasn't frowned upon" (338). In Cuba, however, Morgan says, "Allen knew that having sex with any Cuban would cause more trouble for the other person than it would for him, but he couldn't help himself" (401). One man's island free of inhibitions then is another man's prison. In fact, Mario, before Ginsberg's visit, had already spent time in Castro's UMAP camps; they are legendary for the abuse and torture that occurred in them. Ginsberg's visit and behavior, according to Cuban literary scholar Linda S. Howe, compounded Mario and Ballagas's problems with the government. After one meeting with Ginsberg, the two young men were rounded up and interrogated by security police. They were eventually released; however, Howe suggests that

their association with Ginsberg was one of many incidents that resulted in the demise of Mario and Ballagas's literary magazine *El Puente* (Howe 29-31). Moreover, except for Howe's account, very little information is available about Mario and Ballagas, at least in English. Now, like Whitman and Hart Crane, they are figures that haunt. Auden's concern about the ethical implications of unrestrained pleasure is seen, in this case, as more than fitting. Even more disconcerting is the fact that, having known the abuses of the Castro government, Ginsberg put Mario and Ballagas in harm's way. Furthermore, they are absent figures in his published writing. Their literary journal finished, they are relegated to a mere sexual episode in Ginsberg's history. Mario and Ballagas' story reminds us that, while homosexuality may indeed cross borders, it is never the same in places. We have an ethical obligation to understand how the differences result in consequences for those, not just of the past, but in the present and in the future.

In fact, even during Ginsberg's first trip to Cuba, it would appear that he consumed others as a spectacle. "Havana 1953," for example, written during his first trip to Cuba on Christmas of that year, is a voyeuristic description of a night in Havana. In lines 24-36, he writes:

In walks a weird Cézanne
vision of the nowhere hip Cuban:
tall, thin, check gray suit,
gray felt shoes, / blaring gambler's hat,
Cab Calloway pimp's mustachio
--it comes down to a point in the center—
rushing up generations late talking Cuban,
pointing a gold-ringed finger
up toward the yellowed ceiling,
other cigarette hand pointing
stiff-armed down at his side,
effeminate. . .".

The thin mustache here is key; it is in-between the beard and a boyish clean-shaven face. In 1967's "Elegy for Che Guevara," Ginsberg describes Guevara's obituary photograph as revealing a "young feminine beardless radiant kid" (line 2), a "boy corpse," (5) and a neck sexier

than Johnson, De Gaulle or Kennedy (lines 10-12). For Ginsberg, Guevara here is sexy because he does appear boyish. Although he uses the word “feminine,” youth is emphasized, not “effeminate” behavior and mannerisms. The youth is an example of what Gregory Woods calls “the adolescent pliancy of Narcissus,” one of three male physical types in Western art and literature. He says, “The adolescent may be endowed with an indefatigable penis, but is chiefly admired for his backside” (9). The Cuban, however, in “Havana 1953,” may be “hip,” but he is “effeminate”; therefore, he is neither hyper-masculine like the bearded Castro and Guevara nor the boyish Cassady and beardless Guevara. The images uncover Ginsberg’s sexual classification system, a system that parallels the sexual and gender categories within the United States and Cuba. In an interview with Allen Young, Ginsberg explains the homosexual type he is attracted to: “The form I felt it in was between the heartfelt, populist, humanist, quasi-heterosexual, Whitmanic, bohemian, free-love, homosexual tradition, as you find it in Sherwood Anderson, Whitman, or maybe Genet, a little, versus the privileged, exaggeratedly effeminate, gossipy, moneyed, money-style-clothing-conscious, near-hysterical queen” (*Spontaneous Mind* 321). In fact, in “Havana 1953,” the effeminate Cuban represents *all* Cuba, and the poem’s second section describes the speaker’s disappointment with the country. Ginsberg travelled to Cuba alone in 1953 after hearing rumors of sex orgies; he envisioned a sexual utopia (Schumacher 160). Despite Ginsberg’s own revolutionary beliefs, stereotypical assumptions still carry weight. Orgies were absent; therefore, in the second section of the poem, the speaker’s disappointment is shown with lines like, “I feel rotten” (line 69) and “I spent too much money” (line 71). Even the poem’s rhythm, formed by shorter line breaks, is less erotic than the longer, Whitmanesque lines of “Howl.” True island life, with its mixture of both suffering and pleasure, slowly begins to come to light for Ginsberg.

Indeed, by 1961, when Ginsberg wrote “Prose Contribution to Cuban Revolution,” his feelings for the island had changed. Throughout the essay he has high hopes for Castro’s government, but he warns about censorship, arguing that only a true revolution will come through a Whitman-like consciousness where “it’s natural to be everybody at once . . . to understand the weirdness of everybody, even if it seems to conflict or lead to conflicts” (*Deliberate Prose* 136). The essay, written while he visited Greece only six months after the Bay of Pigs invasion, opens with a description of Greek boys that idolizes their bodies:

I have been sitting in lovely club-bar across the street where Greek boys congregate, they are friendly and they make love between men like in Plato, the whole classic love scene preserved intact with no faggotry involved, a huge relief to find it’s really true and good as an ideal, but for real. Though I find myself now shy and so except for a few not so satisfactory flings with boys I dug for cock but not really in love with, have not been very promiscuous or don’t get too deep involved, but dig watching the scene and being in presence of men who are open, that is, where my feelings are not queer but something out of old human love story. (*Deliberate Prose* 135-136)

This passage foreshadows Ginsberg’s 1965 trip to Cuba. He opens the essay with the “old human love story” in an effort to connect homosocial bonds and homosexuality. The “lovely club-bar” opens the passage, painting an exotic picture. With the first mention of the word “greek,” Ginsberg transports readers away from social constraints. Watching the Greek love scene, Ginsberg sets-up a dichotomy that demonstrates his desire for a culture of acceptance, which America and Cuba in 1961 did not offer. A desire for a culture that allows such openness dominates the passage, but, he argues, openness only occurs if society obtains a reflective consciousness. Throughout the essay he suggests the Beat generation is a brotherhood, and this human connection leads to mystical consciousness. This brotherhood stemmed from what critic Michael Davidson says was “[Jack] Kerouac’s faith in a social revolution formed by ‘guys like us’” (14). But, how queer was this brotherhood? As Davidson argues, the brotherhood “was

based on a heterosexual model of heavy drinking, hard living, fast cars, sports, and sexual excess. The ‘boy gang’ of which Ginsberg dreamed . . . was distinctly *not* ‘society’s perfum’d marriage’, yet it was by no means a post-Stonewall sexual revolution either” (16). Ginsberg argues that only a newer consciousness, like the one found in mystical experiences gained through a brotherhood, results in an improved society. He believes only a revolution will bring about such a society. For Castro, however, homosexuals could not participate in the Revolution. Ian Lumsden argues that Castro’s “public persona was the incarnation of machismo, and according to Castro, Revolutionary Cuba ‘needed strong men to fight wars, sportsmen, men who had no psychological weaknesses’” (61). Paradise, for Ginsberg, is beginning to be formed through human connections, not a particular island location.

“Well the worst thing I said was that I’d heard, by rumor, that Raúl Castro was gay. And the second worst thing I said was that Che Guevara was cute” (Young 20). That Ginsberg centers his deportation from the island nation on comments he made about two Cuban revolutionary heroes, Che Guevara and Raúl Castro, is telling. Photographs of the Cuban revolutionaries were displayed throughout the American media, and the images typically showed them with beards. The beard became associated with revolutionary ideals and masculinity. Furthermore, beards are a typical image related to islands; the figure of the castaway is an example. American politicians, JFK for instance, were preferable in the public’s mind. Their clean-shaven looks embodied respectability. They were of the mainland, and thus belonged to “civilized” society.

Ginsberg *also* began associating the beard with revolutionary ideals and masculinity. The beard became a subversive image that contested sexual mythologies. Tracing the beard’s image reveals Ginsberg’s construction of both Cuban and American sexualities and the link between sexuality and revolutionary ideals that seemed to be represented in the island life of Cuba. It also

shows Ginsberg attempting to connect contemporary sexual relationships to those within ancient Greek society. But, as David Halperin says, such a comparison does not work. Despite his subversive purpose, however, Ginsberg's erotic desires and sexual classification system upheld Westernized masculine and sexual constructions as well as machismo.

The political New Left, according to critic Van Gosse, began romanticizing Castro and his revolutionaries even before the 1959 Revolution. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Norman Mailer, and Amiri Baraka (writing then as LeRoi Jones) all supported Castro. Ginsberg not only romanticized Castro and Guevara's revolutionary ideals, he also eroticized them. In 1961's "Who Will Take over the Universe," Ginsberg writes, "Che Guevara has a big cock / Castro's balls are pink" (lines 16-17). Their political acts are secondary to their virility. Ginsberg became fascinated with Castro and found similarities between Castro and another love. According to Ginsberg's biographer Michael Schumacher, Castro's "rapid-fire speech reminded Allen of Neal Cassady" (422). Cassady was memorialized in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* as Dean Moriarty and became one of Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters. Schumacher's description here suggests the rapid-fire speech and Cassady's antic behavior are what Ginsberg found erotic. Revolutionary behavior represented lawlessness and a world with few women. A masculine brotherhood where masculinity was the sexual ideal, a metaphorical island world without women, was an attractive ideal for Ginsberg.

Ginsberg romanticizes the youthful male, especially a male who cares more for freedom than for American consumerism. Both Che Guevara and Neal Cassady are romanticized in the elegies. In "Elegy for Che Guevara," Ginsberg recalls Guevara's youthful travels when he "faithfully" kept a journal while battling mosquitoes in the Amazon and [slept] on a hill (lines 7-9). Gregory Woods argues that Guevara's corpse "stands out as having particular glamour"

because “it never faded into middle age” (64). This “glamour” is carried through in Cassady’s elegy too. Ginsberg writes, “Agonic Texas Nightrides? / psychedelic bus hejira-jazz, / Green auto poetries, inspired roads?” (lines 99-101). Their revolutionary spirits defy the stereotypical masculine lifestyle in America. Catherine Stimpson, one of the earliest critics who analyzed the Beats and sexuality, argued in 1983, “[Ginsberg] both transgresses against and accepts tradition. In this, he escapes from and extends childhood. In his homosexual acts, he masculinizes some male partners—as if they were linked to fathers or brothers—and feminizes himself. In part, he seems less to be acting out the drama of a powerless woman that [*sic*] that of a powerless child who wishes to please himself and men in power” (389). I would argue, however, that Stimpson leaves out a crucial element: fifties and sixties material consumption. For Ginsberg, the masculine behavior is important because Guevara and Cassady embody the macho revolutionary figure that stands in contrast to capitalist society. Because Cuba, in Ginsberg’s eyes, was an island nation, it seemed to be removed from capitalist society. “Elegy for Che Guevara” argues that Guevara is “[o]ne boy against the Stock Market all Wall Street ascream” (line 38) and “against infrared sensor Telepath Capitalism’s / money-crazed scientists / against College boy millions watching Wichita Family Den TV” (lines 43-45). In “Elegy for Neal Cassady,” Cassady’s spirit is stronger than “[m]ilitary tyranny overtak[ing] Universities” (56). Guevara’s and Cassady’s revolutionary spirits are alternatives to a capitalist society supported through militarization. Ginsberg, here in these two poems, fails to see the similarities between Cuba and America.

For Ginsberg, rebellion is more erotic if found in a youthful, boyish body. Guevara’s “boy corpse” is beautiful because, for example, he does not look like Dean Acheson (line 33). In Guevara’s elegy, Acheson symbolizes what Guevara is not: Capitalism that leads to imperialist,

Cold War foreign policy and conformist masculinity, neither submissive boyish innocence nor the rebellious revolutionary spirit. Both demonstrate a *warmth* that is absent from the coldness of Acheson's *Cold War*. This warmth is found in Ginsberg's word choice of "radiant" in the Guevara elegy (lines 2, 46). In "Elegy for Neal Cassady," he writes, "Tender Spirit, thank you for touching me with tender hands / when you were young, in a beautiful body, / Such a pure touch it was Hope beyond Maya-meat" (24-26). The physical act, "touch," described in the lines, evokes warmth, signifying a hope in melting the coldness of the postwar culture; the touch symbolizes erotic freedom.

But why does Ginsberg connect rebelliousness and youth, especially within the two elegies? Youth, especially within these two poetic elegies, presents the dead in perfected light; the afterlife is free of societal restrictions. For Ginsberg, old age seems to be a disease. Indeed, according to Gregory Woods, sex acts are often conceived as having "curative properties" (52), especially in war poetry. The penis, while it may be seen as an "active weapon," can also, "by entering the wound," "plug it" (52). Symbolically, a revolutionary's body represents hope; if old age reminds an individual that death will approach, the youthful body is a reminder to keep living. Ginsberg though eroticizes Guevara's and Cassady's youthful rebellion. In doing so, he parallels the Beats to Cuban revolutionaries; such a connection, at least in America, paints Ginsberg and his friends as subversive. Furthermore, islands typically seem as if they too offer curative properties, especially warm islands, because of their paradise-like atmosphere.

It is important to note the difference between these two elegies to the elegy for Frank O'Hara that Ginsberg wrote, a poem examined in the previous chapter. The elegies for Guevara and Cassady do not offer an ethical redemption of the past; instead, they idolize beauty. This does not account for the traumas of the past. In particular, the Guevara elegy, since it is merely a

sexualized description, does not include hints about the political implications for the future. In fact, the elegy is odd and contradictory on Ginsberg's part, especially considering that, based on his "Prose Contribution to Cuban Revolution," he knew and understood the treatment of homosexuals by the Cuban government.

Indeed, subversive behavior does not keep Ginsberg from idolizing masculinity. Cassady, Castro, and Guevara embodied leadership and charisma; they made others want to follow them. Ginsberg did indeed place westernized constructions on Castro's image, yet the bearded revolutionaries were seen similarly by Cubans. Looking back on his adolescence in Cuba during the Revolution, Reinaldo Arenas' 1993 memoir *Before Night Falls* details how both women and men "went wild over these hairy fellows; everybody wanted to take one of the bearded men home" (45). Connected to the violence in the jungle, the beard is linked to male aggression, and the erotic longing for the men is also a longing for freedom. If William Whyte's 1950's *Organization Man* was clean-cut, the revolutionaries' beard growth is anti-capitalistic with a sexualized energy that suggests freedom may be gained through masculine means.

Although Ginsberg compares Cassady's and Castro's speech patterns, photographs show a clean-shaven Cassady. This detail provides a rich complexity to Ginsberg's sexual classification system mentioned earlier. In his poem "Please Master," the speaker performs the submissive role of a penetrated lover: "Please master make me say Please Master Fuck me now Please / Master grease my balls and hairmouth with sweet vaselines / please master stroke your shaft with white creams / please master touch your cock head to my wrinkled self-hole / please master push it in gently, your elbows enwrapped round my breast" (lines 30-34). The active and passive roles present yet another sexual category. Catharine Stimpson argues that "[o]f the Beats, Ginsberg most fully inscribes a sodomy that incorporates sado-masochistic traits" (380) and that

“‘Please Master’ emulates the rhythms of male arousal, excitement, and orgasm” (381). I would argue, however, that Stimpson too quickly assigns Ginsberg one particular sexual role. Instead, the poem depicts the gradual shift of power dynamics between the two subjects. The speaker says, in the first line, “Please master can I touch your cheek.” This is active. By the end of the poem, however, he wants to be called “a dog, an assbeast, a wet asshole” (line 48) until he cries out at the end (line 62). Despite the fact that the speaker cries out, he is not a “near-hysterical queen.” Instead, the master/slave relationship presents idealized masculinity; the master exhibits strength while he is also restrained. In line 44, the speaker desires pain, but not until line 64 does he cry out. The poem here performs a Euro-American sexual construction, but the poem also parallels the power dynamics performed during the Cuban Revolution.

The master/slave binary became even more confused once Ginsberg grew out his own beard; he was often compared to Castro, the Revolution’s “master.” I would also argue that this image is used frequently in representations of islands; the perfect example is of Robinson Crusoe and the slave Friday. Indeed, islands have frequently been the site of conquest and colonization, resulting in the master/slave construction. Ginsberg, however, as a figure, destabilizes the binary. The Fair Play for Cuba movement, an organization made up of members who would become the New Left in the United States, held a reception in 1960 at New York’s Hotel Theresa for Castro when he traveled to the country. According to Van Gosse, “The mass media liked to put [Ginsberg and Castro], the two ‘beards’, together, and Ginsberg had perhaps the lushest and most notorious facial hair in North America proper” (188). Gosse passes off this detail as another example of the Beats comparison with communists. The comparison can be taken further. Gregory Woods maintains, “The Cuban revolution turns out to be extending pre-revolutionary Catholic moral control and the rules of Hispanic *machismo*, having taken place within rigid

assumptions of masculine and feminine roles, the virility of violence, and the heroism of the proletarian male. One form of oppression replaced by another, albeit more egalitarian than the first” (203). This parallel places Ginsberg *within* machismo, where the macho figure, Castro the figure par excellence, dominated. Two other figures are worth mentioning as well. According to Ian Lumsden, in *Machos, Maricones, and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality*, machismo also classified men as *maricones* (cowardice in Spanish), the effeminate homosexual, and *entendidos*, a less obvious homosexual man who could easily pass as a heterosexual male (29-30). Ginsberg used a similar classification system. While compared to Castro, he never felt like the macho figure and attempted to find a category for himself. In his Allen Young interview, Ginsberg said, “I couldn’t call myself a fairy exactly . . . queer? . . . I have used that, but I’ve never found the right word . . .” (321). Ginsberg left no room for himself within his own sexual classification system, and the beard’s macho identification disguised his sexuality while also exposing his sexuality.

During the hunt for communists, officials within the Eisenhower administration and Joseph McCarthy added homosexuals to their list of subversives. A closeted homosexual, this fear suggested, could be found hiding anywhere within American society. The beard then performs both a positive and negative function during the Cold War era. The beard held an ability to disguise, but it also held an ability to expose. If a beard is typically a sign of virility, then the facial hair could be an easy disguise for a gay male; however, because the beard was often equated with radicalism, the beard exposed a sign of leftist sympathies. As critic Robert Corber argues, the Cold War was a contradictory era (“Cold War Femme” 3). It was an era when even in Cuba the bearded were suspected homosexuals who seemed too similar to members of the American counter-culture, despite the fact that Castro and Guevara wore beards as well.

Critics looking back perceive Ginsberg as a “pioneer closet dismantler” (Docherty 201), or, as poet Mark Doty romantically argues in a recent essay celebrating “Howl,” “Ginsberg entirely transcended the question of polite behavior, of queerness, of the appropriate. He somehow skipped right around our American obsession with a binary scheme of human sexuality . . .” (13). Ginsberg was indeed revolutionary, but he could be a conformist as well. Both aspects of Ginsberg’s personality (revolutionary and conformist) led to his ability to maneuver around identity issues, especially when that identity fused with Cold War politics.

Fellow poet Jack Spicer, addressing Ginsberg in *A Book of Magazine Verse*, writes, “At least we both know how shitty the world is. You wearing a / beard as a mask to disguise it. I wearing my tired smile. I / don’t see how you do it. One hundred thousand university / students marching with you. Toward / A necessity which is not love but is a name” (lines 1-6). Like Ginsberg, Spicer, as a gay male, lived in a world where his sexuality was suspect; survival often depended on hiding his sexuality. Spicer suggests that Ginsberg delighted in his bearded disguise while hiding exhausted Spicer. Ginsberg seems to agree. In his journal he writes, “I live as if indifferent to the suffering of animals and men who die and grown to feed me and make my houses warm and bright—as if shielded from their sufferings, from knowledge and share of theirs by my tricky beard and wit. So that my poetry is all a half-celestial con, worth nothing to the bloodshot eyes of Physical sufferers in the minds and factories and fields” (qtd. in Miles 267). His beard and poetry enabled his indifference. Despite his work as an activist and outspoken gay male, Ginsberg hints at the contradictions in his life.

Perhaps Ginsberg grew out his beard because he wished to gain the confidence of revolutionaries. But the beard made him just as suspicious as he had been without facial hair. Fraud is an issue that LeRoi Jones argues is problematic; it fails to move a revolution forward. In

his essay “Cuba Libre,” Jones writes that U.S. revolutionaries “have become merely people like myself who grow beards and will not participate in politics. A bland revolt. Drugs, juvenile delinquency, complete isolation from the vapid mores of the country—a few current ways out. But name an alternative here. Something not inextricably bound up in a lie” (qtd. in Tietchen 134). This too is evidence of a call to masculinity. Jones insinuates that the American revolutionary behavior lacks action; Americans are too passive, which is typically associated with femininity.

By the 1970s, Ginsberg would respond by using his beard for a more revolutionary statement. The bearded Ginsberg, wearing an Uncle Sam paper top hat, became the Anti-War movement’s symbol. Through this Uncle Sam parody, Ginsberg, an openly gay male, revealed the nation’s sexual character excluded homosexuals during the Cold War. His comparison to Castro after the Fair Play for Cuba reception adds yet another complexity to Ginsberg’s parody. The two contradictory masks, Uncle Sam and Castro, ironically parallel both America’s and Cuba’s fear. The masks also parallel what Robert Corber calls the Cold War crisis of masculinity. “Masculinity,” he argues, “remained a contested terrain throughout the postwar period” (*Homosexuality in Cold War America* 8). Earlier, in his 1956 poem “America,” Ginsberg joined politics and sexuality; in the poem, he personifies America by using sexual connotation and writes, “America when will we end the human war? / Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb” (lines 4-5). Gregory Woods claims this image classifies “the atom bomb as an artificial phallus big enough to pleasure the vanity of a whole nation” (52). Ginsberg asks America, “When will you take off your clothes?” (line 8). The sexual undertones in the early lines of “America” become homoerotic when Ginsberg adds, “It occurs to me that I am America” (49). The vulgarity in the poem is directed at a government that equated homosexuals with

communists and a government that attempted to destroy other places to gain power. Ginsberg plays this game as well: “America I used to be a communist when I was kid I’m not sorry” (line 30). Through such a line, Ginsberg provides a sexual mythology that counters the one identified as “normal.” Ginsberg was partly successful in finding a middle ground; he complicated the Cold War binaries even while unconsciously subscribing to the binaries.

While many saw Ginsberg as a radical, even a close friend like Frank O’Hara understood Ginsberg’s attempts to escape were rooted in fantasy. In his poem “Vincent and I Inaugurate a Movie Theatre,” O’Hara details the opening of the Charles Theatre in Greenwich Village. The occasion of the poem is that Allen Ginsberg and Allen’s partner, Peter, were preparing to leave New York City to travel to India. For O’Hara, America itself, like a Hollywood film, was a manufactured fantasy. O’Hara writes:

Now that the Charles Theatre has opened
it looks like we’re going to have some wonderful times
Allen and Peter, why are you going away
our country’s black and white past spread out
before us is no time to spread over India
like last night in the busy balcony I see
your smoky images before the smoky screen
everyone smoking, Bogart, Bacall and her advanced sister
and Hepburn too tense to smoke but MacMurray rich enough
relaxed and ugly, poor Alice Adams so in-pushed and out
in the clear exposition of AP American or Associated
Paranoia and Allen and I getting depressed and angry
becoming again the male version of wallflower or wallpaper
or something while Vincent points out that when anything
good happens the movie has just flicked over to fantasy
only fantasy in all America can be good
because all Alice Adams wanted was a nose
just as long as any other girl’s and a dress
just as rustly and a mind just as empty so America
could fill it with checks and flags and invitations
and the old black cooks falling down the cellar stairs
for generations to show how phony it all is
but the whites didn’t pay attention that’s slaving away
at something, maybe the dance would have been fun

if anyone'd given one but it would have been over
before Alice enjoyed it and what's the difference
no wonder you want to find out about India take
a print of Alice Adams with you it will cheer them up (1-28)

In his essay “‘Our Country’s Black and White Past’: Film and the Figures of History in Frank O’Hara,” Mark Goble points out, “In the poem’s first few lines, we see the eminently private matter of four gay men deciding their travel plans superimposed upon a double feature of *The Big Sleep* (1946) and *Alice Adams* (1935).” He says, “The absurdity of this casual conversation between friends dissolving into an engagement with the ideological mission of Hollywood cinema is the essence of the poem’s sense of humor” (81). I would add too that the poem is important in terms of fantasy because it details traveling (queer escapist migration). The poem suggests that escape could be easier and, perhaps, even more subversive to Cold War culture. The experience of film, through the simple act of sitting in an American movie theater, could be a radical and utopian act. For example, according to Goble, the 1964 issue of *Life* magazine that claimed to expose homosexuality in America, and that helped perpetuate Cold War anxiety about homosexuality, detailed San Francisco’s Jumpin’ Frog bar. The bar held showings of movies for ‘gay’ clientele. Goble writes, “The photograph of the bar and its caption were intended to reassure *Life*’s readers that homosexuals don’t go to the movies like you do; they watch movies somewhere else, in separate and unequal facilities, makeshift movie theaters with portable screens where films with recognizably ‘perverse’ content like *Some Like It Hot* play again and again.” Instead, Goble argues, Frank O’Hara’s poem proposes that the fantasies of film are geared toward all Americans. The desire for escape then is actually what other Americans have in common with gay men and lesbians (84-85).

Fantasy is not just escapism; it also consists, like movies make clear, of the making and unmaking of worlds and places. The remaking of the world by humans can lead to hope, or, as

Bloch says, despair, if a transformation is flawed. For example, he says, “This is particularly apparent in the hideous streets and suburbs which are a legacy of the nineteenth century. They stand out as scabs and sores on the landscape, or rather: the latter is totally destroyed” (791). The representation of islands in the poetry discussed so far reveals how the poets did indeed understand that a particular ethics of envisioning space was needed. For instance, Auden’s travel and residence on Ischia allowed him to formulate what theorist and environmental designer Dean MacCannell says is a tourist ethics that “take[s] responsibility for understanding their own pleasure and what, if any, ‘good’ it serves” (53). I argue that such an ethics was bound up with his sexuality and Christianity; it is an ethics that hopes for human liberation.

Auden’s concern can be traced to earlier work, especially his work on Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*. The play’s magician, Prospero, is a symbol of the artist, in particular the artist as conjuror. Ginsberg’s construction of Cuba and Cuban sexuality within his poetry is a similar conjuring. It is not the Cuba that others possibly saw or envisioned but a world that Ginsberg imagined for his own purposes. Ginsberg as Prospero. Stranded on an island as the play opens, Prospero is shown to have the ability to restore order from chaos. For a castaway adrift on an island, chaos is the natural world. Nature’s disparate elements need to be ordered. An island is a perfect symbol for poetry; the land mass, bordered on all sides by mere water, represents the spatial constraints of a poem. The island as metaphor also parallels the difficulty of creating something out of nothing. Furthermore, islands are apt images of exile. In “The Islands of Poetry; the Poetry of Islands,” Rajeev S. Patke explains:

the writer’s condition could be expressed in terms of exile or migration, because that is when one cannot take one’s self or its relation to other selves for granted. That is also why islands provide good natural habitats for exiles and immigrants, the unwilling and the willy-nilly. In the confining boundaries of an island, a self cannot escape easily, nor shed the obligation to confront, recognize, and name

itself. The castaway is thus an island-Adam, who must begin the task of naming himself. (181)

“The task of naming” calls to mind the ethics of representation. To return to the image of Prospero, many poets feel obligated to not become a Prospero figure; instead, their duty is to represent the world in a truthful manner.

The world of a poem is created by the poet; the world is easily unmade through the opening and closing of a book or through the reader’s individual interpretation. The symbolic nature of islands can be found throughout various pieces of literature. In their introduction to *Islands in History and Representation*, editors Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith explain, “Human cultures are not typically sharply bounded or homogeneous. Islands appear to hold out this prospect and with it the possibility of the complete description of something static, unmixed and singular. In fact they have always been places of arrival and departure, the location of hybrid cultures, as storms, shipwrecks, unplanned landfalls and incomplete or abandoned settlement produce ever-changing worlds” (12). We like to think of islands as static and un-changing; however, in actuality, islands are constantly influx. For poets, what better image could they have?

W.H. Auden’s “The Sea and the Mirror,” written during the Second World War, anticipated his use of island imagery in his Cold War poetry; the poem also showcases the connection between islands and poetry. The work, subtitled “A Commentary on Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*,” is a culmination of his thinking on Shakespeare’s play, a piece of art that Auden believed was preoccupied with the very question of art itself. His poem, like the play, he said, is “attempting something which in a way is absurd, to show in a work of art, the limitations of art” (“The Sea and the Mirror” xi). In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare’s magician Prospero and his daughter Miranda have been stranded for nearly a decade on an island after Prospero’s brother

sent him adrift in order to gain power. As the play opens, Prospero plots to restore his power. A magician is indeed the perfect symbol for art. The ability to create something from nothing through the act of writing is similar to the supernatural conjuring that Prospero enacts during the play. Caliban, who represents nature and thus stands opposed to art, gives a speech in Auden's "The Sea and the Mirror" that articulates the "misleading" aspect of art. Caliban says:

You yourself, we seem to remember, have spoken of the conjured spectacle as 'a mirror held up to nature', a phrase misleading in its aphoristic sweep but indicative at least of one aspect of the relation between the real and the imagined, their mutual reversal of value, for isn't the essential artistic strangeness to which your citation of the sinisterly biased image would point just this: that on the far side of the mirror the general will to compose, to form at all costs a felicitous pattern becomes the necessary cause of any particular effort to live or act or love or triumph or vary, instead of being as, in so far as it emerges at all, it is on this side, their accidental effect? (34)

Like Ginsberg and Auden, Caliban and Prospero are opposed; the two characters allow Auden to convey contrary notions about art.

Islands are sites where nature seemingly rules; at first glimpse, they are worlds without culture. In his book *Beach Crossings: Voyaging Across Times, Cultures, and Self*, Greg Dening explains that islands are always both historic sites as well as metaphoric constructions. He argues, "Whatever else Robinson Crusoe and the Swiss Family Robinson sparked in our imagination, it was the ludic element of islands as 'small continents' that engaged us. The play lay in the remaking of a strange, even threatening environment of an island into a cultural order of some sort. . . . On islands there seems to be a magical inventiveness in making Culture, order, out of Nature, chaos" (13). For Auden, the chaos was especially found in the misuse/mishandling of language. Constantly aware of the intent behind his words and the worlds they created in his poetry, Auden understood that language should subordinate itself to ethics.

When the Cold War world seemed chaotic, islands appeared to be the perfect refuge; however, while islands have been a refuge for poets, such land masses have also been ominous presences. Often used for prisons, like Riker's Island in New York and the Gulag's Solovetsky Islands, islands are symbolic of the marginalized individual. According to Island Studies scholar Godfrey Baldacchino, "The small, remote and insular [nature of islands] suggests marginality, being on the edge, being out of sight and so out of mind, situations which can expose the weakness of mainstream ideas, orthodoxies and received wisdoms, while fomenting alternatives to the status quo. Any dominant paradigm is supposedly weakest at its periphery" (6). The emphasis on the border between mainstream and marginality reveals not only why poets found the use of island imagery so useful (poets are frequently not held within mainstream culture) but also why gay and lesbian poets found their symbolic nature intriguing. They do indeed act as a perfect site where a pleasurable utopia could be manufactured.

Yet in his book *The Ethics of Sightseeing*, Dean MacCannell notes that an analysis of "manufactured 'pleasures'" is needed in order to formulate an ethical tourist stance. He says, "The ethical task of the tourist begins with an effort to discover the differences, if any, between his or her personal pleasure and the imperative social command to 'Enjoy!'" He adds, "Ethical tourists take responsibility for understanding their own pleasure and what, if any, 'good' it serves" (53). I would add that once the "good" is found, the traditional conception of the good life by Aristotle, a tourist begins to conceive of a better world. Within the realm of Cold War poetry, the image of the fantasy island is both critiqued and imagined in an effort to offer ideas about such a "good life."

Despite the false conception of Utopia, Ginsberg did indeed express hope in a future that could include others. The negativity presented in this chapter is able to be transformed into

positivity. Moments and experiences analyzed in this chapter hint at a queer utopia on the horizon. Their hopes lift readers from the present and their wishes prompt us to believe in another existence. Much of what Ginsberg offers are fantasy ideals; however, even within fantasy, desires push a reality closer.

Chapter Three

W.H. Auden, Austria, and the Search for a Christian Social Utopia

[The Christian] has to make his public confession of belief in a church which is not confined to his sort, to those with whom by nature he feels at home, for in it there is neither Jew nor German, East nor West, boy nor girl, smart nor dumb, boss nor worker, Bohemian nor bourgeois, no elite of any kind. There are not even Christians there, for Christianity is a way, not a state, and a Christian is never something one is, only something one can pray to become. –W.H. Auden, from *Auden and Christianity*

Innumerable times a whole Christian community has broken down because it had sprung from a wish dream. The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try and realize it. But God's grace speedily shatters such a dream. –Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

If Jesus is about anything, it's that love trumps rules. –Bishop Gene Robinson, whose ordination as an openly gay bishop triggered controversies still unraveling within the Episcopal Church U.S.A. and the global Anglican Communion

In November of 2009, Pope Benedict XVI issued the *Anglicanorum coetibus*, an apostolic constitution that authorized “ordinariates,” geographic regions comparable to dioceses that are national in scale. The parishes in these ordinariates will retain some of their Anglican heritage, such as their liturgical practices and allow married priests to remain priests; however, the parishes will be tied to Rome by having a predominately Catholic identity (“St. Luke’s” 1). The constitution came at a turbulent time in the Anglican Communion, with congregations in England divided over both the ordination of women and issues concerning sexual orientation; and, at the same time, in America, the Episcopal Church has remained divided over the ordination of Bishop Robinson, gay marriage, and other sexual orientation issues.

When St. Luke’s Episcopal parish in Bladensburg, Maryland announced in June of 2011 that it would become the first parish to move away from the Episcopal Church U.S.A. by joining the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington (“St. Luke’s” 1), it was a move that did not

surprise many fellow Episcopal Churches and their members. Even before Pope Benedict XVI's apostolic constitution, a number of Episcopal Churches in 2006 and 2007 folded themselves into the Anglican Church of Nigeria, a conservative branch of the Anglican Communion with a Nigerian bishop frequently outspoken about his opposition to LGBT issues and rights (Boorstein 2). This divide resulted in lengthy condemnations and debates on Episcopal blogs against and about the conservative opposition to the Episcopal Church's general convention's inclusive mandates, which, with a larger margin of victory than supporters even anticipated, embraced the ordination of gay and lesbian priests and bishops as well as the blessing of same-sex unions.

Also, the divide has propelled what will undoubtedly become the most expensive litigation in the Episcopal Church's two hundred year history. The congregations, many in the Falls Church, Virginia area, who split with the Episcopal Church to join with the Nigerian Anglican Communion, remained in the church buildings. In one instance, those who refused to leave the Episcopal Church U.S.A. had to worship in a Presbyterian Church basement across the street from their former church home. The Episcopal Church Diocese took the congregations to court to regain the buildings and other property. In February of 2012 a Virginia court ruled in favor of the Diocese (Boorstein 2-3).

The divisions have caused both minor and major incidents. Individuals who were once close friends, practicing and worshipping in the same church for a number of years, find it difficult to talk when they see one another in a local grocery store (Boorstein 3). Furthermore, one of the most serious and major incidents during the divisions and debates occurred in 2009 was when openly gay Bishop Gene Robinson prepared to provide the invocation for President Obama's inauguration festivities. The police apprehended a man carrying a sawed-off shotgun

along with pictures of Robinson and his husband. The man's intention, of course, was murder (Montgomery 2).

As the issue of gay marriage remains an intense legal and political battle in this country, and as the Conservative Christian Right makes their opposition to LGBT relationships and civil rights one of their primary agendas, Bishop Robinson's story will continue to both enrage and intrigue many. The documentary that narrates his journey, *Love Free or Die*, took the Special Jury Award for its genre at the January, 2012 Sundance Film Festival and is currently being screened across the country. At the Washington, D.C. screening in February, an interviewer asked Bishop Barbara Harris, who as the first consecrated female bishop in 1989 caused a similar stir within the Episcopal Church, what she thought of Bishop Robinson as the first gay bishop. She snorted and responded, "Give me a break" (Montgomery 1-3). As Harris makes clear, Bishop Robinson is *not* the first gay bishop. He is just the first *openly* gay bishop. Issues of sexuality that were once discussed, if they were discussed at all, among friends and loved ones in the private and social realms are now very much a discussed part of our public realm.

W.H. Auden was one of the most well known Anglican intellectuals of the late twentieth century. At the same time, his life as a gay man remained, mostly, private among close friends and literary acquaintances. Whether or not it is useful or not, one cannot help but wonder what Auden, a Christian and a gay man, would make of the contemporary debates about homosexuality, especially within his home church. The tendency would be to assume Auden would side with progressive Episcopalians like Bishop Robinson and bemoan the renewed ties with Rome; however, one should not so easily assume this. A complex individual, Auden held conflicting views about the relation between his sexuality and his faith. He liked to explain he was Anglo-Catholic and once said that "in each of us, there is a bit of a Catholic and a bit of a

Protestant; for truth is catholic, but the search for it is protestant” (Kirsch 110). He also strongly detested the changes in the Anglican service during his own era when the church moved from using the King James Bible for lesson readings to a more modern Bible (Kirsch 3). A firm believer in marriage as a sacrament (Kirsch 25), he, more than likely, would have been perplexed by the current battle that defines marriage as a civil right. Most surprising of all, Auden told his friend Alan Ansen, ““I’ve come to the conclusion that it’s wrong to be queer, but that’s a long story. Oh the reasons why are comparatively simple. In the first place, all homosexual acts are acts of envy. In the second, the more you’re involved with someone the more trouble arises, and affection shouldn’t result in that. It shows something’s wrong somewhere”” (Kirsch 172-73). In his *Auden and Christianity*, Arthur Kirsch adds, however, that “he nonetheless took comfort in the belief that he was God’s creature, that God made the universe and saw that it was good, and that if homosexuality was a sin, it was an instance of man’s sinful condition and could be forgiven” (17).

All of this would make it rather easy for a LGBT activist, gay literary historian, or queer theorist to identify Auden as a problematic LGBT figure. That would never do Auden justice. In fact, Auden’s traditional ideals do not stop me from summoning him. Actually, I argue that more than any other figure Auden offers the most useful and viable exploration for our own contemporary clash between religion and sexual orientation. What would it mean to say that Auden is a ghostly presence who haunts us now in the present? And what useful conceptions of hope and theories of community could Auden offer? As seen from the previous chapter, Auden’s criticism of the cult of pleasure led also to a criticism of the pastoral tradition in poetry, but not because he feared and detested his own body. Instead, Auden saw the primary focus on the body in the pastoral tradition not only unethical for embracing a grand utopian vision but also as a

division, a severing, of the body from the spirit. His move from the island of Ischia to Austria was a direct response to an ethical turn in his thinking and his poetry. Auden had always been concerned with ethics; however, in Austria, and useful for the purposes of this project, Auden's turn to the unity of the body with the spirit and his reflections on community culminate in a vision of both the domestic and the communal as keys to a better life for all individuals in the future, what utopian theorists like Ernst Bloch would refer to as utopian practice, contrasted to utopian theory. Auden's utopian practice hinges on his Christianity. Can a Christian social utopia though ever be a queer utopia?

In the previous chapter, I argued that Auden's critique of the pastoral and of island landscapes was in direct response to constructions of ideal utopias, utopias that were never truly possible and excluded others. Here, I would like to focus on how Auden's critique of island landscapes and of the pastoral tradition in poetry leads to Auden's counter representation of geography, geographies that direct us to a hopeful future. In particular, Auden's "In Praise of Limestone" is a poem, arguably one of his greatest, that he wrote while living in Italy on the island of Ischia and anticipates his move from the Mediterranean landscape to the landscape of Austria, "the gothic north" (1) and "guilt culture," (3) as he called it in the poem "Good-Bye to the Mezzogiorno."

Like the northern landscape of America, the European landscape has consistently been rich with forests and woods. Auden held an appreciation for the Brothers Grimm, and as adults who have read a fair amount of fairy tales are able to gather, forests and woods are symbolically tied to our unconscious. More to the point, the Christian meaning of forests has traditionally been associated with the parallel of the move from darkness into light, the life before Christ to the life lived after the acceptance of Christ. This led Auden to say, in his poem "Woods" from his

sequence of poems “Bucolics,” “A culture is no better than its woods” (54). This statement is far more than just an environmental stance. Our woods tie us to our guilt and our suffering. In his 1938 poem “Musée des Beaux Arts,” Auden writes, “About suffering they were never wrong, / The Old Masters: how well they understood / Its human position” (1-2). Suffering, according to Auden, as Arthur Kirsch explains, must not be seen as “vulgar and purely negative.” Instead, Auden believed we must recognize the reality of suffering, respond to it in an ethical way, and, above all, not run away from it. Despite suffering, Auden believed happiness to be our ultimate duty (16). But happiness would be void of meaning without acknowledging the reality of suffering. Auden began to understand then that Ischia’s “positivist republic” (“Ode to Gaea” 42) too easily hid suffering and thus would hinder redemption’s powerful grace if the gothic north was not included in a life lived.

Auden’s “In Praise of Limestone” compares and contrasts two landscapes: the limestone landscape of Italy and the landscape of his youth in England, the lead-mines, which, like Austria, represents guilt culture. Landscape parallels the body, and this calls forth a number of binaries: the body and the spirit, hope and doubt, and, finally, sin and salvation. Auden’s imagery shows how the two landscapes, like the other binaries, work against one another and also work together. They are *both* necessary for redemption and to receive grace. He writes, presumably addressing his partner Chester Kallman:

They were right, my dear, all those voices were right
And still are: this land is not the sweet home that it looks,
Nor its peace the historical calm of a site
Where something was settled once and for all: A backward
And dilapidated province, connected
To the big busy world by a tunnel, with a certain
Seedy appeal, is that all it is now? Not quite:
It has a worldly duty which in spite of itself
It does not neglect, but calls into question
All the Great Powers assume; it disturbs our rights. (62-71)

And he continues, ending the poem this way:

In so far as we have to look forward
To death as a fact, no doubt we are right: But if
Sins can be forgiven, if bodies rise from the dead,
These modifications of matter into
Innocent athletes and gesticulating fountains,
Made solely for pleasure, make a further point:
The blessed will not care what angle they are regarded from,
Having nothing to hide. Dear, I know nothing of
Either, but when I try to imagine a faultless love
Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur
Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone landscape. (86-95)

Note Auden's use of both "backward" in the earlier lines and "forward" in the later lines.

"Backward" evokes the image of Adam and Eve looking back to Eden as they are exiled from its paradise, and "forward" evokes the image of Christian resurrection. In Christian theology, Christ redeems humanity after the Fall. Auden's unification of binaries in the poem reveals his desire for a life absent of severing and distinctions. Kirsch argues that the end of the poem "reinforce[s] Auden's quest to translate the Edenic memory of past childhood innocence . . . into an adult hope for the future" (145). Auden's use of landscape, however, is far removed from the use of landscape within the pastoral tradition. In fact, his use of the limestone landscape to symbolize unity contrasts with poetry written by other gay male writers.

For instance, despite Walt Whitman's democratic desire, his ideal unity excludes others. Whitman's poems in the "Live Oak with Moss" sequence were the only poems that had obvious homosexual themes, and in a later edition of *Leaves of Grass* they were revised and cut so much that the homosexual imagery was nearly absent. In the ninth poem of the sequence, before the revision, he writes,

I dreamed in a dream of a city where all men were like brothers,
O I saw them tenderly love each other—I often saw them, in numbers, walk-
ing hand in hand;
I dreamed that was the city of robust friends—Nothing was greater there

Than manly love—it led the rest,
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city, and in all their
looks and words.—(*Norton Anthology* 1-6)

Whitman's city of men is a utopian vision that can never be a fully realized utopia; it privileges a masculinity that fails to acknowledge a variety of other gender types, not just women but also men who would not match the manliness that Whitman has in mind.

In contrast, Auden's City of God is articulated fully in his poem "Memorial for the City," a poem that mourns the immediate postwar, destroyed Berlin. The poem describes how the City of God has the possibility to be realized in the present; it is beyond the barbed wire that divides Germany and so symbolizes possibility: "Behind the wire / Which is behind the mirror, our Image is the same / Awake or dreaming: It has no image to admire, / No age, no sex, no memory, no creed, no name, / It can be counted, multiplied, employed / In any place, at any time destroyed" (III.19-24). When the city is destroyed, it is the fault of humans who refuse to see beyond distinctions and do not allow themselves to act together to forge such a City of God. Like the Auden epigraph that opens this chapter, it is a city that does not privilege, that holds no distinction between races, nationalities, gender, or sexualities. It is a city that also echoes St. Paul's own theology. For example, in his epistle to the Galatians, a response to the debate over whether or not gentiles should be circumcised, Paul's letter could be summarized this way: the law or the cross; that is the only choice. Identity was no longer important for Paul. Instead, anyone could be welcomed into the fold; however, those who fail to accept the cross would be locked out of salvation, and so Paul's Christian utopia could never be a queer utopia. This was a doctrine that Auden though could never fully accept. Throughout his poem "Horae Canonicae," as Kirsch observes, "Ordinary people can be equally unobservant and at the same time agents of the Crucifixion" (20). Both Auden and Whitman were deeply concerned about the nature of

democracy; they both believed in unity through diversity. Reading their poetry, it is difficult to ask if one poet was more democratic than the other.

Whitman's pastoral poems in *Calamus*, for example, discussed more fully in the previous chapters of this project, place emphasis on the body. Love is frequently tied to beauty and physicality. Romantic ideals were not perfect. As Auden says in his poem "Mountains," taken from "Bucolics," "Am I / To see in the Lake District . . . / Another bourgeois invention like the piano? / Well, I won't," (22-25). The lines indicate that pastoral poetry ("the Lake District" hints at Wordsworth) may idealize nature and homosexuality, yet the pastoral tradition is also typically tied to privilege ("bourgeois"). The tone suggests that the speaker would not have any part of a poetic invention rooted in distinctions.

Byrne R.S. Fone, in his essay "This Other Eden: Arcadia and the Homosexual Imagination," traces the representation of Arcadia from Virgil up to Gore Vidal's twentieth-century novel *The City and the Pillar*. From the earliest tradition to a Cold War novel like Vidal's, Fone says Arcadia has frequently been the imagined location "where there is peace [and] the feelings between men partake of the mythology of homosexual life" (18). This use of the pastoral, according to David Shuttleton in his essay "The Queer Politics of Gay Pastoral," has, until the last few years, been largely ignored by the majority of literary critics; critical work on the pastoral, he explains, attempted to create a heteronormative Arcadia. This critical discourse propelled gay writers to use the trope even more in an effort to naturalize homosexuality within the literary tradition. He argues, however, that this merely reinforces essentialist ideas of sexuality (126-128).

In fact, this typical representation portrays the divide between nature and culture, where nature is the ideal because culture is absent. Even if that culture is homophobic, such a utopian

notion reveals the desire to map an illusory space into actuality, an actuality that cannot exist since nature and culture, in reality, are never truly separate. According to geographer Denis Cosgrove, in a chapter entitled “Mapping Arcadia,” found in his text *Geography & Vision: Seeing, Imagining, and Representing the World*, “Arcadia’s geography is one of yearning more than finding. It is a nowhere place, a utopia. Arcadia addresses the insistent question of the place that humans occupy, should occupy and, in reverie, perhaps, once did occupy, in nature. Behind this single, simple toponym lies a complex geography of memory and desire, and a landscape that, once we map its poetic contours, reveals itself as the habitation of more troubling ghosts than we might initially expect” (70). In the context of gay literary tradition, the yearning for such a natural utopia does directly unveil cultural homophobia; without the intense hatred of homosexuality, an imaginary Arcadia would not need to be yearned for. More to the point, the desire represented within gay literature for such a place also unveils the desire to have one’s sexuality be thought of as belonging to nature. For the gay male literary tradition, this haunts the mapping of Arcadia: the desire to be accepted by culture. I would argue, however, that thinking of this represented Arcadia as utopian space centers on a general conception of a utopia that is not politically or socially useful (a no place). If, for example, this literary Arcadia is analyzed using Ernst Bloch’s theory of utopia, Arcadia becomes effective only as art because so many writers detach Arcadia from life. This detachment, according to Bloch, in his discussion of wish-landscapes, lacks utopian function (*The Utopian Function of Art and Literature* 73). Instead, the representation of landscape would need to contain anticipatory illumination. Simply put, literary representations that contain such anticipatory illumination imagine the world anew without the then present world exploding or disappearing within the representation.

Auden does then enter the pastoral tradition against his own better judgment; however, his representation of landscape is more aligned with the above utopian function expressed by Bloch. Auden's own pastoral poems break away from that tradition, and even the queer pastoral tradition, creating a new landscape that is, I argue, queerer than all. He understood that the pastoral constructed a world that divided nature from culture, and this division was one that Auden felt did not construct a valid, nor useful, unification. Instead, in Auden's poetry, nature and culture merge; through such a poetics, Auden represents naturecultures, anticipating current thinking in queer ecology. This unity too is linked to his Christianity because naturecultures breaks down distinctions that result in any privilege.

Naturecultures is a term taken from feminist philosopher and zoologist Donna Haraway's text *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*; it is a term that Catroina Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, editors of the collection *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, explain is a "key trajectory for queer ecological thinking" (31). Haraway theorizes naturecultures as an interaction between the two instead of a focus on either one or the other. Society typically privileges either nature or culture over the other and separates the two, as if elements from culture should not and do not exist within nature. Furthermore, such a division disregards elements of nature found within culture. For Haraway, the figure of the cyborg is the ultimate symbol of transgressed boundaries in the postmodern world because it is neither a part of nature nor a part of culture; it is a hybrid of both (151). The cyborg, she argues, because it is such a hybrid, offers more political possibility (154).

Throughout Auden's "Bucolics" cycle, a number of nature images are presented. The stream, however, represents the ultimate symbol of a natureculture. For example, in "Streams,"

he calls a stream a “servant” in “the household of Mrs Nature” (8), fusing the two through language. Later in the poem, he writes:

And not even man can spoil you: his company
coarsens roses and dogs but, should he herd you through a sluice
to toil at a turbine, or keep you
leaping in gardens for his amusement,

innocent still is your outcry, water, and there
even, to his soiled heart raging at what it is
tells of a sort of world, quite other,
altogether different from this one

with its envies and passports, a polis like that
to which, in the name of scholars everywhere,
Gaston Paris pledged his allegiance
As Bismarck’s siege-guns came within earshot. (33-44)

The stream is innocent, not because it is natural, but because it mocks the way humans have attempted to use the water—as a device to divide humans and nations from one another.

Interestingly then, nature here knows and understands culture more than human beings do.

Toward the end of the poem, the speaker, dozing near the stream on the grass, awakes to look out on a croquet tournament (48-49); the appearance of a divide between nature and culture, Auden suggests, is just that, mere appearance. He also includes images of “wild old men / hunt[ing] with spades and hammers, monomaniac each, / for a megalith or a fossil, / and bird-watchers [creeping] through mossy beech-woods” (53-56). These images reveal the collision of culture with nature. According to Auden’s poetry, nature is never truly pure.

This trope is also located too in his poem “River Profile,” which opens with an epigraph from the German Romantic poet Novalis: “Our body is a moulded river.” Auden writes:

Disemboguing from foothills, now in hushed meanders,
now in riffling braids, it vaunts across a senile
plain, well-entered, chateau-and-cider-press country,
its regal progress

gallanted for a while by quibbling poplars,
then by chimneys: led off to cool and launder
retort, steam-hammer, gasometer country,
it changes color.

Polluted, bridged by girders, banked by concrete,
now it bisects a polyglot metropolis,
ticker-tape, taxi, brothel, foot-lights country,
à-la-mode always. (21-32)

Auden here uncovers the cyclic and redeeming power of water; culture may disintegrate, but when it comes into contact with nature, culture has the ability, like the river, to renew itself.

According to critic Paula Marchetti, in “Auden’s Landscapes,” “The soft, arcadian/utopian vision must coexist with the hard, scientific-rational point of view” (210).

I would add that while the figure of the cyborg is apt for our own postmodern world, Auden found a figure during the Cold War that worked in a very similar way. Auden anticipates Haraway’s arguments through his poetic use of the Madonna. In a book review focused on depression, Auden wrote:

The Christian conception of a unique revelation in history is as incompatible with Jung as it is with Marx, with cyclical theories of time as with doctrines of the Wave of the Future . . . one cannot, for instance, identify the cult of the Earth Mother with the cult of the Madonna; the former is a dynamo in disguise, the falsely personal image of the impersonal forces of nature; the latter, through her actual personal historical existence on earth, has become the type and pledge of the redemption of the natural order. (qtd. in Mendelson 373)

Edward Mendelson argues, “In the figure of the Madonna, he implied, history and nature, Logos and Eros, are reconciled. He said as much in ‘Woods’ in 1952, using a phrase less conventional and casual than it sounds: ‘A well-kempt forest begs Our Lady’s grace’” (373). Throughout the postwar period, Auden’s nature imagery consistently attempted to merge the idea of culture in an effort to match that ultimate fusion of nature and culture that he found represented in the

Madonna. According to Mendelson, the “sequence is the work of an urban sensibility that regrets its exclusion from the country while knowing its regret is an evasive fantasy” (378).

It is the divide between nature and culture that constructs homosexuality as other. Even contemporary, conservative rhetoric posits homosexuality as “a crime against nature.” The rhetoric centered on “a crime against nature” is typically tied to conservative brands of Christianity, and, I would argue, this is the type of Christian rhetoric that Auden would find constitutes a severing within Christian community. This is exactly what we see occurring in our own present within the Anglican Communion. In fact, Auden acutely understood that the separation of church and state was necessary for a fully democratic society. As Kirsch explains, Auden “condemns . . . the political exploitation of Christianity” (75).

Many gay male writers would attempt to counter the “crime against nature” rhetoric by utilizing pastoral poetry. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson explain that a “historical, homoerotic Arcadia” has existed within artistic representation for centuries (4). Fone argues that homosexuality and the pastoral have been inseparable, even at the earliest stages of the pastoral tradition, such as in Virgil’s *Eclogues*: “The green forest [in Virgil’s poem is] a place where love can flourish . . . in short, a secret Arcadia” (14). But, Roman homosexuality was just as complicated as Greek homosexuality.

In her essay “Sons and Lovers: Sexuality and Gender in Virgil’s Poetry,” the scholar Ellen Oliensis argues that while Virgil’s *Eclogues* stands as an origin of the homoerotic pastoral, the gender and sexuality found in Roman antiquity is far more complex than the gender and sexuality we see in our own contemporary period. She writes:

Our culture tends to divide the sexual universe according to the preferred gender of an individual’s sexual partners—a scheme that yields heterosexuals, homosexuals, and bisexuals. In Virgil’s Rome, however, what counted more was the role an individual took in sexual intercourse: ‘penetrating’ or ‘penetrated’,

‘active’ or ‘passive’, masculine’ or ‘feminine’. Sexual intercourse was articulated in terms of social hierarchies, and the ‘senior’ partner (older, higher-status, male) was expected to maintain and enact his seniority in bed. (296)

Despite the use of the pastoral by poets like Whitman and Allen Ginsberg, the pastoral was far from utopian. What is most interesting too is that Virgil is a contested writer. His use of homoeroticism in the pastoral poetry has resulted in LGBT writers upholding him as an exemplary figure. At the same time, Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue, known as the Messianic Eclogue, has traditionally been seen by Christian writers like Dante as foreshadowing Christianity. Oliensis explains that many Christian readers, so taken with Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue, misread the homoeroticism in others, like the Second Eclogue that uses the name “Alexis.” They believe it refers to a female instead of a male (295).

Auden, however, does not believe we necessarily have to make a choice between one or the other. In his poem “Horae Canonicae,” a series of poems that parallel the church offices, he again sets up contrasts. In the poem “Vespers,” the church office that takes place at dusk, the speaker says, is the time when “our two paths cross, and “both simultaneously recognize his Anti-type: that I am an Arcadian, that he is a Utopian” (14-16). The contrast is one that Auden reflects on in an essay on literary Edens. We are again brought back to two important words for Auden: “backward” and “forward.” He argues that the Arcadian looks backward to Eden and the Utopian forward to New Jerusalem: The Arcadian “knows that his expulsion from Eden is an irrevocable fact and that his dream, therefore, is a wish-dream which cannot become real” while the Utopian, “on the other hand, necessarily believes that his New Jerusalem which it could be realized are a necessary element in his dream; it must include images, that is to say, not only of New Jerusalem itself but also of the Day of Judgment” (*The Dyer’s Hand* 410). Instead, harmony

must be worked for in the present among individuals, a (utopian) practice that will, according to Auden, lead to grace.

The use of the pastoral elegy also fuses two disparate elements, love and death. Despite Auden's criticism of the pastoral tradition, he understood the pastoral elegy as offering a unity that could be hopeful and useful. He incorporated conventions of the pastoral elegy in a number of poems, such as "In Memory of W.B. Yeats." According to Gregory Woods in *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition*, the death expressed in a pastoral elegy, because of the fusion of love with death and the use of the natural world, the mourning actually enhances life (108-09). Woods, in fact, traces the connection between homosexuality and the pastoral back to the poet Theocritus. He says the poet's "account of the death of Hylas and the consequent grief of Heracles (XIII) is . . . touchingly erotic" (27). Auden, however, moves beyond the conventions of the pastoral elegy; the landscape becomes a conduit to summon the departed. The ghostly presences further enable him to reflect on ethics: the love that such a summoning brings forth offers a stronger and more useful affect than eroticism.

Auden was, perhaps, not the first to perform such summoning, and he will not be the last. For example, medievalist and queer theorist Carolyn Dinshaw, in her essay "Touching on the Past," reveals how specters move us to our own theoretical and scholarly pursuits. The essay focuses on the controversial medieval historian John Boswell. He taught at Yale and is best known for his 1980 *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the fourteenth Century*. The Boswell thesis, as it is now known, claims that Greek and Roman sexual practices paved the way for homoerotic acceptance. Boswell's thesis was controversial because he argued that medieval Christians were more accepting of homosexuality than we have originally thought. He distinguished between the

early medieval period and the later medieval period; he claimed that the early period was accepting of homosexual acts while it was during the later period that the Church began to read “animosity” about homosexual acts into the Scriptures. The question of historical accuracy lies outside the purview of this project. However, what is important to note is that as a gay male who also happened to be Roman Catholic, Boswell’s thesis has frequently been seen by other LGBT scholars as an attempt to reconcile his sexuality with his faith and so provides a parallel to Auden. As a historian though, Boswell faced a greater challenge than a poet. In Dinshaw’s essay, she writes that Boswell was concerned about the gay community and wanted to justify it to others: “Boswell’s own concept of community shaped his history” (58). Going through his archive, Dinshaw notes that he received a number of letters from gay men who were ostracized and isolated (63), perhaps a direct parallel to the way he also felt as a gay man within the Catholic Church. It is also a similar action that Dinshaw herself performs throughout the essay. Boswell passed away in a clinic near Yale from AIDS complications in 1994 (Kuefler 23). In the essay, Dinshaw observes what it means to go through Boswell’s photographs and papers; she eloquently writes that she is attempting to “imagine bodies extending across boundaries of space and time . . . [in order to] imagine bodies that undo conventional or ordinary historical conceptions. To imagine such bodies making contact is to put a new spin on the notion of contingent history: think of the etymology of ‘contingent,’ from the Latin *to touch*” (70).

This is what I am also attempting to do throughout this project; it is what I am attempting to do here in this chapter, to touch Auden. Furthermore, Auden attempted the same with the German writer Goethe. In *Dictations: on Haunted Writing*, Avital Ronell argues that Goethe is a writer who is summoned by a number of other writers. As a model European writer, Goethe’s heritage evokes awe, wonder, envy, and anxiety of influence, if one is also a writer (i-xvii).

Ronell adds that when one cites Goethe in one's own writing, the two writers "are usually involved in a kind of hypnotics, playing out modulations of unconscious transmission and telepathy" (157). This is clear in two of Auden's essays and throughout a number of poems, especially his "Dichtung Und Wahrheit."

Auden wrote the forewords to two of Goethe's texts in translation: *Italian Journey* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Goethe's *Italian Journey* resonated so well with Auden because of his frequent stays on the island of Ischia. Goethe's text, formed from letters and journal entries, details the trip he made to Italy in 1786, a trip meant as a reprieve from the celebrity of his literary success as well as from the anguish of unrequited love. In the foreword, Auden writes, "*Italian Journey* is not only a description of places, persons, and things, but also a psychological document of the first importance dealing with a life crisis which, in various degrees of intensity, we all experience somewhere between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five" (*Forewords and Afterwords* 135). Auden understood the crisis documented by Goethe because it was a similar crisis he was experiencing on the Island of Ischia and that would propel him to Goethe's own region, the "gothic north." More interestingly, Auden's foreword to *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is very much about the way both a writer and reader can experience a text as evidence of maturity. Auden explains that a youthful reader will perhaps have a different reading of Werther than an older reader. The short novel is about the sensitive and romantic Werther who becomes consumed with the character Lotte. As she prepares to marry another man, Werther's torment reaches despair and he commits suicide. Readers have often seen the novel as a tragic love story. Later in life, Goethe disliked this work that made him famous because of the attraction others had for the character of Werther. Auden explains that Goethe did not mean Werther to be seen as a commendable figure. Instead, Auden explains, it is a cautionary tale that

is “a masterly and devastating portrait of a complete egoist, a spoiled brat, incapable of love because he cares for nobody and nothing but himself and having his way at whatever cost to others. The theme [is that of an] egoist who imagines himself to be a passionate lover” (126-27).

The novel does in fact offer and utilize what Roland Barthes would term the lover’s discourse. In the book of that title, Barthes frequently uses Goethe’s novel as the example par excellence. This is the discourse too that Auden wrestles with in his “Dichtung Und Wahrheit” and reveals Auden working towards a language that would, contrasted to Werther, include everyone, a communal language that has the ability to connect. In Barthes text, he describes a lover’s discourse as one that contains numerous fragments of language that seemingly construct a narrative (a love story). In actuality, the narrative is not ordered, but fragmented. Examples Barthes include are outbursts of annihilation, language that details the ordeal of abandonment, the inability to name the one we desire, the imagining of a rival, and other fragments. What does it mean when we say, “I love you”? Auden’s “Dichtung Und Wahrheit” centers on this similar question.

To call it a poem is not quite correct; other critics have called it an “essay.” One could argue, however, that it is a poem. The translation is “Poetry and Truth,” and the subtitle is “An Unwritten Poem.” The title is taken from Goethe’s autobiography, and the main focus, a theme that Goethe was also interested in, is the impossibility of a poem’s subject and that paradox of language that includes the inability for language to tell the “truth.” In the first section, Auden writes, “Expecting your arrival tomorrow, I find myself thinking *I love You*: then comes the thought:--*I should like to write a poem which would express exactly what I mean when I think these words*” (649). The remainder of the text explores that meaning. Furthermore, Edward Mendelson explains that the “you” who was arriving at Auden’s Austrian home was twenty-five

year-old Adrian Poole. He was an Oxford student Auden met while teaching there, and while Poole liked spending time with Auden, he, unlike Auden, did not feel a sexual attraction (433). Unlike Werther, Auden recognizes the way language has the ability to disconnect us from others, especially when we are concerned only with our own feelings. He writes instead, “The ‘symboliste’ attempt to make poetry as intransitive as music can get no further than the narcissistic reflexive—‘I love Myself’” (650). If the lover’s discourse disconnects us from others by focusing on the “I,” what would be a language of connection?

For Auden, this language was that of the liturgy and is detailed in his poem “Whitsunday in Kirchstetten.” The poem describes a service celebrating the Pentecost, which is used as a metaphor for the utopian possibility of healing injustice. Arthur Kirsch maintains that “Auden was . . . drawn to the communal service of the liturgy because of his lifelong sense of isolation” and that the liturgy is “first and foremost a community in action, a thing done together, and only secondarily a matter of individual feeling or thinking.” Kirsch calls the service Auden’s “communal sanctuary” (6). The poem describes a number of disconnections that symbolize human division. The speaker, an Anglican, participates in a Roman Catholic Mass (1-16), the poem details the then present questioning of lower Austria’s loyalty (18-19), and the Cold War division via imagery of the nuclear race (“catastrophe” line 78). The political and national dimensions of the poem represent Auden’s concern about injustices; however, he held firm to the possibility of human unity. Indeed, the Pentecost allows Auden to focus on the very meaning of hope:

The Holy Ghost
does not abhor a golfer’s jargon,
a Lower-Austrian accent, the cadences even
of my own little anglo-american
musico-literary set (though difficult,
saints at least may think in algebra

without sin): but no sacred nonsense can stand Him.
Our magic syllables melt away,
our tribal formulae are laid bare: since this morning,
it is with a vocabulary
made wholesomely profane, open in lexicons
to our foes to translate, that we endeavor
each in his idiom to express the true magnalia
which need no hallowing from us, loaning terms,
exchanging graves and legends. (35-49)

The Holy Ghost does not discriminate and it does not divide human beings. Instead, it brings them together.

The liturgy also helped ease Auden's loneliness. Kirsch describes how Auden enjoyed being around families, and he did have a number of friends with families with whom he spent time with; however, his brother John once said, "In spite of his fame and wide friendships throughout America and Europe, he was lonely" (Kirsch 5). During the Cold War, homosexuality was a criminal offense not only in America but in many European countries as well and the result was Auden's exclusion. Also, as his brother notes, Auden's psychology led to his withdrawal, what Kirsch identifies as Auden's painful shyness, and as Auden himself explained why he appreciated Thomas Hardy's poetry, "because I half suspected that my own nature was both colder and more mercurial" (Kirsch 5). The solitude that comes from loneliness is seen by the majority of people and mass culture as damaging. Yet according to psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, solitude can be political and offer hope. She argues, "I need to be able to have a relationship with myself, both biologically and intellectually, which is a way of partaking of solitude and not relying exclusively on the outside world. The important thing to note is that someone who is capable of solitude is also capable of connecting to others, in the sense of caring for others, without which one remains in a state of constant need—one is consumed, the way that love can be all-consuming" (qtd. in Zournazi 69). This is what Auden finds powerful about the

liturgy. As he wrote in his poem “Horae Canonicae,” a poem that movingly describes church service, “In solitude for company” (“Lauds” 3). The church community can then parallel larger communities and the world.

Auden’s description of the liturgy is an example of his belief in the City of God in the then present moment, but it also implies that injustices in the future will subside. This ability of the present to offer hope for the future is also what propels Ernst Bloch to describe Christianity as providing the strongest examples of social utopias. For instance, he argues that Christianity’s hope for the life to come in the beyond (the future utopia), propels Christians to construct parallels of this future in the present. The example he gives is the Church. He notes, however, that the Church can never fully be an example of the City of God because, and he offers St. Augustine’s City of God as an example, the Church typically has very “little regard for the existing State,” the political state (*Man on His Own* 122-129). This is then where Auden differs from mainline Christianity. As Kirsch explains, Auden never had any interest in eschatology (20). He was always concerned with the City of God on earth. For Bloch, however, eschatology is an important part of the utopian function of Christianity. Auden would disagree on this point, and, in fact, disputes about the utopian function of Christianity are not unusual. Utopian thought has been debated among a number of key Christian thinkers. It is especially noteworthy that two theologians Auden greatly admired disagreed significantly on this point. Reinhold Niebuhr disliked “the utopian illusions and sentimental aberrations of modern liberal culture” which “are really all derived from the basic error of negating the fact of original sin” (273). On the other hand, Paul Tillich, in his lecture “The Political Meaning of Utopia,” argued that “utopia has a foundation in man’s being” because it expresses that “man has inner aims and what he must have

for future fulfillment as a person” (127). Auden can be seen as finding a middle ground between these two extremes, a middle ground that can be seen as utopian practice.

Ideas about community and the reality of suffering would find their eloquent place in a poem that would set the stage for later poems written during his period in Austria. “Friday’s Child” was written as a memorial for the pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis in 1945 for his part in the plot to assassinate Hitler. Bonhoeffer wrote *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, a text that exemplifies the distinction between utopian practice and utopian ideals. Bonhoeffer contrasts the ideals a Christian has for a Christian community to the actual practice of living together within such a community. Ideals, he argues throughout the text, hinder genuine love for other people and a desire for a *human* community. There is little evidence that Auden read this text, even though the ideas parallel Auden’s; however, one of the most important key themes from Bonhoeffer that influenced Auden was Bonhoeffer’s radical notion of a “religionless Christianity,” meaning a Christianity focused on the evidence of an incarnate and humiliated Christ in day-to-day life and everyday living. This is explored in Bonhoeffer’s *Letters and Papers from Prison* (Mendelson 425). This would be, to return to the Bishop Gene Robinson quote used as the epigraph for this chapter, a turn to love instead of rules. This is, however, very difficult to do. Indeed, Auden writes in “Friday’s Child,” “It never crossed our minds He meant / Exactly what He said” (7-8). Humans are humans; the love for others, no matter their distinctions and differences from the “I,” is, perhaps, the most difficult action of Christianity and would explain why so many Christian denominations frequently find themselves at a loss for unity. Moreover, as Edward Mendelson claims, “Friday’s Child” “was partly a reminder to [Auden] about the recent history of the part of the world that he had moved to” (425).

In September of 1957, after Auden won a poetry prize that provided a sum of money that enabled him to purchase property, near Vienna, the first and only piece of land he would own; he bought a farmhouse in the village of Kirchstetten. According to Edward Mendelson, Auden left the pleasure-filled island of Ischia in Italy because, “Arcadia, he had repeatedly warned himself, transforms itself into a prison when one tries to remain there” (417). I would add, however, that Arcadia in this sense is the traditional conception of Arcadia as a pleasure-filled space outside of reality and a space that could never be fully made possible in the present. Instead, the landscape and his home in Austria provided another sense of utopia, one that showcased the possibility of unity between individuals, a unity that could heal injustices. That possible unity, Auden found, could only be made visible within his poetry by going to “guilt culture,” and dwelling in Austria would bring forth the past into the present, the defining act of place-making.

Auden’s utopian vision is pointed to further, with more specific language and details, in his poem “Thanksgiving for a Habitat.” It is the domestic space, what Auden calls “the *geography* of the house” as the title to the sixth section of the poem, that provides the space for freedom. Furthermore, Edward Mendelson says, “Auden was now ‘responsible for a piece of the earth,’ as he told an interviewer: ‘dominant / over three acres and a blooming / conurbation of country lives,’ as he wrote in ‘Thanksgiving for a Habitat.’ In the same summers when he wrote his poems about householding, he also wrote about the temptations that come with power over nature” (444). Nature and culture then are given equal weight yet again.

Written while living in his farmhouse, “Thanksgiving for a Habitat” is a meditation on the various spatial aspects of his house; each section details a room: the kitchen, bathroom, living space, bedroom, study, cellar, and even the attic. In “Prologue: The Birth of Architecture,” Auden writes:

No world
wears as well as it should but, mortal or not,
a world has still to be built
because of what we can see from our windows,
that Immortal Commonwealth
which is there regardless: It's in perfect taste
and it's never boring but
it won't quite do. Among its populations
are masons and carpenters
who build the most exquisite shelters and safes,
but no architects, any more
than there are heretics or bounders: to take
umbrage at death, to construct
a second nature of tomb and temple, lives
must know the meaning of *if*. (18-32)

This opening describes how privacy (“shelters” and “safes”) is related to world making and sets the stage for the theme of domestic bliss, but it is, as we shall see, a bliss that paradoxically results in love *and* loneliness. Auden knew “the meaning of *if*,” and it was brought home to him as his attention turns from his house to the community and environment of modern Austria.

In an early Austrian poem, Auden showcases the blending of past, present, and future.

“Et in Arcadia Ego” also presents the communal experience:

Who, now, seeing Her so
Happily married,
Housewife, helpmate to Man,

Can imagine the screeching
Virago, the Amazon,
Earth-Mother was?

Her jungle-growths
Are abated, Her exorbitant
Monsters abashed,

Her soil mumbled,
Where crops, aligned precisely,
Will soon be orient:

Levant or couchant,
Well-daunted thoroughbreds

Graze on mead and pasture,

A church-clock sub-divides the day,
Up the lane at sundown
Geese podge home.

As for Him:
What has happened to the Brute
Epics and nightmares tell of?

No bishops pursue
Their archdeacons with axes,
In the crumbling lair

Of a robber baron
Sightseers picnic
Who carry no daggers.

I well might think myself
A humanist,
Could I manage not to see

How the autobahn
Thwarts the landscape
In godless Roman arrogance,

The farmer's children
Tip-toe past the shed
Where the gelding-knife is kept. (1-36)

As John Fuller explains in his *W.H. Auden: A Commentary*, the poem details “the nature of evil and superstition with a truth about the holiness of settled nature in terms of modern Austria, where the rural environment confronts technocracy and recent genocide” (496). The picnic imagery is especially telling. A picnic also appears in “*Horae Canonicae*”: “We, too, may come to the picnic / With nothing to hide, join the dance / As it moves in perichoresis, / Turns about the abiding tree” (“Compline” 61-64). The picnic, according to Arthur Kirsch, is a symbol of agape. Eating, Kirsch explains, was “an image of selfishness transformed by the Eucharist into agape” (137).

As the spiritual love represented in the image of Christ, agape is also tantamount with the Love Feast of the early church. The feast, detailed in the second chapter of the Acts of Apostles, is the food shared among the apostles in an experience of fellowship. Service in the early church would have opened with the Feast, then consisted of preaching, and ended with the Eucharist. The community forged from the sharing and eating of food is a reminder for Auden that connection among humans is able to occur. In his introduction to *The Protestant Mystics*, Auden detailed his own personal experience of a vision of agape:

One fine summer night in June 1933 I was sitting on a lawn after dinner with three colleagues, two women and one man. We liked each other well enough but we were certainly not intimate friends, nor had any one of us a sexual interest in another. Incidentally, we had not drunk any alcohol. We were talking casually about everyday matters when, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, something happened. I felt myself invaded by a power which, though I consented to it, was irresistible and certainly not mine. For the first time in my life I knew exactly—because, thanks to the power, I was doing it—what it means to love one’s neighbor as oneself. I was also certain, though the conversation continued to be perfectly ordinary, that my three colleagues were having the same experience. (In the case of one of them, I was able later to confirm this.) My personal feelings towards them were unchanged—they were still colleagues, not intimate friends—but I felt their existence as themselves to be of infinite value and rejoiced in it. (*Forewords and Afterwords* 69)

The unconditional love is felt without speaking, without force, and without asking anything of the other.

Eating as an example of agape is a theme that he also explores in his “Thanksgiving for a Habitat.” For instance, in “Grub First, Then Ethics,” the poem centered on the kitchen, Auden compares the utilization of the space to the Eucharist. The action of the Eucharist typically takes place with other participants; it not only brings the individual to Christ but to others as well. The speaker in the poem, however, is alone. Kitchens do indeed bring people together: “These [appliance] engines politely insist / that banausics can be liberals, / a cook a pure artist / who moves Everyman / at a deeper level than / Mozart” (46-51), and “Jew, Gentile or Pigmy, / he

must get his calories” (57-58). The tone of this section, while light at times, ends with reflection on gluttony and disconnection: “The houses of our City / are real enough but they lie / haphazardly scattered over the earth” (II.81-83). The dark tone is further emphasized by the fact that, in a poem about a kitchen, actual descriptions of cooking and eating with others are never mentioned. We are led back to the hope contained in solitude. The loneliness found in this kitchen looks forward to the possibility of later human connection. The dining room poem, “Tonight at Seven-Thirty,” dedicated to M.F.K Fisher, reveals this very well; he calls the dining room “the sacral dining area” (24). In a book review of Fisher’s *The Art of Eating*, a piece Auden entitled “The Kitchen of Life,” he astutely wrote:

It is no accident that the central rite of the Christian religion, its symbol for agape, love untainted by selfish desire or self-projection, should be the act of eating bread and drinking wine. For such a symbol, a sexual rite would never do. In the first place, since it presupposes two different sexes, it divides as well as unites; in the second, it is not intrinsically selfish enough. Though it is necessary to the survival of the race, the sexual act is not necessary to the survival of the individual so that, even at its crudest, it contains an element of giving. Eating, on the other hand is a pure act of taking. Only the absolutely necessary and absolutely self-regarding can stand as a symbol for its opposite, the absolutely voluntary and self-forgetful. From watching the way in which a person eats, one can learn a great deal about the way in which he loves himself and, consequently, about the way he will probably love or hate his neighbor. (*Forewords and Afterwords* 486-487)

What is most interesting about this quotation from the book review is the division between sex and love. Auden’s relationship with Kallman was always a struggle between sex and domestic commitment. The kitchen here then, separated from sex, is unified with the comfortable form of domesticity, contented love. Eating in the poem not only connects us to other human beings, but places us firmly into the animal world of nature: “The life of planets / is one continuous solitary meal, / and ruminants / hardly interrupt theirs to sleep or to mate, but most / predators feel / ravenous most of the time and competitive” (1-6). Like sex, eating too is the animalistic side of

our natures; however, it is through the act of dining that humans come together in love. Throughout the poem, however, the speaker's loneliness, while not directly stated, is implied. Indeed, Auden and Kallman's relationship was never entirely blissful. For example, Auden writes that "a dinner-party, / however select, / is a worldly rite that nicknames or endearments / or family / diminutives would profane: two doters who wish to tiddle and curmurr between the soup and fish / belong in restaurants, all children should be fed / earlier and be safely in bed" (44-51). Interestingly, the speaker seems to observe the party from a distance; he is critical and seemingly jealous of a relationship flauntingly displayed. Utopian possibility, according to Auden, does exist: "I see a table / at which the youngest and oldest present / keep the eye grateful for what Nature's bounty and grace of Spirit can create: / . . . a talkative mood" (71-74) The grace and talk represent culture while nature is found in the life cycle of aging as well as the food on the table. They collide. Not only do human beings come together at the dinner table, but utopian possibility is present in the simple and everyday act of eating.

In the dining room poem, conversation over the meal is recognized by the speaker as central to living. The conversation that Auden describes here is contrasted to what Martin Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, calls "idle talk." The philosopher Alphonso Lingis argues that it is "a language of hospitality" that is contrasted to Heidegger's concept. Instead, "spreading warmth around a place" ("Come in, how are you? Sit down") is a resonance across a space that provides intimacy; this language offers a deep connection and unity (qtd. in Zournazi 32-33). In "To-Night at Seven-Thirty," for instance, Auden describes how talk can be boorish (60) if a guest is not equipped with humility and warmth. The power of speech, he says, is being in a "talkative mood but knowing when to stop" (77). He returns at the end of the poem to agape as

the guests eat: “in swallowing / a sign-act of reverence, / in speech a work of re-presenting / the true olamic silence” (81-83).

For Auden though, the power of the host does not mean controlling such conversation. Throughout “To-Night at Seven-Thirty” Auden instead sets up the binary of the host and the guest only to break it down and reveal yet again the theme of agape. The dichotomy of the host and the guest directly parallels the political realm, especially during the Cold War, and allows us to see how the intimacy of home actually has significant and larger meanings. The Australian anthropologist Ghassan Hage has written and spoken about the home as a comfort zone and the cultural implications of hospitality. In a conversation with Mary Zournazi, printed in *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*, Hage says that the discourse surrounding being a host (country) allows the one who is the host to have fantasies of control (165). Auden seems to understand the implications of the terms “host” and “guest.” In lines 29-42, he reverses the meaning of the host as he contrasts the dinner party with a mass-banquet, saying that one’s host could “well be his own / chef, servitor and scullion” (36-37). Instead of a binary of host and guest, the poem’s last stanza leaves us with the image of a table that does not have an individual sitting at the head. As Kirsch explains, “Worshippers formed a psychic field of a ring after the feast of agape . . . and a ring or circle always had sacramental and paradisaic associations for [Auden]” (11).

The image of the circle, agape, is tied to the Christian sacrament of marriage, symbolized in the wedding ring. Auden considered himself married to Chester Kallman; however, Kallman could not remain faithful. Despite the betrayal, Auden and Kallman remained friends. For Auden, however, the circle never broke. Two poems, one from Auden’s early period and another from the Austrian period, reveal the importance of this circle. The early poem, “In Sickness and Health,” constructs marriage as a sacrament by contrasting it to passion and lust:

Nature by Nature in unnature ends:
Echoing each other like two waterfalls,
Tristan, Isolde, the great friends,
Make passion out of passion's obstacles,
Deliciously postponing their delight,
Prolong frustration till it lasts all night,
Then perish lest Brangaene's worldly cry
Should sober their cerebral ecstasy.

But, dying, conjure up their opposite,
Don Juan, so terrified of death he hears
Each moment recommending it
And knows no argument to counter theirs:
Trapped in their vile affections, he must find
Angels to keep him chaste; a helpless, blind,
Unhappy spook, he haunts the urinals,
Existing solely by their miracles. (33-48)

Auden also leads us back to Goethe's Werther; a lover's passion can only lead to destruction.

Instead, Auden constructs a love that unifies and loves the other as the individual loves the self:

"This round O of faithfulness" (97). Sadly, however, because of Kallman's betrayal with other men, Auden tended to live a life alone, an experience that caused him to find ways to relieve the loneliness. In the Cold War era poem "Loneliness," Auden addresses loneliness by saying, "Gate-crashing ghost, aggressive / invisible visitor, / tactless gooseberry, spoiling / my *tête-à-tête* with myself, / blackmailing brute, behaving / as if the house were your own, / so viciously pursuing / your victim from room to room" (1-8). "Routine" helps him to live comfortably in solitude, he says in line 22, but, most importantly, he tells loneliness, "your days are numbered: to-morrow / Chester, my chum, will return. / then you'll be through: in no time / he'll throw you out neck-and-crop" (35-38). Agape will return.

The return can only take place by traveling over landscape. In Auden's poem "Amor Loci," the analogy of love to the love of a landscape ties Auden's sexuality to topography.

Auden illustrates in the poem that the problems of love, especially homosexual love, can be just as difficult as creating a utopia in the present. He writes:

I could draw its map by heart,
showing its contours,
strata and vegetation,
name every height,
small burn and lonely sheiling,
but nameless to me,
faceless as heather or grouse,
are those who live there,

its dead too vague for judgement,
tangible only
what they wrought, their giant works
of delve and drainage
in days preterite: long since
their hammering stopped
as the lodes all petered out
in the Jew limestone. (1-16)

The “its” in the first line is both love and landscape. Yet the two are not easily distinguished from one another. The ending tone of the first stanza reflects the disappointment that love has created as well as the longing for a love that goes beyond mere knowing to a true experience. Landscape is indeed the perfect analogy in this case; the search for landscape (home/dwelling) is similar and usually results in similar disappointment. The second stanza points to Auden’s relationship with Kallman, but Auden is not just reflecting on his relationship with Kallman. In fact, the ending of the poem signals that Auden is speaking of homosexual love in general. He continues with:

Industry wants Cheap Power,
romantic muscle
a perilous wilderness,
Mr Pleasure pays
for surf-rising, claret, sex:
it offers them none.

To me, though, much: a vision,

not (as perhaps at twelve I thought it) of Eden,
still less of a New
Jerusalem but, for one,
convinced he will die,
more comely, more credible
than either day-dream.

How but with some real focus
of desolation
could I, by analogy,
imagine a Love
that however often smeared,
shrugged at, abandoned
by a frivolous worldling,
does not abandon? (27-48)

In an earlier poem, "Pleasure Island," Auden had criticized the cult of pleasure; similarly, in the above poem, pleasure, the speaker says, will not offer what one actually desires—love. Utopian "vision" is possible, however, and it will, according to Auden, surpass ideal landscapes such as Eden or New Jerusalem. Is the love too, referred to in the final stanza that is "often smeared, / shrugged at," homosexual love? It would seem so.

Auden found the comfort of his Austrian home provided him peace with the flesh, and he details in many poems the uniting of the flesh with the spirit. In the poem focused on the bedroom in "Thanksgiving for a Habitat," "The Cave of Nakedness," "habitat" is given a double meaning: the literal space of the bedroom as well as the individual body as space, tying home ever closer to sexuality and identity. While the majority of the poem focuses on the individual's bedroom as a location of rebirth through the action of sleep, the poem provides a theme that is central to Auden's oeuvre: "Our bodies cannot love: / But, without one, / What works of Love could we do?" (88-90). As John Fuller explains, in his commentary on Auden's poetry, this is a paraphrase of Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy's aphorism, "Sexuality throws no light upon love, but

only through love can we learn to understand sexuality” (493). The poem meditates on celibacy and privacy:

Bed-sitting-rooms
soon drive us crazy, a dormitory even sooner
turns us to brutes: bona fide architects know
that doors are not emphatic enough, and interpose,
as a march between two realms, so alien, so disjunct,
the no-man’s-land of a stair. The switch from personage,
with a state number, a first and family name,
to the naked Adam or Eve, and vice versa,
should not be off-hand or abrupt: a stair retards it
to a solemn procession.

Since my infantile entrance
at my mother’s bidding into Edwardian England,
I have suffered the transit over forty thousand times,
usually, to my chagrin, by myself: about
blended flesh, those midnight colloquia of Derbies and Joans,
I know nothing therefore, about certain occult
antipathies perhaps too much. Some perks belong, though,
to all unwilling celibates: our rooms are seldom
battlefields, we enjoy the pleasure of reading in bed
(as we grow older, it’s true, we may find it prudent
to get nodding drunk first), we retain the right to choose
our sacred image. (21-42)

Loneliness is often a choice to protect the privacy of both our literal space and our bodily space.

Auden here reflects on the examples, like dormitories, that merge private and public; they are, he suggests, spaces that are not utopian. Auden does not imply that there should or could be a distinction between private and public. He seems to be asking throughout “Thanksgiving for a Habitat” if any space is ever truly private. He is thankful for space that does not allow for a *forcible* inclusion of the public into his private life. Furthermore, the bedroom is the location, although it is typically identified with the flesh, where flesh and spirit are able to merge. He writes, “We may not be obliged—thought it is mannerly—the bless / the Trinity that we are corporal contraptions, / but only a villain will omit to thank Our Lady or / her hen-wife, Dame Kind, as he, she, or both ensemble, / emerge from a private cavity to be re-born, / re-neighbored

in the Country of Consideration” (80-85). The joining of the flesh with the spirit in Auden’s writing, according to Arthur Kirsch, affirms the importance on the body (45) and seeks to critique the Christian misunderstanding of St. Paul; his epistles are frequently used to argue that the spirit is superior to the flesh. Instead, Auden argued, in a letter to a priest, “It does seem to me that the doctrine of the Incarnation implies the coinherence of spirit and flesh in all creatures” (qtd. in Kirsch 28). I would argue that Auden’s preoccupation with a reconciliation of flesh with spirit is very much an acceptance of his sexuality and the need to find a way to include sexuality in matters of faith.

Moreover, it parallels the attempt to reconcile the private life with a public life. The division between private and public creates anxiety about the encroachment of public into the private life. This encroachment is one reason why Auden moved to Austria. In his poem “A Change of Air,” Auden writes, “To go Elsewhere is to withdraw from movement, / A side step, a short one, will convey you thither” (9-10). He adds, “Within its average elsewhereishness / Your name is as a mirror answers, yourself / How you behave in shops, the tips you give: / It sides with neither, being outside both, / But welcomes both with healing disregard” (16-20). According to Edward Mendelson, “The motive for the journey is an ‘estrangement between your name and you,’ a dissociation between the public self known to others by name and the inner self that needs no name to know itself” (“The European Auden” 63).

When we are unable to see an “I,” it is more difficult to find a way to include that “I” in the political process. Mendelson points out that Auden’s poems during the late forties and early fifties concern themselves with the importance of an individual seeing the face of the other in order to make a sound existential choice between what is good to do to another human being and what is wrong (360-361). In “The Virgin and the Dynamo,” this “world of faces” is the

“historical world of the virgin” (*Dyer’s Hand* 61). Auden says that the ability to see the face allows one to see “the love of my neighbor as a unique and irreplaceable being” (61-62). He writes in “Numbers and Faces,” “True, between faces almost any number / Might come in handy, and One is always real; / But which could any face call good, for calling / Infinity a number does not make it one” (13-16). The face stands in opposition to the crowd (the masses) that Auden says is “comprised of $n > 1$ members whose only relation is arithmetical, they can only be counted. A crowd loves neither itself nor anything other than itself; its existence is chimerical” (*Dyer’s Hand* 63). This is the world of a dictator.

The crowd, described in his poem “We, Too, Had Known Golden Hours,” “only allows for mechanical speech” (20). When we are simply a member of a crowd, we are unable to think through choices before action. Mendelson says, “Faces and names can take responsibility; numbers and crowds cannot” (371). The mentality of the crowd leads to mass destruction. In “The Managers,” Auden writes, “The last word on how we may live or die / Rests today with such quiet / Men, working too hard in rooms that are too big, / Reducing to figures / What is the matter, what is to be done” (27-31). According to Mendelson, “If I accept myself as a mere cog in an irresponsible social machine, I let my mental states serve as mere cogs in my incoherent inner machinery” (372). Technology creates automatons and leads to destruction. Mendelson says, “The rhyme *face* and *place* occurs in a poem about the condition of having neither” (378). Thus, Auden gives us during this time period poems like “In Transit,” “Fleet Visit,” “Bucolics,” and “Ode to Gaea.” In “Ode to Gaea” the earth holds a preferable view from the ground instead of the airplane that opens the poem. The airplane, like the crowd, only sees a large mass. This even has political implications during our own present moment. To return to the beginning of this chapter and the current debates within the Anglican Communion, Bishop Gene Robinson

argues that “nothing works better to change hearts and minds than LGBT people telling their own stories—or allies telling the story of someone they love, such as a child, aunt or uncle, or friend” (Montgomery 2). The individual face will enable utopian practice and change.

Auden always believed that the world could learn from errors and mistakes and work toward a hopeful future. One poem that this is shown most clearly in is “Josef Weinheber.” Weinheber was an Austrian poet who collaborated with the Nazis; he committed suicide after becoming disillusioned. Auden’s farmhouse resided just a short walk to what had been Weinheber’s own house. Auden writes:

Categorised enemies
twenty years ago,
now next-door neighbors, we might
have become good friends,
sharing a common ambit
and love of the Word
over a golden Kremser
had many a long
language on syntax, commas,
versification. (11-20)

And later in the poem, he adds,

Already the realms that lost
were properly warm
and over-eating, their crimes
the pedestrian
private sort, those nuisances,
corpses and rubble,
long carted away: for their raped
the shock was fading,
their kidnapped physicists felt
no longer homesick.

To-day we smile at weddings
where bride and bridegroom
were both born since the Shadow
lifted, or rather
moved elsewhere: never as yet
has Earth been without

her bad patch, some unplace with
jobs for torturers (61-78)

“Unplace” is a significant word in these lines and points to a larger understanding of the poem. Place-making does not consist of mere happy events, but a place, according to these lines, consists of positive and negative. As a location where only the negative occurs, an “unplace” is defined as the location where the darkest events within that present time occurred. These lines suggest that space has the ability to heal from having been an unplace. The possibility that the speaker could have been friends with Weinheber during another time showcases Auden’s hope for unity between disparate individuals. Friendship equals unity and eventual joy, and this unity is utopian potential that could heal the injustice that is remembered within the place.

In fact, the most useful tool that Auden is able to present to us in the contemporary time is joy. “Life remains a blessing,” Kirsch says, “became a refrain of his existence” (15). In his 1944 essay “The Giving of Thanks,” Auden wrote, “for the gift of being alive, [*The Tempest*’s] Miranda’s simple *O Wonder!*’ is the proper expression of gratitude” (Kirsch 16). Such joy in gratitude can indeed be politically useful. According to Julia Kristeva, “psychoanalysis has taught us that joy is a way of mourning our grief” (qtd. in Zournazi 75), and Auden understood this very well. Kristeva argues, “We know perfectly well that it’s up to us to transform reality, but the transformation depends on our mental state, on the forms of discourse we adopt, and if our symbolic disposition leans more towards that of the dance, and of optimism, we have a stronger hold on reality than if our disposition is that of lamentation and melancholy” (74). This is precisely Auden’s point when he writes, in the “Compline” poem of “*Horae Canonicae*,” “That we, too, may come to the picnic / With nothing to hide, join the dance / as it moves in perichoresis, / Turns about the abiding tree” (61-64). Joy means recognizing the reality of both

happiness and suffering. Joy leads to unconditional love that will forge a community that is able to initiate transformative politics.

Chapter Four

“The Beautiful Completeness of the View”: Elizabeth Bishop and the Representation of Queer Space

The lesbian is never with us, it seems, but always somewhere else: in the shadows, in the margins, hidden from history, out of sight, out of mind, a wanderer in the dusk, a lost soul, a tragic mistake, a pale denizen of the night. – Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Sexuality and Modern Culture*

Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. –Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”

A window is helpful for a writing life. If consumed by language or a character, a look up and out of the pane will, if needed, bring the writer back to reality. Since the writer’s life is one of hibernation, a window allows light into the darkness. In a photograph from the Library of Congress, the poet Elizabeth Bishop sits at her desk where she worked during 1949-1950 as the National Poetry Chair, a position now known as the U.S. Poet Laureateship. Near her desk is a long, vertical picture window that is framed with flowered curtains. She sits in a leather chair at a large oak desk and is hunched over while staring down at a few pages of a manuscript. In the background, however, the view from the window nearly dominates the photograph as it reveals the dome of the Capitol building. This is a window then that is not merely a writer’s necessity. Just across the way, the federal government busied itself with purging gay men and lesbians from their jobs. “Does a window form part of the inside of a building or not?,” Jacques Derrida has asked (qtd. in Wigley 87). This photograph of Bishop illustrates two points of interest that will be explored throughout this chapter: the contrast of the public realm with that of the poet’s imagination and the blurring of the boundary between the public and the private that occurred during the Cold War era.

Bishop was very much private about her sexuality; as her biographer Brett C. Millier has observed, “She did not write about it; she apparently did not talk about it” (56). Steven Gould Axelrod, however, recently claimed that Bishop’s Cold War poetry offers an opposing ideology to the compulsory heterosexuality of the era. Indeed, while Bishop may not have written obvious anti-Cold War lines, Bishop’s poetry is framed by a lesbian visibility that opposes the culture’s construction of both gender and sexuality. Axelrod maintains that Bishop is “a creature divided” (849), and it is understandable she could be read as such. Axelrod “unravel[s] the paradox of a writer who primarily inhabited private spaces in her daily existence yet vigorously, if obliquely, critiqued public places in her poetry” (843).

Even though a letter to her friend Robert Lowell made clear her anxiety about making her private letters public, Bishop eventually came to terms with having her drafts, unpublished poems, and letters made public, sold to research libraries and eventually published in book form (*Words in Air* 743-745). Readers who know how to look for them will be able to locate Bishop’s criticisms of the Cold War era. She uses what critics Lynn Keller and Christanne Miller define as “indirection.” In an essay focused on Bishop and Emily Dickinson, Keller and Miller argue that such a language is a “reliance on connotative or implicit meanings, wordplay, manipulation of understatement, qualifiers, or slight shifts in tone . . .” (534). Bishop’s use of such indirection, and the way it allows the reader to understand her feelings about the Cold War, will become apparent through analysis of a number of poems in this chapter. Indirection, according to Keller and Miller, reveals how Bishop wanted to “see rather than be seen” (538). If she could subtly criticize nationalism, then the window would not shatter but remain a protective device; however, I would argue that the line between “see” and “seen” is not as distinct as we like to think. During the era, the private space and the public sphere had a perplexing relationship. The

public sphere has consistently excluded marginalized individuals and so the private space has been seen as the only space offering freedom; however, the search for Utopia in the private, domestic realm is apolitical and contrary to Utopia; it suggests a failure of community. This project ends with a chapter on Bishop because it is in Bishop's poetry that we are able to locate the only feasible, hopeful, and fully formed utopian space during the Cold War: the world of the imagination. The geography, if you will, of a poem, attempts to replicate a utopian space that Cold War nationalism attempted to deny.

The public sphere has often been identified as a masculine arena while the private sphere of the domestic has traditionally been equated with the feminine. Bishop's time at the Library of Congress subverted such a construction. In a January, 1950 article from *Boston Post Magazine*, the writer Sally Ellis introduces readers to the new National Poetry Chair. What is most interesting is the gendered language Ellis uses to describe Bishop. The article is titled "U.S. Poetry Chair Holder Tells How She Courts the Muse." The lead to the story is, "There are strange goings-on up on the attic floor of the Library of Congress!" (3). "Strange" indeed; as a woman, Bishop's presence in the public space of the Library of Congress challenged the strict dichotomy between masculine and feminine. This is perhaps why Ellis anxiously riddles the news article with descriptions of Bishop that identify the poet as exemplifying normative femininity: "Quiet, self-effacing Elizabeth Bishop," Ellis writes (3). And, "In a 24-foot office that looks so much like a Beacon Hill drawing-room that you expect tea and thin bread-and-butter sandwiches to be served any minute, an attractive young woman sits at her desk piecing scraps of paper together" (3). This detail is most telling of all. Ellis seems to only have been able to write of a woman in a masculine, public space by identifying the public space in domestic terms.

In *Organization Man*, the quintessential detailing of suburban life in the Cold War, William Whyte said of privacy during the era: “In the battle against loneliness even the architecture becomes functional. Just as doors inside houses—which are sometimes said to have marked the birth of the middle class—are disappearing, so are the barriers against neighbors. The picture in the picture window, for example, is what is going on inside—or, what is going on inside other people’s picture windows . . .” (qtd. in Nelson 85-86). Whyte suggests that we have an inherent right to be lonely and that the Cold War era is marked by a desire to break down any barriers between ourselves and other people. The window for Whyte is an apt metaphor for the Cold War; the pane is the desire to know what other people are doing, and the pane is the disregard for privacy. In an era defined by suspicion, the window became an example of how privacy was often an illusion; however, what Whyte fails to note is that the window is framed. Looking in the window from the outside, only certain elements are visible. Also, visibility works both ways.

As those suspicious of Bishop would possibly be viewing and scrutinizing her, she scrutinized the era, especially from her desk that overlooked the city of Washington D.C. In the poem “View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress,” Bishop writes:

Moving from left to left, the light
is heavy on the Dome, and coarse.
One small lunette turns it aside
and blankly stares off to the side
like a big white old wall-eyed horse.

On the east steps the Air Force Band
in uniforms of Air Force blue
is playing hard and loud, but—queer—
the music doesn’t quite come through.

It comes in snatches, dim then keen,
then mute, and yet there is no breeze.
The giant trees stand in between.

I think the trees must intervene,
catching the music in their leaves
like gold-dust, till each big leaf sags.
Unceasingly the little flags
feed their limp stripes into the air,
and the band's efforts vanish there.

Great shades, edge over,
Give the music room.
The gathered brasses want to go
Boom—boom. (1-22)

The first stanza of this poem presents the Capitol as an ominous presence through the use of language like “heavy” and “coarse.” The same point is made through her description of the Air Force Band: “hard and loud.” The nature imagery in the poem offers peace against the intolerable architecture and music; like private space, the trees offer shade, a partial cover. The most important detail in the poem is that of the Air Force Band; through the image, Bishop contrasts national/official art to that of the poem the writer is in the process of constructing. Bishop implies that art and the political, public realm should remain separate.

In her Second World War era poem “Roosters,” Bishop foreshadows this use of views and windows to critique the nationalistic errors taking place. During the late 1930s and the early 1940s, Bishop lived in Key West, Florida. She wrote to her friend Frani Blough Muser, “Key West is as beautiful as ever. I’m beginning to think it has a sinister ‘hold’ on me” (*One Art* 87). Key West’s isolated nature lured and kept Bishop there, according to Thomas Travisano: “local historian Tom Hambright testifies that Bishop received nary a mention in the Key West newspapers during her decade-long stay on the island—and it was only in 1993 that her former house on 624 White Street received a historical plaque in her honor” (4). Travisano adds that “a gay poet could stay under the radar in Key West far better than in the most places in America in that date and time” [*sic*] (5). Despite the peace that Key West offered Bishop, the reality of the

War shaped her writing. In a letter to her mentor and friend Marianne Moore, she explained her thinking about her poem “Roosters.” She writes, “I want to emphasize the essential baseness of militarism. In the first part [of the poem], I was thinking of Key West, and also of those aerial views of dismal little towns in Finland and Norway, when the Germans took over, and their atmosphere of poverty” (*One Art* 96). The comparisons between the European villages to her beloved Key West reveal Bishop’s fear that aspects of the public sphere would destroy her own private space; in fact, her fear was justified. Later, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the military began using Key West as a strategic point of interest.

Bishop’s critique of militarism, according to Camile Roman, can be traced back to the poet’s mother’s mental illness. The absent mother resulted in Bishop’s movement between Canada and the United States and her being shuffled between relatives (6). During World War I, Bishop’s mother was hospitalized in Halifax, Canada. A large explosion in Halifax Harbor occurred near the time of Bishop’s mother’s hospitalization and perhaps linked loss with war in Bishop’s mind (Roman 6). The war culture that she witnessed both in Halifax and the World at War in the late 1930s found form in her poem “Roosters,” which details the various meanings the image of the rooster has in culture. Bishop writes:

Deep from raw throats
A senseless order floats
All over town. A rooster gloats

Over our beds
From rusty iron sheds
And fences made from old bedsteads,

Over our churches
Where the tin rooster perches,
Over our little wooden northern houses,

Making sallies
From all the muddy alleys,

Marking out maps like Randy McNally's:

Glass-headed pins,
Oil-golds and copper greens,
Anthracite blues, alizarins,

Each one an active
Displacement in perspective:
Each screaming, "This is where I live!" (28-45)

In these early lines, Bishop describes how the rooster surrounds us throughout towns and cities; like maps, they ground us in the here and now of the moment and in time and space ("This is where I live!"); thus, the rooster helps us to have an intimate relationship to our spaces and communities. Bishop's lines that detail the rooster's "marking out maps like Randy McNally's" also indicates how a positive object is able to be transformed into a negative one, depending on how it is used and who uses it. Bishop writes:

Cries galore
Come from the water-closet door,
From the dropping-plastered henhouse floor,

Where in the blue blur
Their rustling wives admire,
The roosters brace their cruel feet and glare

With stupid eyes
While from their beaks there rise
The uncontrolled, traditional cries.

Deep from protruding chests
In green-gold medals dressed,
Planned to command and terrorize the rest,

The many wives
Who lead hens' lives
Of being courted and despised. (13-27)

The violence depicted here of the cockfight in these lines parallels the war violence of patriarchal culture; this is a violence that often seeps into civilian life. During the Second World War

especially it was a violence that drastically touched women and children more than any other war since that time. Finally, it is important to note that the speaker hears the sound of the rooster through the very structure of a house that allows the public world into the private one: “At four o’clock / in the gun-metal blue dark / we hear the first crow of the first cock // just below / the gun-metal blue window” (1-5). However, as Bishop explores the various cultural meanings of the rooster, she leaves us with a hopeful image. In lines 78-116, the central depiction of the rooster is that of Peter’s denial of Christ from chapter twenty-six and verse seventy-five of the Gospel of Matthew: “Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: ‘Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly.” Bishop provides us with the paradox of faith: although Peter denied Christ, it was his humanity that led to Christ’s forgiveness. Bishop was not religious; however, the symbolism of the rooster, weakness, reveals to us that we are able to find love and power in weakness, an apt contrast to militarism.

When the United States Navy began using Key West as a strategic location and base, it became less attractive and inspirational to Bishop: “I am rather depressed about Key West—and my house—just now [three weeks after the Pearl harbor attack]. The town is terribly overcrowded and noisy (at least on White Street) and not a bit like itself,” she wrote to her friend and fellow poet Marianne Moore in 1941 (*One Art* 104). And a year later, she said that “when the war is finally over, Key West will be more ruined than ever—nothing but a naval base and a bunch of bars and cheap apartments” (*One Art* 106). In fact, her very private space, the house she often shared with her then partner Louise Crane, she rented out to a navy couple (Roman 44). The intrusion of the military culture into her private sphere simply made Bishop more keenly aware of the dangers of militarism.

Using the image of a rooster to critique militarism proved useful for Bishop. In a later poem, she utilizes another cloaking mechanism for similar condemnation. Bishop's "From Trollope's Journal" is a poem that she began working on during her year in D.C. but published later than "A View from the Capitol" (Roman 134). She referred to the poem as her anti-Eisenhower poem (*One Art* 439). According to Camille Roman, using Anthony Trollope's Civil War-era journal allowed Bishop to take on his personae, hiding herself underneath Trollope's speaking voice to make public her uneasiness about nationalism (134-35). It was a fitting persona for Bishop; the famous Victorian novelist, an Englishman, was an outsider as he traveled throughout the United States during 1860-1861. As a lesbian, Bishop herself held an outsider status, especially while holding the Chair in the city of Washington, D.C. Using the metaphor of illness, Bishop's poem suggests that destructive nationalism seeps into every fiber of our lives, even into what we think of as our most private of spaces, the body. She opens the poem with the following description:

As far as statues go, so far there's not
much choice: they're either Washingtons
or Indians, a whitewashed, stubby lot,
his country's Father or His foster sons.
The White House in a sad, unhealthy spot
just higher than Potomac's swampy brim,
--they say the present President has got
ague or fever in each backwoods limb.
On Sunday afternoon I wandered—rather,
I floundered—out alone. The air was raw
and dark; the marsh half-ice, half-mud. This weather
is normal now: a frost, and then a thaw,
and then a frost. A hunting man, I found
the Pennsylvania Avenue heavy ground. . . (1-14)

As Bishop notes under her title, the journal entry is taken from 1861, as the country begins its war. Bishop's use of Trollope's geographical description makes evident the power the D.C. architecture had on her frame of mind while working in the Library of Congress. The landscape

and architecture is painted as ugly, dark, and menacing. Even the president's illness seems to be conflated with the geography itself. Bishop suggests the real disease is that of nationalism, represented in the architecture of the White House. Roman explains:

Bishop wrote in her journal of 1950 [that] she was accumulating a long list of grievances to indict militarism for poisoning "the air" of her poetic and private worlds in "From Trollope's Journal." But even during the more "open" political moment of the late 1950s and early 1960s, she chose the path of obliqueness rather than directness in the poem. The self-protective "version" of Bishop was obviously still editing her more political "versions" that sought a significant dialogue with the Cold War national narrative . . ." (134)

Her significant dialogue continues in the second half of the poem as Bishop suggests that the illness is not just found in the White House, but also is rooted in militarism:

There all around me in the ugly mud
--hoof-pocked, uncultivated—herds of cattle,
numberless, wond'ring steers and oxen, stood:
beef for the Army, after the next battle.
Their legs were caked the color of dried blood;
their horns were wreathed with fog. Poor, starving, dumb
or lowing creatures, never to chew the cud
or fill their maws again! Th'effluvium
made that damned anthrax on my forehead throb.
I called a surgeon in, a young man, but,
with a sore throat himself, he did his job.
We talked about the War, and as he cut
away, he croaked out, "Sir, I do declare
everyone's sick! The soldiers poison the air." (15-28)

The comparison of Civil War-era Washington to the Cold War-era Washington presents Bishop's concern for the less than democratic behavior occurring a mere few yards away from her Library of Congress office; the Dome overshadowing her workday is a reminder of the public encroachment on her private self, the window the only division between herself and that Cold War world.

Bishop understood though that a window, in terms of an ideal conception of privacy, was a structure that could be deceptive in one location and yet be transformed in another. In her poem

“Under the Window: Ouro Prêto,” the speaker observes and describes vivid town scenes from her window. Ouro Prêto is the town where the third of Bishop’s three loved houses was located (*One Art* 454, 462). An eighteenth-century town in the state of Minas Gerais, Ouro Prêto came to Bishop’s attention through her long time partner Lota Soares’ friend Lilli Correia de Araújo, a Danish widow of the famous painter Pedro Correia de Araújo. Bishop enjoyed the town so much that she traveled there often to spend time with Lilli and another friend, Ninita. The townspeople called them “the French ladies,” what Bishop’s biographer Brett C. Millier calls an “amused and tolerant recognition of their complex lesbian ménage (Millier 362). In fact, once Bishop decided to have her own house there, she renovated one, fell in love with it, and named it “Casa Mariana,” after her friend and poetry mentor Marianne Moore (Millier 418). The specter of lesbianism also circled around Moore, another female who was a bit reclusive, and Bishop always seemed to hold a slight infatuation with the poet, a little bit of a school girl crush. Naming the house then and framing it with Moore’s absent presence presents the structure and the window that is the central image of her poem, “Under the Window: Ouro Prêto,” in joyous light. In the poem, for instance, she uses lush and seductive language and images to describe the scene. She begins the poem with “food,” then moves on to describe a mother combing a daughter’s hair, and women in red dresses (lines 1-3). In the third and fifth stanzas she describes the drinking of cold water and the people drinking it “lovingly” (line 7, 15). A number of details in the poem, however, evoke the residents’ poverty. Like W.H. Auden, Bishop implies that joy is possible only through recognizing the reality of suffering.

Despite the repeated critical analysis of Bishop embodying an extreme notion of privacy, I would argue that Bishop does not suggest the triumph of the private as the answer to political and social matters. Suspicious of “the public,” Bishop acutely understood that “the public” is a

phantom. In his introduction to his edited collection *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Bruce Robbins explains that while the media, the government, and politicians attempt to construct “a general public” and suggest they are speaking for that public, they exclude others, especially marginalized groups and individuals like women, racial and ethnic minorities, and those who identify as LGBT. Robbins asks, “Who among us [then] is not justifiably suspicious of those who claim to speak in the public’s name?” (x). Derrida argues that “public opinion” is a specter, “present as such in none of the spaces” where it is argued to be located; this, however, does not mean we should sink into pessimism or, as Derrida says, that we “simply plead for plurality, dispersion, or fractioning. . . . For certain socio-economic forces might once again take advantage of these marginalizations and this absence of a general forum.” Instead, we must question, “How then to open the avenue of great debates, accessible to the majority, while yet enriching the multiplicity and the quality of public discourses, of evaluating agencies, of ‘scenes’ or places of visibility?” (qtd. in Robbins xii). I argue that in her poetry, Bishop very much evaluates agency and places of visibility in order to interrogate the boundary between public and private and the values exhibited by a Cold War “general public.” In fact, the very act of *publication* resulted in Bishop’s entry into the public sphere. Bishop blurred the division between public and private through this act. Although Bishop uses a poetic indirection to write about lesbian relationships and to critique Cold War culture, I argue she uses a language of intimacy in her poetry that is a direct contrast to the political rhetoric of harshness and fear perpetrated within the Cold War “public” sphere.

Bishop’s poetry is easy to dismiss as imparting observational imagery that is void of the personal because of her use of indirection; however, intimacy is not always found in the personal but can also be located in the reader’s understanding of the poet’s objective correlative. The

personal may not be Bishop's private life but the connection with the reader. Bishop makes this intimacy clear in "Poem." Significantly, she uses the image of a house (the ultimate symbol of intimacy) to make her point. She describes a house from Nova Scotia that appears in a painting (painting is used to stand in for poetry and all art in the poem) and writes of an uncle she never met who once owned the painting:

I never knew him. We both knew this place,
apparently, this literal small backwater,
looked at it long enough to memorize it,
our years apart. How strange. And it's still loved,
or its memory is (it must have changed a lot).
Our visions coincided—'vision' is
too serious a word—our looks, two looks:
art 'copying from life' and life itself,
life and the memory of it so compressed
they've turned into each. Which is which?" (45-54)

Art lies in the realm of the uncanny through its ability to touch the writer and reader across time and space. The image has meaning for me, and the image has meaning for the writer. According to Victoria Harrison's *Elizabeth Bishop's Poetics of Intimacy*, intimacy is also found in what she calls Bishop's "localism," "her attention to the ordinary, daily emotions and conversations among subjects" (6). Not only then is there an intense connection between reader and writer but the connection becomes: writer-subject-reader-writer. This touching is an intimate act that would be stereotypically defined as feminine, and it is found in a text that Michael Warner would call a counterpublic, which is formed, he says, "by [the counterpublic's] conflict with the norms and contexts of their cultural environment" (63).

In the discourse surrounding the interrogation of the public sphere, utopian thought is an analytical tool that reveals the spectral nature of an all inclusive ideal public. Robbins ends his introduction to the edited collection by saying that "it is hard to find grounds for optimism about the immediate possibilities for a democratic publicity—this is perhaps the best note to sound in

conclusion: the public sphere is an unfulfilled task—in Homi Bhabha’s words, a ‘conversation we have to open up,’ which would be one step toward the still more utopian goal of forging a community that would take ‘the complex, often incommensurable fate of [those excluded from the sphere] as the basis for a redefinition . . .’” (xxiv). Although Robbins and the other essayists in his collection never mention him, we are led back to Ernst Bloch and his utopian theory.

Although Robbins argues that “it is hard to find grounds for optimism,” his use of “possibilities,” “optimism,” and “an unfulfilled task” point to hope for the future. If Bloch’s not yet Utopia offers evidence that Utopia is actually on the horizon, then Robbins’ description of an inclusive public sphere as “an unfulfilled task” parallels Bloch’s theory; a window does not shatter but is gently unlatched and opened up through an individual’s powerful choice.

Bishop’s poetry and letters direct us to this important point: Utopia would mean a choice about what should remain private and what could be made public, and the choice should not have to be based on a superior/inferior power dynamic. In 1972, through their correspondence, poets Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell debated what critics see as their disagreement over confessional poetry. Although Bishop does say she “deplore[s] the ‘confessional’” (*Words in Air* 708), recent critics have pointed out, rightly so, that Bishop is not such a private poet as originally imagined, especially if one considers her poetic friendship with Lowell. For example, in *Midcentury Quartet*, Thomas Travisano argues, “Indeed, the confessional model is of little use, and is often a downright hindrance, to a conscientious analyst faced with a massive array of published and unpublished data—letters, annotated manuscripts, workbooks, reviews, and extraordinary persistence of that intricate and unofficial, yet powerful and enduring web of links that joined Bishop and [Randal] Jarrell to Lowell and [John] Berryman in a private literary circle” (38).

However, Bishop admonished Lowell for his use of his then ex-wife Elizabeth Hardwick's letters in his collection *The Dolphin*. At the time, Bishop was at work on her own collection, *Geography III*. Both collections were published around the same time, Lowell's in 1973 and Bishop's a mere three years later, in 1976. Three seemingly competing tropes occur through these two collections; both poets' collections carry the image of geography and space (landscape and more artificial spaces like architecture) throughout the poems, loss and loneliness, and the difficulty of negotiating the private and public. These tropes, however, do not appear competing if the historical context of their writing is taken into consideration. In 1973, the Supreme Court would rule in *Roe v. Wade* that privacy extended 'toward individual autonomy'" (Nelson 113). Scholar Deborah Nelson argues that this decision was the culmination of a series of landmark cases (*Terry v. Ohio*, *Katz v. U.S.*, *Loving v. Virginia*, and *Eisenstadt v. Baird*) that moved "the privileged space of the marital bedroom, [decided in *Griswold v. Connecticut*], to the world outside the home" (112).

The trope of geography and space, for both Bishop and Lowell, becomes not just a metaphor paralleling the limits of space, but a literal representation of the private and public, and the blurred boundaries between the two. "Is loss ever truly private?" they both ask. Their answer is no. However, the difference, especially during the Cold War, is that Bishop comes to this conclusion from an outsider status (as a lesbian) and Lowell as an insider (a white, heterosexual male). The master trope for this notion of private and public in both collections is poetry itself. In *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard maintains that poetry is a metaphor for shelter and says, "The house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace" (qtd. in Biele 55). He goes on to say, "The house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (qtd. in Biele 55). Of course, what stands apart and

away from a house then constitutes instability, and Eve Sedgwick would argue that such illusions of stability actually reveal to us instabilities, calling for “unknotting[s]” (60) of meaning of such “double binds” (70). Both Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell in these two collections perform such an unknotting of private/public and stability/instability; this illustrates the anxiety over privacy during the Cold War era.

In Bishop’s “Crusoe in England,” for example, Crusoe says, “I used to sit on the edge of the highest [volcano] and count the others standing up, / naked and leaden, with their heads blown off. / I’d think that if they were the size / I thought volcanoes should be, then I had / become a giant . . .” (lines 15-19). The landscape is epic in scope; however, Crusoe notes that his point of view may not be accurate. Bishop’s commentary here is on poetry as mimesis: for a viewer’s (or poet’s) reality is never the true reality because of point of view. Landscape then is a metaphor for truth and fiction in poetry. Landscape is an apt metaphor here. According to Susan McCabe, “geography . . . is a writing of the earth” (221). Bishop opens *Geography III* with two lessons from Monteith’s 1884 Geographical Series as epigraphs. The map is a trope Bishop used throughout her poetic career: Her poem “The Map” opened her first collection, *North & South*. McCabe argues, “Maps should orient us, but as ‘The Map’ early on disclosed, mapping is an artistic, subjective affair: We lose all direction and grounding in its flat surface” (222). Space then is subjective as well: one’s private space may be one’s public space and vice versa. Bishop implies the line between the two is recreated and dependent upon subjectivity.

In “Crusoe in England,” landscape though is also a meditation on what happens when one is left too much alone within private space:

The island smelled of goat and guano.
The goats were white, so were the gulls,
and both too tame, or else they thought
I was a goat, too, or a gull.

*Baa, baa, baa and shriek, shriek, shriek,
Baa . . . shriek . . . baa . . .* I still can't shake
them from my ears; they're hurting now.
The questioning shrieks, the equivocal replies
over a ground of hissing rain
and hissing, ambulating, turtles
got on my nerves. (lines 100-110)

Stranded, Crusoe is immersed in his own private space; the public world is absent, despite the vastness of the world of the island. Madness takes over; the landscape images usually associated with natural beauty begin to unnerve him. Bishop details the contradiction within privacy in this poem as it relates to landscape, which is often used as an escape. Privacy is very much wanted and needed; however, loneliness can take over. Bishop has Crusoe say:

I often gave way to self-pity.
“Do I deserve this? I suppose I must.
I wouldn't be here otherwise. Was there
a moment when I actually chose this?
I don't remember, but there could have been.”
What's wrong about self-pity, anyway?
With my legs dangling down familiarly over a crater's edge, I told myself
“Pity should begin at home.” So the more
pity I felt, the more I felt at home. (lines 55-64)

Bishop shows in these lines the contradictory impulse within the mind: we love the solitude that such loneliness is able to bring; however, loneliness leads to self-pity. Despite the fact that he is far away from home, self-pity has reached him even on the deserted island. McCabe says, “Sense of Place is relative to perspective: as Crusoes, we must design our own maps. While we attempt to define the self in terms of remembered place, Bishop reminds us that our constructions are artificial. *Geography III* gives us a new primer where each direction or island must be renamed, yet resists nameability” (222). Furthermore, this being alone in a space is carried through other Bishop works; in particular, imagination and the writing life are used to showcase the paradoxical aspects of space.

According to Margaret Dickie, in *Stein, Bishop, and Rich: Lyrics of Love, War, and Peace*, Bishop was concerned about the failure of art to represent the world accurately; however, she began to consider how “books and by extension poems arrange and disarrange any understanding of the world derived from direct experience or travels” (127). Like the way continents, nations, islands, and states come together to form one large map, the elements within a poem construct a particular world view through the poetic speaker’s observations and through the selection of detail (127). Art parallels a map of the world, and just as Bishop criticized the redrawing of boundaries after war as a patriarchal construction that affected the daily lives of human beings, Bishop’s argument with Lowell over confessional poetry reveals another ethical concern, this time about poetic selection. Furthermore, Bishop used the metaphor of mapping to refer to various modes of geography, not only the geography of the poem, but also the body (127). In her poetry, Bishop builds worlds in an effort to ground herself in space.

Place-making, according to anthropologist Keith Basso in *Western Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apaches*, is “retrospective world-building.” Basso describes how, when a place is named and located within a narrative, memory of the place is called forth. A memory that is particular to the speaker or teller is not just called forth but the entire history of that place, and every event that the landscape experienced is made present yet again. Basso argues, “What people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and inhabitants of the earth . . . We *are* in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine (5-7). The notion of place, particularly dwelling, has already a lengthy history within twentieth-century thought. One of the foremost pieces of philosophy written about what it means to dwell is Martin Heidegger’s “Building Dwelling Thinking,” a lecture given in

1951 and that appeared in his *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Exploring what it means to dwell in a specific location became a primary concern of Bishop's.

In 1952, Bishop visited Brazil for the first time. The beginning of her experience in the country was not pleasant. She had an allergic reaction to the fruit of the cashew, and her body swelled; the result was her immediate dislike for the country. Although Bishop's body was transformed, she soon returned to health. After this bodily renewal, Bishop had a different feeling (*One Art* 249). She wrote in a letter, "I like [Brazil] so much that I keep thinking I have died and gone to heaven, completely undeservedly. My New England blood tells me that no, it isn't true. Escape does not work; if you really are happy you should just naturally go to pieces and never write a line—but apparently that—and most psychological theories on the subject, too—is all wrong (*One Art* 249). For Bishop, Brazil became the ultimate site for place-making.

Throughout Bishop's poetry, the Brazilian landscape is used as a metaphor for the body. In particular, Bishop's use of mapping often was related to colonialism and the destructive forces that not only transformed the land but the human body as well. For instance, in "Brazil, January 1, 1502," Bishop details the conquest with a poem that uses rich, lush details to describe the landscape. Near the end of the poem, however, the poem's mood turns as the speaker begins to use sexualized language:

The lizards scarcely breathe: all eyes
are on the smaller, female one, back-to,
her wicked tail straight up and over,
red as a red-hot wire.

Just so the Christians, hard as nails,
tiny as nails, and glinting,
in creaking armor, came and found it all,
not unfamiliar:
no lovers' walks, no bowers,
no cherries to be picked, no lute music,
but corresponding, nevertheless,

to an old dream of wealth and luxury
already out of style when they left home—
wealth, plus a brand-new pleasure.
Directly after Mass, humming perhaps
L'Homme armé or some such tune,
they ripped away into the hanging fabric,
each out to catch an Indian for himself—
those maddening little women who kept calling,
calling to each other (or had the birds waked up?)
and retreating, always retreating, behind it. (33-53)

The lizard represents female power and sexuality, and Bishop paints the imagery in a way so that the reader is implicated in the harmful gaze (“all eyes / are on . . . the female one”). The next stanza builds on this idea, and the description takes the gaze one step further by revealing how that colonial gaze results in the marginalization of “the other,” (both ethnic and female). That marginalization then becomes violent and highly alarming; the result is not just the rape of the land, but the rape of the female body. The concern Bishop presents is not just in the past. For instance, in *Inscrutable Houses: Metaphors of the Body in the Poems of Elizabeth Bishop*, Anne Colwell notes, “The irony of the soldiers heading straight from Mass to catch themselves Indian women is not lost, but, as readers, our own dreams and desires for a better life, for connection, our own questions of travel, place us all in complicity with the soldiers” (142). Although Bishop was also in search of a better life through her travels, she formulates here an ethics that forces her, and us, to question our own actions. Although the historical time frame described in the poem takes place in 1502, the implication is that the colonial gaze haunts the then present and will continue to haunt in the future. For example, *Life Magazine's* World Library Series commissioned her to write the text for their volume on Brazil. While the volume is filled with beautiful, scenic photographs, Bishop manages to say in the text, “Eventually, barring some world-wide disaster, Brazil, with its ample resources and raw materials, is going to push and be pushed into industrialization. There can be no doubt that it will one day emerge as a major world

power. The question is, what kind of men will be running the country then, and what kind of a country will it be?" (148). Place-making can be negative, or it can be positive.

In her poetry, Bishop articulates that the difference between negativity and positivity is centered on the gaze. She returns again and again to the trope of seeing and being seen. In the above poem, the trope becomes intertwined with the question of utopian ideals. The final stanza implies the colonial gaze resulted in a conception of Utopia that built a world through an ideal that refused to consider other maps (other subjectivities). Like Auden, Bishop's poetry constructs an ethics of seeing. What the colonial gaze sees is equated with what the viewer believes he can control and own. Instead, Bishop's poetry, letters, and paintings indicate that Utopia is able to be found not in an idealized vision, but through the daily actions and interactions between individuals, especially those working to forge communal space.

When Bishop was ill from her allergic reaction to the fruit of the cashew, she was nursed back to health by Lota Macedo Soares, whom she met in New York in 1942, and their relationship developed quickly. Bishop was asked to live with Soares in the house she was building in the mountains above Petrópolis, two hours from Rio de Janeiro. In a letter to Robert Lowell, Bishop wrote:

She is building an ultramodern house up on the side of a black granite mountain, with a waterfall at one end, clouds coming into the living room in the middle of the conversation, etc. The house is unfinished and we are using oil-lamps, no floors—just cement covered with dogs' footprints. The "family" has consisted of another American girl, also a N.Y. friend of mine, 2 Polish counts for a while, the architect over week-ends etc., all a strange tri- or quadric-lingual hodgepodge that I like very much. After a couple of weeks of rain . . . the cook left, and for about a month I did the cooking. I like to cook, etc., but I'm not used to being confronted with the raw materials, all un-shelled, unblanched, un-skinned, or un-dead. Well, I can cook goat now—with wine sauce. And we have a new cook, from the "north" (the "north" is regarded a little the way we regard the "south") who came armed with a gigantic chromium crucifix. She "loves nature," so we hope she'll stay. She loves it so much though that when you want her she's usually out gathering flowers up on the mountain. (*Words in Air* 134)

The description here shows Bishop constructing a habitat that encompasses powerful human connections through domesticity. Bishop too takes pains to describe the housing and goings-on with specific details that are just as lush as the landscape. The unknown, the strangeness of a country that was very new to her, allowed Bishop the privacy that would lead to love and an even stronger imagination. While the domestic sphere is often used to exclude women from the public sphere, Bishop describes a space that is transformed from traditional patriarchal conceptions into a space that is matriarchal. She uses “family” in quotation marks because she is very much aware that her family does not match the image of the Cold War nuclear family; the space in Brazil redefines family home life. In “Brazil, January 1, 1502,” she opens with an epigraph from Sir Kenneth Clark’s *Landscape into Art*: “. . . embroidered nature . . . tapestried landscape,” a comment on the way we tend to transform the natural world into our constructed, ideal dwellings. Indeed, Bishop wanted to create and dwell in a place that would make the phrase “domestic bliss” matter to not just those living in a nuclear family but for her as well. Like Auden, it was important, however, that her dwelling take ethics into consideration.

Deborah Nelson, in her analysis of privacy in the Cold War, argues, “The home is considerably more than a structure or a piece of property; it is instead a central political and formal metaphor of what it means to be private, the most common metaphor of privacy in the cold war” [*sic*] (75). The home then, typically seen as the place where one retreats in order to secure time alone, is instead complicated during the Cold War; the home is, like Eve Sedgwick’s notion of the closet, neither private nor public. The closet is, of course, only one small structural element within a house; however, during the Cold War, the closet is “marked with the historical specificity of homosocial/homosexual definition” (Sedgwick 72). I would argue that the house in its entirety, closet and all, can be seen as similarly marked during this time period. Sedgwick

claims, “Gay thinkers of this century have . . . never been blind to the damaging contradictions of this compromised metaphor of *in* and *out* of the closet of privacy” (72). Indeed, Bishop uses the image of the house as a metaphor for both the body and poetry and the imagination, implying that it is only through the act of writing and the use of the imagination where an individual can ever feel free from those contradictions embedded in the social fabric of Cold War society.

Bishop’s “The End of March” was written in 1974 after a summer stay in a house owned by her friends John Malcolm Brinnin and his partner Bill Read (*Words in Air* 767). Once published, she dedicated the poem to them. With this dedication tucked under the title, the poem is then framed by homosocial/homosexual desire. She says of the house, “I wanted to get as far as my proto-dream-house, / my crypto-dream-house, that crooked box / set up on pilings, shingled green, / a sort of artichoke of a house, but greener / (boiled with bicarbonate of soda?), / protected from spring tides by a palisade / of—are they railroad ties? / (Many things about this place are dubious.)” (lines 24-31). As most of Bishop’s imagery, the description is precisely accurate, as she makes clear in a letter to Robert Lowell: “John B was so appalled when I said I wanted that ugly little green shack for my summer home! (He doesn’t share my taste for the awful, I’m afraid.)” (*Words in Air* 767). Bishop’s idea of dwellings, her blue prints for utopian practice in the daily life, never included a stereotypical notion of beauty. In fact, she seems to have been fascinated with unusual living spaces. In an early prose piece, “To the Botequim & Back,” an essay written about Ouro Prêto, she writes:

About a mile above the city, up a winding steep dirt road, you reach a high plateau. On the way you pass two small chapels in the distance, Our Lady of the Safe Delivery and Santa Ana. Up through Burnt Hill, past steep fields full of ruins. After two hundred years, a few ruins have turned back into houses again: one very small one, just four standing walls with openings for a door and window, now has a roof of tarpaulin, weighted with stones. It is hard to see how anyone lives in it, but a few hens scratch around the door and there’s some washing spread out over the tops of the nearest weeds.

The tiniest house of all, mud brick, wattles showing through stands against a magnificent view, overlooking a drop of a thousand feet or so, one end of the house emerging into a small and very old bus body. The windows and door of the bus are all faded green, with a black rounded roof. Whether the house is an extension of the bus, or the bus the “new wing” of the house, is a hideous little riddle against a majestic backdrop. But someone lives here! (*Collected Prose* 78)

In the first paragraph, Bishop’s enthrallment with living space rests with the history and longevity of the area. The word “ruin” does not mean utter destruction; instead, individuals have been able to transform the “ruin” into a habitat. Although the image of poverty is important to note, Bishop suggests that even in terrible circumstances humans have a way of fashioning homes. This is also demonstrated in the poem discussed earlier, “Under the Window: Ouro Prêto.” Furthermore, “ruin” parallels the imagery in the second paragraph. Like in her letter to Lowell about her taste for the awful, Bishop finds the mud shack/bus house “hideous.” The view, however, transforms the space. Similar to the inner workings of a poem, the house is only one element in a larger space, and Bishop implies the majestic view would not have the same effect without the contrast of the house. What is especially significant here is Bishop’s exclamatory statement, “But someone lives here!” It is not the house’s aesthetics that make a space a dwelling; instead, the people living within the space are more important. The social and communal function of spaces is a trope that Bishop carries throughout the majority of her art.

What is most interesting too about the imagery of Bishop’s green shack in “The End of March” is the way such a “dubious” space, while painted aesthetically unpleasing to the eye, is a haven. This is what makes the house “dubious,” in fact—it is a structure that is neither stable nor unstable. Dubious too because of the homosocial/homosexual framework Bishop sets up with her dedication, and because, according to a letter to Lowell, Bishop stayed in the house with her later partner, Alice Methfessel (*Words in Air* 765). While Nelson argues that “categories of citizens—women or homosexuals . . . were banished to the deprivation, rather than the liberation, of

privacy” (xiii), Sedgwick claims no one is ever truly *in* or *out* of the closet, and we see this working throughout Bishop’s poem. The dedication is a public disclosure of homosexual desire, while the architecture of the green shack, its instability (“crooked box” i.e., not straight), at the same time shelters, but seems as if any moment it could be swept out to sea.

The historical context of the Supreme Court’s landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision is significant to an understanding of Bishop’s “The End of March.” Bishop parallels this shift from the home to that of the body in Cold War culture. The home shelters the body from the outside world, but before *Roe v. Wade*, doctors and medical boards held control over a woman’s body so that even within the architecture of the house, the body could be under surveillance. But, in “The End of March,” Bishop turns this surveillance on its head. In the third stanza, the speaker longs to be within the green shack, staring out through binoculars (line 34).

In Bishop’s “The End of March,” once inside the house, the speaker says she wants “to retire there and do *nothing*, / or nothing much, forever, in two bare rooms: / look through binoculars, read boring books / old, long, long books, and write down useless notes, / talk to myself, and foggy days, / watch the droplets slipping, heavy with light” (lines 32- 37). The stability here for the speaker, the retreat into the imagination, is attainable. Or is it? Bishop writes, “A light to read by—perfect! But—impossible” (line 48). In a recent issue of *American Poetry Review*, poet Joelle Biele, in an adept analysis of this poem, details Bishop’s use of the following from Kierkegaard: “Poetry is illusion before knowledge; religion is illusion after knowledge. Between poetry & religion the worldly wisdom of living plays its comedy. Every individual who does not live either poetically or religiously is a fool.” Bishop jotted the quote down in one of her notebooks early in her career, and she later asked her students at Harvard to consider the alternatives presented by Kierkegaard on a final exam. Biele argues, “Bishop was

not one to choose between alternatives. Instead, she places the worldly wisdom of living in the pause and turn of the mind” (60).

This retreat into the self/into the house does suggest secrecy, a hiding away from the world, and Sedgwick argues that by the eighteenth century, secrecy had come to represent “sexual secrets” (73). Bishop, however, realizes she can never avoid the Cold War scrutiny. Biele argues, “Bishop knew that the possibility for her desires to be realized were, in her own word, dubious” (55). This withdrawal into the self makes one feel whole and complete and this provides pleasure, a pleasure found in the right to be lonely during an age of anxiety that argues for inclusion in every fabric of life out of fear of destruction. Poet Denise Riley says, “This right to be lonely may serve to interrogate the diction of belonging. For do we *want* this social inclusion? . . . the impulse to inclusion . . . runs a circuit of envy in all agitation about who or what is in, and who and what is not. With such jealousy any drive for greater social inclusion is as driven as any society gossip column—while one unhappy by-product of striving for enlarged acceptability is to push the resulting residue of everyone else further into the backwoods of an unspeakable deviancy” (50). The house, then, if neither public nor private, represents, for Bishop, the complexity of the contradictions within Cold War culture. The only place where one can be free of such contradictions, according to Bishop, is through poetry and the imagination.

This retreat into the world of the imagination is symbolized by the green shack; it also symbolizes the anxiety over the failure of human connection and a fear of loss. In fact, one central trope in “The End of March” is the ghostly figure: “a thick white snarl, man-size, awash, / rising on every wave, a sodden ghost, / falling back, sodden, giving up the ghost . . .” (20-22). Colwell explains that in a draft of the poem Bishop had written “a ghost / giving up the ghost,” and in the margins, attempting to work through the ghostly imagery, “a drowned ghost” and

“ghost of a drowned man.” Colwell argues that Bishop’s lines “embodies both the feeling of loss or absence, even uncertainty, and a strange suggestion of weary freedom, a giving up of something too sodden to carry around, like a ghost ‘giving up the ghost’ . . . there is no longer any need to search for connection or answers because nothing can be resolved, because ending does not bring with it resolution” (187-188). Near the end of this project the poet has brought us back to the dead figure(s) remaining with us, the beach, the vanishing and reappearance of foot prints in the wet sand. Without meaning to, Bishop has returned us to Muñoz’s argument that the ghostly figure reminds us how we carry our dead with us into battle; she has returned us to Hart Crane’s sea, Frank O’Hara’s death, and W.H. Auden on Fire Island and his demand for more definitions of pleasure. Muñoz argues the ghostly figure’s “space of emptiness is meant to make room for other worlds of sexual possibility” (42). The figure reminds us to not settle for the present (28).

Bishop always seemed to believe that the world of the imagination was the safest place to reside; the irony, however, is that same space can be a prison. According to her biographer Brett C. Millier, Bishop wrote a short story in 1938 that very much uncovers her desire for solitary confinement. Bishop sent the short story, “In Prison,” to the *Partisan Review*, where it won the journal’s one-hundred –dollar prize and appeared in the March issue (137). Narrated by a male would-be writer who craves the confinement of a prison cell, the story, according to Millier, expresses Bishop’s own desire in “choosing necessity over infinite choice” (135). The prisoner reduces every element in his life, most importantly books and writing space. As a young writer in 1938, the story reflects Bishop’s “ambition and anxiety” about the fear of failure as a writer, Millier points out (135). Millier adds:

The view from the window of [the narrator’s] cell, he insists, must be appropriately confined and suggestive, and here Elizabeth lifts a passage almost

verbatim from her travel notebook account of her visit with Louise [Crane] to the Asylum of the Mausoleum, to the cell where Van Gogh was confined. 'I can still see as clearly as in a photograph the beautiful completeness of the view from that window: the shaven fields, the black cypress, and the group of swallows posed dipping in the gray sky—only the fields have retained their faded color.' But, [the narrator] says, 'I do not feel that what is suited to an asylum is necessarily suited to a prison. (135)

The absence of a window would create the illusion of even less space. What are readers to make of Bishop's seemingly contradictory impulses? Her travels and movements, especially to Brazil, seem to indicate a desperate desire for more space and better spaces for living. Her open window in Ouro Prêto reveals a speaker (an individual) who is hopeful about allowing the outside world to seep into her own private space. In many of her poems, Bishop's speakers seem acutely aware and anxious about being scrutinized. Despite all this, the prisoner in the above story is one with the smallest of spaces and who is under constant surveillance. What would it mean to say that to make *less* room became, for Bishop, a way to make, in Muñoz's words, more room for possibility? Confined in such a small space, the prisoner must rely purely on the imagination. As "The End of March" makes clear, the imagination is the ultimate space for more possibility. To make this statement is the absolute piece of evidence that Bishop's poetry presents utopian possibility. With Bishop's imaginative powers spread before us on the page, we are witness to utopian practice. To come back to Colwell's phrase, what was it about larger spaces/rooms that resulted in "weary freedom" and what was it in those larger rooms that Bishop needed to "giv[e] up" that was "too sodden to carry around"? What were the forces that led to the imagination as the site for utopian possibility?

In *Exchanging Hats*, William Benton's edited collection of Bishop's paintings, the fifth painting reproduced in the book is of a sleeping figure on a bed. Although the painting is undated, the figure, according to Benton, is Louise Crane, one of Bishop's earliest partners. The

composition of the painting is one of extreme intimacy. On the 8 ½ x 5 ½ paper, the bed takes up the majority of the painting's surface. A window appears above the bed, and Bishop has also painted about a half of an inch of the wall. A chair sits off to the side, cut in half by the painter's perspective. The figure of Crane sleeps with her hands folded together on her chest while a book sits off to the side on the bed. Bishop's scaling seems to be slightly off: the bed is huge in comparison to the sleeping partner. Unpublished poems "Foreign-Domestic" and "A Lovely Finish" also portray her later partner, Soares, reclining with a mystery book or waking up in the morning (Roman 14). On the surface, it would appear as if the bedroom was the only space where intimate moments could occur between homosexual partners during the Cold War; however, it is important to note that these moments are frozen in time. Bishop's artistic renderings (visual and literary) cling to the experienced intimacy.

Bishop's poetry continually attempted to create new spaces, imagined anew from previous negative spaces. In her poem "Sestina," which appeared in the 1965 collection *Questions of Travel*, Bishop produces a childhood memory:

September rain falls on the house,
in the failing light, the old grandmother
sits in the kitchen with the child
beside the Little Marvel Stove,
reading the jokes from the almanac,
laughing and talking to hide her tears.

She thinks that her equinoctial tears
and the rain that beats on the roof of the house
were both foretold by the almanac,
but only known to grandmother.
The iron kettle sings on the stove.
She cuts some bread and says to the child,

it's time for tea now; but the child
is watching the teakettle's small hard tears
dance like mad on the hot black stove
the way the rain must dance on the house.

Tidying up, the old grandmother
hangs up the clever almanac

on its string. Birdlike, the almanac
hovers half open above the child,
and her teacup full of dark brown tears.
She shivers and says she thinks the house
feels chilly, and puts more wood in the stove.

It was to be, says the Marvel Stove.
I know what I know, says the almanac.
With crayons the child draws a rigid house
and a winding pathway. Then the child
puts in a man with buttons like tears
and shows it proudly to the grandmother.

But secretly, while the grandmother
busies herself about the stove,
the little moons fall down like tears
from between the pages of the almanac
into the flower bed the child
has carefully placed in the front of the house.

Time to plant tears, says the almanac.
The grandmother sings to the marvelous stove
and the child draws another inscrutable house. (1-39)

The space of the kitchen here does not follow any nuclear family ideology; in contrast, the scene is one of a matriarchal atmosphere, and the images that stand out are laughing, reading, and coloring; however, the “tears” and the absent mother and father demonstrate how Bishop also associated the domestic space with loss. The crayon constructed dwelling within the poetic structure of the sestina (the poetic form a parallel to the kitchen space) symbolizes the desire for a domestic life that is not filled with sadness. The final line, “And the child draws another inscrutable house,” indicates the continual wish. This is also emphasized in the sestina’s formal requirements of repetition.

The images found in a kitchen, such as the stove and tables, are ones that Bishop repeated over and over again throughout her art. It is as if she spent her life revising the childhood kitchen

scene in a desperate attempt to modify the domestic space into one of joy and hope. In a short story that is also autobiographically based, “In the Village,” Bishop writes, “This morning it is brilliant and cool. My grandmother and I are alone again in the kitchen. We are talking. She says it is cool enough to keep the oven going, to bake the bread, to roast a leg of lamb” (*Collected Prose* 260). Bishop’s “again,” her repetition of this moment with the grandmother, is not fixed in nostalgia. Instead, the look backward allows her to look forward. Moreover, two of Bishop’s paintings focus on tables covered with cloth and flowers, presumably in kitchens (*Exchanging Hats* 15, 59), and another two are detailed paintings of stoves (*Exchanging Hats* 65, 67).

Throughout his *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Muñoz argues that utopian possibility does not merely lie in happiness but “all sorts of bad feelings, moments of silence and brittleness” allow us to see and understand “beyond [that] void” that stands between people and that results in miscommunication and misunderstanding (14). Utopian possibility is found in the movement from the sadness of the childhood memory to these later imaginings.

Bishop’s descriptions of houses and rooms lie in the realm of utopian possibility. Poetry, if published in book form, stands a strong chance of remaining. Bishop’s description of the writing desk’s space, because of its connection to the imagination, then serves as the most hopeful utopian space. In one of her paintings, “Interior with Extension Cord,” her writing desk is painted to the right side, taking up the corner space of the painting. In the opposite corner, Bishop has replicated a full-length mirror and a type of cabinet. The focal point of the painting is the open door that is beside Bishop’s writing desk stool. Bishop has placed a colorful garden that fills the entire space of the door. The majority of the painting is white: the wall and ceiling make up the bulk of the painting and the cabinet is white as well as the bottom half of the desk. The garden contains green, white, and blue coloring. The only other colors are brown (the outline of

the mirror, the stool, and the top of the writing desk) and just a spot of yellow (a lamp that rests on top of the desk). Using a dark brown, Bishop has painted a small pot of ink and a fountain pen next to the lamp (*Exchanging Hats* 43). The coloring is interesting because the darkest brown is of the desk, drawing in the reader's view to that point; however, the desk competes with the garden framed by the door. The private world of the imagination and the world outside the house co-exists side-by-side. However, Bishop has chosen the outside world as a natural world. That Bishop chose to fill the entire view of the door with the garden signals an almost anxious drawing in of a world of her choice, not the public world that would seem to encroach.

This is emphasized again in her Vietnam War-era poem "12 O'Clock News." This poem shows that even at the writing desk the outside world forces itself into our private spaces. Consisting of eight stanzas, the poem imitates a news commentator-speaker: "A slight landslide occurred in the northwest about / an hour ago. The exposed soil appears to be of poor / quality: almost white, calcareous, and shaly. There / are believed to have been no casualties" (14-17). The poem is written in two columns, with each stanza labeled with a piece from her writing desk: gooseneck lamp, typewriter, pile of mss., typed sheet, envelopes, ink-bottle, typewriter eraser, and ashtray." The poem's structure then formally showcases the anxiety over the public world's infringement on the imagination. Also, Bishop returns us to the question of view and geography:

From our superior vantage point, we can clearly see into a sort of dugout, possibly a shell crater, a "nest" of soldiers. They lie heaped together, wearing the camouflage "battle dress" intended for "winter warfare." They are in hideously contorted positions, all dead. We can make out at least eight bodies. These uniforms were designed to be used in guerrilla warfare on the country's snow-cover mountain peak. The fact that these poor soldiers are wearing them here, on the plain, gives further proof, if proof were necessary, either of the childishness and hopeless impracticality of this inscrutable

people, our opponents, or of the sad corruption of their leaders. (52-65)

In Camille Roman's analysis of this poem, she notes that "the Vietnam conflict's military-political discourse of quagmire dominates the poem," and that this enabled Americans to put distance between themselves and those who were suffering. This, however, was "self-deception and cover-up" (147). I would add that by noting the "vantage point," Bishop also observes the complexity of the connection between viewing and secrecy. Again, what we see may not always be the truth, and the truth may not always be what we see. The use of geography, whether landscape or "the geography of a house," as Auden called it, was always the best method for Bishop to make this point. During this time in her life, she also found that geography was tied to death and loss.

Bishop found her own place-making becoming unraveled because of loss. In Bishop's *Geography III*, the landscapes in all the poems are linked to such loss; Bishop's collection is framed by the loss of her long time partner Lota de Macedo Soares, who committed suicide in 1967. The landscape can bring love: Bishop met Soares when she traveled to Brazil. Or it can bring loss: When Bishop returned to the United States, Soares followed, committing suicide soon after her arrival. This parallel of places to death is found most prominently in "One Art," the sixth poem in the collection. The speaker claims, "So many things seem filled with the intent / to be lost that their loss is no disaster" (lines 2-3). The loss of Soares is paralleled to "two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster, / some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent" (lines 13-15). She continues by saying, "—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture / I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident / the art of losing's not too hard to master / though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster" (16-19). The restrained tone allows the reader to realize there is no comparison; the loss of love is the greatest disaster, and the speaker is attempting to bring forth the loved one by the

act of writing “(Write it!).” As Muñoz notes in his analysis of the poem, “The poet is inviting us to do more than simply accept this loss but to embrace it and perhaps even to understand it not as loss but as something else” (71). He adds that “although we cannot simply conserve a person or a performance through documentation, we can perhaps begin to summon up, through the auspices of memory, the acts and gestures that meant so much to us” (71-72). The utopian possibility in such loss is located in the memory and the ability to hold on to the loss while moving forward into the horizon of a possible queer utopia.

At the conclusion of Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Bishop is again provided to showcase the “rhythm of cross-temporal comparison” of utopian possibility: Bishop’s “Invitation to Miss Marianne Moore,” written for her friend and mentor who lived in Brooklyn. I also offer it here at the end because it brings us full-circle to the hopeful queer image of the Brooklyn Bridge:

From Brooklyn, over the Brooklyn Bridge, on this fine morning,
please come flying.

 In a cloud of fiery pale chemicals,
 please come flying,
to the rapid rolling of thousands of small blue drums
descending out of the mackerel sky
over the glittering grandstand of harbor-water,
 please come flying.

Whistles, pennants and smoke are blowing. The ships
are signaling cordially with multitudes of flags
rising and falling like birds all over the harbor.
Enter: two rivers, gracefully bearing
countless little pellucid jellies
in cut-glass epergnes dragging with silver chains.
The flight is safe; the weather is all arranged.
The waves are running in verses this fine morning.
 Please come flying.

Come with the pointed toe of each black shoe
trailing a sapphire highlight,
with a black capeful of butterfly wings and bon-mots,

with heaven knows how many angels all riding
on the broad black brim of your hat,
please come flying.

Bearing a musical inaudible abacus,
a slight censorious frown, and blue ribbons,
please come flying.
Facts and skyscrapers glint in the tide; Manhattan
is all awash with morals this fine morning,
so please come flying.

Mounting the sky with natural heroism,
above the accidents, above the malignant movies,
the taxicabs and injustices at large,
while horns are resounding in your beautiful ears
that simultaneously listen to
a soft uninvented music, fit for the musk deer,
please come flying.

For whom the grim museums will behave
like courteous male bower-birds,
for whom the agreeable lions lie in wait on the steps of the Public Library,
eager to rise and follow through the doors
up into the reading rooms,
please come flying.

We can sit down and weep; we can go shopping,
or play at a game of constantly being wrong
with a priceless set of vocabularies,
or we can bravely deplore, but please
please come flying.

With dynasties of negative constructions
darkening and dying around you,
with grammar that suddenly turns and shines
like flocks of sandpipers flying,
please come flying.

Come like a light in the white mackerel sky,
come like a daytime comet
with a long unnebulous train of words,
from Brooklyn, over the Brooklyn Bridge, on this fine morning,
please come flying. (1-58)

Muñoz argues that experiencing ecstasy with one another, “in as many ways as possible, can perhaps be our best way of enacting a queer time that is not yet here but nonetheless always potentially dawning” (187). He says of Bishop’s poem, “This flight is a spectacle of queer transport made lyric” (188). He does also note, as I did in the first chapter of this project, that “two other queer ghosts who float over the bridge are Walt Whitman and Hart Crane” and that this allows us to realize that the bridge is “a dense connective site in the North American queer imagination” (188-189). However, he fails to take this any further and even misses the Frank O’Hara connection. Muñoz notes that “Bishop refers to Moore’s signature three-cornered Paul revere hat and her pointy black shoes, making the address all the more personal and highlighting Moore’s own queer extravagance” (188). I would add too that the image of Moore also summons the image of Washington crossing the Delaware, an image that connects the poets to Frank O’Hara. The bridge is transformed by Bishop from a site that evokes loss to a site that calls up hope. We are not falling and plummeting. No. We are flying into the utopian horizon.

Conclusion

You Are Here

How do we transcend bitterness and cynicism and embrace love, hope, and an all-encompassing dream of freedom, especially in these rough times? –Robin Kelly, *Freedom Dreams*

Where does the history of an idea begin? Until I turned sixteen years old, I lived as a church mouse. I enjoyed church lock-ins, vacation Bible school, Bible drill contests, and youth fellowship groups. I loved my gay best friend too. In a high school of about 300 students in the Appalachian region, it became necessary to protect him. Students threw trash at us from the school buses, fellow students spat on us as they passed us in the hallway, and on a weekly basis we received notes in our lockers that read, “Die.” We had to link arms walking from the cafeteria at lunch time. During class changes, I often had to shove large boys into lockers before they could punch and shove us. I began to be told by my home church that my best friend would go to hell. I could not conceive of a God who also did not love my friend. I did not remain a church mouse; I became angry and withdrawn instead.

I grew up twenty minutes from a number of entry points to the Appalachian Trail and the Jefferson National Forest. In order to find solace from high school, I spent many hours trail running through the woods. I enjoyed it because it felt like an escape; I never had any plan or particular path in mind for the day’s run. I would run for a short time and then stop when I came to one of the visitor maps along the trail: “you are here” it would read with a red arrow that pointed to the location. “Here” was important to me because I was not there, in high school or in town. The recent past remained with me; however, the present moment was cathartic. Reading the visitor map, I would decide on a new trail to take. The future was uncertain and winding, but I knew it would be better than any moment in the past.

I escaped by reading books as well. I did not read Auden until college; however, during high school I devoured books by Bishop, Ginsberg, and O'Hara. I also found peace by reading Southern LGBT writers like Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote. While life is not art and art is not necessarily life, I have understood throughout the years that art and life are often linked in ways that are difficult to explain.

Anger though never seemed to be given the chance to ease; it shifted, settled, and, often, intensified. Where does the history of an idea begin? Did it begin in high school? Or did it begin when my best friend cut off contact with his parents during his final year of college because they threatened to disown him? Or did it begin when one of my students in my composition class, six years ago, had to drop out because, as she explained to me, her father refused to help her pay the tuition unless she denied her lesbian identity? Or did it begin when I had a student three years ago explain to me why he had missed a week of class: he was living out of his car after coming out to his parents; they had told him to pack up and leave.

Recently, while riding one of the LSU buses, I read a book while waiting for my stop but kept being interrupted by a rather loud conversation occurring between two undergraduate students in the seats next to me. They were shameless and unaware of how their conversation could be heard and what it would mean for other individuals on the bus: "Man, he's such a faggot! I mean, seriously, man! What a faggot!" *Now isn't life difficult enough without that?* Frank O'Hara's line from his poem "Biotherm" went through my mind in that moment on the LSU bus.

Sinking into despair, exhaustion, and pessimism has become typical for those of us who care about LGBT issues and rights. I opened this project with a discussion of Tyler Clementi's suicide. The number of losses from LGBT suicides results in our own feelings of failure and

hopelessness. As I write this conclusion, however, Tyler Clementi's roommate has been found guilty of a number of offenses, most importantly of bias intimidation. California's Proposition 8 has been found unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court. Despite how hopeful these examples are, I am left wondering how useful they are for hope in daily LGBT life.

"You need to come visit me; I'll take you to Tokyo." The fall of 2011: across land and ocean, I am speaking on the phone with my high school best friend who has lived in Japan for fifteen years. We talk for three hours. Do you remember? It is a question constantly used throughout the conversation. We do not call forth the memories of suffering; instead, we call forth those moments of happiness and hope that occurred in the midst of that high school misery. Linear time seems to have collapsed. Auden surfaces as a reminder for me that although we have suffered, joy eventually occurs as well. Such merging is, I think, often represented in writing because the collapsing of time easily occurs during the composing process. In *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*, Mary Zournazi says, "The sphere of hope and lack of hope in the same kind of place-holder invites, I think, a different . . . sense of time and memory—the hope of filling in the gaps of history that can be so easily elided when talking about revolution and freedom—other people's histories, our own, and the telling of stories about political struggles" (47).

Currently, the United States political climate is so deeply polarized that civil conversation is virtually obsolete. What new world could be imagined to counter our contemporary public sphere? Imagining new worlds is easy enough. The real work is living in the here and now of daily life with hope that looks toward the imagined not yet utopia. Zournazi writes that "hope may be that force which keeps us moving and changing—the renewal of life at each moment, or the 're-enchanting' of life and politics—so that the future may be about how we come to live and

hope in the present” (274). This is what the poets is this project did for me and what I hope I have revealed throughout the work. My copy of Auden’s *Collected Poems*, at this point, is battered, creased, and split in half from wear; I have had to tape it back together. Although I carry Auden’s ghost with me, I find myself often exploring and debating his statement that “poetry makes nothing happen” (II.36). Located in his “In Memory of W.B. Yeats,” the line is frequently thrown around in debates about the usefulness of poetry; however, I think it is important to note the context. Written in 1939, a month after the death of Yeats, Auden was disillusioned over the inevitable coming war. I find myself disagreeing with Auden’s statement. Living daily with hope is a defined action that I choose, and I have chosen it from intense study of O’Hara, Ginsberg, Auden, and Bishop.

In Ginsberg’s “The Change: Kyoto-Tokyo Express,” he describes a visionary moment on the train in Japan. After traveling in a number of Asian countries like India and Vietnam, where, as he described to his father in letters, the poverty and suffering overwhelmed him, Ginsberg “recognized his own mortality as a part of an enormous continuum of human experience: so much of existence involved suffering, but in the external scheme, such suffering was temporary” (*Family Business* 215). I imagine visiting my friend in Japan and, followed by Ginsberg’s specter, having an uncanny experience. Like Ginsberg, my friend traveled to Japan in search of a better life and a geography that contained utopian possibility. But utopia’s meaning, “no place,” defies a pinning down into a specific boundary. O’Hara and Ginsberg gradually came to this realization; Auden and Bishop articulated it throughout many of their poems. In fact, what I have hoped to prove throughout, as Ernst Bloch argues, is that “art [is] an arena in which an alternative world can be expressed—not in a didactic, descriptive way as in traditional ‘utopian’ literature, but through the communicative of an alternative experience” (Levitas 148).

I am left with more questions than answers though. Can daily utopian practice that is not seemingly political on the surface ignite social change? Is an individual's daily life politically useful? What of this analysis of poetry? Is Auden correct? Can poetry really not *do* anything? Along with Jill Dolan's analysis of theater as utopian practice and Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*, which looks at various art and writing as offering a queer utopia, those of us who work in the humanities argue that art and literature matters. But how many individuals will read these works and see the utopian possibility and the hope for social change that we argue the artists' represent? Art may not do anything; however, like Jill Dolan, I argue that art can provide "faith and persistently shore up [an] ability to hope" (141).

In her discussion of utopian theater, Dolan ends her book by saying, "Utopia is always a metaphor, always a wish, a desire, a no-place that performance can sometimes help us map if not find. But a performative is not a metaphor; it's a doing, and it's in the performative's gesture that hope adheres, that *communitas* happens, that the not-yet-conscious is glimpsed and felt and strained toward" (170). Theater's power is in the audience and that forging of a community that takes place in the moment of the performance. I would claim that poetry acts in a similar way, albeit in an understated way. I think of Bishop's tendency to give poems as gifts. Robert Lowell even carried around a poem she dedicated to him in his wallet. I am also reminded of being on the LSU bus and hearing the students' loud conversation ("faggot") occur while reading. I was studying and annotating Auden's "In Praise of Limestone" during that moment. I was brought back to O'Hara's *Now isn't life difficult enough without that* and in response to the student's derogatory language I jotted O'Hara's line in the margin of my Auden text. O'Hara spoke to me, to Auden, and all three of us psychically connected in that moment. Dolan writes, "Writing, like performance, is always only an experiment, an audition, always only another place to practice

what might be an unreachable goal that's imperative to imagine nonetheless. Writing, like performance, lets me try on, try out, experiment with another site of anticipation, which is the moment of intersubjective relation between word and eye, between writer and reader, all based on the exchange of empathy, respect, and desire" (168). The poems I have examined throughout this project have taught me that. My own writing of this project has been an attempt to conjure their specters and to perform just this type of exchange of empathy. I take this empathy with me out into the world; it is, I believe, a hopeful act that will create more exchanges and thus more empathy.

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Vita

Brigitte Natalie McCray grew up in Southwestern Virginia, where she spent her teenage years fighting bullies, being sent home from high school for writing and publishing a feminist zine, and protesting the school's use of the confederate rebel flag. She experienced her first successful act of social change when the high school administration finally had the maintenance staff paint over the rebel flag that had decorated the school gymnasium for a number of years. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in English with a concentration in creative writing from Emory & Henry College, where she was the editor of the school's literary journal and won a number of awards for her poetry. She worked as a newspaper reporter for one year at the *Bristol Herald Courier* in Bristol, Virginia, and for another year at *C-Ville Weekly* in Charlottesville. She went on to graduate with a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing, both from Virginia Commonwealth University. While a student in the Master of Fine Arts program, she won the graduate fiction award in 2005 and an honorable mention for the same award in 2006. Her stories, poetry, essays, and reviews have appeared in *storySouth.com*, *Timber Creek Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Red Rock Review*, *The Explicator*, *The Journal of Homosexuality*, and *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*. While a student at Louisiana State University, she was named the outstanding women's and gender studies graduate student for 2010. She has taught at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women in Virginia, Virginia Union University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Northeast State Community College, and, currently, at Louisiana State University. In May, 2012, she will graduate from Louisiana State University with a doctorate in English and a minor in women's and gender studies. In June she will move to Rock Island, Illinois, where she will join the faculty at Augustana College as a two-year fellow in English and Creative Writing.