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Fighting Form: Boxing and the Aesthetic Containment of Violence

by

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in English

Designated Emphasis in Film Studies

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At the height of its popularity in the United States, the sport of boxing promised to satisfy the desire for an unmediated vision of social experience. Within the ring, race and class difference could be seen in the mutual violence of two bare bodies. New media technologies that emerged from the era—including film, radio, and television—picked up on the ring’s peculiar claim to phenomenal reality, and long-established media like literature and the fine arts also turned to boxing and boxers as the nexus of a new unmediated aesthetics. In my analysis of boxing in literature, early film, and motion photography, I argue that this fantasy of unfettered access to the social world depends on an elaborate formalizing apparatus, both in the ring and in its representations. I contend that authors, filmmakers, and photographers find in the ring’s rigid geometries, oppositional structures, and visible bodies the possibility for new visual and linguistic forms that might establish a more real realism. However, they confront a contradiction: only through a highly regimented form can they get at the raw ontological truth of social reality. The tenuous interplay between abstract form and violent reality becomes a central concern in representations of boxing. As much as these works claim to have discovered the form of violence, they also inadvertently draw attention to the violence of form.

My project attempts to bridge aesthetic theory and critical thinking about race and class. The very conflicts that have traditionally separated these fields—particularly the perceived incommensurability of formalist analysis and historical and political analysis—are the same conflicts from which boxing derives its popular appeal. In my readings of the photographic work of Eadweard Muybridge, the novels of Stephen Crane and Ernest Hemingway, the journalism of Jack London, and the films of Charlie Chaplin, I show that the many different valences of “form,” whether social, economic, cultural, or aesthetic, appear to collapse within the ring into a unified structural logic. Whether it be in the visual overlap between the boxing ring and the film frame, or in the parallel between spectatorship and “race consciousness,” or even in the blackness of one fighter versus the whiteness of another, boxing condenses abstractions and solidifies realities into a single, coherent conflict.

## Chapter 1 Introduction: Making the Ring Mean

What is boxing “about”? That it must be about *something* seems clear to anyone considering the sport from a distance. The closer we move to the ring—through the lenses of television and film cameras, through the eyes of photographers and the voices of radio commentators, through the rapt and raucous attention of the spectators surrounding the ring, through the ropes and ultimately into the ring itself—the more we expect finally to see the core of what boxing *means*, what these boxers *symbolize*, what the sport’s violence and brutality *signify*.

And there’s no shortage of fans, promoters, commentators, journalists, photographers, artists, novelists, poets, psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, and filmmakers to tell us exactly what a particular fight—or the sport at large—means. A boxing match always seems to signify beyond the immediate sight of two people punching each other into insensibility. Depending on the account, a given fight might embody competing ethnic rivalries, the brutality of urban life, or the *agon* of industrial capital. It might be a fight between different moral philosophies or national ideologies. Boxing can be tragic or comic, brutal or gentlemanly, deeply personal or thrillingly communal. Nor is it always even a structure that pits one boxer against another; in many accounts, both boxers embody the *same* glorified ideal.

Boxers seem to take on and readily absorb the significance of whatever meaning spectators throw at them. Even the harshest critics of the sport cannot help but also turn to the metaphorical and symbolic impulse that the ring invites (e.g. displaying our “basest impulses”). This fundamental quality of boxing—its ability to signify endlessly—is perhaps the source of its allure to so many fiction writers, painters, and filmmakers, especially at the turn of the twentieth century in the United States. Holding off for now on the cultural-historical explanation, I want to begin by considering why this hyper-figurative feature of the sport may have been of peculiarly strong aesthetic interest.

In her book-length essay on the sport and its significance, Joyce Carol Oates seems to contradict everything that I’ve just claimed above:

I don’t ‘enjoy’ boxing in the usual sense of the word, and never have; boxing isn’t invariably ‘brutal’; and I don’t think of it as a ‘sport.’

Nor can I think of boxing in writerly terms as a metaphor for something else. No one whose interest began as mine did in childhood—as an offshoot of my father’s interest—is likely to think of boxing as a symbol of something beyond itself, as if its uniqueness were merely an abbreviation, or iconographic; though I can entertain the proposition that life is a metaphor for boxing—for one of those bouts that go on and on, round following round, jabs, missed punches, clinches, nothing determined, again the bell and again and you and your opponent so evenly matched it’s impossible not to see that your opponent *is* you: and why this struggle on an elevated platform enclosed by ropes as in a pen beneath hot crude pitiless lights in the presence of an impatient crowd?—that sort of hellish-writerly metaphor. Life *is* like boxing in many unsettling respects. But boxing is only like boxing. (4)

For Oates, the burden of signification works in the other direction. Boxing isn’t a metaphor or symbol for anything, but life is “in many unsettling respects” like boxing. Boxing is, according to Oates, something akin to Lacan’s category of the Real or Heidegger’s “thing itself,” a rarefied and self-contained space within which things happen free from metaphor, symbolization, and

external reference. Her anti-reading of boxing stands in direct opposition to Roland Barthes' earlier reading of professional wrestling, in which wrestling is an example of an utterly legible performance characterized by the obviousness of its symbols. For her, boxing can't be a wrestling-like "performance" in even the broadest sense since it would perform nothing but itself, but is instead an unfolding of unadorned existence. It may be used as a metaphor for something else, but it cannot be the subject of one itself. From Oates' perspective, it would be fruitless to look for "meaning" in a boxing match. And even though she might "entertain" the idea that the metaphor can be reversed, she doesn't find it particularly compelling—since it invariably leads to "hellish," tired, overwrought language full of the "jabs, missed punches, [and] clinches" of life. Thus, one is left with the choice between a dishonest metaphor (boxing is like life) and a bad one (life is like boxing).

However, whether dishonest or merely bad, metaphors *of* and *for* boxing abound. But what Joyce Carol Oates hits upon with remarkable insight is the persistent awareness in discourse surrounding boxing that it can be both intensely metaphorical and startlingly absolute. For those authors, artists, and filmmakers interested in the underlying ideology of language and visual representation—particularly in an era like the late-nineteenth century when film and photography blur the boundary between reality and its representation more than ever before—the metaphorical pliability of boxing has an inescapable gravitational pull.

In the opening chapter of William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, we see the double-function of boxing as metaphor and material reality. Boxing is the means by which Quentin Compson, by way of Rosa Coldfield, attempts to return the "ghost" of Thomas Sutpen to material existence. This invocation is both literary and metaphysical, both literal and figurative. As Rosa begins to tell her story to Quentin, Sutpen begins to "assume a quality almost of solidity" (13), materializing as if in a "fading and ancient photograph" (14). And the chapter ends with Ellen's confrontation with Sutpen's bloodied body immediately following an organized fight with one of his slaves (29-30). While the bond between photographic and filmic technologies and turn-of-the-century boxing is significant—as I will make clear in the chapters that follow—what stands out even more is that the photographic and cinematic imaginations and the pugilistic one facilitate Sutpen's progress from the realm of the imagination into the realm of phenomenal reality.

As Quentin listens to Rosa begin her story, he sits in an environment remarkably like that of a movie theater. As though seeing the light from a projector shine through the darkness, Quentin sees "[t]he yellow slashes of mote-palpitant sunlight [that] were latticed no higher up the impalpable wall of gloom which separated" him and Rosa (22). As she tells her story, Quentin sees her as though through projected light that doubles as its own screen. And like a movie-goer, he too recognizes that "the very quality which [a dream] must depend to move the dreamer (verisimilitude) to credulity—horror or pleasure or amazement—depends as completely upon a formal recognition of and acceptance of elapsed and yet-elapsing time as music or a printed tale" (22). The words could just as easily be those of Christian Metz or Tom Gunning describing the willing disbelief of the filmgoer a half century later.<sup>1</sup> Moving from photography to cinema to boxing, Sutpen comes further and further into material existence. The chapter recapitulates a techno-aesthetic genealogy of something more than mere verisimilitude: it is the recreation of the thing (Sutpen's body) itself.

But it's in the climactic confrontation at the end of this chapter that Sutpen's reanimation comes at last to fruition. Rosa tells the story of her sister Ellen, who was determined to "know all of it" (29), and so entered the stable where Sutpen holds fights for a mixed race audience. She

expects to see “the white faces on three sides, the black ones on the fourth, and in the center two of his wild negroes fighting, naked, fighting not as white men fight, with rules and weapons, but as negroes fight to hurt one another quick and bad” (28-29). Instead, she discovers that Sutpen himself, “as a grand finale,” has himself just fought one of his slaves. The climactic image is a striking tableau of what Ellen saw: “her husband and the father of her children standing there naked and panting and bloody to the waist and the negro just fallen evidently, lying at his feet and bloody too, save that on the negro it merely looked like grease or sweat” (29). The naked, bloody body of Sutpen as the victorious boxer completes the process of materialization that Rosa had started at the beginning of the chapter.

Ellen had gone expecting finally to “know all of it” by seeing with her own eyes the fighting among slaves that she had already assumed was happening, but is horrified to see what she had not anticipated: that Sutpen was himself the main event. Like a representational “return of the real,” Sutpen-as-boxer is beyond imagining, but undeniably asserts itself. The shock of this moment is made all the more shocking by Ellen’s realization that their young children have also been watching; Henry had been forced to watch against his will, “screaming and vomiting” all the while, and Judith watches from a hidden vantage, signaling the beginning of her fall into corruption.<sup>2</sup>

The Freudian “primal scene” becomes here loaded with a specifically aesthetic purpose. Not only does this highlight the “seen” of the “scene,” but it also marks the shock of moving out of the realm of the represented and into the phenomenal world. This is the sign of Sutpen’s transition from “ogre-shape” into something of “solidity, permanence” (13). Like Joyce Carol Oates, Faulkner finds in boxing an aesthetic emblem of the Real. One of the ideas I will return to throughout the chapters that follow is that boxing constantly finds itself on the edge of aesthetic experience. It harkens back to the Classical roots of the word “aesthetics” as those things which are *physically felt* while simultaneously building on the long-nineteenth century’s conception of “aesthetics” as a cultivated and internalized *artistic response*.<sup>3</sup> The two very different responses of Sutpen’s children reflect these two ways of responding aesthetically: Henry responds physically, and Judith responds in a detached, intellectualized way. Boxing perpetually lies in an ambivalent position between metaphor and denotative absoluteness (the bodily thing).

Even in the primal scene of *Absalom, Absalom!* there lies an underbelly to the seeming absoluteness of the sight of the bloodied boxer’s body of Sutpen. Not only is the tableau already referring externally to a familiar iconography of victorious boxers standing over their fallen opponents—making of this scene a typological and iconographic moment—but even in the description of the blood covering his body, there appears a slipperiness to the ability of the scene to signify only itself.<sup>4</sup> Ellen sees Sutpen “bloody to the waist,” while his opponent lies “at his feet and bloody too, save that on the negro it merely looked like grease or sweat.” Blood—that deepest and trickiest of all Faulknerian signifiers—transmutes before Ellen’s eyes into grease and sweat.

It’s in this particular metaphorical slippage that we can finally begin to understand, contextualize, and historicize the nature of the sport’s tendency to “represent” and “figure.” The racial inflections of this scene are so obvious and so overstated that even Ellen breaks the usual Faulknerian imperative to add greater nuance and confusion to moments of recognized racial difference. She offers her own *prima facie* reading of what she sees as Sutpen’s “deadly forethought toward the retention of supremacy, domination” (29). That she mistakes the blood of the loser for “grease and sweat” (and by extension, confuses the grease and sweat of Sutpen for blood) is an even more on-the-nose schematization of the difference between white master and

black slave. But behind all of this lies another layer to the schematized difference that Ellen sees. If this is a moment within which Sutpen is made *material*, then the unnamed “negro” becomes an immaterial *symbol*—of Sutpen’s domination, of raw labor, and of racial difference itself.<sup>5</sup>

Even though boxing enters the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a combative sport that pits different white immigrant groups (mostly Irish, Scottish, and English) against one another, by the late-nineteenth century, the sport absorbs many other racial and national groups into its visual lexicon. In this same era, “race” itself as a biological and physiognomic category becomes troubled by the introduction of “ethnicity” as an increasingly prevalent term; the power dynamics of difference begin to rely more and more on a much more abstract category. Boxing is there to give voice to the fault lines between the seeming absoluteness of “race” and the intangibilities of “ethnicity.” It makes the intangible seem tangible again. From the perspective of authors, artists, filmmakers, photographers, and more, the ring seems to offer a way out of a growing aesthetic and cultural conundrum in the United States.

“Aesthetics,” as articulated within the ring, can attempt to recapture its roots as a physical and material sensation. “Metaphor,” “symbol,” and “representation” become highly problematic terms in boxing, but terms that are nonetheless incredibly important to the ring’s ability to signify. A white boxer fighting a black boxer, or an Irish boxer fighting a freed slave, or a Mexican boxer fighting a Filipino boxer cannot easily be both only themselves *and* representatives of larger ethnic, racial, national, cultural, or class groups. Yet nevertheless, the ring apparatus—and by extension, representations *of* the ring—claims to do both things simultaneously. In the chapters that follow, I examine the aesthetic appeal of boxing to authors and filmmakers in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. It seems to offer both a solution to the perceived waning of realist aesthetics—a way to invigorate art with a renewed sense of the real—and a solution to the problem of how best to represent (and thereby contain and control) difference in the post-nineteenth-century era of “ethnicity” and increasingly abstract definitions of “race.” I claim that these were not separate endeavors united by the mere coincidence of history and nation, but that they were instead intertwined enterprises that relied on the conventions of one or the other to further their respective goals.

At the height of its popularity in the United States, the sport of boxing promised to satisfy the desire for an unmediated vision of social experience. Within the ring, race and ethnic difference could be “seen” in the mutual violence of two bare bodies. New media technologies that emerged from the era—including film, radio, and television—picked up on the ring’s peculiar claim to phenomenal reality, and long-established media like literature and the fine arts also turned to boxing and boxers as the nexus of a new unmediated aesthetics. In my analysis of boxing in literature, early film, and motion photography, I argue that this fantasy of unfettered access to the social world depends on an elaborate formalizing apparatus, both in the ring and in its representations. In the chapters that follow, I contend that authors, filmmakers, and photographers find in the ring’s rigid geometries, oppositional structures, and visible bodies the possibility for new visual and linguistic forms that might establish a more real realism. However, they confront a contradiction: only through a highly regimented form can they get at the raw ontological truth of social reality. The tenuous interplay between abstract form and violent reality becomes a central concern in representations of boxing. As much as these works claim to have discovered the form of violence, they also inadvertently draw attention to the violence of form.

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conflicts from which boxing derives its popular appeal. In my readings of the photographic work of Eadweard Muybridge, the novels of Stephen Crane and Ernest Hemingway, the journalism of Jack London, and the films of Charlie Chaplin, I show that the many different valences of “form,” whether social, economic, cultural, or aesthetic, appear to collapse within the ring into a unified structural logic. Whether it be in the visual overlap between the boxing ring and the film frame, or in the parallel between spectatorship and “race consciousness,” or even in the blackness of one fighter versus the whiteness of another, boxing condenses abstractions and solidifies realities into a single, coherent conflict.

### Reimagining Aesthetic Experience

As I suggest above, those who were painting, writing about, photographing, and filming boxing at the turn of the twentieth century did so, at least in part, in an effort to restore to aesthetic experience the perceived loss of physical sensation. According to Terry Eagleton, while the category of “aesthetics” was initially meant to signify a pre-rational experience of the world through one’s physical senses, rather than simply opening up “the whole terrain of sensation,” it more significantly opens up sensation to the “colonization of reason” (15). This is, in effect, a story of modernity that parallels Marxian alienation. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century, “aesthetics” comes to be used in exactly the opposite sense of its original meaning; rather than referring to one’s physical senses, it instead refers to one’s ability to distance oneself from the phenomenal world, to “appreciate” and “feel” an abstract representation of the world in a work of art, a poem, or a novel.

As Gail Bederman claims in her *Manliness & Civilization*, the cult of masculinity in late-nineteenth-century America was dedicated to physicality as a curative for the perceived “aestheticization” and “effeminization” of culture. Neurasthenia—a male condition of heightened emotional sensitivity whose cure was often physical exercise—was as much a diagnosis of the national culture of the second half of the nineteenth century as it was of the individual men who suffered from it. The nation was suffering from an excess of “feeling.” Bederman points to a number of cultural expressions of this anxiety, including boxing, and claims that one of the upshots is the transformation from myths of “manliness” to myths of “masculinity” (18). The turn toward physicality, biology, and the body are extensions of a broader disaffection with cultural abstractions and intangibilities. The prevalent—and seemingly contradictory—discourses of “civilization” were, according to Bederman, a loose way of binding inconsistently applied claims to supremacy by white men. Thus, “under the logic of ‘civilization,’ [Jim] Jeffries could be simultaneously a manly, civilized heir to Shakespeare and a masculine modern-day savage lifted from the forests of ancient England” (42). John Dudley notes a similar transformation in aesthetics during the same period. In his *A Man’s Game: Masculinity and the Anti-Aesthetics of American Literary Naturalism*, Dudley also claims that American authors of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries see “aesthetics” as a dirty word gendered feminine. He claims that American Naturalist authors develop what Dudley calls an “anti-aesthetic” based on the principles of seemingly “unadorned” modes of writing associated with journalism, science, sport, and technology.

However, as Eagleton and Susan Buck-Morss have both separately noted, “aesthetics” has *always* been conflicted in this regard. “[T]he aesthetic partakes at once of the rational and the real, suspended between the two somewhat in the manner of the Lévi-Straussian myth” (Eagleton 16); while the space *where* that interaction happens between “the rational and the real” might change (whether in the physical body or the numinous intellect), it always, according to

Eagleton, plays out as a contradiction—between sensation and sensibility, self-determination and ideology.

For Susan Buck-Morss, in her reading of Walter Benjamin, the “aesthetic” is inextricably bound to the “anaesthetic” in the modern era. Building on Benjamin’s reading of “shock” in Baudelaire as the default mode of modern sensation, Buck-Morss claims that a condition of heightened sensation in mass culture paradoxically leads to a greater condition of insensibility; in response, a short-circuit occurs whereby sensation seeks “to *numb* the organism, to deaden the senses” (18). In other words, for a person who is overstimulated by modern life, sensation becomes unexpectedly a means by which to *desensitize*. That is, the more one feels, the more one no longer feels. By her reckoning, Benjamin’s great intervention is to “*undo* the alienation of the corporeal sensorium” (5); the solution lies not in “educating the crude ear to hear music” or “training the eye to see beauty,” but in “giving [the ear] back hearing” and “restoring ‘perceptibility’” (18). The biggest obstacle, however, is that

the role of ‘art’ in this development is ambivalent because, under these conditions, the definition of ‘art’ as a sensual experience that distinguishes itself precisely by its separation from ‘reality’ becomes difficult to sustain. Much of ‘art’ enters into the phantasmagoric field as entertainment, as part of the commodity world. (23)

Because aesthetic experience so readily becomes “anaesthetic,” “art” and “sensation” become confused.<sup>6</sup>

While Dudley’s and Bederman’s studies both point to the unique claim that masculinity has to turn-of-the-century “anti-aesthetics” in American culture, Eagleton and Buck-Morss ally the field’s gender dynamics to the *inception* of modern aesthetic discourse, not just to one brief point in its long history. Buck-Morss sees in the ascetic, anaesthetic subject a fear “of the biological power of women” (8) since “the theme of the autonomous, autotelic subject as sense-dead” is a “tale of all-male reproduction, the magic of *creation ex nihilo*” (10). And Eagleton’s metaphor for the changes that aesthetic philosophy undergoes over the course of its history has a deliberately gendered overtone: “it is born as a woman, subordinate to man but with her own humble, necessary tasks to perform” (16). In an extension of much older hierarchies, physical sensation is gendered female while the intellect is gendered male.<sup>7</sup>

In the texts of my study, boxing is a vital point of entry for this fundamental contradiction in aesthetic experience between the real and the rational. If boxing is an isolated space within which “reality happens,” it is also a space whose effects on the world around it can only ever be imagined. If what Joyce Carol Oates claims is true, then what happens in the ring only matters within the ring. Moreover, many authors and artists—including Ernest Hemingway and Charlie Chaplin—use consciousness (both in its literal and figurative sense) as a crucial example of and model for aesthetic experience. For example, one cannot have an objective relationship to one’s own loss of consciousness (that is, being “knocked out”) any more than one can have an objective relationship to one’s own death. One can only imagine it or have someone else imagine it on one’s behalf.

Oates’ belief in the unidirectional metaphor of the boxing ring—that life can be like boxing, but boxing can only be like itself—highlights one of the sport’s greatest appeals to authors and filmmakers at the turn of the century. It offers the promise of breaking free of the contradiction of aesthetic experience where sensation isn’t merely a means to further insensibility, but is instead a vital and necessary *break* with everyday sensation. It is a fantasy of “restoring ‘perceptibility.’” The pain in the ring is seemingly more real than reality and exists in a state prior to rationalization. However, as each of my chapters demonstrates, this belief, too, is

ultimately subject to the same contradictions as aesthetic experience has always been. While the intellectual acrobatics involved in evading that contradiction are different in each case, the double-speak between the real and the rational persists in each of the texts I study nevertheless.

### Violence in/as Form

As Elaine Scarry claims of the experience of pain more broadly, one cannot both experience pain and express it simultaneously. “Pain” and “imagining” occupy two opposing halves of an aesthetic dialectic. But more than simply tracing a history of aesthetic philosophy, Scarry’s *Body in Pain* entertains the possibility that all human expression finds its origins in this incommensurable difference. Like the aesthetic paradox noted by Eagleton and Buck-Morss, “pain” occupies the bodily realm of the pre-rational senses while “imagining” occupies the rational realm of the perceived, external world:

Though the capacity to experience physical pain is as primal a fact about the human being as is the capacity to hear, to touch, to desire, to fear, to hunger, it differs from these events, and from every other bodily and psychic event, by not having an object in the external world. Hearing and touch are of objects outside the boundaries of the body, as desire is desire of *x*, fear is fear of *y*, hunger is hunger for *z*; but pain is not ‘of’ or ‘for’ anything—it is itself alone. This objectlessness, the complete absence of referential content, almost prevents it from being rendered in language; objectless, it cannot easily be objectified in any form, material or verbal. But it is also its objectlessness that may give rise to imagining by first occasioning the process that eventually brings forth the dense sea of artifacts and symbols that we make and move about in. (162)

The experience of pain has no object and is simply *felt*. The absent agent or cause must be imagined. Seen in conjunction with Eagleton and Buck-Morss’s accounts, Scarry appears to be outlining a myth for the origin of consciousness, or perhaps less ostentatiously, an origin myth for expression, rationalization, and projection. “Imagining” for her is the attempt to articulate causes, the attempt to rationalize why one feels pain by projecting outwards, and though she never names it such, I would claim that it is the transformation of pain into *violence*. In other words, “violence” might be said to give form to pain. Violence schematizes a relationship between subject and object akin to the way in which Hegel’s master-slave dialectic schematizes the relationship between self and other.

Sigmund Freud develops a similar schematization earlier in the century. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud searches for a convincing model that can account for the relationship between pain and pleasure. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* takes as its jumping-off point shell shock and traumatic neurosis, disorders whose primary characteristic is the repetition of a traumatic, painful experience. Among the many ways this repetition compulsion expresses itself, one particularly well known one is the story of his young nephew. This “good little boy” develops a way of “staging” the felt pain of his father’s and mother’s absence by “taking any small objects he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner, under the bed, and so on, so that hunting for his toys and picking them up was often quite a business” (13). As time goes on, the game becomes more complex. The boy has a reel with a string tied to it; he holds the string and throws the reel over the edge of his bed. He utters an expression of dismay, pulls the reel back up by the string, and expresses a joyful “da” upon its return (14). The child’s “great cultural achievement” was in “staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach” (14), transforming the *passive* experience of his parents’ disappearance into the *active* experience of making their surrogate leave in a manner of his own choosing—often staged as

merely the “departure” without the anticipated “return” (15). Pain again becomes transformed into violence through a formalized representation.

Seeing Scarry and Freud together in this way, we can avoid the unwieldy concepts of “masochism” and “sadism,” complimentary concepts that Freud himself seems unsatisfied with in his “Economic Problem of Masochism” essay (so much so that it leads directly to his late-career “drive theory” which instead pits a “death drive” and a “life drive” in a perpetual dialectical opposition to one another). In place of the sadomasochistic pairing, we see something more in line with aesthetic philosophy and phenomenology. The experience of pain is directionless, objectless, and formless; violence, in contrast, gives pain a “story” by supplying it with a cause (object) and an effect (subject).

But as both Elaine Scarry and Susan Buck-Morss readily point out, in that act of formalization lies great political power. In particular, in the late-nineteenth century as the “urban-industrial populations began to be perceived as themselves a ‘mass’—undifferentiated, potentially dangerous, a collective body that needed to be controlled and shaped into a meaningful form” ( Buck-Morss 28), the “surface pattern, as an abstract representation of reason, coherence, and order, became the dominant form of depicting the *social* body that technology had created—and that in fact could not be perceived otherwise” (35). Aesthetic representation, particularly representation that relies on heavily regularized geometries and abstract schemas, has the effect of controlling and shaping the chaotic masses into something meaningful (and powerful). Or more dramatically, as Scarry claims,

to acknowledge the radical subjectivity of pain is to acknowledge the simple and absolute incompatibility of pain and the world. The survival of each depends on its separation from the other. To bring them together, to bring pain into the world by objectifying it in language, is to destroy one of them: either, as in the case of Amnesty International and parallel efforts in other areas, the pain is objectified, articulated, brought into the world in such a way that the pain itself is diminished and destroyed; or alternatively, as in torture and parallel forms of sadism, the pain is at once objectified and falsified, articulated but made to refer to something else and in the process, the world, or some dramatized surrogate of the world, is destroyed” (50-51).

Representing pain (as violence) carries with it an enormous political power. Like a grand version of Freud’s “fort/da” game, formalizing and objectifying the experience of pain either destroys a “dramatized surrogate of the world” (the staged absence, or “fort”) or it destroys pain itself (the staged return, or “da”).

Form, then, takes on a vital (if not *central*) role when dealing with violence and the experience of pain. In my project, I consistently look to the ways in which the geometric design of boxing, the bodily opposition of the fighters, the material objects of the ring, and the centrality of rules play into the ring’s many political and social valences. In fiction and film, the *representation* of the formal apparatus of the ring, then, becomes doubly important. The many instances and layers of form—most often a specifically visual form—become for authors and filmmakers dealing with boxing a way to describe abstract social, economic, cultural, or aesthetic ideas in a schematic, formalized way. Because boxing has such a strong tendency to encourage spectators (and consequently, those filming and writing about boxing) to think metaphorically, symbolically, and representatively, its *formal* regularity also suggestively expands outward into how we think *formally* about race, class, and ethnicity. To present violence in this intensely formalized manner has major implications for how we might think about representations of violence as a form of social control.

As Scarry says, the act of representing violence can either obliterate pain or obliterate the world of its victims. It is either empowering or disempowering. In point of fact, however, the difference isn't always as clear as it is in the case of torture, which is the zero point of Scarry's argument. In representations of boxing, narrative conventions (as well as marketing and promotional materials) rely on themes of social uplift and self-fashioning. "Making something of oneself" is both a literal and a figurative truism of ring stories. Violence is as often something a boxer does *to the world* as it is something that the world does *to a boxer*.

In the chapters that follow, I dig more deeply into this gray area. However, more often than not, representations of boxing appear far more often to be examples of political containment than of liberation. While there is some wiggle room to identify some resistance—especially in the work of Charlie Chaplin—the rest of my texts formalize ring violence as a means to control rather than to free. It's also worth noting that all of my texts are written by white middle-class men, while their boxing subjects are generally from other ethnic, class, and racial groups. That in itself would be of relatively little note if not for the simultaneous fact that in this period there are very few boxing novels, stories, or films written by America's cultural others. As much as boxing is a sport defined by its diversity (both among its participants and its spectators), representations of the sport are far more homogeneous. There are, of course, material and institutional reasons for this, but the consequence is that depictions of the sport become an early aesthetic testing ground for the (violent) political power of form. With no substantial body of counter-narratives, I would argue, this peculiar constellation of aesthetics, violence, and racial thinking grows unchecked. The American Modernists would later join their European counterparts in taking up the banner of aesthetic form in the second decade of the twentieth century, but the movement's roots in the American context—particularly its basis in formalizing social difference—can be traced in large part to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century representations of boxing.

### Cutting the Gordian Knot: Race, Ethnicity, and Class

According to Roland Barthes, cultural myth operates by means of a "clarity principle" through which "it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, . . . [and] it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves" (143). And in his essay on professional wrestling in the U.S., he distinguishes wrestling from boxing in that the former "demands an immediate reading of the juxtaposed meanings, so that there is no need to connect them" (16). In other words, wrestling is more suitable to the present age of myth than is boxing because wrestling is excessively and immediately legible; its "grandiloquence is nothing but the popular and age-old image of the perfect intelligibility of reality" (25). While this distinction might hold true for actual boxing, *representations* of boxing are a different story. It is this very fantasy of absolute legibility and clarity that so strongly appeals to authors and filmmakers at the turn of the century.

But rather than staging "a sort of mythological fight between Good and Evil" (23), boxing matches stage fights between racial and ethnic absolutes. If the boxing ring is where reality happens, then it is where real racial and ethnic difference seems to happen, as well. The problem, however, is that "ethnicity," unlike "race," fits strangely into this paradigm. As an emerging discourse in the early part of the twentieth century, "ethnicity" didn't rely on discourses of the body. It is, according to Max Weber, predicated on "common belief" and culture (389). In other words, it wasn't immediately legible. "Ethnicity" entered the popular lexicon in an era when urban immigrant groups were visibly indistinguishable from the Anglo-

American hegemony. However, this didn't stop people from trying—to the point of national obsession. Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* included sections and photographs dedicated to identifying some of these groups, including chapters on "The Italian in New York," "Jewtown," and "The Bohemians." American Naturalist authors dedicated whole novels to particular urban immigrant groups defined by their culturally defined "ethnic" peculiarities; the titular characters in Frank Norris's *McTeague*, Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Jack London's "The Mexican," and Theodor Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* all serve as novelistic portraits akin to Riis's photo-literary tour of urban ethnic groups.

Boxing built upon this discourse and brought it to bear on larger aesthetic and cultural transformations at the turn of the century. Where before the sport had been predicated on staging conflicts between nationally defined groups—mostly Irish and British—it very quickly adapted its oppositional structure to account for ethnic groups, as well. The sport clearly had already developed a complex mode of signification to distinguish otherwise invisible differences (wherein Irish and British fighters had their own distinct "styles" in the ring that astute observers claimed to be able to pick out). But as boxing began appearing in painting, in photography, and especially in prose fiction and early film, the rhetorical power of visibility grew more significant. Representations of boxing thus became an important part of the larger trend toward making ethnic difference seem visible and legible. Ongoing changes in prose fiction and the advent of cinematic technologies incorporated this new discourse of "ethnicity" into the regime of visibility. The ambivalence of the "real" and the "rational" played out in how bodies were visibly encoded.

It would be all too easy to over-schematize the distinction between racial discourse and ethnic discourse as a direct parallel to the aesthetic distinction between the real and the rational. If nowhere else, representations of boxing at the very least show how little regard the ring has for the distinction between ethnicity and race (or between biology and culture). The Jewishness of a boxer is made to seem every bit as visible as the African-American-ness of another. What's important is that these differences are all equally made to signify visibly. Like Barthes' wrestling match, boxing in film and fiction gives to ethnically and racially marked boxers "the simplicity of essences." And like Riis's tour of New York tenement life, ethnic difference in the ring, like the already familiar discourse of biological race, bears the same "grandiloquence [that] is nothing but the popular and age-old image of the perfect intelligibility of reality." It appears to have *always* existed and to have simply been identified thanks to the visual technology of the ring; it seems to be what Barthes would call "a thing that means something in itself."

Boxing is a key part of the advent of new visual technologies in the early-twentieth century. Boxing photos and illustrations appear in late-nineteenth-century *tromp l'oeil* painting. And not only is boxing one of the most popular subjects in early film—especially in the United States where the first projected film program was of a boxing match—but as my chapter on Eadweard Muybridge explains, boxing was also deeply embedded in the very form of the cinematic apparatus itself, responsible in large part for, among other things: the length of film, the framing of film, the invention of film editing, and the suturing and identification of a film audience. Boxing was also central to the subsequent creation and popularity of television and closed circuit technology (as it would later be key to cable television and Pay Per View services). While critics and historians of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American culture have provided a convincing account of the importance of visual technologies in the disciplining of racial and ethnic bodies, none seem to have noticed just how significant a role boxing played in that history.

Many studies of the relationship between racial and ethnic categories and visual culture frequently attempt to explain this relationship through identity politics. Linda Martín Alcoff's *Visible Identities*, for example, tries to disentangle the subjective experience of identity and the institutional power of visibility. She claims that "the practices of visibility are indeed revealing of significant facts about our cultural ideology" and "that what the visible reveals is not the ultimate truth; rather, it often reveals self-projection, identity anxieties, and the material inscription of social violence" (8). While I certainly agree with the sentiment she expresses, she falls into one of the fundamental theoretical problems of much identity criticism: that the critique hinges on an assumption of a deeper, authentic ontological truth to race and ethnicity than what the visual domain imposes. In contrast, Michael Chaney's *Fugitive Vision* takes a much more convincing and theoretically compelling route, not by falling back on definitions of what race "really is," but by pointing out the ways in which "the constitution of a racialized seeing subject . . . looks back at the systemic structures that occlude it." He borrows Kaja Silverman's use of the word "screen" in order "to name a network of imagery and image associations as both a cultural grammar for making the pictorial domain intelligible as well as the porous ground of relations on which subjects project themselves into being" (5). In other words, rather than drawing a dichotomy between the "constructed-ness" of a visual regime and the authentic identities "beneath," Chaney instead points to the ways in which a vast and complex visual field is itself internalized and manipulated by its subjects.

If boxing films and prose fiction speak through the seemingly visual language of race and ethnicity, the story they tell is one of class aspiration. In the United States, boxing is strongly associated with its working-class roots; in England, by contrast, boxing spectators, known as "the fancy," were defined by a mix of upper- and lower-class men. Both Elliott J. Gorn, writing of the nineteenth century, and Carlo Rotella, writing of the twentieth, have pointed to the sport's working-class origins in the United States as its single-most defining feature. But unlike racial and ethnic difference, class difference isn't clearly schematized in representations of boxing.

Instead, the ring is most often made to stand in for the inevitabilities, brutalities, and violence of class itself. Rarely do you find in the ring a boxer who stands for one class affiliation (working class) and an opponent who stands for another (bourgeois); boxers are almost all invariably defined as working class. While, as I've claimed repeatedly, the ring is rich with the ability to signify and metaphorize, class doesn't work that way. Instead, the space of the ring most typically represents an entire class, class structure, and class consciousness. It is a representational embodiment of a concretized working-class consciousness. If, as Georg Lukács claims, the middle-class is doomed to be perpetually unable to come to true class consciousness, then it's fair to assume that boxing provides a simulacrum of and desire for that consciousness. After all, the ring is where "real life" happens. It is a totality within which the working class's entire world (and class consciousness) seems to play out for the sake of middle-class audiences.<sup>8</sup> Unlike real boxing, films and novels about boxing and boxers were consumed avidly by a bourgeois readership, and, I would argue, boxing films and novels were largely responsible for bringing middle-class spectators into the sport's fan base. The outlawing of prizefight films in 1912 wasn't merely a reaction against a black boxer's (Jack Johnson's) victory over a white man (Jim Jeffries); it was an aesthetic reaction against a mode of viewership predicated on physical sensation. In its place, narrative film came to dominate the medium, and boxing as a subject was forced to comply to the demands of narrative form.

Because middle-class readers and audiences can't imagine their own class condition, they adopt someone else's. While this condition appears to them as a "definite structural relation, a

definite formal nexus which appears to govern the whole of life” (52), it isn’t *their* life. There is perhaps no greater cultural sign of one’s own alienation than the desire to see another class’s “totality” expressed in a concrete form, and representations of the ring promise to fulfill that desire.

Turning to Lukács also provides a nuanced way of beginning to rethink the function of aesthetic philosophy in depictions of boxing. The perpetual conflict in aesthetics between the “real” and the “rational” is, in Lukács’s understanding, an expression of the “irreconcilable antagonism between ideology and economic base” (64). The sense of the “beautiful” and the “good” in both aesthetics and moral philosophy became conflated over the course of the nineteenth century as a way of resolving the fundamental conflict between physical (immediate) and intellectual (mediated) perception. Boxing—initially conceived of as a renewed disruption of this unstable aesthetic equilibrium by way of its regimented violence and naked bodies—became beatified and totalized just as other aesthetic subjects before it had.

Nonetheless, boxing in film and fiction has a firm hold on the popular, bourgeois imagination in the United States, and I would argue, it’s largely because it offers a certain reassurance to its middle-class audience. It seems to present “the class struggle [in which] we witness the emergence of all the hidden forces that usually lie concealed behind the façade of economic life,” but it is not the middle-class’s struggle nor is it their truth. Regardless, “the capitalists and their apologists gaze as though transfixed” (Lukács 65). It’s an enormously compelling class fantasy, one that continues to occupy the literary and cinematic imagination throughout the early-twentieth century. Not only in accounts of boxing, but also in the many other novels, paintings, photographs, articles, and films that make a spectacle of working-class life. The Modernists, too, would later adopt and ventriloquize the imagined totality and consciousness of urban immigrant groups, the working classes, and America’s racial others. But in boxing, the formal regimentation of the ring, of its bodies, and of its violence, presented such a compelling and suspiciously clear vision of the working-class world that it was impossible not to see oneself within its bounds.

### Project Overview

In my second chapter, “The Mechanics of Prizefighting,” I discuss the central role boxing plays in the development of motion photography in the late-nineteenth century. In Eadweard Muybridge’s prospectus to his *Animal Locomotion* (1887), he describes his frustration that “mechanics”—what we today call unskilled or day laborers—lack the “grace” necessary to convey on film the “actions incidental to every-day life.” In response, he deploys a technological apparatus designed to keep their lack of grace at bay and forcibly “naturalize” the scenes he stages for the camera. This approach is clearest in his motion studies of boxing where he substitutes the viewing position of boxing spectators with that of the camera lens, naturalizing his subjects’ motions by naturalizing the position of the viewer. This technique is not only foundational to formalizing film spectatorship, but it also inescapably sutures class and racial discourse into his photos and into later film practice.

In my third chapter, “Fistic Consciousness,” I contend that Stephen Crane and Jack London expand upon the interest among American Naturalist authors for collective forms of consciousness. These two authors transform the structure of the boxing spectacle into a narrating language capable of representing group consciousness. In Stephen Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, the structure of boxing specifically emblemizes a class consciousness forever out of characters’ reach. As characters approach—but never achieve—self-awareness of their social



situation so, too, do their violent acts asymptotically approach the structure of a boxing match. Violence, like consciousness, is denied form in language. I also closely analyze Jack London's newspaper series on the Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries fight of 1910 as a racial analog to Crane's class-based treatment of boxing. For London, boxing is not simply a metaphor for the act of writing—as it was for other Naturalist authors like Frank Norris—but more, the act of watching and writing about a fight is a material manifestation of race consciousness. What I call in this chapter “fistic consciousness” is the formal battleground in London and Crane's work between working-class, racially defined self-awareness and narrative mechanisms of stylistic containment.

In my fourth chapter, “Of Boxers and Bullfighters,” I argue that Ernest Hemingway's ambivalent treatment of boxing reflects a deep political and aesthetic ambivalence in his poetics of male suffering. Boxers are emblems of unaccountable pain who stand in direct contrast to his many other martyrs and masochists. Where his non-boxers undergo personal, spiritual, or political transformation through the experience of pain and death, Hemingway cannot account for the boxer stylistically and can only understand the boxer as a no-place of representational possibility. However, he finds in the Spanish bullring a more aesthetically pleasing—and less incomprehensibly painful—alternative structure of violence, but one that constantly draws on the ineffable specter of the boxing ring. Following from Elaine Scarry's distinction between “pain” and “imagining,” I contend that the dialectical interplay in Hemingway's work between boxing and bullfighting asks us to rethink long-standing critical debates over connotation and denotation in his work. Not only does this dialectical approach reorient stylistic considerations of his work toward his personal philosophy of violence, but more significantly it accounts for his ambiguous and anxiety-ridden attitudes toward boxing and the aporia for which it stands: the pain and trauma of American racial history.

My fifth chapter, “The Property Man,” examines the visual markers of class in the slapstick comedies of Charlie Chaplin. Much like boxing itself, slapstick films present working-class subjects to a middle-class audience. Just as slapstick reflects the familiar iconography of day labor—brooms, ladders, bricks, and hammers in city streets, tenement housing, and corner shops—the genre also includes the immediately recognizable visual tropes of boxing. Over the course of his career, Chaplin continues to revisit the spectacle of boxing as a theoretical tool that articulates the institutional violence of serial unemployment. More than any other of the works I analyze in my project, Chaplin's films deconstruct the formalizing structure and power of boxing. In these films, boxing becomes more than a simple metaphor for mechanization and dehumanization; it is a crucial part of the visual history of urban labor and of the chronic instability of employment. As such, the boxing ring is the site of some of Chaplin's strongest and clearest political views in his films, a physical space within which he attempts to identify and dismantle the objective structures of economic disparity.

## Chapter 2

### The Mechanics of Prizefighting: Eadweard Muybridge and Abstract Athleticism

#### Introduction

According to film critic Andre Bazin, “photography and the cinema . . . are discoveries that satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism” (12). While this claim is grossly overstated, it highlights the importance of the realist impulse in the era of emerging film technology. Early in its history, the new technology was treated as a virtually agent-less medium for transcribing reality as it truly is. Many of the earliest films consisted of very short, single reel, non-narrative episodes and isolated movements; these included filmed gestures, dances, physical feats, excerpts of stage performances, actuality films, and a number of other subjects suitable to the medium.<sup>9</sup> The films from this era are most often characterized with respect to later narrative cinema; whether to identify the “latent,” embryonic narrative qualities of the medium in its earliest manifestations or to set these early films in direct opposition to what cinema later “becomes,” critics invariably understand early cinema in terms of (later) narrative cinema.<sup>10</sup> Nor will I do differently. It is precisely this relationship of early cinema to narrative cinema that will drive the ideas in this chapter. While I won’t attempt to uncover some latent early presence of narrative in these early cinematic technologies, I will attempt less ostentatiously to understand early cinema in terms of certain narrative traits inherent from its earliest manifestations. As the above quote from Bazin suggests, film from its very inception (and even before) visits and revisits “our obsession with realism.” I do not believe, as Bazin does, that cinema or photography in any way “satisfies” this obsession, or if it does it is an incredibly angst-ridden and tenuous form of satisfaction. My goal in this chapter lies in attempting, first, to understand the nature of the Bazin-ian “obsession with realism” and its relationship to the gradual appearance of narrative as the dominant cinematic mode, and second, to make a case for the representation of boxing in American film as a crucial site for understanding this relationship.

While I take for granted that early cinema is interested in the limitations and possibilities of realism and that it finds something of an answer in its deployment of narrative, I don’t take for granted the form that the medium’s investigation takes. That is, I believe that it’s ultimately fruitless to question *whether* film is interested in realism but instead believe that asking *how* it’s interested in realism leads to much more productive results. This is not merely because asking the question *whether* (film is interested in realism) demands that we have a clear understanding and consensus about what realism looks like, but more because if film were to look like the realism Bazin has in mind, it would look like nothing but the phenomenal world. Our ability to describe the medium would be lost in the process, and there would be nothing to characterize but the phenomenal world itself. In contrast, to ask *how* the cinema understands realism forces us to characterize the tautological trickery by which the cinema attempts to make the technological apparatus between viewer and viewed disappear.

In early cinema, the frequent use of boxing as a subject allows the medium explicitly to explore the nature of this tautological trick. More than any other early filmic subject, boxing brings to the fore the *how* of filmic realism. In order to demonstrate the extent of this relationship, I will trace the development of cinematic form and of boxing practice in the United States in the late-nineteenth century to attempt to account for this close affinity. Though I will develop this in greater depth later in this chapter, I will here briefly point to some of the cinema’s earliest formal interests that closely overlap those of boxing. For example, in early cinema, the

camera was typically stationary and visually limited (framed), so filmmakers had to create the sense of visual-field depth through the use of vanishing points or through multiple layers of action—foreground, background, and any number of layers in-between. In early boxing films, the “sides” of the ring were created by the right and left edges of the frame. Ropes delimited front and back layers to the images, with layers of action (typically boxers between the front and back ropes with spectators milling about behind the rear rope boundary). As was also done with many of the stage performances adapted for film, the floor of the ring also matched the geometry of the frame: the front of the ring doubles as the bottom of the frame, and the foreshortened sides and rear of the ring contribute to the sense of image depth (a trick borrowed from Renaissance painting’s vanishing-point geometry). Movement (cinema’s single-most important “trick”) was emphasized through subjects’ navigating the space delimited by this sense of depth, perspective, and framing.

The bond between film and boxing form pervades much of early cinema. Some credit a boxing film shown by the Latham Brothers in New York City in April of 1895 as being the first public showing of a projected film, predating the Lumiere Brothers’ first film program in December of 1895. Importantly, the Lathams’ desire to show a full round with a single projector led to their tripling the capacity of the mechanism in order to show (still somewhat abbreviated) rounds (North 18). David A. Cook makes a rather grandiose claim as to the Latham brothers’ contribution to the medium: “this relatively simple technological innovation [now called the “Latham loop”] had far-reaching aesthetic consequences, since without it the cinema could never have evolved as an art form” (13). Though Charles Musser is a bit more reserved in his estimation of their contribution, he devotes ten pages of his volume in the *History of the American Cinema* series to the Lathams. For Musser, the Lathams’ great contribution was their push to develop a viable and profitable means of projection (Thomas Edison—whose equipment the brothers were under license to use—initially dismissed the profitability of projection). Regardless of their position among film history’s many firsts, the Latham brothers recognized the strong compatibility between early film technologies and boxing matches. But this is only a small taste of the coincidence between the technological-logic organizing early cinematic practice and that governing boxing.

### Muybridge and the Invention of the Cinematic Fetish

In the technologies directly preceding film, boxing is also a common subject. Of the 781 plates in Eadweard Muybridge’s *Animal Locomotion*, eighteen of them display the motions of boxers (both alone and in pairs). Among the dozens of athletic movements depicted in his 1887 work, boxing appears most often, with baseball a close second (at sixteen series). I begin with Muybridge not for the often over-determined sense of his work being the origin of cinema, but rather because of his methodology, his wanting, as he states in his “Prospectus,” to provide “a comprehensive and systematic investigation with improved mechanical appliances, and newly-discovered chemical manipulations, [which] would demonstrate many novel facts, not only interesting to the casual observer, but of indisputable value to the artist and to the scientist” (Muybridge 1585). His work is an explicit attempt to produce as accurate a picture of motion as photographic technology could then allow. While his photographic work is much more ostensibly “scientific” than the work of many early filmmakers, many of his series and subjects reappear throughout successive cinematic practice. The association of science with athleticism was not long-standing; the idea that athletic practice was an ideal subject for a study such as Muybridge’s was relatively new (though not necessarily novel). According to John Dudley, in

his book *A Man's Game: Masculinity and the Anti-Aesthetics of American Literary Naturalism*, athleticism underwent a radical transformation in the American public consciousness in the late-nineteenth century. This was the era in which professional spectator sports rose to remarkable popularity (primarily baseball and boxing); simultaneously, Dudley claims, scientific modes of authorship supplanted the aesthetic, stylized, effected modes of the earlier part of the century (hence the “anti-aesthetics” of his title). This explains, according to Dudley, the interpenetration of the scientism of the American Naturalists and the sporting world; thus, London’s boxing journalism, Norris’s essay comparing authors to boxers, and Crane’s stories and novels of gamesmanship. As with these literary examples, Muybridge, too, employs a rigid sciento-technological structure to his studies of athleticism.

In order to capture a truer, more scientific picture of people and animals in motion, Muybridge spent much time during the 1870s and early 1880s in the US and Europe consulting with like-minded photographers, artists, technicians, and scientists (including American artist Thomas Eakins, French scientist Etienne-Jules Marey, and French artist Emile Duhouset). In 1883 at the University of Pennsylvania, Eadward Muybridge applied his technical expertise in “instantaneous photography” (high-speed exposure) to a protracted study of motion. His work was published in 1887 as *Animal Locomotion*.<sup>11</sup> From his earliest motion studies in the 1870s under Leland Stanford’s patronage, Muybridge’s photography dealt often and thoroughly with the sporting world. His first motion experiments were exclusively devoted to studies of horses at various gaits. According to the now-mythic origin story of Muybridge’s work, Stanford (an avid horseman) had a suspicion that at some point during a fast trot all four legs of a horse were off the ground simultaneously. Stanford asked the then most prominent photographer on the West Coast, Muybridge, if such a thing could be proven using photography. In 1872, a photo was supposedly taken of Stanford’s prize trotter, Occident, mid-stride with all four legs “suspended” in air (though this first photo has never been known to have been seen by anyone beyond Stanford or Muybridge).<sup>12</sup>

Though Stanford was convinced, Muybridge kept working to refine the technique. Another similar photograph was taken in 1873 but was never published. Muybridge took a third photo of Occident mid-stride in 1877; this time, he and Stanford published it.<sup>13</sup> While this photograph is actually a photo of a painting that was presumably done from an existing photograph, it was enough to make an impact in the public sphere. To further persuade the public and the press that these were indeed photos taken of a horse in motion, in 1878 Stanford and Muybridge invited a number of press representatives to witness the photographic process from beginning to end. This time, the process included multiple photographs taken in quick succession to show the horse at various stages of movement. While these successive and more refined photographic experiments were much more persuasive, public and press reactions still evinced a strange mix of disbelief and reactionary parody. There exist a number of press cartoons from the period caricaturing the uncanny angles and positions of the horses’ legs. It’s impossible to imagine the extent of this cultural shock, but these caricatures suggest how odd it was to have seen natural movement thus starkly “revealed” for the first time. Moreover, as Noël Burch points out, those “who found these pictures unrealistic also found them *ugly*” (11 emphasis Burch’s). We see here that technological verisimilitude comes with its own anxieties and that early on in Muybridge’s serial photography he was already working with and against these anxieties.<sup>14</sup>

By the time Muybridge had left Stanford’s employ and begun his work at the University of Pennsylvania, his pictographic studies of motion had broadened in interest. His subjects in *Animal Locomotion* included “more than 20,000 figures of men, women, and children, animals

and birds, all actively engaged in walking, galloping, flying, working, playing, fighting, dancing, or other actions incidental to every-day life, which illustrate motion and the play of muscles” (“Prospectus” 1586). According to Linda Williams’ reading of the studies contained in *Animal Locomotion*, in Muybridge “we begin to understand how a (cinematic) invention of photography is more than simply a technology for recording; it is part of the very will-to-knowledge/power of the *scientia sexualis*” (48). That is, while Muybridge’s work purports to *reveal* latent truths about human and animal motion taken from “every-day life,” it simultaneously *produces* the cinematic terms of difference. While Williams is speaking expressly about the gender discourse supporting much of Muybridge’s study, she also argues that the terms of difference are directly related to Muybridge’s scientific attitude. Dudley, too, claims that the scientific mode of authorship associated with the American Naturalists operates within a redefined gender paradigm in which aesthetics carries a (negative) feminine connotation and the unadorned, unaffected style of the Naturalists carries a (positive) masculine connotation.

To better understand the move Linda Williams performs in drawing attention to the *production* of a fetish structure, we first need to understand who and what she is attempting to rework. Williams summons an extensive body of work devoted to describing and defining the particular qualities of the “cinematic fetish.” Specifically, she turns to the work of Laura Mulvey, Christian Metz, and Jean-Louis Baudry. I will briefly summarize here each author’s version of the cinematic fetish for the sake of easy comparison, and though Williams’ discussion doesn’t turn directly to Freud, I feel the need to begin here with his definition of the fetish since it grounds each critic’s own definition (and since I will return to Freud’s definition often for the remainder of this chapter).

Freud explains that “the fetish is a penis-substitute . . . for a particularly quite special penis that had been extremely important in early childhood but was afterwards lost. That is to say: it should normally have been given up, but the purpose of the fetish precisely is to preserve it from being lost. To put it plainly: the fetish is a substitute for the woman’s (mother’s) phallus which the little boy once believed in and does not wish to forego . . . [F]or if a woman can be castrated then his own penis is in danger; and against that there rebels part of his narcissism” (“Fetishism” 205). The fetishist’s single aim is to deny the possibility of sexual difference by returning to some aspect of the initial trauma of witnessing the “horror of the female genitals.” In addition, there persists an unmistakable sign of the fetish’s inherent ambiguity; since the fetish serves to deny difference (mother must have a penis) through the insistent marking of difference (the abundance of penis-substitutes), every fetish is undergirded by intense anxiety.

Laura Mulvey applies Freud’s notion of “scopophilia” to the cinematic apparatus, and specifically to the parallel between the male gaze and the cinematic apparatus itself. In this scenario, women present an anxiety inherent to the castration complex: “woman as representation signifies castration, inducing voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms to circumvent her threat” (Mulvey from *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* 208); in effect, the sign of her fetishization is her existence *in excess* of cinematic narrative as “icon” or “starlet.” Christian Metz’s fetish is “the cinema as a technical performance, as prowess, as an *exploit*, an exploit that underlines and denounces the lack on which the whole arrangement is based (the absence of the object, replaced by its reflections), an exploit which consists at the same time of making this absence forgotten” (272); to oversimplify, Metz’s cinematic fetish is the direct result of “willing disbelief,” in which audience members willingly accept the object-world presented to them (I am an eye witness to the world on-screen) while simultaneously accepting their separateness from it (I am sitting in a darkened theater). Metz’s fetish is, as it is for Freud, a monadic fantasy

returning the subject to a state prior to castration anxiety (but one that can only exist *after* castration anxiety has set in). Jean-Louis Baudry adopts a similar line of argumentation and points to the creation of continuity from a discontinuous series of images: “separate frames have between them differences that are indispensable for the creation of an illusion of continuity, of a continuous passage (movement, time). But only on one condition can these differences create this illusion: they must be effaced as differences” (290). For Baudry, the cinematic fetish results from a spectator’s “forgetting” the technological ideology which generates the sense of wholeness and continuity from a series of edited shots. In each case, the elision of difference is the fundamental characteristic of the fetish. The elision of difference takes a number of forms through these various cinema critics, but most importantly what emerges in their combination is the close tie between the unity of (male) spectatorship and the creation of a seemingly unmediated form of representation (realism).

According to Williams, each of these three critics applies the psychoanalytic term (“fetish”) to cinema as a *fait accompli*; that is, “all three theorists assume that the desire for these visual pleasures is already inscribed in the [viewing] subject” (44). In turning to Foucault for theoretical support, Williams gives fetishization a *positive* thrust in addition to its *negative* one: it is something *produced* rather than something representing a *lack*. It is, to borrow Foucault’s term, a “transfer point” for the development of a particular “perversion” (in Williams, the pornographic will to knowledge). As I’ve pointed out elsewhere, the binding of male athleticism to scientific posturing is something relatively unique to the period; Dudley claims that “as a public performance of manhood, spectator sports began to demand the attention of the American public in the late-nineteenth century and contributed to the promotion of hypermasculine virtues in the increasingly sedentary and thus feminized realm of popular entertainment” (9), and that in response “the [Naturalist] author adopts the attitude of a Kiplingesque man of action and . . . that of an impartial social scientist” (21). As Foucault’s works make continually clear, this was the century which made criminality, poverty, violence, sexuality, race, and insanity into objects of intense scientific scrutiny; the male body was taken on in this same period as a site of both resistance and of intense anxiety with regard to these various social pathologies.

Male athleticism and its related valences (e.g., musculature) were deployed by Muybridge and others as part of this broader understanding of the male body and as a deliberate attempt to “strip” the male body of these pathological states (what could be termed predictors of Freudian fetishes). It is crucial to note here that boxing was more caught up in these various social pathologies than any other sport of the time (and was not willing or able to shed itself of these pathologies, despite its concern for male athletic prowess). Williams notes that in Muybridge’s motion studies

naked and semi-naked men . . . walk, run, jump, throw, catch, box, wrestle, and perform simple trades such as carpentry. While naked and semi-naked women perform many of these same tasks, in their activities and gestures we see how the greater sexuality already culturally encoded in the woman’s body feeds into a new cinematic power exerted over her whole physical being. We see, in other words, how an unprecedented conjunction of pleasure and power ‘implants’ a cinematic perversion of fetishism in the prototypical cinema’s first halting steps toward narrative. (39)

In contrast to women who are persistently made to perform “narrative,” men “go about their business rather like Occident, Stanford’s trotter, simply performing the functions they do best” (39). It is precisely this cinematic *obviousness* of maleness which intrigues me—that Muybridge presents us with the bare nakedness of men doing “bare” tasks (walking, running, throwing,

catching, boxing, wrestling, carpentering, doing masonry, farming, blacksmithing, shoeing horses, etc.). In Williams' revisiting of Luce Irigaray, "each of these discourses [cinematic and psychoanalytic] provides the man with a 'speculum' that only confirms the 'truth' of his own sexual identity" (54). Said otherwise, Williams claims, by way of Freud, that Muybridge is attempting to understand women under the terms of male sexuality; under this rubric, women must appear to lack the phallus (i.e., women appear "produced," and men appear "as they truly are"). Williams' contribution to this understanding is to identify in Muybridge the *process* of this fetishization developing in cinematic technologies. Williams goes far throughout *Hard Core* in finding links in cinema, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and critical theory that persistently equate men with representability (obviousness) and women with its opposite (the perceived need for accoutrement), but she is careful to point to the scientific problem of the presence of the observer in which "the phallus is left staring at its own reflection" (54), of an elision of true sexual difference; and as my claims about the various other forms of nineteenth century social pathology suggest, Muybridge actively sought to elide the differences *within* masculinity (class, race, etc.).

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My particular interest here is to examine more closely what happens when the (male) observer most clearly recognizes that he is, in fact, left staring at himself. I'm spurred by Linda Williams' claim that this particular technology (cinema) does not necessarily contain within it a ready-made "perversion," but that it finds itself in the process of both revealing and developing one. I choose to begin here with a return to Muybridge not because of his common association with the origins of cinematic practice, but because of 1) his producing his work at a time when the male body was of heightened visual importance, 2) his claiming to provide work of "indisputable value to the artist and to the scientist" simultaneously, a combined effort which I hope will shortly reveal its importance to my overall project, and 3) his producing work which finds itself poised formally between classical narrative cinema and Bazin's ideal of a photo-cinematic technology which "satisf[ies], once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism."

Though, as I mentioned above, public and press reactions to Muybridge's and Stanford's initial motion photography experiments vacillated between novel pleasure and uncanny disbelief, Muybridge himself couldn't credit the naturalness of the motions he had captured:

I have experienced a great deal of difficulty in securing proper models. In the first place artists' models, as a rule, are ignorant and not well bred. As a consequence their movements are not graceful, and it is essential for the thorough execution of my work to have my models of a graceful bearing. I have the greatest difficulty, however, in inducing mechanics, at any price, to go through the motions of their trade in a nude condition to the waist only. (Muybridge xxxi)

It would be a mistake to call Muybridge's project a purely scientific one since not only was he a photographer by trade widely recognized for his landscape photography and panoramas, but also one of his clearest goals was to provide figural models for artists (hence, his frequent use of Classical motifs owing to the popular prevalence of Neo-Classical subjects in art instruction through the later half of the nineteenth century).<sup>15</sup> Though he expresses dissatisfaction with his models' lack of grace, more importantly he seems to have been persistently frustrated by the results of his series. While he had been attempting, in Williams' phrasing, "to see and know more of the human body—in this case, to answer 'academic questions' of the mechanics of body movement" (Williams 36), he had also been very consciously producing a technology which

would allow audiences “simply to learn the new truths of bodily motion, [and] they stayed to see more because this new knowledge was also infused with an unsuspected visual pleasure” (Williams 39).

Or, perhaps better said, Muybridge did in fact *suspect* this “visual pleasure” but was driven by his inability to direct his models sufficiently to derive the visual pleasure he most sought from their movements. “Visual pleasure” was anything but “unsuspected”; Williams herself claims that the pleasure-effect of these motion studies was at least as much a *positive* production as it was a *negative* effect. This suggests to me that the narrative qualities that Muybridge is “revealing” in his female models arose to a similar degree in all of his models. This is not to say that the narrative-fetish isn’t applied to women, but is rather to suggest that his “difficulty” is just as much a frustration with other qualities (here, the social class) of his models as it is with their gender. Muybridge had trouble isolating the truly masculine from what he saw as intruding cross-identifications—e.g., those of women and laborers. He notes that his “greatest difficulty [was] in inducing mechanics, at any price, to go through the motions of their trade in a nude condition to the waist only.” “Mechanics,” here, is his term for tradesmen (blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, etc.). It isn’t much of a stretch to read his “difficulty” in undressing these men as a manifestation of precisely the same technological perversity at work in his treatment of women, but here Muybridge openly acknowledges his desire to have these “mechanics” appear more graceful (and more naked) than his photographs “reveal” them to be. Nor is it a far stretch to read his “difficulty” as of a kind with the sexual difficulty that Freud claims the fetish is meant to overcome. Here, however, we begin to see the limitations of understanding the fetish as a purely *sexual* term since to do so would reduce his attitude toward male laborers to simple homophobia or latent homosexuality. Instead, I believe the stakes to be much greater; the elision of difference, concerned with establishing an absolute category of the “masculine,” must acknowledge and subsequently fetishize anything it recognizes as “other.” Fetishism subsumes any and all categories, implying that we are all men “underneath.”

It seems incongruous to have mechanics performing their labor with the “grace” Muybridge expects of them; similarly, Williams says

there is something incongruous about the application of Muybridge’s chronographic apparatus, with its batteries of cameras and measurement grids, to the increasingly fantastic scenes conjured up in the women’s section of *Animal Locomotion*. This incongruity arises in part from the very impossibility of measuring the female body with apparatus and grids that are more appropriate to the throwing of a baseball than to the ‘flirting’ of a fan, to traditionally masculine, aggressive movements of propulsion than to traditionally feminine movements of twirling and self-touching. It is as if Muybridge could only represent the female body against the standards used to measure male movement and gesture. As a result, what began as the scientific impulse to record the ‘truth’ of the body quickly became a powerful fantasy that drove cinema’s first rudimentary achievements of narrative diegesis and *mise-en-scène*. (41)

Not to abstract this point overmuch, but this claim reveals a larger incongruity produced by Muybridge’s apparatus. Not only could the inherent incongruity of the apparatus be understood as a product of seeing women under a technology driven by the male gaze, but we see a similar effect in Muybridge’s application of his apparatus to his “mechanics.” Not only were these men reluctant to disrobe (hence lending inadvertent or unexpected narrative props), but they also stand out (to Muybridge’s eye) for their ignorance and lack of grace under the precision of his instrument. As much as he was disappointed by their appearance in motion, he was attempting to



instill an elegance that he saw lacking from their performances. To a degree, his own difficulty in finding grace among his mechanics closely resembles the responses from the public after his initial studies of horses in motion: uncanny disbelief that motion could possibly be so un-artistic. While his expressed difficulty doesn't refer to specific plates or specific models, I would like to look more closely at a handful of the series involving these "mechanics."

While many of the plates involve in part the labor of these mechanics (hauling logs or rocks, using a pick, etc.) there are those which set the scene of labor so thoroughly that they approach something like the narrative to which Williams refers. For example, plate 387 ("Farmer, using a long-handled shovel") shows not only the action described, but also goes far to prove to us that the subject is, indeed, a "farmer." He is bare to the waist, smoking a pipe, and wearing a straw hat. While he does perform the mechanical movement described ("using a long-handled shovel"), his attire is as much the subject of the series as is his action. Unlike the surrounding series (plates 385 and 388 in the original order of publication) depicting "farmers," the figure in this plate wears a wide-brimmed straw hat and smokes a pipe as he shovels (the other two "farmers" possess only their tools).<sup>16</sup> Similarly, we see "blacksmiths" hammering an anvil (e.g., plates 374, 376, 377) and shoeing a horse (plates 508 and 509); in each of these series much more than the simple motion of these figures is on display.

Elsewhere, the caption accompanying some series describes the person as much as the action being performed. For example, in addition to the farmer and blacksmith series, Muybridge has noted for plate 379 "Carpenter, planing a board"; plate 380 "Carpenter, sawing a board"; plate 381 "Mason, laying a brick"; 386 "Miner, using a pick"; 405 "[Mason,] Carrying a hod of bricks up a ladder"; plate 505 "Bricklaying" (506, 507), etc. Motion isn't enough to justify itself in his depictions of professional laborers; Muybridge gets more and more elaborate in justifying the actions on display. Not only is there a context given to us, but more often than not the context involves stating an appropriate occupation ("mason," "carpenter," etc.) beyond his more typical participial phrase captions (e.g., "walking," "rising," "jumping," "throwing," "turning," etc.). The distinction between the participial phrases and the use of vocational titles is telling of Muybridge's general attitude toward his model "mechanics."<sup>17</sup> The plainness of their actions isn't enough to describe the series in which these models appear; rather than rely on the obviousness of their appearance and motion, they are dressed and labeled according to the vocation that matches their movement.<sup>18</sup>

Understood more generally, we see photography in a transitional stage toward recorded motion incorporating and producing a technological fetish structure. The naturalization of laborers in motion remains important throughout the early days of cinema in a number of contexts. For example, some of the more famous "actualities" filmed by the Lumière Brothers in France such as "La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon" (1895) or "Démolition d'un mur" (1896) are reminiscent of Muybridge's depictions of day laborers. Also, many of the film subjects of the Edison studio were more obviously borrowed from Muybridge's studies of laborers in motion, including "Blacksmith Scene" (1893), "The Barbershop" (1894), "Winchester Arms Factory at Noon Time" (1896), and "Columbia Bicycle Shop" (1897).<sup>19</sup> In effect, we see two simultaneous impulses working at odds: as a technology "of indisputable value to artists and scientists," cinematography works apparently at odds with its own goals. On the one hand, it attempts to reveal a latent truth in motion (presumably of value to scientists) and simultaneously to produce the sense that there is a latent truth to be uncovered (an aesthetic goal presumably of value to artists, and certainly of value to the fetishist).<sup>20</sup> The one attempts something like Bazinian

realism; the other attempts to understand its milieu through fetish structures (compensatory mediation).

What sets this particular fetishization apart from the development of a gender-fetish as described by Williams is that these labor series provide something of a limit case to the depiction of maleness. If we take as a whole Muybridge's series showing women in motion, we see time and again an abundance of the fetish (costuming, props, bashfulness, voyeurism, etc.). Looking at the laborer series as a whole, we see an obvious ambiguity in the fetish structure, a sort of half-formed, quasi fetish rather than something overabundant and all-determining. While this sort of partial fetish structure is akin to Williams' fetish-in-progress, hers continues along the same path toward accoutrement, embellishment, and visible excess. The fact that these figures are both men *and* laborers troubles Muybridge and his cinematic successors.<sup>21</sup> Unlike the fetishization of women, the depiction of men in fetishized situations looks for other outlets. As I will make clear below, it's this troubled area that filmic depictions of boxing attempt to work through.

### Form, Formlessness, Abstraction

It isn't merely a problem of an ideal realism (akin to Bazin's) that proves impossible from the outset of the cinematic medium, but rather a more specific problem of the *form* that that realism will take. How does one convincingly go about presenting and capturing reality? Even in Bazin, we can sense something of the sexual language informing this endeavor: filmic technologies "satisfy" an "obsession with realism." Up to now, I've devoted much time to discussing the various ways in which Muybridge departs from an unmediated presentation of a scientific reality (his various narrative fetishes in his portrayal of women and of laborers); however, this leaves under-explained and under-explored those series which supposedly present a truly unmediated vision of reality. That is, this leaves undisturbed and untroubled his series of (unclassed) men in motion; to do so could be seen as a reinscription of the gender and class politics Muybridge himself enacts. By concentrating on the ways in which Muybridge has set apart laborers and women in *Animal Locomotion*, I may have inadvertently reaffirmed the unmarked status of his category of masculinity at large.

In more closely examining these other series (men walking, running, jumping, etc.) I will attempt to describe the formal qualities of these series. This is a difficult task insofar as the defining trait of these series is their apparent formlessness. Though both Laura Mulvey and Linda Williams depend for their arguments upon the inherent maleness of the scientific will-to-knowledge and though it can be easily claimed that Muybridge tailored his methods to better suit his studies of males in motion, this assumes an *actual transparency* in Muybridge's methods. That is, Bazin's obsession with realism has been truly satisfied. That this satisfaction arrives only via the fetishization of women and of laboring men is not particularly unusual, but I'm skeptical of the possibility of there being anything like a formless transparency and confident that under closer scrutiny we will see peculiar traits arise within this version of (proto-cinematic) realism that carry over into later cinematic practice and into other manifestations of realism (i.e., literature).

In his study of realism and masculinity in the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century, Dudley discusses at length the problem introduced by an understanding of masculinity (here, in literature) predicated on formlessness, scientific observation, and a lack of ornamentation. For him, the central manifestation of this problem is a set of narrators who must adopt the feminized role of the artist while simultaneously distancing themselves from it by

understanding themselves as masculine participants in the action being described. The result, he claims, is the role of “observer,” a narrator caught in the perplexing position of being neither fully a participant nor fully the artist. A “naturalist fiction [emerges which] thus reflects the difficult balancing act required of an art that defined itself as ‘artless.’ Furthermore, it is through the discourse of gender that the aesthetic sensibility peculiar to literary naturalism emerges” (21). As does Linda Williams, Dudley draws upon the cultural-historical importance of the schema which relegates femininity to ornamentation, style, and what was in the late-nineteenth century thought of as the “aesthetic movement” and assigns masculinity to sparseness, scientism, and what Dudley refers to as an “anti-aesthetic” pose. I am here reminded of Muybridge’s dual purpose of providing a study of “indisputable value to the artist and to the scientist,” but importantly what Dudley’s study does not account for are the different attitudes adopted when representing different subjects.

Regardless, the strength of this schema persists through the turn of the century and into much of what came later to be called Modernism; and as Dudley himself claims, “in so linking artistic ideals with notions of manhood, naturalist fiction, in turn, reveals the contradictory and unstable nature of this aesthetic scheme and constructs an approach to the problem of the artist as both insider and outsider that continues to haunt the persona of the author in American society” (14). I hesitate to agree too strongly with this last of Dudley’s claims but will certainly allow that this gendered aesthetic schema continues to persist in various literary and filmic works (primarily in hardboiled fiction, Naturalist film/fiction, and in various avant-garde movements such as abstract expressionism). As for his claim that Naturalist fiction has a unique claim to the insider-outsider duality, this seems to me scarcely tenable.<sup>22</sup> What Dudley’s argument does provide, however, is a way of thinking of this experience of alienation as predicated upon an experience and understanding of gender and that this experience has tangible formal features.

Returning to Muybridge’s work, it isn’t difficult now to see the nature of the fetishization I’ve described above. On one hand, following from Williams, we see the production of a fetish structure in which women bear the onus of narrative in an ostensibly scientific framework, and we can stretch Williams’ argument to apply similarly to Muybridge’s “mechanics” performing their assigned motions in a narrative context; while on the other hand, we are left with what appears to be a bare and unadorned masculinity. In point of fact, these remaining unmarked (non-laboring, non-feminized) representations of masculinity in *Animal Locomotion* are men performing athletic feats, a far cry from the “actions incidental to every-day life” that Muybridge claims to be recording.<sup>23</sup> What is it in the way these actions are filmed, however, that makes them appear so well-suited to the methods Muybridge employs?

To answer this formal question, I think attention must be given to some of the details involved in the technological apparatus Muybridge invents and deploys. In claiming that authors of the time were attempting to achieve an “anti-aesthetic” formlessness in their writing, John Dudley also suggests a particular attitude toward the technology of writing itself. His suggestion is that authors overcame the feminine associations of artistry and aestheticism by borrowing the journalist’s scientific detachment, lending a technological transparency to prose itself.<sup>24</sup> Muybridge understood his project not as an end in and of itself; it was meant to serve as a tool to others (his “artists” and “scientists”). He was merely providing tools in the form of photographs (or photographic data) for others to apply to their own individual work. In his description of his method, “Prospectus and Catalogue of Plates,” Muybridge gives the specific measurements, angles, and various logistical means by which he photographed his many series. The following is a selection from these descriptions:

An estimate having been made of the interval of time which will be required, between each photographic exposure, to illustrate the complete movement, or that portion of the complete movement desired, the apparatus is adjusted to complete a succession of electric circuits at each required interval of time, and the motor is set in operation. When the series is to illustrate *progressive* motion; upon the arrival of the model at the point marked “1” on the track, the operator, by pressing a button, completes an electric circuit, which immediately throws into gearing a portion of the apparatus hitherto at rest. By means of suitably-arranged connections, an electric current is transmitted to each of the 3 cameras marked “1” in the various batteries, and an exposure is simultaneously made on each of the photographic plates, respectively, contained therein. At the end of the predetermined interval of time, a similar current is transmitted to each of the cameras marked “2,” an another exposure made on each of the next 3 plates, and so forth until each series of exposures in each of the three batteries is completed. Assuming the operator to have exercised good judgment in regulating the speed of the apparatus, and in making the first electric contact at the proper time, and that the figures 1 to 12 represent the distance traversed by the model in executing the movement desired, the first three photographic exposures—that is, one exposure in each battery—will have been synchronously made when the model was passing the position marked “1” on the track T; the second three exposures will have been made when the model was passing the position marked “2,” and so on until twelve successive exposures were simultaneously made in each of the three batteries. This perfect uniformity of time, speed, and distance, however, was not always obtained. (1587)

I excerpt this technical description at length to relay at least some of the extent to which Muybridge’s exactitude (or at least his descriptions of his exactitude) stands in for his artistic goals (his aim for “graceful” movements).<sup>25</sup> Muybridge conflates his elaborate system of relative angles and positions, shutter timing and speed, and multiple-camera coordination with his anticipated artistic result. For Muybridge, formlessness occurs when his technological apparatus perfectly overlaps the artistry of the result; it’s in these ideal moments that Bazin’s positivist realism appears. Through these technologies, “nature at last does more than imitate art: she imitates the artist” (Bazin 15). As I’ve shown above, Muybridge’s most obvious difficulty arises from his depictions of laborers, and Linda Williams’ argument demonstrates that the narrative embellishments attached to women in movement exhibit a similar (though ostensibly *latent*) anxiety, one that is masked by the various narrative accoutrements in those series. Muybridge seems to conjoin seamlessly art and science (technology) in his depictions of athletic men, and he finds a compensatory fetish to force women to fit into his dual purposes; however, neither the technological apparatus nor artistic embellishment suffices in his depictions of laborers. Something in the resulting photo series displays to Muybridge’s own eye something undesirable and ungraceful. Despite his attempt to elide these differences, they persist. As I claim above, this particular fetish structure remains half-formed because his interest in depicting these laborers must insist on their simultaneous visible masculinity (sameness) and visible class status (difference). Unlike his depictions of women, who remain pliable in the face of his fetishistic needs, his mechanics are irreconcilable to either the category of abstract maleness or that of fetishized difference. We will see a similar problem surface in his depictions of boxers, and little wonder since the sport and its practitioners are marked (for Muybridge) by the same contradictory identifications (masculinity and manual labor).

Whether as tools for scientific study or as artists' models, the entirety of his project is dedicated to measurement (primarily proportion and position) over the duration of a given movement. As artists' aids, many of the various props, tools, and clothing make some amount of sense, since a Neo-Classical style was then commonplace in art school education. The pseudo-pastoral situations and Olympic-style athletic performance (originally naked men) inhered in a work that served (at least, in part) as a catalogue of a variety of Classical poses and situations. The "grid" background was useful not merely for scientific observation, but also for art students studying proportion. This technique of applying a grid to artists' subjects and models is an old one, perhaps made most popular in the modern world by Leon Battista Alberti during the Italian Renaissance in his 1435 work *De Pictura* (On Painting). Alberti's decidedly scientific approach to painting and drawing codified various methods for achieving a sense of depth and perspective in painting which had earlier depended upon allegory, symbolism, and iconography to convey meaning, style, and form. In an attitude resembling Muybridge's, Alberti attempts to explain how in fact things are seen. In the first place, when we look at a thing, we see it as an object which occupies a space. The painter will draw around this space, and he will call this process of setting down the outline, appropriately, circumscription. Then, as we look, we discern how the several surfaces of the object seen are fitted together; the artist, when drawing these combinations of surfaces in their correct relationship, will properly call this composition. (64)

In order more clearly (and most importantly, more *accurately*) to circumscribe a given object, Alberti suggests the use of a "veil" which is "loosely woven of fine thread" and "divided up by thicker threads into as many parallel square sections as you like, and stretched on a frame." The veil is then set up "between the eye and the object to be represented" (65). This tool's application has persisted well beyond Alberti's description in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and Alberti already anticipates one of the problems experienced by Muybridge: "I will not listen to those who say it is no good for a painter to get into the habit of using these things [i.e., translucent veils with grids], because, though they offer him the greatest help in painting, they make the artist unable to do anything by himself without them. If I am not mistaken, we do not ask for infinite labour from the painter, but we do expect a painting that appears markedly in relief and similar to the objects represented" (67). Here, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, we already recognize the conflation of "style" and "technology" in service of the desire for absolute verisimilitude. In Alberti's formulation, this technique so flawlessly unites style and its apparatus that he claims, "if I have not succeeded in accomplishing this undoubtedly difficult task to the satisfaction of the reader, Nature is more to blame than me [sic], as she imposed the law that no art exists that did not begin from faulty origins" (96). While this last comes off as tongue-in-cheek humility, it also serves as a reasonable summation of his (and by extension Muybridge's) attitude towards his method: if the result (the artwork) proves unsatisfactory, the fault lies with Nature since the technique employed so perfectly represents its objects.

Muybridge, too, believed in the verisimilitude resulting from his applied technique (with the important exception of his "mechanics"). Muybridge, and later pioneering filmmakers such as Edison and the Lumière brothers, returned to Alberti's obsession with proportionality, depth, and vanishing-point perspectives. This was an artistic endeavor every bit as much as it was a scientific one; technology is for them the exact equivalent of style and form. In this unity of technology and form, the sense of formlessness arrives from the ability to resort to technological limitations when asking stylistic questions. For example, questions of framing and camera position are clearly answerable by resorting to Muybridge's lengthy technical description

(above). To call these “limitations” is also something of a misnomer since these were technical decisions (e.g., how far to place the camera, what size lens to use, etc.) at least as much as they were consequences (e.g., shutter speed and photographic developing techniques determined the relative distances between camera and subject).<sup>26</sup>

As many critics have made clear throughout cinematic history, cinematic technology always engages in precisely the sort of “feedback loop” Foucault describes in *A History of Sexuality*: a “transfer point for relations of power” which both creates and is created by the ideologies inherent to a given technology. Jean-Louis Baudry, in his “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” claims that “the spectator identifies less with what is represented, the spectacle itself, than with what stages the spectacle, makes it seen, obliging him to see what it sees; this is exactly the function taken over by the camera as a sort of relay” (*Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* 295). That is, the spectator (in his formulation, the filmmaker and spectator are no different) transposes him/herself into the position of the cinematic apparatus (camera, projector, etc.). “The cinema can thus appear as a sort of psychic apparatus of substitution, corresponding to the model defined by the dominant ideology” (296) passed down from perspective artists like Alberti. Words like “style” cease to carry the same meaning, understood to have been supplanted by the apparatus itself (a position occupied by the transcendental viewing subject).

Perhaps the single-most compelling aim of Muybridge’s work is not the breakdown of bodies in motion into their constituent, measured parts, but rather the isolation of the bodies in motion from their expected context. This could be another way of understanding Williams’ point with regard to narrative; in reintroducing something like context, Muybridge introduces something resembling narrative.<sup>27</sup> In effect, and this is key to understanding Muybridge’s study, the male body in motion (athletic in contrast to laboring) is *abstractable*. That is, it can be reduced to an absolute state separate from any other context. And here we begin to understand the use-value of athletic performance in *Animal Locomotion* and more importantly, the underlying anxieties and contradictions implicit in this version of abstraction and the form which it takes. That Williams would turn to the props and accoutrements accompanying women to note the differences in Muybridge’s depictions of men and women highlights the importance of the nakedness of the men shown. It is as if Muybridge is attempting to distill maleness down to its (literally) barest essence. That the majority of these men are not performing motions “incidental to every-day life” and are in fact performing exceptional actions further demonstrates the degree to which Muybridge is perpetually abstracting maleness and the male body in motion and isolating it from anything like “every-day life.” Athleticism is fundamental to this process of abstraction.

### Boxing and Verisimilitude

While Dudley’s *A Man’s Game* focuses specifically on literature, his arguments derive from larger cultural concerns and anxieties of the time. For these authors, as for Muybridge, “organized athletics, in particular, united the various strains of masculine anxiety and proved significant in shaping Norris’s, Crane’s, and London’s journalistic and literary concerns” (9). Muybridge’s series are not merely “actions incidental to every-day life” (Muybridge “Prospectus”), but are more often than not actions appropriate to athletic practice and the sporting world, especially among his male subjects.<sup>28</sup> In *Animal Locomotion*, men not only walk (one of the few actions performed by men that may actually be “incidental to every-day life”), but they also run at gaits as various as those of Leland Stanford’s horses. These men throw rocks,

put shots, throw spears, wrestle, fence, play cricket and baseball, jump obstacles, jump for distance, throw a discus and a hammer, and (most important for my study) box. Though Dudley's argument pertains strictly to the rise of spectator sports in an American context, it should be of little surprise that the first international Olympic competition occurred in the decade immediately following Muybridge's Pennsylvania motion studies; certainly athletic (male) competition was on many people's minds in the United States and abroad.

However, rather than devote this study entirely to representations of male athleticism, I've chosen to single out one particularly compelling and volatile form of male athleticism that appears in Muybridge's study: boxing. During a lecture tour of Europe in the early 1880s, the Prince of Wales purportedly told Muybridge, "I should like to see your boxing pictures" (Muybridge xxiii). Though his encounter with the Prince of Wales occurred before Muybridge had completed *Animal Locomotion*, Muybridge had struck a chord in conducting photographic studies of boxing. His boxing series were not only of strong interest to those attending his lecture series, but they also became an important subject to later filmmakers and contemporary writers (both of fiction and of journalism). Moreover, it's only in America that boxing grows in importance beyond the actual matches. Boxing was popular in many countries through the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, but it's only in America that a substantial body of film and fiction grows with it. In fact, not only is boxing the most frequent athletic subject for Muybridge's motion studies, but among sports films the quantity of boxing films produced in all of the twentieth century is second only to films about racing horses. Boxing appears throughout (American) Naturalist fiction and develops hand-in-hand with the hardboiled fiction genre. Simultaneously, boxing is among the earliest subjects for the earliest filmmakers (again, primarily in America) and persists as a filmic subject well after the sport itself waned in popularity.<sup>29</sup>

Within the context of Muybridge's extended photographic study, boxing is the one athletic performance that does not readily abstract masculinity from other cross-identities like class and race. In all of his 781 photo-motion studies, the only non-white model (number "22" in the catalogue) is one of his model-boxers who is described in the catalogue as a "mulatto and professional pugilist" (Muybridge 1588).<sup>30</sup> While this unnamed boxer appears in other non-boxing series (plate 6 "Walking," plate 91 "Ascending Stairs," plate 126 "Descending Stairs," and plate 311 "Heaving a 75-lb rock"), he does perform a left-handed and a right-handed punch in two separate motion series (plate 343 "Striking a blow with left hand" and plate 344 "Striking a blow with right hand"). His appearance in the collected series does not stand out for his appearing any different from the numerous other male models in *Animal Locomotion*. Nor is his race made to seem readily apparent to the observer. Like the many other male athletes among the series, model number 22 is naked, is not encumbered by any narrative embellishments or props, and stands isolated before the battery of cameras. However, when put alongside the sixteen other boxing series in Muybridge's work, we recognize its most obvious difference: number 22 boxes alone. If we were to understand these two series (343 and 344) in light of my foregoing argument about Muybridge's abstracting images of male athleticism in motion, then this would pose no problem. He is alone, his musculature and athleticism are foregrounded; his masculinity is seemingly clear.

However, here we come to one of the crucial differences in the representation of boxers in contrast to the representation of other athletes among the series. The three combative sports included in the collection (boxing, wrestling, and fencing) all depict *paired* athletes with the important exception of these two series (plates 343 and 344) of model 22. Unlike the other

isolated athletes throughout the work, the isolation of model 22 is of a different kind. At first glance, the formal presentation of model 22 in motion is identical to the other motion series of male athletes, but his being presented under the guise of the rubric I've established above is, in fact, a *reversal* of the expected form for the visual representation of boxing. The other boxers always appear in pairs, which is itself a reworking of what I've termed an abstractable masculinity. But before we can fully understand the nature of the reversal I'm speaking of here, we need to take yet another step back and turn first to the formal features of the representation of boxing in plates 329-342. From there, I will return to the particular issues addressed in plates 343 and 344.

Muybridge's boxing series can be divided into three types. The first (plates 329-333) is the style most familiar to enthusiasts and practitioners of the time: bare-knuckled prize fighting, which included closed-fist blows to head and body, closed-fist parries, and grappling techniques resembling those of modern olympic-style wrestling. The second (plates 334 and 335) is the then-novel Queensberry style with gloves (though the Queensberry rules were developed and first implemented in the 1860s, the first championship under these rules didn't occur until the 1890s), which eliminated grappling and limited attacks to the use of gloved fists.<sup>31</sup> The third (plates 336-342) is the slightly more esoteric "open-hand" boxing. One of the more remarkable aspects of this last style is that it appears too fast for Muybridge's cameras to make sense of the movements; it isn't always obvious what has happened between one frame and the next, and a projection of these series in sequence would appear choppy and disconnected.

In contrast to the other combative sports (and nearly any of the other actions in the entirety of the catalogue) depicted in these series, boxing in practice very closely resembles boxing as it appears here. That is, the movements inherent to the sport don't appear as isolated from their accompanying apparatus as do the numerous other actions in the catalogue. As I mentioned above, the structure and form of boxing overlap much with early film technique and interest. Particularly evident in these plates is the overlap between camera framing and the boundaries of the ring. Foreground, background, frame left, and frame right are both the boundaries of the ring and the boundaries of the visible field. The (non-filmic) idiosyncrasy of Muybridge's use of a "foreshortened" perspective from a 60° angle relative to the "lateral" angle (perpendicular to the line of action) only adds to the sense that this is also a ring under scrutiny by spectators *surrounding* a ring. In fact, spectatorship seems wholly antithetical to the majority of Muybridge's human motion studies; of all of his human motion studies, only boxing already existed as a widespread spectator event, and only in these series do there seem to be implied spectators.<sup>32</sup>

Even the boxers' near nudity seems as much a product of the rules of boxing (dictating that boxers wear next to nothing) as it seems a product of Muybridge's governing rubric (stripping motion down to its barest essence). This again in contrast to the other models depicted throughout the photo-series collection whose nudity is not an expected part of the motion being performed. Among the few exceptions to this general rule are the series of women bathing (plates 406-414) and those series of women dressing and undressing (plates 415-425 and 427-432, respectively). As Linda Williams makes clear, these were part of an active *scientia sexualis* in which the mysteries of sexuality became subject to scientific scrutiny and understanding. In this sense, these bathers (as often bathing one another as themselves) were no part of public discourse; their entire existence as sexual subjects hinges on an implied voyeurism, a viewer-position further suggested by the whole of Muybridge's extensive "toilet" series which purport to reveal the mysteries of the various phases of women in their most private moments (dressing,



washing, getting into bed, etc.).<sup>33</sup> To those funding Muybridge's work, who were likely already familiar with the conventions and structure of boxing, seeing two near-naked men framed by the camera and seen from multiple angles would seem far less an abstraction from "every-day life" as nearly any of the other series. An important ambiguity arises from these series between the abstract, de-contextualized masculinity on display (akin to the series of naked men walking, running, etc.) and the very familiar appearance of a boxing match and its apparatus (ring, audience, dress, etc.). The incredible similarity of boxing on screen to boxing in the ring explains in part its being a common and intensely popular subject throughout early cinematic practice.

### Spectatorship and Investment

It seems to me that the only significant visible "absences" in the boxing series are the ring judge and the spectators; even this sense of something missing could be further diminished if we account for the absence of a judge by referring to the well-established practice of boxing *exhibition*. Briefly, exhibition style bouts emerged alongside prize fights, but according to Elliott J. Gorn in his study of boxing in nineteenth century America, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prizefighting in America*, exhibition bouts were something of a cultural defense against middle-class moralizing and anti-Anglo sentiment which painted boxing as a sign of the barbaric and decayed morals of the British (leveled with equal severity against the old aristocracy and the working class). According to Gorn, exhibitions developed as an apparatus almost wholly distinct from prizefighting. While many practitioners and spectators participated in both, the intent driving the development of exhibition bouts was to avoid the social stigma attached to prizefighting. Exhibitions attempted to regain the gentlemanly status that had accompanied boxing in late 18<sup>th</sup> century England; they were demonstrations of technique and skill, were often choreographed sequences, and rarely faced the legal issues constantly plaguing prizefighting. Where boxing had once been a spectacle thought to have brought tradesmen and gentlemen together (Gorn says aficionados of the time referred to this audience as "the fancy"), the uniquely bourgeois America of the nineteenth century forced many practitioners to distance themselves from the perceived brutality of prizefighting. Of course, some trainers and boxers made more of this distinction than others.

Since an exhibition match was not fought in the proper sense and there was no winner to be determined, it needed no judge and his "absence" would have been a familiar sight. Moreover, the entire apparatus behind exhibition bouts closely resembled the goals of Muybridge's study. As the more aristocratic and morally acceptable half of the boxing world, exhibitions explicitly claimed to display for an audience both the "science" and the "art" of boxing.<sup>34</sup> Significantly, its art and science were made visible and comprehensible via exhibition, and boxing had already been a common subject for the visual arts. In terms of his boxing series, the only real contribution Muybridge made to the (yet-to-be-invented) cinematic apparatus was to develop a photographic device tailored to a preexisting model of spectatorship. That this particular form of spectatorship already contained a hazy delineation between narrative (choreography) and ideal realism (the actual, phenomenological world) made the application of the apparatus to boxing that much more seamless; exhibition boxing closely resembled prizefighting, suggesting the unpredictability of the actual world, but it also was recognizably predictable in its choreography.

In terms of the development of the ideology of cinema, Muybridge's boxing series are one of the first examples of the understanding and accommodation of an "audience." This is not to say that Muybridge's other series don't demonstrate the development of a filmic subject/viewer (see above discussion of Metz, et al.), but I am suggesting that the easy parallel of

the implied boxing audience with the series viewer in these boxing plates demonstrates that Muybridge is closer to the ideology of the filmic apparatus (and its audience) than many critics recognize. That this quality appears in his studies of boxing should seem less than surprising at this point, but the connections between the development of the cinematic apparatus and of boxing culture run deeper. Unlike many of his series of women in motion, these series imply neither a voyeuristic viewer nor an objective (abstracted) scientific observer. While betting had no place in exhibition boxing (and certainly had no place in Muybridge's motion studies of the sport), viewers' investment in the matches was still predicated on having a stake in one boxer or the other. It's nearly unimaginable to have a truly unbiased spectator at a boxing match; the spectator must side with one boxer or the other in order to make sense of the match.<sup>35</sup> This is not to say that voyeurism and scientific detachment play no part in cinema—obviously, these are two of the most common ways of understanding film viewership—but during the cinema's earliest years (and among its immediate technological forebears) its dominant mode of spectatorship was still very much undecided and undetermined.<sup>36</sup>

The first public audiences for film (in the United States) were not predominantly middle class. As best as has been determined by early film scholars, these earliest film viewers may have been predominantly urban-dwelling and working class (Hansen 61). Though initially incorporated into the programs of lengthier stage performances, films soon gained their own dedicated storefronts (typically nickelodeons) and their own unique methods of exhibition (small, individual viewing mechanisms). They were often found in storefronts located at the boundary between working class and middle class neighborhoods. This is the precise socio-geographical location in which sociologist Loïc Wacquant finds most boxing schools to be located in his study/memoir of boxing in Chicago, *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*. Wacquant claims that one most often finds boxing schools at this geographical boundary because boxing is about the personal achievement that would allow one to move from working class to middle class, but his concern is only for the boxers themselves not for boxing's spectators. Boxing spectators had traditionally been confined to the "fancy" (a mix of working class men and scattered aristocrats, journalists, and others "slumming it" among the "vital" laborers), and film's earliest venues posed little or no challenge to this long-standing group.

However, as narrative film began to gain prominence in the first decade of the twentieth century, the medium began to appeal to middle class tastes and desires. Through this transitional period in filmmaking, credulity became a common target for ridicule among journalists, critics, and filmmakers. As Geertz claims for cockfighting, boxing also depends upon a strong viewer investment for its meaning, but the absurdity of overinvestment in early film was seen as a sign of one's lack of sophistication, typically understood along class lines. As film moved toward a predominantly narrative style, the credulous spectator became a more and more common target for journalists, critics, and even films themselves (e.g., the Edison-Porter film "Uncle Josh at the Picture Show" in which a caricatured country bumpkin falls prey to the illusions of the screen, culminating in his attacking the screen).

Finding ways to "de-invest" viewers from exhibited boxing matches was crucial to its being accepted in the growing bourgeois-ification of the medium. The anxiety over this type of investment came to a head in the 1912 boxing film of Jack Johnson v. John Jeffries. Moral crusaders finally defeated boxing's defenders in the black boxer's famous defeat of a white man for the Heavyweight Championship; boxing films were, for all intents and purposes made illegal. That they first became reintroduced to the public via narrative film (in the 1920s) testifies to just how widespread this anxiety over viewership modes was. Metz's form of cinematic fetishism

was, as the preceding discussion shows, part of a larger process of the racially inflected bourgeois-ification of the medium. It wasn't a given that the cinema would provide a ready means for "transcending" the reality on screen.

### Symmetry and Narcissism in the Boxing Ring

The close resemblance of Muybridge's boxing series (plates 329-342) to exhibition boxing returns us to a crucial concern in early cinema: the question of verisimilitude. The fact that Muybridge's studies of boxing more closely resemble exhibition boxing than prizefighting suggests that he was part of the drive to make representations of boxing palatable to a middle class audience. The staginess of all of his series in *Animal Locomotion* is obvious, and to reduce these motion studies to a question of the difference between actual life and its staging would always return us to the fact that Muybridge coordinated and choreographed all of his (human) subjects. I do not, then, intend to investigate the degree to which these series are "real"; to do so returns us to the unanswerable phenomenological question about film's inherent realism (see Bazin). I am, however, attempting to engage with teleological assumptions about the development of narrative in the cinema. Boxing does more than resemble proto- and early cinema in its formal concerns; even more than its accompanying ideological apparatus, I would argue that boxing's important place in cinema in its earliest phases stems from each medium's concern for the place and function of narrative. Further, I would argue that each medium's concern for narrative is expressed through remarkably similar attitudes toward gender, race, and class.

Plates 329-342 feature two boxers in each series. There is a predictable symmetry of action and visibility. On one side of each photo stands a face-on view of one boxer; on the opposite side is a backside view of the other. These positions tend not to change (the only exception occurs in some of the throws to the ground), and each fighter closely resembles the other in terms of height, weight, skin tone, and even facial hair (matching mustaches). It is rare to find two men in the same frame in Muybridge's study. Women appear together in abundance throughout the work, a characteristic which Williams claims is a further sign of Muybridge's commonplace fetishization of women.<sup>37</sup> However, when women appear together in the work, not only are these situations often narrativized/contextualized (women bathing other women, a woman passes another woman in the "street," etc.), but Muybridge heightens the sense of difference *between* the two women. The sense of a servant-master relationship pervades these images of women in *Animal Locomotion*. Recognizing this obvious difference through narrative-like cues (props, costumes, etc.) makes clear the fetishistic nature of Muybridge's use of paired women.

In contrast, Muybridge's boxers, fencers, and wrestlers are almost wholly indistinguishable from one another. The carefully orchestrated sense of symmetry and sameness pervades the images of fighting men. Many of the fighting series (including the few fencing and wrestling series) follow what Muybridge terms a "round" movement, "a movement which, being completed, restores the body and limbs to the approximately relative position they occupied at its commencement" (1588). The only exceptions are found in plates 331, 332, and 333 (and, of course, 343 and 344, but more on these below) where one boxer performs a throw or takedown. Nothing seems to change, but the two men seem deadlocked in an endlessly even match. Regardless, the sense of difference between the two boxers disappears in favor of a more typically abstract view of the masculinity on display (we could even call this a literalization of "the phallus [that] is left staring at its own reflection"). There exist no obvious contextual or

narrative cues that would set one boxer apart from the other. It's perhaps in this light that we see these series' closest affinity to exhibition style boxing where spectator alignment matters not at all since there is no actual competition taking place with none of its accompanying apparatus (betting, etc.). At best, the formal structure of the boxing series gives us a sense of something like a perspectival difference; that is, consistently the series show one boxer (on the left) with his face toward the viewer and the other (on the right) with his back to the viewer. Yet, even this small difference falls away as merely a photographic "trick" of showing two perspectives (of the same object) simultaneously. Even though we are watching *two* boxers, the effect is closer to watching a *single* boxer from two vantage points simultaneously (a technique Muybridge himself employs throughout *Animal Locomotion*).

An important question remains: if these boxing series (with two men) are much more like the other series of male athleticism (with only one man depicted), why the need for two men in the first place? Why wouldn't these series *actually* use one man instead of *virtually* using one man? Answering this question is at the heart of the relevance of boxing to Muybridge's study and to turn-of-the-century American culture generally. The easy answer would be to say that since actual boxing includes two men, its representations must also include two men; however, this answer ignores the appearance of baseball players in isolation, foot-racers in isolation, and so on. As I've discussed above, Muybridge's representations of boxing closely resemble boxing as it's actually seen and conducted. More than any of the other depictions of athleticism, boxing looks most like its counterpart in reality. It is both intensely attached to an ideal abstracted masculinity (as are the other series of men in motion) and also to its actual apparatus and context (closer to other series which fetishize their subjects).

### Representation in Conflict

As I see it, the reason for this ambiguity is a deeper anxiety over the socio-cultural conflicts which boxing presents. In Muybridge's study we see the early signs of a visual conflict in representations of boxing that addresses and attempts to overcome the unique situation of boxing in the US in the late-nineteenth century. It lies between an abstract (unmarked, non-fetishized) masculinity and the problematic category of a fetishized (marked, contextualized, narrativized) masculinity. Muybridge cannot represent boxing without somehow (even in a strangely displaced way) confronting its deep interest in generating context. Elliott Gorn claims that boxing in the nineteenth century depended upon contextualizing each and every fight within pre-existing cultural markers of difference. Above all, Gorn claims, boxing was a manifestation of localized ethnic conflicts. Often these were exaggerated conflicts between self-identifying English and Irish communities, or native-born Irish-American and Irish immigrant communities. Commonly, these differences were heightened well beyond any actual associations with England, the US, or Ireland; depending upon the fight, a single fighter may be the representative of English loyalties and in another stand in for Irish ones. According to Gorn, "it is clear that ring rituals sought to channel working-class rivalries, giving them clear and coherent expression . . . The factional hatreds between neighborhood and ethnic cliques did not disappear, but a hiatus in the violence seemed possible as the gangs turned to a symbolic expression of their differences. For a moment, at least, two men in the ring would do the work for many in the streets" (87). Not only did boxers stand in for a given neighborhood or ethnicity, but the peculiarities of a boxer's own neighborhood or ethnic identification were often reconstructed and overstated by spectators, managers, and reporters. Boxers were thus made to seem an intensification of these pre-existing

differences; that the differences between the boxers themselves were (more often than not) fictive made little difference to the communities they represented.

Boxing is unique in that it's a working class form that must always work against a strictly abstract masculinity. That is, boxing makes no sense without these fetishistic markers of difference. The problem Muybridge faces, then, is his attempting to include his representations of boxing within his larger project of presenting images of an ideal, abstract male athleticism. Hence, we end up with odd juxtapositions of an isolated "mulatto and professional boxer" and doubled white amateur boxers. Increasingly, we can see the class conflict being played out in this anxiety; on the one hand, boxing is understood as an invested and heavily differentiated form (its history as a working class form), and on the other, it is seen as a means for articulating and isolating a singular, idealized form of masculinity (its being more and more adopted as a useful form for middle class ideology). That this same conflict plays out on the level of the possible stylistic modes for film as a whole is made clear in the contradictory impulses seen in Muybridge's studies of boxing. Muybridge sees in boxing a means for articulating difference without having to acknowledge difference, thus we end up with a (white) man fighting his perfect mirror image. Model 22, then, is doubly different. His being a boxer already sets him apart from the other athletes since boxing is a means of representing differences in conflict, and his being isolated from any mirror opponent marks him as yet "more" different since boxing can only be understood in *pairs* of men.

### Chapter 3

#### Fistic Consciousness: Representation, Realism, and Spectatorship in American Literary Naturalism

On July 4, 1910, in Reno, Nevada, the reigning heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson squared off against Jim Jeffries, a former champion who had left retirement to stand against the first African American to claim the championship title. This fight occupied the cultural imagination—to the point of obsession—for months prior to the fight, and for years afterward.<sup>38</sup> Among the hundreds of newspaper correspondents present at the fight from around the world, Jack London was among the highest profile. Under contract to the *New York Herald*, London wrote twelve pieces between June 23 and July 4 covering each of the eleven days prior to the fight as well as the fight itself. London, like many others in the press, made no bones about his own personal investments in seeing a white boxer defeat a black one.

For London, the signifying power of boxing depends on its physical, violent, and visible rhetoric of biology. As London says in his first dispatch on the Johnson-Jeffries fight, “for the man who would know life as it is, in all its naked facts, and not life as he surmises or dreams it ought to be, there is something of big and basic importance in the contemplating of the world-wide interest manifested in this fight” (265).<sup>39</sup> What is on display for all to see are the “naked facts” of “life as it is.” To be fair, London is in his newspaper dispatches much more sensationalist than otherwise; however, the sentiment here conveyed closely parallels London’s overriding philosophy of crude biological determinism prevalent in much of his work. Throughout his fiction and in his many fight pieces, there is an almost endless barrage of discourse concerning “racial history” and “racial memory.”<sup>40</sup>

There is, for London, a direct biological connection between those in the ring and those watching the fight. This is nothing less than a biological and racial theory of representation. The two fighters aren’t merely “symbols” or “reflections” of some larger group affiliation; they don’t stand in for those who surround the ring. What happens in the ring isn’t a figurative act; that is, boxing doesn’t refer to something other than itself, and the connection between fighters and spectators isn’t an imaginative one. It is material, biological, and tangible. In London’s coverage of the 1910 Johnson-Jeffries fight, we see a clear example of the stakes and power of representation at the turn-of-the-century. London finds in (and around) the ring an aesthetic model for how a shared racial history might facilitate a more real realism that can finally get at “life as it is.”

On the verge of Modernism’s explosion onto the American scene, London along with other authors and artists at the turn of the century are already questioning long-standing assumptions about the relationship between art and the phenomenal world. In this chapter, I claim that for the American Naturalists, boxing was an important site for reimagining the relationship between representation and reality, between signifier and signified. More importantly, boxing gave voice to the role of American racial politics and racial history within that transformation. Critics of American Modernism, such as Michael North, have discussed at length the close connections between the racial imagination and Modernist aesthetic philosophy, but I argue that such connections largely precede and extend beyond the Modernists proper. In addition to London’s fight coverage, I will also look closely at another well-known work of the period, Stephen Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. While many other authors and works might be equally well suited to this discussion—especially Frank Norris’s essays and novels—

I've chosen to look at two isolated prose pieces that I find most comprehensively engaged with the intersections of race, representation, and boxing.

In London's theory of boxing spectatorship, not only were the fighters embodiments of their respective racial groups (Johnson, the son of slaves, and Jeffries, a white boxer who had previously defeated the high-profile black boxer Peter Jackson in 1898), but boxing fandom itself has, for London, its own unique racial history:

Every train, east or west, brings in the sporting men, fight followers and the inevitable correspondent. It is to wonder. On the other hand, there is no wonder about it. There must be a large remnant left of the large-bloodedness of the English-speaking race to evince such a tremendous interest in the particular sport of sports which it originated and developed until it became stamped today into the crystallization of many generations, the Marquis of Queensberry rules. (264)

He goes even further back into racial history in accounting for the interest in fights: "they want to see fights because of the old red blood of Adam in them that will not down. It is a bit of profoundly significant human phenomena. No sociologist nor ethicist who leaves this fact out can cast a true horoscope of humanity" (265).<sup>41</sup> Prize-fight spectatorship is bound up, for London, in an Anglo-Saxon racial genealogy every bit as original as sin. In his coverage of Johnson's earlier bout with Burns in 1908, London expresses mild surprise at the "fair-mindedness" of the crowd because "those fifty or sixty thousand men were descended from generations that attended old bare-knuckle fights in England, where partisan crowds jammed the ringside, slugging each other, smashing the top hats of gentlemen, promoters, and backers, and swatting away with clubs at the heads of the poor devils of fights whenever they came near to the ropes" (258). As much as he praises the crowd's self-restraint, it's hard not to hear in London's surprise a genuine desire for those rowdier days of their progenitors.

Moreover, the easy way in which London offhandedly unites the spectators into a common genetic history flies directly in the face of historical fact—boxers and spectators are and have always been defined by their cultural, ethnic, class, and racial heterogeneity, particularly in the US.<sup>42</sup> Not just that, but he's also almost imperceptibly tied his theory of a shared racial history to a shared language ("the English-speaking race"); while certainly not an uncommon slip of the tongue, it's particularly telling when it comes from an author who is thinking so much about the nature of representation.

So strong is London's conviction that boxers and boxing spectators are acting according to genetically proscribed roles that when a match departs from his sense of the "natural rules" governing the fight, the fight becomes "inconsistent" and "unforgivable" (253). The fighter that doesn't follow the course proper to his primal role is likened to Max Nordau's "degenerate" whose behavior "has no affinity with [his] own nature" (Nordau 9). Seeing this "unforgivable" fight prompts London into a bituminous, Biblically-inflected digression on "the decadent":

[N]othing but disease and insanity and death can proceed from the weak-kneed and emasculated. It is vastly better to be elemental than decadent. And for those who to-day are healthy and strong and yet recoil from a prize-fight, it would be well for them to recollect that they have come from the loins of elemental men; that the decadent has no issue. (253)

To put it bluntly, all who are alive are descended from boxing fans. The progeny of those who aren't boxing fans will be naturally selected out of the future racial population. Seeing a fighter cave in to visible cowardice leads naturally into a discussion of similarly "cowardly" spectators who "recoil from a prize-fight." Boxing is thus neither "sign" nor "representation." For

spectators, the mere act of watching unflinchingly a boxing match is an affirmation of their virility. For London, the events in the ring are not a reflection or symbol of anything for those watching. The act of spectating has a material, biological significance. According to London's biologicistic thinking, boxers are not embodiments of spectators' interests and affiliations. For London, boxers *and* spectators are all part of a shared genetic history. Watching a match is acting according to one's racial make-up and ensures the survival of the race. Thus, a prize-fight is just as "real" to the spectators as it is to the fighters themselves.

To hear London recount these fights, everyone—with the exception of Jack Johnson—is Anglo-Saxon. Johnson's fights with Tommy Burns and Jim Jeffries are affirmations of Anglo-Saxon racial memory; there is no similar affirmation for Johnson. In the conclusion to his final piece on the Jeffries-Johnson fight, London writes, "Johnson is a wonder. No one understands him, this man who smiles. Well, the story of the fight is the story of a smile. If ever a man won by nothing more fatiguing than a smile, Johnson won to-day" (301). The shift from biological discourse to figurative language is unmistakable. Absent are the Darwinian overtones and gone are the links to race and racial history. Johnson, just like his victory, is a "wonder." He alone is figurative, and since none in the audience feels a racial link to him (a very wrong assumption by London), his actions in the ring can only be understood in metaphorical and symbolic terms.

Indeed, London's coverage of this and other Johnson fights returns again and again to the boxer's grotesque smile. London first draws attention to Johnson's smile in his coverage of the Burns-Johnson fight in December of 1908: "When he smiled a dazzling flash of gold filled the wide aperture between his open lips, and he smiled all the time" (260). The metonymic conflation of a black man with his too-big smile was no new turn of phrase at the time; it had been part of long-standing racial typing that became more pronounced with the popularity of nineteenth-century cartoons. However, what is remarkable about London's depiction is that someone so deeply invested in a biological philosophy of race, history, and culture credits a smile for the victory in the then-ultimate arena for biological and physiological prowess. As his exaggerated smile makes clear, Johnson is a cipher with no biological truth or genetic history of his own. His victories are testaments to the power of his smile, not of his musculature or athletic prowess. In line with most other journalists and commentators of the time, London depicted Johnson as a flashy and excessive showman. Johnson "is a play-actor deliberately playing a part . . . Back in that cool brain of his he decides he needs this display of tigerishness in his business, and so he displays it" (285). In contrast, he points to Jeffries' humility and public shyness, qualities that go hand in hand with his musculature. Just as Jeffries is constantly evading the public and "does not care a red cent for the public" (268), so do his muscles not aim to please. The "uninitiated do not understand" and are "surprised at his softness and at the sheath of fat that encased him" (270). But London is quick to correct this misunderstanding:

Take one of those soft pads of Jeff and watch it. Suddenly it leaps and quivers, takes form and bulk, is alive with swift and excessive energy, then relaxes and sinks back and down into the soft pad that it was. Now that is a muscle. It is the real thing. (270)

Jeffries' physique is an embodiment of his genuineness and humility. It isn't flashy, but it is "real." Johnson is a fighter of intellect, carefully measuring and calculating his movements and public appearances. In contrast, Jeffries is described in animalistic terms, a fighter whose muscles act and retract like a cat's claws. In a twist on the expected racial dynamics of civilization and primitivism that would ordinarily pit the civilized white man against the dark primitivism of the black man, Johnson is made an emblem of the degenerate and over-civilized present.



Jeff is a fighter, Johnson is a boxer. Jeff has the temperament of the fighter. Old mother nature in him is still red of fang and claw. He is more a Germanic tribesman and warrior of two thousand years ago than a civilized man of the twentieth century, with the civilized trade of boilermaker, and he has bridged the gap by turning pugilist and becoming the mightiest walloper of men in all the earth. (267)

To London, Johnson operates as an alienated subject, manipulating and mechanically operating his body's "business" from "that cool brain of his." Johnson reflects modernity's ills, while Jeffries offers its cure via a primitive reawakening.

The contrast between Jeffries' "realism" and Johnson's "metaphoricity" recapitulate a familiar aesthetic antagonism, one of particularly strong interest to American Naturalist novelists at the time.<sup>43</sup> What's at stake in the ring isn't simply a matter of biological or racial superiority. For London, the contest in the ring carries additional cultural and aesthetic valences. London attempts here to work through the knotted interrelationship between the discourses of race, aesthetics, and culture. Biological determinism stands over against cultural indeterminacy at a time when "ethnicity" is just beginning to emerge as a supplement to (and possible replacement for) nineteenth-century racial discourse.<sup>44</sup> And significantly for London and the later Modernists, his biological theory of spectatorship also predicts and supersedes Saussure's radical splitting of signifier from signified (Saussure 67). Jack Johnson is a direct reflection of the decadence of indeterminacy and the arbitrariness of the sign.

Taking his primitivist reversal further, London also links Johnson to the ephemerality of the present. "He is easily amused. He lives more in the moment, and joy and sorrow are swift passing moods with him. He is not capable of seriously adjusting his actions to remote ends" (266). London's harsh critique of the degeneracy of modernity is bound to his off-hand racist portrayal of Johnson as a "happy-go-lucky" Sambo. For Johnson, "[t]he passing moments would tantalize him into pursuit of immediate and momentary ends," and "Johnson cannot remember [the fight], because the public is pressing at his doors for an exhibition there and then of his prowess and development. It is the moment, the everlasting, tantalizing, immediate moment, and Johnson succumbs" (268). Like the figure of the dandy that formed the heart of Max Nordau's pathology of the fin-de-siecle "degenerate," Johnson is in London's estimation an emblem of the freneticism and shallowness of the too-civilized present. Johnson's reduction to a mere "smile" is as much a castigation of the inauthentic modern age as it is a repetition of a familiar racial caricature.<sup>45</sup> Though Johnson ultimately wins the fight against Jeffries, London only grants him a victory "for to-day" (294), pointing out that no fighter has yet "extended" Johnson enough to prove his merit once and for all. Johnson's victory is cast-off as a fleeting moment, every bit as impermanent as Johnson's thoughts—echoing the claim by Hegel that Africa and, by extension, the African diaspora "is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit" (99).

London alienates Johnson from history, racial memory, and even his own body. Like the degenerate or neurasthenic, Johnson is the human culmination of the machine age. London's description of Johnson as an "amazing fighting mechanism" (300) is less a compliment than a pathological diagnosis. In London's earlier account ten years earlier of a fight between Jim Jeffries and Gus Ruhlin, he pits "the two battling elemental males" at the ring's center against the surrounding modern environment:

It was a picturesque scene, this twentieth century arena, this machine-age gladiatorial contest. The house in darkness and the ring a white blaze of light; the tick-tick of the telegraph keys, the monotonous dictation to the stenographers of each blow and parry and

maneuver, and the excited voices of glad men sure of their winnings; and under the clustered arc lamps, in the blinding glare, the two battling elemental males, and around all the sea of faces stretching away and fading into the darkness. (252)

Akin to Henry Adams' account of "the Virgin and the Dynamo" or of Thomas Eakins' "The Gross Clinic," we see here the same core dialectical opposition between the mechanistic and the primeval, between scientific objectivity and bodily sublimity. The boxers in this earlier piece are the sole representatives of the "elemental" in contrast to the mechanical apparatuses surrounding them, but in his later pieces covering the Johnson-Jeffries fight, the terms have shifted. The crowd and Jeffries are aligned by their common racial memory and primitive interest, while Johnson is the sole embodiment of "cool" objectivity and of technological rationality.

Yet, despite the strong suggestions of Johnson's degeneracy, the match as a whole is treated by Jack London as an embodied manifestation of Anglo-Saxon racial memory. Johnson's blackness is accommodated by denying Johnson any permanence, history, or material presence. He is an emblem and "mystery" (301) against which Jeffries' (and by extension the Anglo-Saxon spectators') primitive physicality does battle. As London himself admits, Johnson "fought a white man in a white man's country, before a white man's crowd" (293), and he "would smile in irony at the spectators, play-acting, making believe he thought the applause was for him—and never believing it at all" (294). London summarizes the fight as a "monologue delivered to twenty thousand spectators by a smiling negro who was never in doubt and who was never serious for more than a moment in time" (294).<sup>46</sup> London isolates Johnson in time, place, and culture. He has no people of his own, no country, and no memory. His "monologue" is a form of ironic play-acting delivered to deaf ears with no serious import behind it. It is for no one and about nothing.

The fundamental problem of representation as London sees it is the inescapable divide between metaphor and materiality. The racial dynamics of the boxing ring provide the perfect substance with which to imagine a non-figurative language, wherein a pre-lapsarian mode of signification comes under attack by a post-lapsarian racial other. The fall of representation is the rise of indeterminacy—whether racial, aesthetic, or linguistic. Stephen Crane identifies a similar "fall" in modes of representation, but he's far less deterministic in his thinking. Rather than aiming for ways to reunite signifier to signified or looking for a root cause to blame for the rise of indeterminacy, Crane is more willing to explore the mechanisms by which representation signifies. Like London, boxing is an important site in Crane's fiction for working through the interrelationship between race, cultural signification, and prose aesthetics; but unlike London, Crane is willing to let indeterminacy lie. Even more suggestively, in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Crane explores the consequences of overly deterministic thinking. Rather than investigate the root causes of violence and poverty, he castigates bourgeois readers for their desire for resolutions and causes. By pitting the narrator against his characters, we see emerge two very distinct aesthetic and epistemological perspectives, each with its own stakes and methods.

The violence in Stephen Crane's short novel appears disorganized, chaotic, and multidirectional. It has no specific sources, targets, or aims, and in Crane's imagined version of turn-of-the-century life in New York's Bowery district, violence seems a key symptom of the "disease" of poverty and destitution. According to this understanding of violence in *Maggie*, Crane's vision of tenement life in the city is in line with much thinking at the time in its pathologizing of poverty. The omnipresence of violence in the novel is often understood by critics as merely one of Crane's descriptions of "what poverty looks like." The rampant violence

in Crane's Bowery is, according to these same critics, a novelistic version of Jacob Riis's photojournalistic studies of poverty in New York City first published in the 1890s.<sup>47</sup>

To claim that *Maggie* presents a symptomatic version of immigrant tenement life isn't without ample textual support. The text reminds us constantly of where we are, who these people are, and how uncontrollably violent they are. It's an urban district of vacant lots, and of overcrowded and cramped living spaces. The Johnson family is a caricature of the Irish immigrant family. The father perpetually walks around with his "applewood emblem of serenity between his teeth" (i.e., the stereotypical Irishman's pipe); the mother is redder than either her anger or her drunkenness can account for; Jimmie is an incorrigible street brawler; the baby has already learned the habit—as if by nature—of clenching its fists; and Maggie, the eponymous heroine, is also an old slang term in British and Irish English for a prostitute. Both parents are habitually drunk, and each family member is inescapably embedded in a culture of constant violence.

This is a family standing in cartoon relief against an urban backdrop rife with the material of the middle class's imagined immigrant experience. One scene of violence bleeds into another seamlessly. In the opening street brawl, Jimmie stands atop a hill of rubble fighting off the boys from a rival gang (3). Jimmie's friend Pete steps in to break up the fight (4). As Jimmie and Pete walk away from the scene of the fight, Jimmie turns on his friend Billie, and the two wrestle and roll on the ground "in the modes of four thousand years ago" (5). Jimmie's father next shows up to break up that fight and take him home. Once home, the successive chain of violence expands outward exponentially. Maggie "jerked the baby's arm impatiently" making him "fall on his face roaring" (6). After some castigations by Maggie, Jimmie "suddenly swore and struck her" (7). And so on. The rest of the novel could easily be described as an attempt to map these intricately connected branches and rivulets of violence, ending ultimately with Maggie's death and her mother's final "scream of pain" (61).

However, a critical approach such as this—reading the novel's deployment of violence as a symptom of the "disease" of poverty—assumes first that Crane sees violence as a symptom *of* something else (poverty, unchecked immigration, tenement living conditions, etc.), and second it assigns to Crane a sociological goal (describing poverty) rather than a literary one. Tracing the path of violence in the novel toward some "end" parallels the attempt to trace a type of signification toward some final "meaning" underlying the violence. To read the novel symptomatically is to read it sociologically.

It's common among critics of American literary Naturalism to give to its authors a sociological slant, and to a certain extent they're not wrong. Naturalists such as Crane, Norris, London, and Dreiser were very interested in contemporary sociological work and journalistic studies of urban life. All too often, however, that interest is mistaken for a shared politics and a shared methodology. It's one thing to claim that Crane was "interested" in sociological studies of New York's immigrant populations, but it's another altogether to claim that he himself is making sociological claims about causal relationships between poverty and violence.

To some extent this misunderstanding comes from a general misunderstanding of just what "Naturalism" means, or at least of what it meant to these authors. To be sure, Zola's Naturalism and its American counterpart owe much to a wide array of late century scientific discourse. Zola's essay "Le roman expérimental" ("The Experimental Novel") would have many believe that Zola is conducting a scientific experiment, in particular a socio-genealogical one. However, in any one of Zola's novels, "science" is more akin to "mad science" or to the "science" of a five year old poking at a dead skunk with a sharp stick just to see what spills out.

Similarly, claiming—even tacitly—that Crane is performing a sociological study of any kind is mistaking the loose scientism of the Naturalists for actual science, mistaking the method of the Naturalists (and of the “experimental novel”) for their goal.

Zola himself claims that “everything is reduced to a question of method” (35) and that a true experimentalist would rather identify “the entire mechanism of nature, without troubling one’s self for the time being with the origin of the mechanism” (39). His experiments are constructions designed to “teach” a truism rather than “indicate” one through observation. Naturalists are not “solely photographers” and understand that “the idea of experiment carries with it the idea of modification” (11). Zola uses the language of flesh and physiology to describe the role of the naturalist author; in fact, the whole of the essay is a recasting of the scientific philosophy of Claude Bernard whose goal is to draw connections between the experimental science of physiology and the “art” of practicing medicine. Zola frequently claims that the naturalist author “operates” on and “dissects” his subjects, reverse engineering them by taking them to pieces and reassembling them. His governing principle is a study of the “general mechanism of matter” (16), and he clearly distinguishes between the contextual “determinism” of the naturalists and the absolutist “fatalism” of which they are often accused (29). Said most clearly:

All we do is to apply this method [as described by Bernard] in our novels, and we are the determinists who experimentally try to determine the condition of the phenomena, without departing in our investigations from the laws of nature. As Claude Bernard very truly says, the moment that we can act, and that we do act, on the determining cause of phenomena—by modifying their surroundings, for example—we cease to be fatalists. (30)

In effect, the experimental novelist is little different from Job’s god, continually “testing” what happens when a subject is put into various controlled situations and circumstances. The only goal of the naturalist—as much as there can be one—is “to make one’s self master of life in order to be able to direct it” (25). For Zola, attempting to answer “why” is a mystical and fatalistic enterprise symptomatic of the “romantic disease” of poetry and philosophy; in contrast, attempting to answer “how” is an experimental endeavor more in line with what Deleuze calls Sade’s “demonstrativeness” (Deleuze 19) or similar to a proto-Nietzschean “will to power.”

While Crane may not have been as directly influenced by Zola as other American naturalist authors like Norris, the critical impulse to categorize the naturalists as “scientific” and “fatalistic” applies every bit as readily to Crane as to Norris. Consequently, it’s an error to assume that Crane is performing “sociological work” or is “studying” the relationship between poverty and violence. To be sure, Crane is drawing upon contemporary thinking about how poverty is pathologized, and he certainly wouldn’t be the first (or the last) person to think of violence as a symptom of poverty. However, his interests in *Maggie* lie elsewhere; his interests are literary ones. Violence is no symptom for Crane; it is an aesthetic principle, a mechanism. I’d also go so far as to claim that this is true of the Naturalists at large, which is why so many of the works of the American Naturalists return again and again to violence and brutality. More commonly, critics come to the conclusion that the violence found in Naturalist texts is a symptomatic reading of modernity, of the modern socius, of some vital essence “buried” within humanity.

In contrast, my approach to the Naturalists is to move away from symptomatic readings. For Zola, the experiment wasn’t conducted in order to draw conclusions; like the mad scientist or the child with the stick, the experimental novel was performed for the sake of the experiment.

The “subject” of the experiment is experimentation itself. The naturalist, for Zola, orchestrates an experiment under the guidance of his or her pre-formulated notion of some greater truth. The goal of the experiment is not to *discover* if some hypothesis is true; rather, it is to *demonstrate* a structural truth. A naturalist does not deal in hypotheses, since these are in the same realm as poetry and metaphysics. Instead, the naturalist only deals in universal mechanisms because “the only great and moral works are those of truth” (37). Zola quotes Bernard’s example of the distinction:

It will not satisfy the experimental doctor, though it may the merely empirical one, to know that quinine cures fever; the essential thing is to know what fever is, and to understand the mechanism by which quinine cures. All this is of the greatest importance to the experimental doctor; for as soon as he knows it positively, the fact that quinine cures fever will no longer be an isolated and empirical fact, but a scientific fact. This fact will be connected then with the conditions which bind it to other phenomena, and we shall be thus led to the knowledge of the laws of the organism, and to the possibility of regulating their manifestations. (24)

For Zola, tracing simple causes only leads to isolated answers, but the more one looks to mechanisms, the more one moves toward universal truisms. The more broadly a given structure or mechanism applies, the more true it is.

In Crane’s *Maggie*, violence structures the novel. As described above, the entire novel can be mapped as intricately interconnected instances of violence. One violent act is interrupted by another which is then interrupted by another, and so on. There are no “causes” or “ends” as such; instead, we see only a series of violent actions begetting further violent actions. The only cause of any given act of violence is an earlier act of violence. The critical impulse is to take this web of violence and read it over against the circumstances of the novel (urban poverty among the immigrant working classes) and read a direct correlation being made by Crane. However, the novel carefully presents this intricately connected chain of hitting, punching, grabbing, and throwing in such a way as to prevent us from ever recognizing a direct cause or ultimate outcome. Or, more correctly, the only recognizable cause is some earlier act of violence, and its only effect is more violence.

A violent act is never fully realized and never “culminates” in some end point; instead, nearly every violent act is interrupted by the next. If violence can be said to be a “language” or “ideology” in the novel, it is one that can never be fully articulated. Much like Jimmie continually interrupts his own “theory that he had always unconsciously held, that all sisters, excepting his own, could advisedly be ruined” (33), so too does violence never receive a full articulation. Violence, like ideology itself, cannot be penetrated or overcome, merely enacted. Just as it structures the novel, it also structures characters’ behaviors and thoughts. It is everywhere and everywhere inescapable. Violence cannot be symptomatic in Crane’s Bowery because it is utterly constitutive. To look for a cause, one must be able to look past ideology, an impossible task. The chain of violence beginning with the novel’s opening scene, leading through the dissolution of the Johnson family, and ending with the mother’s “scream of pain,” shows us that behind one act of violence lies another and another into infinity. Looking for a cause for one act of violence only leads to the one directly behind it.<sup>48</sup>

Instead, violence is a structure—even *the* structure—of the novel. Like Zola, Crane isolates the peculiar quality of violence by confounding any attempt to symptomatize or pathologize it. Despite a body of critics who insist on reading “behind” this structure of violence, we can no more identify what lies behind it than can the novel’s characters. If they are “caught”

or “trapped” by their own ideological boundaries, so are we as readers. In the same way that we readers are limited by our search for causes, the only cause of violence these characters can identify is some prior violent act. As Rene Girard says of violence, at its most prolific, violence is a series of rampant retributions running unchecked through society; one act of violence leads to its reciprocal, and so on. However, Girard sees in this imagined state of society a natural curative in the ritual act of violence against a scapegoat who embodies (briefly) the source and target of all violence in that society (84).

In contrast, Crane avoids the logic of causality; in its place, his characters attempt to theorize their relationship to this structure. Maggie is no scapegoat; the circumstances of her death are misrecognized by her family. Not only does Jimmie repeatedly fail to theorize “that all sisters, excepting his own, could advisedly be ruined” (33), but the scene of mourning where the other women force Mary Johnson to “fergive” Maggie is its own distinct form of violence. The other women force Mary into making Maggie a scapegoat by emphasizing her “bad, bad” behavior; the violence of this pressure is made clear in Mary’s ultimate “scream of pain” that ends the novel in which Mary gives in to their social violence. Not only does this give the lie to the mechanism by which a chain of violence would ultimately be brought to its full articulation (via a scapegoat), but that ritual is itself shown to be yet one more link in the chain of violence itself—this time visited upon Mary.

Just as Mary is (violently) forced to make Maggie into an emblem and martyr, Jimmie is unable ever to articulate fully his theory about his sister’s relationship to other sisters. Neither character is able to figure Maggie in wholly generalized terms. For them, she does not represent an entire class of people or actions, regardless of how badly the “choir” of women and readers wants that to be the case. She does not represent all sisters and daughters in the Bowery. Crane presents this question often, however. Even the title, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, suggests that she is emblematic of a particular social situation. Very little of the novel deals with Maggie and is dedicated far more to her brother Jimmie, but the title of the novel suggests not that this is about Maggie the character, but is about “Maggie” as a type and a condition. The indefinite article, “a,” emphasizes her generalizability, along with the entirety of the subtitle “A Girl of the Streets,” which draws upon contemporary concerns over a wide variety of contemporary perceived urban social ills like poverty, prostitution, and “unfortunate” children. Elsewhere, a judge (an emblem of bourgeois order not unlike the narrator) jokingly tells Mary Johnson that “the records of this and other courts show that you are the mother of forty-two daughters who have been ruined” (43). And again, when Jimmie suggests to Mary that they keep quiet about Maggie, Mary laughs a laugh that “seemed to ring through the city and be echoed and re-echoed by countless other laughs” (42) suggesting that their situation reflects countless others. The fact that his laugh only “seemed” to ring and echo through the city implies that this is a bit of metaphorical language being deployed by the narrator, a further sign of the tension between the narrator’s desire to make of Mary a “type” and the Johnsons’ desire to understand her idiosyncratically.

For the most part, critics have followed the narrator’s suit and made of this work a “social problem” novel. In order to do this, the novel’s characters must be put in a situation where they don’t know what we readers and critics do. In this reading, Jimmie’s inability to theorize how Maggie is like all of the other sisters he knows is a testament to the ignorance that goes hand in hand with urban poverty, and to why the poor stay poor and ignorant. Taking this reading further, the many acts of violence perpetrated by the Johnson family and those in their immediate

environs testify to the extent of this ignorance. Accordingly, they are made out to be “victims” of ideology.

If the center of this novel is its structure of violence, each of these competing visions offers two very different versions of how to understand that ideological structure. Following the tone of the narrator—wherein the characters are constantly made light of by employing a satiric language of chivalry—these same critics fail to recognize that as much as the narrator makes fun of the characters’ ignorance and victimhood, the characters also have their own theorized relationship to ideology. According to the narrator, characters often commit violence for the sake of a mock-heroic “honor.” Pete is a “knight” in Maggie’s eyes who amazes her with “all his elegance and all his knowledge of high-class customs” (23). Jimmie “and his order were kings” (14) who display a “majestic contempt” (15). In contrast to their brute existence as “urchins” and drunkards, the narrator contemptuously and satirically deploys these idyllic, feudal metaphors. To take the stance that these characters don’t know about themselves what we know about them is to adopt the same contemptuous, patronizing tone of the narrator.

However, we simultaneously find that these characters have a remarkably complex and thoughtful relationship to their world and themselves. The most sustained theory is that articulated by Pete and Jimmie prior to their going to a boxing match. Pete arrives at the Johnson’s tenement and proceeds to tell Jimmie a series of stories about fights he had had with an array of other men. In one extended story, he explains a brawl using the technical terms of boxing:

“Well, deh blokie he says: ‘T’hell wid it! I ain’ lookin’ for no scrap,’ he says (See?) ‘but’ he says, ‘I’m spectable cit’zen an’ I wanna drink an’ purtydamnsoon, too,’ See? ‘Deh hell,’ I says. Like dat. ‘Don’ make no trouble,’ I says. Like dat. ‘Don’ make no trouble.’ See? Den deh mug he squared off an’ said he was fine as silk wid his dukes (See?) an’ he waned a drink damnquick. Dat’s what he said. See?” (18)

We already know that both Jimmie and Maggie see Pete as a “man of the world” who “had certainly seen everything” (18). Beyond the obviously patronizing attitude of the narrator who recognizes Pete as a phony and as a big fish in a very small pond, we can begin to see in this storytelling moment how these characters would tell their own story using their own dialect.<sup>49</sup> Even though the narrator patronizingly refers to Pete as “the narrator,” this is a moment that gives us a glimpse of how these characters understand and theorize their relationship to violence and their social circumstances.

When Pete tells us that the other man “squared off” and that this other man claimed to be “fine as silk wid his dukes,” we see Pete articulating a more organized and structural attitude toward violence. This isn’t simply a chaotic brawl between a bartender and a drunk patron, but is instead a spontaneous boxing match. Unlike the narrator’s frequent ironic deployment of chivalric language to describe the violence of the Bowery, Pete’s story contains no similar irony. Following this story, Pete and Jimmie continue with a further “technical discussion” (18). Again, this is meant to be a satiric jab by the narrator since Pete and Jimmie are describing a variety of far from “technical” brawls, but taking Pete and Jimmie at their word, this is their fullest articulation of how they see the violence around them. And while it’s impossible ever to escape the satiric tone of the narrator, if we attempt to filter it or at least to see his subjects from the inside out (rather from the outside in), we can see this moment as a crucial meeting place between the two viewpoints’ vision of the ideology of violence. The prevalence of free indirect discourse in the novel means that often it’s difficult—if not impossible—to distinguish between the irony of the narrator’s voice and the sincerity of the characters’, but this moment in which

narration is given over to a character (here, Pete) gives us an important tool in seeing how to do this.

That boxing provides the language necessary to articulating these characters' relationship to their ideological situation is not surprising. *Maggie* asymptotically approaches but never wholly commits to representing a formal boxing match. The novel comes close on many occasions, but always falls just shy of including one or more of the necessary features that would make the connection clear. To be sure, it is a violent novel full of violent characters, but its violence is everywhere scattered and never coalesces into anything ritualized, codified, or clear. As I've claimed above, violence structures the novel by its continual appearance and interruption by further violence. More specifically, just as violence approaches but never fully articulates some end, we can now see what that full articulation would look like from the characters' perspective. Violence in the novel always approaches the formal structure of boxing, but is always interrupted just before it achieves that full articulation.

For example, the novel opens with a king-of-the-hill fight between two rival neighborhood gangs of young boys. Jimmie Johnson—"the little champion of Rum Alley"—stands alone on the top of a "heap of gravel" fighting off the "howling urchins from Devil's Row" (3). In the midst of a "vacant lot," the boys stand in a circle around Jimmie (4). As violence escalates, it begins to adopt more and more features of a formalized boxing match. The "champion of Rum Alley" was nearly ready to square off alone against one of the Devil's Row boys in the center of the circle of boys in the vacant lot. Before that can happen, though, Pete shows up and attacks the boy who was about to step up against Jimmie. After Pete breaks up the fight, Jimmie and one of his fellow Rum Alley friends then turn on one another, "fighting in the modes of four thousand years ago" (5). The rest of the Rum Alley boys form a "bobbing circle about the pair." But just as Pete had interrupted the earlier fight, Jimmie's dad shows up to break up this one.

The later fight between Jimmie and Pete occurs as an unusual three-way fight, distorting the expected two-way formality of a boxing match. An unnamed "companion" joins Jimmie to fight Pete for the "honor" of Jimmie's sister. "They bristled like three roosters" (37), but of course cockfights generally only involve two roosters. And again, "the three men edged for positions like frigates contemplating battle," but the metaphor falls flat since there are few common images of such three-way naval battles. And like every other moment of protracted violence in the novel, an "on-coming interruption"—this time a police officer—appears and puts an end to the brawl (38).

A chaotic "battle" between the two Johnson parents sends Jimmie out into the street to wait it out. While he waits, a crowd gathers around their tenement. Once the noises die down, he returns to find his parents asleep, frozen in mid-fight poses. "In the middle of the floor lay his mother asleep. In one corner of the room his father's limp body hung across the seat of a chair" (12). The space and positioning of the two combatants closely resembles a boxing match, one "fighter" down in the middle of the small tenement and another sitting at his chair in the corner. As Jimmie reenters the tenement and approaches his parents, he notes the ways in which they are still stuck in their fighting mode:

The urchin stole forward. He began to shiver in dread of awakening his parents. His mother's great chest was heaving painfully. Jimmie paused and looked down at her. Her face was inflamed and swollen from drinking. Her yellow brows shaded eye-lids that had grown blue. Her tangled hair tossed in waves over her forehead. Her mouth was set in the same lines of vindictive hatred that it had, perhaps, borne during the fight. Her bare, red



arms were thrown out above her head in positions of exhaustion, something, mayhap, like those of a sated villain. (12)

As he moves closer to her, “the woman floundered for a moment, tossed her arms about her head as if in combat, and again began to snore” (12). The fight has been frozen just as it begins most closely to look like a boxing match; it suddenly stopped just on the verge of starting up in earnest and was over before it ever began—or at least over before we readers were ever even privy to it.

A later fight between Jimmie and his mother similarly veers toward the regimentation of a boxing match. The whole tenement house watches as Jimmie and Mary duke it out in the hallway. “She raised her arm and whirled her great fist at her son’s face. Jimmie dodged his head and the blow struck him in the back of the neck. ‘Damn yeh,’ gritted he again. He threw out his hand and writhed his fingers about her middle arm. The mother and the son began to sway and struggle like gladiators” (30). The spectators even begin to make wagers, but Maggie appears and interrupts the fight, and “the Rum Alley tenement swore disappointedly and retired” (30).

My point, however, is not to say that all violence in this novel resembles that of a boxing match; rather, I’m suggesting that if this violence were to reach a full articulation and not be interrupted or diverted into another act of violence, it would look very much like a boxing match. As I claim above, violence in this novel is the central ideological structure, and it is an ideology that both the narrator and the novel’s characters have very different attitudes towards. The narrator (and many subsequent readers of the novel) sees the violence as evidence of a “false consciousness,” a fundamental misrecognition of cause and effect on the characters’ parts. This position is most easily encapsulated by the apparent contradictions between what characters say and what they do. For example, Mary telling her husband, “Why deh blazes don’ chere try teh keep Jim from fightin’? I’ll break yer jaw” (11). Violence is the structure by which this contradiction is expressed. The narrator suggests that he—and by extension, we readers—know something about how these characters think and behave that they don’t know about themselves. Consequently, since the narrator claims that these characters are incapable of articulating any awareness of their own situation, the only “cause” he can resort to is who they are (Irish immigrant stereotypes) and the conditions in which they live (a tenement neighborhood in the Bowery district). Many critical appraisals of the American naturalist novelists have done similarly, and seen in the work of Crane a pseudo-sociological project dedicated to exposing the “ills” and “hardships” of tenement life.

In direct contrast to this perspective, there are many suggestions within the novel that these characters know full well what their situation looks like. At its most cogent, it looks like boxing. In particular, it is the boxing match’s ability to articulate a clear understanding of the social position occupied by the characters. Boxing articulates the structure of violence, but it does not resolve it. It makes distinctly visible multiple class and ethnic antagonisms, not for the sake of some absolute resolution of violent conflict (like Girard’s scapegoat), but for the sake of theorizing *through the language of violence* their social role. The battleground between narrator and narrated is the discourse and structure of violence. The struggle to articulate one’s position (whether the narrator’s or the characters’) can only happen if one has control over the language of violence.

Difficulty arises, however, in attempting to extricate a perspective that “belongs” to the characters from a perspective that “belongs” to the narrator. The easiest way to make this distinction is through tone. Sincerity is the mode of the characters, while the narrator perpetually pokes fun and satirizes everything they say and do—there is, after all, nothing easier to satirize than sincerity. For example, looking again at the apparently contradictory combination of

sentences spoken by Mary Johnson—“Why deh blazes don’ chere try teh keep Jim from fightin’? I’ll break yer jaw”—we can understand this in two ways. The easiest and most obvious way is that of the narrator. The contradiction is so apparent between what we assume Mary “believes”—that violence is wrong and should be prevented—and how she enforces her belief—by threatening violence—that we can’t help but see the “joke.” The seeming contradiction even confuses the target of her ire, the Johnson father: “Ah, wha’ deh hell. W’a’s odds? Wha’ makes kick?” (11) He spots the contradiction and doesn’t understand why she would care either. Then we learn the real reason she doesn’t want Jimmie fighting: “Because he tears ’is clothes, yeh damn fool” (11). It turns out that Mary’s not as victimized by ideology as it first appears.

The assumption that violence is inherently “wrong” and is worth preventing for no other reason other than its own inherent immorality exists only on the part of the narrator and reader. If violence is the site of this struggle between the working class sensibility of the characters and the middle class sensibility of the novel’s narrator and readers, then morality is the key weapon of the middle class. In Georg Lukács’ essay “Class Consciousness,” he describes the moral battleground as follows:

The dialectical contradiction in the ‘false’ consciousness of the bourgeoisie became more and more acute: the ‘false’ consciousness was converted into a mendacious consciousness. What had been at first an objective contradiction now became subjective also: the theoretical problem turned into a moral posture which decisively influenced every practical class attitude in every situation and on every issue. (65)

The “dialectical contradiction” he refers to is a contradiction between “theory” and “practice,” precisely the sort of contradiction that seems at first to play out in Mary Johnson’s two sentences cited above. However, what we learn is that the “contradiction” is not Mary’s, but the reader’s. It is our moral assumption that Mary must believe that violence is wrong and that she contradicts herself by threatening her husband with violence in order to enforce that belief, but as we learn, she just wants to keep Jimmie from tearing his clothes.

In addition to Lukács’ claim that the bourgeoisie’s “‘false’ consciousness was converted into a mendacious consciousness,” we could also add that in *Maggie* the mendacious consciousness is further converted into a satiric consciousness. Moral superiority is continually enforced by the narrator through mock-heroic satire. Satire is borne of contradiction. The fact that Jimmie fights for the “honor” of Rum Alley and later for the “honor” of his sister appears as a contradiction. Jimmie, “the little champion of Rum Alley,” is in truth nothing more than a stereotypical urban “urchin” (3). The bartender Pete appears to Maggie as one full of “elegance” and “high-class customs” (23), while to the narrator and the reader, he is “obviously” a poser and an opportunist. As I’ve claimed above, the narrator deploys chivalric metaphors at every turn, but only because they’re so obviously ill-fitting, that we readers cannot help but recognize the ridiculousness of the endeavor. From the narrator’s vantage, we know more about the characters than they could possibly know about themselves, and it’s through ridicule that the narrator emphasizes this fact.

Since, as I’ve shown above, violence never culminates and never reaches a full or final articulation, the narrator-reader and characters are ultimately struggling over what that full articulation looks like. Also as I’ve already claimed, this articulation looks like boxing to the novel’s characters, and now we can see that to the narrator and his readers it looks like a contradiction, a sign of the characters’ moral intractability and decrepitude. The only “resolution” as the (middle class) narrator sees it, is to make Maggie over into a sacrificial emblem, a sign of the “tragedy” of living under such degenerate conditions. The “choir” of

women who coerce Mary into her painful lament at the end of the novel could just as easily be the “choir” of readers expecting some resolution to the novel’s apparent contradictions and rampant violence. In this way, the narrator resorts to the narrative structure of tragedy to make sense of the unchecked chain of incomplete violent acts. The “choir” attempts to forcibly bring a (violent) resolution to the novel’s own contradictions; they manifest Frederic Jameson’s dictum that novels, like Claude Lévi-Strauss’s myths, offer the “imaginary resolution of a real contradiction” (62). In *Maggie*, Crane makes the mechanism of the “imaginary resolution” patently clear.

But if we take the characters at their word and instead read the novel *sincerely*, we see a very different understanding emerge. The fundamental “contradiction” that informs the satiric reading disappears. For example, Pete’s description of his fight with the man at his bar no longer looks like a drunk picking a fight with a sober (and much younger) bartender, but instead signifies Pete’s cachet among his listeners (Jimmie and Maggie). Through Maggie, we come to understand what a sincere reading of Pete’s tales looks like. Maggie finds use in the theoretical outlook provided by boxing. Her admiration for Pete is tied directly to his ability to aggrandize himself as a fighter. While he and Jimmie have their “technical discussion,” Maggie sees in Pete an “aristocratic person” (19). When Pete turns to Maggie and notices her noticing him, “he grew still more eloquent in his descriptions of various happenings in his career. It appeared that he was invincible in fights” (19). The implication is that all of those “various happenings in his career” are fights of various kinds, each of which comes with some sort of loosely technical judgment like one man who “scrapped like a damn dago” (19). Maggie sees Pete through his “technical discussion” of his many fights and as a consequence sees him as “a formidable man who disdained the strength of the world full of fists. Here was one who had contempt for brass-clothed power; one whose knuckles could defiantly ring against the granite of law” (20).

Through the language of boxing, a “fistic consciousness” emerges which imagines and projects some possible use and function of violence. While the narrator attempts to make violence into a sign of the fundamental contradictions of these characters’ way of life, the characters themselves see in violence the perpetual possibility of its culmination in some purposive action. Again turning to Lukács, “the aspiration [of the proletariat] only *yields the possibility* . . . The dialectical cleavage in the consciousness of the proletariat is a product of the same structure that makes the historical mission of the proletariat possible by pointing forward and beyond the existing social order” (73). The problem with turning to Lukács as an explanation for these characters’ imaginative lives, however, is that it assumes they have some “consciousness” reflective of the actual proletariat. My point, however, isn’t to make a claim about actual people or actual conditions of life. I’m turning to Lukács in order to highlight that the formal structure in *Maggie* is informed by a difference in perspectives informed by class difference. Hence the “possibility” I’m referring to isn’t an actual “class consciousness,” but rather an understanding of literary form. I use the term “fistic consciousness” to highlight this difference and its specificity within the novel and among these particular characters.

By way of Maggie’s sincere reading of Pete’s narrative, Pete becomes a revolutionary figure. That the “reality” of the situation proves Pete to be far less revolutionary and that he proves to be otherwise than he seems, matters little in this reading. Maggie is offering a reading not of Pete himself, but of the violence that structures his stories. It is not Pete the person that matters here, but the role the Pete adopts, his posture. The role is everything. But it’s here that we run up against the greatest difficulty for these characters, the nature of representation. We have already seen how both Jimmie and Mary face enormous difficulty in understanding Maggie

as somehow “representative.” Jimmie cannot fully develop a “theory” about how his sister is like all the other sisters in the Bowery, and Mary must finally be tortured into making Maggie a symbol of all the “bad, bad” behavior in the Bowery. However, we simultaneously see characters adopting and fashioning similarly representative roles throughout the novel.

Maggie figures Pete as a “knight” (20) and she “spent the most of three days in making imaginary sketches of Pete and his daily environment. She imagined some half dozen women in love with him and thought he must lean dangerously toward an indefinite one, whom she pictured with great charms of person, but with an altogether contemptible disposition” (21). Jimmie has a rich imaginative life in which “he and his order were kings” and “above all things he despised obvious Christians and ciphers with the chrysanthemums of aristocracy in their button-holes” (14). Even more elaborately,

to him the police were always actuated by malignant impulses and the rest of the world was composed, for the most part, of despicable creatures who were all trying to take advantage of him and with whom, in defense, he was obliged to quarrel on all possible occasions. He himself occupied a down-trodden position that had a private but distinct element of grandeur in its isolation. (15)

According to this worldview, the ordinary world of absolutes and of rational thinking gives way to a world of metaphor and role-play. The police are not people, but are material manifestations of “malignant impulses.” In this same cosmology, his violent response to the world is an “obligation” because he has chosen to occupy “a down-trodden position.” As with nearly every other such moment in this novel, Jimmie’s worldview has two possible readings. The first is that of the “morally superior” middle class narrator-reader who recognizes in Jimmie an obviously “false consciousness.” According to this reading, we recognize the “obvious” contradiction between how Jimmie views the world (he chooses his “down-trodden position” and is superior to all those he meets on the street) and the world as we “know” it (Jimmie is *actually* down-trodden and is inferior to nearly everyone he meets). More importantly, the violence he commits while driving his truck through the streets is only a sign of his victimhood rather than something which he is “obliged” to do.

In the second reading, however, Jimmie’s world is a world of roles and representation. It is a world in which “he believed in nothing” (14) except that he and his fellows “had no rights” (15). He goes so far as to imagine himself as Apollo’s opponent and that

Providence had caused it clearly to be written, that he and his team had the unalienable right to stand in the proper path of the sun chariot, and if they so minded, obstruct its mission or take a wheel off.

And, perhaps, if the god-driver had an ungovernable desire to step down, put up his flame colored fists and manfully dispute the right of way, he would have probably been immediately opposed by a scowling mortal with two sets of very hard knuckles. (15)

That Jimmie’s fantasy culminates in a fistic standoff with Apollo (a not uncommon allusion in boxing culture) seems only natural at this point. Just as Maggie later imagines Pete standing against the whole world with his fists, Jimmie imagines himself squaring off against the sun god. After receiving the details of Jimmie’s fantasy, we learn that Jimmie “had a fair record” with the police because “he developed too great a tendency to climb down from his truck and fight with other drivers” (16). The “mendacious” narrator has stepped in yet again to demonstrate the obvious immorality that such fantasizing leads to in “real” life.

Role-playing and imaginative projection appear in other key places in the novel, as well. When Pete and Maggie go out, they go to stage performances. During their first night out, the audience is described in terms of ethnic and national stereotypes. Boys selling cakes wander the crowd in “the costumes of French chefs” and “quiet Germans [sit] with the expressions of happy cows.” In a telling reversal, “the nationalities of the Bowery beamed upon the stage from all directions” (22). The direction of representation has been turned around. Instead of those on stage displaying these caricatures and types to the audience, the audience is instead casting themselves and their own “roles” upon the stage. Nor is this a matter of audience identification or projection since those on stage are described simply as “an orchestra of yellow silk women and bald-headed men” (22). There are no obvious cues with which the audience might identify. Instead the audience’s “beaming” upon the stage must be of a different kind. As Maggie and Pete take their seats, Pete “regarded with eyes of superiority the scene before them. This attitude affected Maggie strongly. A man who could regard such a sight with indifference must be accustomed to very great things” (22). The audience looks at the stage, Pete looks at them looking at the stage, and Maggie looks at Pete looking at them looking at the stage. Nor is this any Lacanian desirous orchestration of the “gaze.” Each level of looking suggests a different psychic content: the audience “beams” its nationalities upon the stage, Pete’s look is one of indifferent superiority, and only Maggie’s is one of outright desire. While we might be able to claim that this entire economy of the gaze is centered on Maggie’s psyche, this would ignore the fact that her position is not the privileged one. We enter the scene among the crowd with no mention of any particular character, then the narrative vantage shifts to Pete. Only later does it shift to Maggie’s perspective.

Instead, these moments of elaborate vectors of looks most closely resemble the initial “beaming” of the audience. It is the look that announces oneself as a type and one’s position as a role. In the earlier scene of Jimmie’s god-like fantasy, it all begins with a description of his looking upon the scene of the streets: “On the corners he was in life and of life. The world was going on and he was there to perceive it” (14). As his fantasy progresses, he goes “into a sort of a trance of observation” (15). In the many variety shows that Pete and Maggie attend, they stage themselves as much as the professionals on stage do. Role-playing and looking are inextricably bound at these performances. They see a dancer with a “smile of stereotyped enthusiasm . . . turned for ten minutes upon the faces of her audience” (23). They see “fantastic grimaces [that] looked like a pictured devil on a Japanese kite” (24), and at a museum “Pete occupied himself in returning stony stare for stony stare, the appalling scrutiny of the watch-dogs of the treasures” (27).

The language of many of the performances are of obligation and inevitability, the same language Jimmie uses to describe his “obligation to quarrel” during his extended fantasy. An orchestra is “submissive” to its conductor. A singer sings “in the inevitable voice of brass.” The audience dictates to her that the singer keep returning to the stage in less and less clothing. As Maggie and Pete’s relationship progresses, the stage performances they go to collapse more and more the distinction between stage and audience. By the time they get to their final hall visit, a bouncer argues “furiously with men who wanted to sing with the orchestra.” Elsewhere, “a woman was singing and smiling upon the stage, but no one took notice of her” (44). The performance is all around them. The woman Pete meets there (who ultimately replaces Maggie) “wore no jewelry and was painted with no apparent paint” (45). The paradoxical description implies that we know the woman is painted, but the illusion is so complete that there are no obvious signs that this is the case.

Just as Maggie is forcibly made into a symbol by the “choir” at the end of the novel, the entire Bowery devolves into symbol and representation. The narrator himself even acknowledges the written-ness of the story as the novel progresses by opening chapter seventeen with a reference to “the last chapter.” The final chapter opens with a description of Mary sitting “at a table eating like a fat monk in a picture.” Even from the beginning of the novel, each chapter often begins with general descriptions of its characters and moves into more concrete descriptions. In the first chapter, “a very little boy” becomes “Jimmie.” In the second, “a small ragged girl” becomes “Maggie.” These characters always verge on the precipice of becoming mere “representatives” of types, but until the end of the novel, they seem to balance securely on that precipice.<sup>50</sup> Jimmie attempts but is foiled by his own attempts to make of Maggie a representative of all sisters in the Bowery. He also understands and consciously adopts his own role and “down-trodden position.” The audiences at the variety show halls similarly “beam” their own stereotypes.

Most importantly, returning to the novel’s central structural conceit—violence—we can begin to see that this precipice between *actual* and *representative* is a key mode of understanding the ideology of violence. No violence happens without a group of spectators. Someone (and often many someones) is always watching. During the opening fight sequence among the local “urchins,” local spectators watch the goings on:

From a window of an apartment house that upreared its form from amid squat, ignorant stables, there leaned a curious woman. Some laborers, unloading a scow at a dock at the river, paused for a moment and regarded the fight. The engineer of a passive tugboat hung lazily to a railing and watched. Over on the Island, a worm of yellow convicts came from the shadow of a grey ominous building and crawled slowly along the river’s bank.

(3)

It’s very unlikely that many (if any) of these spectators would be able to see much of anything. The passage seems to highlight the spectators’ casual interest and relative indifference; however, with each described spectator, the physical distance from the object of scrutiny grows. By the time the paragraph describes the final group of spectators (“a worm of yellow convicts”), it includes no verb of seeing. The convicts simply “came” and “crawled” to the edge of the river. The only suggestion that they’re even part of the group of spectators is that they are the logical extension of the prior descriptions of spectators (the “curious woman,” “some laborers,” and “the engineer”). As with the scene at the theater, the direction of looking has been turned around, making the most distant spectators seem distant objects of a gaze originating from the brawling boys.

Every one of the Johnson family fights is “watched” by the entire tenement. This is physically impossible considering the presumed size of the building, the number of tenants, and the size of the hallways and doorways, but just as the convicts are spectators of the fight that they can’t see and aren’t even paying any attention to, so too is the whole tenement building “spectating” during the Johnson fights. “Spectating” becomes synonymous with “representing.” The convicts are watching the fight only because it is a fight just as emblematic of their situation as anyone else’s.

This unusual understanding of spectatorship leads to some odd sentence constructions, as well. For example, when Jimmie and his friend come to fight Pete, we learn that Pete “had a look of watchfulness upon his features.” Logically, this sentence is utter nonsense. It’s repetitive, awkward, and moves in multiple directions. Where is the “look” directed? Who is being “watchful”? What “features” lie beneath his “look”? However, what it does brilliantly is bundle

the two central concepts of role-playing and spectatorship. His “look” is both a way of being looked at and a way of looking at someone else. His “watchfulness” is both a sense that he is worthy of being watched and is himself being circumspect by watching others. His “features” lie beneath his look and constitute it. “Spectating,” then, is more than simply looking. It’s also more than simply being interested.

The fundamentally visual character of this theorization accounts for the proliferation in the novel of “scenes” of violence staged in front of large groups of spectators, while simultaneously under-girding the many deliberate moments of “role-playing” by the characters. Visibility isn’t merely being seen, but is rather more akin to a form of seeing. The fundamental paradox in this situation is the target of the narrator. If the ideology of violence is the battleground between characters and narrator, then the stakes are the power of representation. Once the narrator has brought about the forcible coercion of making Maggie the scapegoat of all the violence in the novel, he also brings about the resolution of the paradox between seeing and being seen. Maggie, by the novel’s end, is a representative of herself and of the Bowery and has no power in the economy of representation herself. She has no conscious “role” to adopt. If boxing is the “theory of practice” of the novel’s characters, then tragedy is the narrator’s attempt to disassemble theory from practice. The novel is made merely a work of representation, a work of tragedy, and becomes an illustration of the presumed causality between poverty and violence.

But this is an unsettling and unsatisfying resolution to a novel that has already done so much to problematize such pat resolutions. While Frederic Jameson has famously claimed in *The Political Unconscious* that most narrative tends toward these uneasy resolutions, Crane’s novel foregrounds that process by highlighting the violent class conflict informing the novel’s resolution. The cruelty visited upon Mary in *Maggie*’s final moments is a direct reflection of readers’ desire for resolution, causation, and closure. Maggie was a “bad, bad” girl who got what was coming to her, and Mary (and the reader) *must* agree. By making Maggie into a martyred symbol of immorality, the violence and ignorance of the urban immigrant poor are justified *post facto* as signs of unchecked immorality that can only end similarly in tragedy. However, Crane constantly turns the modes and mechanisms of representation back upon those watching. Spectatorship is, as Maggie notices in the theater, a process by which audiences project themselves on stage, and it is the players who watch audiences, not the other way around. The “choir” of women who force Mary to mourn are direct analogs for Crane’s readers projecting their own desires on his characters.

But what the “fistic consciousness” suggests is that these characters have their own unmet and unresolved desires. To fight with one’s fists is to voice one’s condition; moreover, it points to the fact that even if we mourn along with Mary for Maggie’s fall, we are simply re-circulating the violence that mourning was meant to end. The choir’s moral castigation isn’t an end to the violence of the bowery, but a rechanneling of it. In contrast, boxing becomes for these characters a utopian vision of violence that can finally be seen, articulated, and understood—but not necessarily resolved. Thus, it isn’t the character’s “false consciousness” that prevents them from recognizing how they think about their own condition; it is rather *the readers’* that prevents us from recognizing our own role in inhibiting that awareness. For Crane, then, representation is a struggle that is caught up directly in the class politics of literature and its readership. True “realism” is stunted by the nature of the novel form itself, dependent as it is on an entrenched class sensibility that desires imagined resolutions to real problems.

In contrast, Jack London has no similar qualms. The uncertainty of metaphorical language and literary form are overcome by the inherited racial bond shared between a subject—

like boxing—and its audience. What we see or read is not a faulty “representation” so long as it taps into the vital primitivism of our shared genetic past. According to London, if there is a sense that what we are seeing or reading is in some way “figurative” or merely “approximate,” we can only blame the decadence of (racial) others for mucking up the gene pool. Indeterminacy of biology and racial history is identical to the indeterminacy of language and signification.<sup>51</sup>

Because boxing provides such ready material for exploring the nature of representation—particularly with respect to race and class—it makes sense that so many authors of the period would turn to it as a literary subject and trope. But as London’s and Crane’s respective approaches to the sport suggest, it could be put to rather different uses. And as direct precursors to the American Modernists’ radical reorganization of what it means to “represent” the world, these two authors’ works show that the literary fault lines were already firmly established.



## Chapter 4

### The Boxer's Pain, the Bull's Prose: Hemingway and the Style of Sadomasochism

"I *can take it!* That's my one hope. That's why I'm not quitting the game. At the cost of my reflexes, maybe. Nature gave me an unusual constitution. You admit I'd be a drawing card. Well, I'm like Battling Nelson—not human when it comes to taking punishment . . . Eventually, after years of battering, someone will knock me out. But before that time, I'm going to cash in on my ruggedness. Capitalize on the fact that no man can keep me down for the count. I'll accumulate a fortune if I'm handled right."

-Mike Brennan, from Robert E. Howard's "The Iron Man"

"If it isn't enjoyable—why do it?"

-Eddy, from Ernest Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not*

#### Introduction

In the opening pages of *Death in the Afternoon*, Ernest Hemingway describes his first experiences with bullfighting. In his description, he closely ties his development as a writer to his development as a bullfight spectator:

I was trying to write then and I found the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing truly what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced . . . The only place where you could see life and death, i.e. violent death now that the wars were over, was in the bull ring and I wanted very much to go to Spain where I could study it. I was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things of all and the most fundamental is violent death. (2)

Undertaking a study of Spanish bullfighting was, according to Hemingway, crucial to fashioning his writing skills. Key terms like "truly," "really," "actual," and "simple" are so central to the most common understandings of Hemingway's style that it's impossible to underestimate the relationship between his passion for bullfighting and his approach to writing in this passage. The opposition between genuine and feigned emotion drives Hemingway's aesthetic quest to write about "simplest things," and only in the bullring does he see the possibility for accurately distinguishing between the two types of affect.

It is no new critical business to find in *Death in the Afternoon* Hemingway's own attitudes toward the practice of writing, and I generally agree with these estimates, but less commonly do critics look to Hemingway for signs that realism is at work.<sup>52</sup> In the above passage, however, Hemingway's repeated articulation of the experience of the *actual* over and above its approximation makes the question of realism a central one. The overarching aim "to put down what really happened in action" belies his impulse to realism, but how does Hemingway's realism compare to well-established nineteenth century realist modes and conventions? And exactly how important is bull-fighting to his brand of realism?

As had been the case with the "orthodox realism" of the nineteenth century, the mediation of author and text lies at the heart of the realist problem as Hemingway identifies it. Europe and the US in the nineteenth century didn't invent realism as an artistic aim, but those authors and artists took verisimilitude to a number of crucial extremes (photography, nineteenth-century *trompe l'oeil*, film, panoramas, daily newspapers, French literary Naturalism, and so on).

At least part of the appeal for Hemingway in writing about male athleticism was that it had long been the domain of journalistic prose, a prose style that had increased in interest among late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century realist fiction authors. Few serious authors had taken on athletic subjects, and those that had done so approached it first as journalists.<sup>53</sup>

As my earlier chapter on Muybridge makes clear, the pose of neutrality is fundamental to the representation of athleticism; even more precisely, representations of athleticism articulated exactly what a “neutral pose” might look like. The representation of athletics (in film and literature) draws upon pre-existing assumptions about sports spectatorship. Muybridge, for example, finds in the camera a nearly perfect substitute for the sports spectator. That the formal presentation of his sporting subjects on film (and of boxers, in particular) so closely resembles the formal presentation of those same subjects in actual practice is no accident; we see in Muybridge’s studies of boxing a formal articulation of a neutral, unmediated vantage point. However, it is far easier to recognize in a nascent technology like film a return to questions concerning the “origin” of realism. More difficult to recognize is the change in attitudes toward realism in a medium like the novel that already had a well-established formal and generic history. For my purposes, there is no particularly stable or useful distinction between “realism” as a loosely defined set of generic (mostly nineteenth-century prose fiction) conventions and “realism” as a concern of nearly all forms of representation (as the attempt to present an accurate recreation of the phenomenal world). That these two conceptions of realism blur together more often than not testifies to the slipperiness of maintaining too firm a hold on these “distinct” definitions. Instead, I’ve opted for the route of trying to trace a rough historical genealogy of the discourse of realism; as such, I will most often use the term in the second sense, that is, as a transhistorical concern, while simultaneously drawing upon many of the assumptions generated by the more historically bound usage (as a genre of nineteenth-century Euro-American fiction).

In my earlier chapter on American Naturalist authors, I point out the ways in which realism as understood by nineteenth-century novelists undergoes a radical transformation in the hands of the late-century Naturalists. Not only did these authors de-psychologize the typical realist character, but they also found in the new category of the “social” a reason for any and all assumptions of the seemingly “real.” I argue that Naturalist authors understand the social nature of the category of the real and turn to sports spectatorship (and to boxing in particular) to articulate the role played by social bodies in constituting a neutral pose from which reality may be observed and conveyed untouched. Not coincidentally, many of these same authors (like Stephen Crane, Jack London, and Frank Norris) worked briefly as journalists. As I claim in that chapter, textual transparency makes sense to the Naturalists only so far as their narrators can adopt a social perspective, most clearly articulated as the perspective of a body of sports spectators.

As much as the Modernists of the twentieth century wanted to turn away from what they saw as misguided assumptions by the prior century’s artists, particularly the assumption of transparent signification, the Modernists also resuscitated and amplified other nineteenth-century interests. While many turned away from the notion of textual transparency—e.g., that words were invisible mediators between a reader and a text’s signified subject—and emphasized instead the role of the art object’s mediation in aesthetic experience, others delved even more deeply into verisimilitude and exaggerated the object-ness of their artistic subjects (adhering to a Heideggerian “thingness of the thing”). Some went as far as to emphasize the objectness of the artwork itself, obliterating the mediation between representation and represented object by eliminating the need for a referent. Poets like Pound, Stein, Williams, and Stephens turned to

painting and the plastic arts as models for what good poetry should do.<sup>54</sup> Novelists, on the other hand, nearly eliminated the object world altogether, giving us deeply subjective psychological morasses. Since these novels seldom attempt to represent an accurate object world, these works exist entirely in a world of representation, signification, and abstraction. Woolf, Ford, and Joyce each presented us with works so deeply embedded within characters' psychologies that they provided next to no access to anything like a familiar object world. The problem of mediation in realist representation grew among Modernist authors into two increasingly distinct aesthetic categories: the poetic object and the prose subject.

From the time of Muybridge to the time of the early-twentieth-century Modernists, a major divide had grown in realist aesthetics, evidenced in the split between Modernist poets and Modernist novelists. Modernist writers discovered that there was no way to articulate both the phenomenal world of objects and the mediating role of the artist simultaneously. Finding a useful and productive way to speak of "realism" with reference to this diverse (and often diametrically opposed) group of Modernist authors seems doomed to failure at first glance. Either we extend the term "realism" to apply to the psychological realism of the novelists, or we extend the term in another direction and speak of an objective realism with reference to the poets. From Muybridge to Hemingway, representations of boxing provide an astonishingly lucid articulation of this increasingly troublesome aesthetic contradiction. For reasons I've explained at length in earlier chapters, boxing is particularly well suited as a subject for exploring the relationship between artistic mediation and the phenomenal world's immediacy. My interest here is not in making any specific claim about realism with respect to the Modernists generally. I am, however, attempting to characterize the historically specific aesthetic situation within which Hemingway writes and what his work reveals about the genealogy of realism. I don't necessarily find him the most realist-minded of these authors, but I do think the particular flavor of his return to and re-evaluation of orthodox realism had a particularly lasting resonance for twentieth-century American prose. Hemingway, more than nearly every other ostensibly "Modernist" author or artist, gives voice to this divisive split in realist modes of representation.<sup>55</sup> The remainder of this chapter will attempt to understand what precisely "realism" looks like in Hemingway's work, what place athleticism (and boxing, in particular) takes in this approach, and how Hemingway's attitude toward realism plays into and informs discourse over the "American-ness" of his prose style.

### Section 1: The Shadow Boxer

As boxing had been the subject for Eadweard Muybridge's own working-through of the problem of photographic/proto-filmic mediation, so too did it become important for other artists at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>56</sup> Ernest Hemingway's approach, however, appears much more tangential and asymptotic to the sport. Always present but never quite at the center of his work, boxing at first glance does not seem to be the sport of greatest interest to Hemingway. He writes about nearly every sport in practice in Europe and North America in the early-twentieth century, but as immensely popular as boxing then was, he has very few works dedicated completely to it. His works include a number of boxers but rarely include any actual boxing; *The Sun Also Rises*, *To Have and Have Not*, *Green Hills of Africa*, "The Killers," and "The Battler" all include important characters who are also boxers, but none of these works gives boxing itself any detail. He uses countless boxing metaphors throughout his work, particularly in his lengthiest study of any one sport, *Death in the Afternoon*, a non-fiction study of Spanish bullfighting, but the action is all in the bulls and bullfighters. Boxing is, to my thinking, notable

more for its absence than its presence in Hemingway's work. As much as this chapter attempts to understand the role boxing plays in Hemingway's work and in his particular brand of realism, it must also be a study of boxing's notable absence and seeming marginality in Hemingway's work.

Boxing (and boxers) present a perpetual aesthetic problem for Hemingway. The sport is too familiar, too domestic, too present, and too multifarious for his liking. While he includes boxers in many of his works, very few works are devoted entirely to boxers and only one short story is actually about boxing itself. Even that story, "Fifty Grand," is not told from boxer Jack Brennan's perspective. Instead, Hemingway chooses to tell it from someone's perspective *just outside* the boxer himself, that of his trainer Jerry Doyle.<sup>57</sup> The boxer's psyche is alien to Hemingway's literary imagination; even better said, the boxer has no conceivable psyche. As the critical emblem of his absent consciousness, Jack Brennan's lack of speech is described repeatedly by the narrator. Doyle tells the reader many times that Brennan "doesn't say anything" (309), "didn't say anything" (310), sat "without saying anything" (311), "didn't talk" (316), and "don't talk any" (322). As we see in the story, though, Brennan's speechlessness is not a literal speechlessness since he has just as much dialogue in the story as any other character. His "laconic" nature signals instead a metaphorical absence. He is the dupe of others' machinations and is unable to articulate any sense of what's happening to him.

Summarized as simply as possible, the story follows Jack Brennan, a boxer on his last legs who bets against himself in the final fight of his boxing career. However, his backers have told him that they've arranged things to ensure that Brennan will win (and lose his entire career savings to them in the process). During the fight, on cue, the other fighter fouls Brennan by hitting him in the groin. Instead of calling the foul as he's supposed to, Brennan fouls the other fighter in return and loses the fight as a consequence. Jerry, the trainer and narrator, is blindsided by what seems to have happened in the ring, just as the reader is. The assumption up to that point had been that Brennan was a dupe and was utterly doomed—that he was being coerced into betting his entire career's saved earnings (the eponymous "fifty grand") against himself and then losing it all by winning the fight. The twist in the end of the story is that the reader (along with the narrator Doyle) discovers that Brennan realizes he was being played for a dummy and decides to throw the fight mid-bout—winning his bet and the fatal ire of his gangster backers.

Prior to that final twist, however, Brennan had been portrayed using many of the tropes associated with many of Hemingway's other boxer characters. Dead, dying, inert, and empty, Brennan "just hasn't got anything inside anymore" (306), is "all busted inside" (326), and his performance in the ring amounts to "nothing" (326). Brennan constantly appears in death-like, prone positions: he "leaned back against a post . . . [and] shut his eyes in the sun" (303), he lies "face down [with] his face in the pillow" (307), "he just sits there on the bed" (309), he feels that he is attending his own wake (310), he lies "perfectly still" (318), and "he lies there with his eyes shut" (326). The boxer can only ever be dead, wholly other, and outside the realm of representation.

We see similar tropes in Hemingway's two Nick Adams stories about boxers, "The Battler" and "The Killers," that present two washed-up former boxers. Both are pathologically self-destructive and each bears the marks (both literal and symbolic) of defeat and decay. In "The Battler," the boxer Ad is described as having a "misshapen" face. "His nose was sunken, his eyes were slits, he had queer-shaped lips . . . [T]he man's face was queerly formed and mutilated. It was like putty in color. Dead looking in the firelight" (131). The story goes on to present a man malformed, mistreated, abused, and defeated. Ad lives the life of a transient; he is financially

supported by a woman who deserted him; he is cared for by a black man he met while in prison; and he is prone to fits of insanity. Ad is a living, walking stand-in for death and emasculation: he is physically deformed, mentally unstable, described as a monstrous corpse, and cared for by a woman and a black man—as low as a Hemingway character can get. Bugs, Ad's black caregiver, knocks Ad out when he starts threatening Nick. While laying prone, "his face looked bad, the eyes open" (136) in creepy resemblance to a dead body. The sense, however, is almost comic in its tragic repetition. Bugs explains to Nick that "[he] hate[s] to thump him and it's the only thing to do when he gets started" (138). This sort of thing seems to happen often between Ad and Bugs; the act has a mechanically absurd flavor to it.<sup>58</sup> The absurdity of the situation only makes it all the more horrifyingly tragic to Nick.

While it's true that Hemingway's work is full of these male characters—failed, abused, beaten, dead, dying, and self-destructive—it's only Hemingway's boxers (the few that there are in his work) who bear so much of the onus and flavor of defeat. In his non-boxers, there is often the accompanying sense of transcendence, transformation, martyrdom, and self-realization in moments of death and failure. Francis Macomber's death in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" signifies his transformation into a more masculine man. The near-insignificant death of Paco in "The Capital of the World" signifies his entrance into manhood. Harry's death at the end of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" signifies his transformation into a full-fledged writer. And so on. There are so many of these moments, in fact, that to list all of these works would be to list the entire Hemingway bibliography. For these non-boxing men in Hemingway's work, the experiences of death, near death, and immense physical pain offer the promise (and achievement) of personal fulfillment. There is a psychic mutation in these experiences, a farther shore that exists beyond and through pain and death. Death, for Hemingway's non-boxers, is a means to an end rather than simply an end. Boxers, however, present a problem. Hemingway's boxers stand immutably within the experience of pain and death. For them, there is no regenerative, restorative, or fulfilling moment. Ad, as discussed above, is already dead and will always be so. "The Battler" provides an image straight out of Dante's *Inferno*; Ad is doomed for eternity to repeat his defeat senselessly. Boxers constitute the limit case of transformative violence in Hemingway's work.

A similarly non-transformative death experience is presented in "The Killers." Ole Andreson, a former prizefighter ("you'd never know it except from the way his face is" (288)), lies in his bed with his face to the wall waiting for the killers to come for him. As with Ad in the story above, Ole is a character hopelessly embedded within death and defeat. There is no transformation and no trade-off; like every other of Hemingway's boxers, Ole has been endlessly beaten both physically and psychically with nothing at all to show for it. "The Killers" ends as a reiteration of what Freud identifies as "the economic problem in masochism" according to which "masochism is incomprehensible" ("The Economic Problem in Masochism" 190). When faced with the sight of Ole's prone body lying there inertly awaiting his imminent doom, Nick turns and runs away. While Freud claims to tackle the problem of masochism head-on in "The Economic Problem" essay, he, like Nick Adams, turns away from the willed experience of pain. Freud concludes his essay by claiming that the masochist not only "overcomes" the death-instinct but that he has also carried with it an "erotic component." Thus, for Freud, "even the destruction of anyone by himself cannot occur without gratification of the libido" (201). Thus, even though Freud has devoted this essay to a study of the supposed problem of masochism (the willful experience of pain), he cannot help but turn away at the last moment (and provide a pleasurable outcome). There is no place in psychoanalysis for pleasure-less behavior. Like

Hemingway's non-boxers, Freud's masochist seeks pain for the sake of some libidinous outcome. However, as the above examples from Hemingway's work show, boxers carry no such obvious erotic or pathologically masochistic component unlike Hemingway's other masochistic characters. Instead, boxers serve as zero points for the experience of pain. They feel pain intensely and fatalistically in Hemingway's stories and novels, but there's never a point at which that pain becomes transformed into anything remotely pleasurable.

After Nick Adams sees Ole's utter resignation in the face of imminent death, Nick decides to leave town. He tells George, the counterman at the diner, "I can't stand to think about him waiting in the room and knowing he's going to get it. It's too damned awful." George's response—dutifully playing the part of the Freudian superego—admonishes him: "Well, . . . you better not think about it." While it can easily be argued that Nick gains some pleasurable outcome from the experience, Ole does not. Nick, as the perennial Hemingway stand-in, turns from the "incomprehensible" face of impending death and takes away some "erotic" benefit: a life-lesson that brings him closer to manhood. Ole, however, remains forever doomed and untransformed.

Boxing is consistently treated differently from other subjects in Hemingway's work. It provides an important aporia in his work, signified much more by its pervasive marginality than by its obvious centrality. For an author so clearly dedicated to violence and the experience of pain, it strikes me as odd that Hemingway would turn and run (as Nick Adams does) in the face of his boxers. Hemingway finds in boxing an element too difficult to confront in his work. It signifies for him an unaccountable and irreconcilable experience of pain, loss, and defeat. My ultimate point, though, is not to psychoanalyze Hemingway nor is it to symptomatize his treatment of boxing as some part of his own masochistic inclinations. I'm far less interested in "Hemingway" as a psychic subject than as an artistic one. Far more interesting is that there exists a stylistic counterpart to the anxiety manifest in boxing that offers us a way into Hemingway's approach to the problem of realism.

Returning to "Fifty Grand," we can begin to piece together the aesthetic function of the aporia of boxing. The boxer Jack Brennan signifies a deeply unsettling absence; his speechlessness is not a literal speechlessness, but signals rather an inaccessible consciousness, an unknown and impossible representational possibility. The trainer's perspective gives us some vital footing, however. If Brennan as the inscrutable boxer presents a representational problem, Doyle as the expert trainer presents a solution. A multi-faceted expert discourse asserts itself to compensate for whatever the boxer and his world might lack. Doyle, the narrator, speaks in colloquialisms peppered with a wide array of boxing terms and phrases. Slang provides a linguistic register within which the expert perspective can flourish. In the Hemingway oeuvre, slang signifies a deep and intimate familiarity with a place, a sport, or a group of people. Like Jake Barnes' use of Spanish in *The Sun Also Rises* or Manuel's use of bullfighting slang in "The Undefeated," Doyle's use of slang confirms his familiarity with the boxing world and with a host of other specialized discourses (regional, cultural, class, criminal, and so on). Doyle's expertise extends across a wide range of social groups and disciplines. He plays the role of teacher and provides the reader with the interpretive tools (i.e., the language) necessary to understand what we see/read. In tandem with his fluent disciplinary expertise, Doyle's Northeastern dialect comes and goes throughout his narration; for example, sometimes he'll use "I says" or "he says" to attribute direct speech, but other times he'll fall back on the more conventional phrases "I said" or "he said." The vast majority of the story is told through character dialogue, but looking at one of the longer narrative sections, we can see how infused with dialect the narration is:

Jack started training at Danny Hogan's health farm over in Jersey. It was nice out there but Jack didn't like it much. He didn't like being away from his wife and the kids, and he was sore and grouchy most of the time. He liked me and we got along fine together; and he liked Hogan, but after a while Soldier Bartlett commenced to get on his nerves. A kidder gets to be an awful thing around a camp if his stuff goes sort of sour. Soldier was always kidding Jack, just sort of kidding him all the time. It wasn't very funny and it wasn't very good, and it began to get to Jack. It was sort of stuff like this. Jack would finish up with the weights and the bag and pull on the gloves. (301)

Not a single sentence in this paragraph is free of colloquial speech. We receive the narration as a spoken, dialect-ridden account. Even more, the structure of the paragraph follows a non-conventional pattern. The last two sentences don't properly end the logic of the paragraph and instead perform a demonstrative function; the final two sentences operate like extended punctuation (a colon). "It was sort of stuff like this" doesn't refer to what came before but refers ahead to what Doyle is about to say. The next sentence (which also ends the paragraph) begins to explain what "sort of stuff" he means, which the succeeding paragraphs detail. More than simply *narrating* events and dialogue, Doyle is *demonstrating* them for us. These final two sentences don't so much end the paragraph as they instantiate and prepare us for the "scene" that follows. The language of the conversation that follows—which is mostly dialogue—continues its demonstrative tone. Demonstration is the single-most important goal of expert discourse. Expert discourse demonstrates *through* its language rather than *by* its language, and the ideal of any expert language is to become the equivalent of a colon. In effect, expert discourse functions identically to the technology employed by Muybridge in his photographic studies, relaying an unmediated vision of its subject.

Following the paragraph cited above, Doyle continues to describe what comes after the "colon."

"You want to work?" he'd say to Soldier.

"Sure. How you want me to work?" Soldier would ask. "Want me to treat you rough like Walcott? Want me to knock you down a few times?"

"That's it," Jack would say. (301)

While the dialogue attribution uses a conditional tense to denote regular or usual behavior, this is a singular scene that presumably happens "sort of" like this but not exactly like this particular example. This is a "for instance" meant to demonstrate to Doyle's reader a typical pattern. To symptomatize this use of the conditional tense as mere colloquialism misses the fact that a key aspect of colloquial language *is* its demonstrative quality. Not only that, but telling the story in colloquial language is itself a form of demonstration (in contrast to more neutral language which would denote something other than itself). Colloquial language demonstrates both itself and its referent; or more precisely, the referent of colloquial language and the language itself are utterly inseparable. My point here is that a discourse of expertise has everything to do with what might be termed "colloquial." In his *The Colloquial Style in America*, Richard Bridgman claims that "Hemingway discovered the principal components of [his stringent] aesthetic in the colloquial tradition" (212) and Bridgman describes Hemingway's attention to colloquial languages as in tune with the American idiom's fundamental "changes" and "diversity" (222). Bridgman, however, is less than rigorous in his attempt to negotiate the relationship between Hemingway's narrative style and his use of character dialogue:

Guided, however, by Gertrude Stein's revelation of the underlying formal structure of the vernacular, Ernest Hemingway developed a subtle, intricate, and balanced narrative prose

independent of a specific narrator. In response to the radical stylization of his narrative prose, Hemingway's dialogue then began contracting and kept on until at last it dwindled down to silence, the other side of speech. (230)

Bridgman forces an arbitrary distinction between Hemingway's "narrative prose" and his "dialogue," creating a stylistic opposition where there is none.<sup>59</sup>

There's little difference between the dialects visible in characters' direct speech and in Doyle's narration. The above example shows how his narrative prose flows *demonstrably* and seamlessly into dialogue. However, "colloquial" is in itself a fraught term. As Bakhtin claims of the novel generally, "the novel comes into contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present" ("Epic and Novel" 27). Nothing could be more demonstrative of the diversity of that "spontaneity" than colloquial language. Interlaced within characters' direct speech and in Doyle's narration other registers appear, particularly the "tough guy" speak of mobsters.<sup>60</sup> Hogan rehearses a handful of euphemistic slang terms with Doyle that refer to the two men who come to visit Brennan at the training farm; he calls them "wise boys" (308), one is a "big operator" and a "pretty smooth boy," and "they're a couple of sharpshooters" (309). Emphasizing this added register, one of the mobsters arrives complete with his own phoneticized dialect: "Soldier *Bahltlett* was out here *wukking* with you for a while, wasn't he?" (308, emphasis added). One dialect and set of idiomatic phrasings runs seamlessly into another. The slang and technical expertise associated with boxing are nearly inseparable from these various languages/dialects. It is not for nothing that a story about boxing is so riddled with slang. Boxing is a sport dedicated to voicing regional antagonisms, inter-ethnic animosity, and demonstrable violence. As Joyce Carol Oates says, "boxing really isn't metaphor, it is the thing in itself" (102), and so it can't help but demonstrate itself. But if Jerry Doyle is the "expert," what does that make the story's boxer Jack Brennan?

As the perpetual point of absence in the story, Brennan's "voice" doesn't emerge until the story's closing ironic moments. Doyle's vantage of expertise grants him a "double-vision" that can recognize the two performative registers of Brennan's fight. He can point out the dramatic irony happening in the fight by pointing out the difference between what seems to be happening and what's actually happening. Knowing and fluently demonstrating the many different dialects intersecting in the story also means that Doyle can demonstrate to the reader the difference between the *perception* and the *actuality* of the fight. Just as Doyle can fluidly navigate between the wide variety of dialects in the boxing world, he can also recognize and point out the many different levels of perception and knowledge. Understanding these contradictory perspectives is the foundation of the expert's position. The expert can separate the "false" from the "true" and demonstrate to the reader how to recognize the difference.

It's no surprise then that dramatic irony abounds in Brennan's fight, and that the expert Doyle can safely point out to his readers the difference between how things appear and how they really are. Even though there are many competing perspectives in Brennan's fight, Doyle guides his readers confidently through the morass. As the fight begins, Doyle notes how Brennan's opponent Walcott plays up the part of a gentleman for the crowd. At one point, Walcott poses for the crowd with his hand on Brennan's shoulder, and they exchange heated words. Doyle notes that the crowd can't hear so "this is all great for the crowd. How gentlemanly the boys are before the fight. How they wish each other luck" (320). The irony of the situation (the crowd perceiving one thing while another transpires) is doubled in the ironic tone of Doyle's narration. Doyle notes many times what "the crowd" can't hear or see, paying particular attention to the fact that "it didn't show what an awful beating [Brennan] was taking" (323). Over the course of the fight,



Brennan is double-crossed by his gangster “benefactors,” adding yet another layer of dramatic irony. Brennan expected to lose and so bet fifty grand on the other fighter. All this, Doyle sees and relays easily to the reader.

However, the fight takes an unexpected turn. Prior to the fight, Brennan’s manager and two suspicious friends had talked to him to verify their suspicion that Brennan expected to lose. During the fight, Walcott fouls Brennan with a low hit to the groin. Brennan declines the foul, and fouls Walcott in return, in effect throwing the match. Brennan reveals to Doyle after the fight that he had realized that his manager and the gangsters had wanted him to win (Walcott was favored 2-1). By story’s end, Brennan’s “eyes are open now” (326). Brennan not only one-ups Doyle’s expertise (“it’s funny how fast you can think when it means that much money” (326)), but because Doyle was in the dark, so were we readers. The comfort and assurance of Doyle’s expert discourse proves to have been a misplaced confidence.

Unlike every one of Hemingway’s other boxers, Brennan undergoes a transformative experience; however, rather than contradicting my earlier claim that boxers undergo no transformations in Hemingway’s work, this is the exception that proves the rule. Part and parcel of Brennan’s transformation is his retirement from the sport. In effect, there’s no contradiction in Hemingway’s attitude toward boxers since the story is about Brennan’s transformation from boxer to non-boxer. As much an expert as Doyle may have seemed and pretended to be for the sake of us readers, we are utterly in the dark. The inscrutability of the boxer is turned into a narrative trick where we’re left in the dark because the one character who recognizes what’s happening (Brennan) is the one character to whom we have no access. Hemingway puts the aporia of boxing to narrative work; because we (like Doyle) took the boxer’s inscrutability for granted, we didn’t see this final turn in the story coming. Not only does the story hinge on the O. Henry-like twist at the end, but it also adds another layer of irony by giving the lie to Doyle’s expertise.

By story’s end, Brennan is no longer a black spot in the story, but is rather the only one with full disclosure. The twist is that the boxer is not a boxer. Not only are his eyes open after the fight (in contrast to the many death-like trances earlier in the story), but his laconic nature has been transferred to the other boxer Walcott. Earlier, Brennan “doesn’t say anything” (309), “didn’t say anything” (310), sat “without saying anything” (311), didn’t talk” (316), and “don’t talk any” (322); but after the fight, “nobody speaks to Jack” and “Walcott doesn’t say anything” (325). Brennan tells Walcott, “Well, you’re the champion now . . . I hope you get a hell of a lot of fun out of it” (326). The tables have turned, and Brennan is no longer a boxer. He can speak, but no one else can. He has adopted the position of expertise, marked by the ability to speak. He was expertly spoken about, but he himself could not speak his own expertise until after the story’s final ironic twist(s). In this story, the ability to speak hinges on one’s ability to articulate what’s actually happening; it is a movement from a position of object-ness to subject-ness.

Prior to the fight, Brennan had served as the expert’s visual specimen. Like slang discourse itself, Brennan constantly demonstrates his own boxer-ness. Doyle notes that after Brennan’s private conversation with his manager and the two shady men, “Jack doesn’t say anything. He just sits there on the bed. He ain’t with the others. He’s all by himself. He was wearing an old blue jersey and pants and had on boxing shoes. He needed a shave. Steinfeld and Morgan were dressers. John was quite a dresser too. Jack sat there looking Irish and tough” (309). Brennan’s object-ness is tied crucially to his boxer-ness. He looks demonstrably like a boxer while the other three men look notably alike and well dressed.

Most importantly, though, the position of the boxer is tied to the experience of pain. Brennan's self-destructive masochism intensifies just before the fight. He drinks himself to sleep the night before the fight (314). He begins spending money frivolously and carelessly. Brennan bets against himself knowing that "[he] got to take a beating. Why shouldn't [he] make money on it?" (313) When Walcott hits him below the belt, Doyle can see that Walcott "never thought Jack could have stood it" and remarks that "Jack's face was the worst thing I ever saw" (325). The pain and self-destruction build to a head up to the moment when Walcott fouls Brennan. Brennan has to "hold himself in" because "his insides were going to fall out" (324). Doyle repeats the phrase "holding himself in" many times through the last few pages of the story. The image of a beaten man "holding himself in" is so psychically suited to Hemingway's work that we must wholly admit to Brennan's transformation into the prototypical Hemingway hero. The pain Brennan experiences from having been hit disgustingly hard in the groin is complimented by the pleasure he takes in keeping himself together. This is the heart of the transformation from a doomed boxer to a man who can turn his own pain to profit. He's converted boxing into business, pain into pleasure. At the story's end, he's "all through. It's just business" (315). This change is signified by his leaving boxing altogether. Transformation doesn't come easily or painlessly for Hemingway's characters, and no less so for a boxer who becomes not one. In all likelihood, since he's gone against what he presumes were his managers' wishes, he can expect violent retribution. But this fatalistic expectation, unlike that of Ole Andreson waiting for his death, is a transformative one.

During the fight, Walcott keeps telling Brennan, "Be yourself!" Obviously a euphemism for a much stronger insult closer to "Fuck yourself," the phrase carries the added weight of the identitarian game being played. Brennan continues to accuse Walcott of acting the part of a popular boxer, and Walcott counters with the above insult that accuses Brennan of acting like something other than himself. Before the fight, Brennan needed to find out Walcott's "nationality." One of his cornermen tells him "he's some sort of a Dane," while another tells him "he's a Bohemian" (321). As the fight starts, Brennan asks Walcott, "what do you call yourself 'Walcott' for? . . . Didn't you know he was a nigger?" (321), and just after Walcott fouls him, he calls him a "polak son-of-a-bitch" (324). Because boxing plays the game of reifying and realigning ethnic, national, and regional allegiances, these alliances often become confused and overlapping. As argued above, a major reason for Hemingway's aesthetic difficulties with the sport comes directly from this inherent difficulty. In the exchange of insults between Walcott and Brennan, the game native to the sport plays out in a deliberate confusion, but Brennan ultimately walks out of the ring for good having to "hold himself in." Like Hemingway's other boxers, Brennan begins the story completely empty and interior-less. He cannot "be himself" because there is no integral "self" to Hemingway's boxers. After the fight, Brennan passes the torch, so to speak, to Walcott who has successfully achieved the "popular win" (326) and become the boxer in Brennan's place.

I could more correctly describe Hemingway's one and only story about a boxer as a story about becoming a non-boxer. Just when Hemingway seems to be writing about a boxer, he instead writes about a boxer who isn't one, or at least stops being one. Brennan's retirement from boxing coincides with a whole host of other personal transformations. He converts boxing into business, he leaves a world of men for his family (a wife and daughter), and he translates pain to pleasure. However, at the heart of his transformation was his ability to think fast in the ring and appraise the situation, to master the irony of the expert's position. The expert occupies an array of possible positions (embodied in language) simultaneously; no wonder then that after the fight

Brennan must continue to “hold himself” together. Just as Doyle speaks in the languages and dialects of those people and cultures about which he writes, so too has Brennan learned to occupy those positions. In recognizing what’s happening to him, Brennan simultaneously masters the cacophony of the boxing ring’s multiple perspectives and loses his status as a vacuous boxer, passing on the inarticulable position of the boxer and his pain to his opponent Walcott.

## Section 2: Of Boxers and Bullfighters

In the passage from *Death in the Afternoon* with which I opened this chapter, it is the simple pageantry of “violent death” that makes bullfighting so interesting to Hemingway. While he compares boxing to bullfighting throughout the work, the trait that sets boxing most clearly apart from bullfighting is that a “boxer does not face death” (104) in the way a bullfighter does. Strangely, however, the vast majority of his references to boxing in *Death in the Afternoon* compare boxers to the bulls, not to the bullfighters. Thus, something is amiss in his attempt to differentiate the bullfighter from the boxer. When he tells his Socratic yes-man, the “Old Lady,” that “your boxer does not face death,” he is comparing the risks a bullfighter takes to those the boxer takes.<sup>61</sup> Yet, again and again, it is the bulls that receive a boxer’s valuation, changing the terms of the metaphor. Bulls “are not fed after they leave the corral any more than a boxer would be fed immediately before a fight” (29). Bulls lose their ideal conditioning in late summer “unless they have been fed up on grain which makes them fat, sleek and glossy and very violent for a few minutes but as unfit for fighting as a boxer that has trained exclusively on potatoes and ale” (49). The difference between a bull who escapes the ring and a bull who “welcomes the fight” is like “the difference between street fights which are usually infinitely more exciting, portentous and useful, but out of place here, and the winning of a championship in boxing” (112). In his most extended comparison, a good bullfighter must learn to prepare for a bull’s counter:

[T]he attacker must lay himself open and the counter is certain to arrive if it is as fast as the attack, since it has the opening before it while the attack must try to create that opening. In boxing Gene Tunney was an example of a counter-puncher; all those boxers who have lasted longest and taken least punishment have been counter-punchers too. The bull, when he is in querencia, counters the sword stroke with his horn when he sees it coming as the boxer counters the lead, and many men have paid with their lives, or with bad wounds, because they did not bring the bull out of his querencia before they went in to kill. (150-151)

Certainly, Hemingway does compare bullfighters to boxers, as well, but the bulls bear the greatest burden of comparison. That bulls are most often compared to boxers and that Hemingway claims that boxers do not “face death” seems strange. Bullfighters run a far lesser risk of death than do the bulls (whose tragic death Hemingway claims bullfighting plays out), so his differentiation might make sense if bullfighters and boxers were being more often compared; however, it is the bulls—who face death more certainly than bullfighters—who are most frequently made over into boxers. Something is being left unsaid, then, in his claim that boxing is not like bullfighting because boxers do not “face death” in the way of the bullfighters since it is not the bullfighters or their death that lay at the heart of the spectacle. Hemingway leaves unsaid his deeper understanding of the relationship between the bull’s certain, absolute death and the boxer’s non-transformative masochism.

That Robert Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises* is a boxer, a Jew, and a scapegoat for the expatriates' disaffection and ennui proves more salient in this light. Not only is he compared to castrated or less powerful bulls at various points in the novel, but the death of the bull in Pedro Romero's fight is a rather obvious double for the singled-out Cohn (the boxer). Moreover, the physical appearance of Cohn's nose (both a boxer's nose and a Jew's nose) simultaneously marks him apart and reveals his foreordained doom just as the physical appearances of Ole (in "The Killers") and Ad (in "The Battler") had similarly signified their doom. Cohn himself "cared nothing for boxing, in fact he disliked it"; getting his nose "permanently flattened" by his trainer only "increased Cohn's distaste for boxing," and according to Jake's wry anti-Semitism, the injury "certainly improved his nose" (11). Just as boxing and boxers seem unaccountably masochistic and narratively untouchable elsewhere in Hemingway's work, Cohn himself finds boxing detestable even though he is himself a boxer. In addition to being permanently and visibly injured, he finds no pleasure in the sport. *The Sun Also Rises* persists in linking Cohn's Jewishness to his being a boxer. His busted boxer's nose replaces his "busted" Jewish one. Jake explains that Cohn's college boxing was a way for him "to counteract the feeling of inferiority and shyness he had felt on being treated as a Jew at Princeton" (11).

Jake and Bill's conversation about the corralling of the bulls during the festival of San Fermin in Madrid contains an unmistakable Cohn-subtext:

"They let the bulls out of the cages one at a time, and they have steers in the corral to receive them and keep them from fighting, and the bulls tear in at the steers and the steers run around like old maids trying to quiet them down."

"Do they ever gore the steers?"

"Sure. Sometimes they go right after them and kill them."

"Can't the steers do anything?"

"No. They're trying to make friends."

"What do they have them in for?"

"To quiet down the bulls and keep them from breaking their horns against the stone walls, or goring each other."

"Must be swell being a steer." (138)

The festival of San Fermin itself seems, from Jake's perspective at least, to have to do with outsiders and foreigners. During the festival, "a man, bent over, was playing on a reed-pipe, and a crowd of children were following him shouting, and pulling at his clothes. [Jake and his gang] saw his blank pockmarked face as he went by," and Bill remarks, "He must be the village idiot" (157-158). Less an alluring pied piper figure than a physically marked ("bent over" and "pockmarked") one, the children seem more to be chasing him and abusing him than being led. A banner carried by the crowd proclaims: "Hurray for the Wine! Hurray for the Foreigners!" (158) The bullfight at the heart of the festival ritualizes the sacrifice of some outsider.<sup>62</sup> Thus, it comes as little surprise that Cohn's "foreign-ness" so closely parallels the treatment of the steers.

Cohn doesn't simply serve as the group's scapegoat, though. From Jake's perspective what makes Cohn so unbearable is that he is a "black hole" for their mistreatment. He is detestable because he can be endlessly detested.

I do not know how people could say such terrible things to Robert Cohn. There are people to whom you could not say insulting things. They give you a feeling that the world would be destroyed, would actually be destroyed before your eyes, if you said certain things. But here was Cohn taking it all. Here it was, all going on right before me, and I did not even feel an impulse to try and stop it. (56)

As with Ole and Ad, here we are presented with a boxer whose attachment to pain is so absolute and so total that nothing can come of it; no libidinous psychic outcome can be achieved, even by round-about means. There is no lesson and no transcendent experience, simply an emblem of pain unending. Jake acts like a deer caught in the headlights when directly confronted with the bottomless depths of Cohn's ability to "take it." Jake sees Cohn behave just as senselessly while Frances browbeats him. "His face was white. Why did he sit there? Why did he keep on taking it like that?" (58). Jake flees the scene and returns to his hotel just as Nick Adams had fled from the scene of Ole Andreson awaiting his killers.

Immediately afterward, sitting in his room thinking about Brett, Jake is confronted by his own inability to "take it": "The Catholic Church had an awfully good way of handling all that. Good advice, anyway. Not to think about it. Oh, it was swell advice. Try and take it sometime. Try and take it" (39). Then he cries himself to sleep. Precisely to what "all that" refers remains vague and unclear throughout the novel, but we can safely assume Jake's "injury" is something vaguely sexual in nature; however, it is this precise lack of certainty and clarity that lies at the heart of what the experience of pain means in this novel. The horror of and disgust at Cohn's impossibly deep ability to "take it" and Jake's never-named injury share in common Freud's "economic problem" of masochism. From Freud's perspective, masochism marks the combined persistence of the death-instinct and its return in a translated (erotic) form. According to Freud's model of the development of the masochistic perversion, the initial death drive is overcome by redirecting its forces outward (as sadism); this, in turn, is redirected inward by social constraint (by both the superego and the ego itself) and experienced as masochistic guilt ("The Economic Problem of Masochism" 200). Further, not only has some vestige of the death-instinct "escaped deflection on to the outer world," but there also is some translated (erotic) component. Freud's conclusion, then, is that "even the destruction of anyone by himself cannot occur without gratification of the libido" (201). In this last claim lies Freud's reconciliation of the "economic problem."<sup>63</sup> There can be no pain for itself, according to Freud; there must be some psychic pay-off. Said otherwise, in order for pain to be comprehensible it must be rearticulated as gratification of a sort, even if it's a delayed pleasure. However, it is precisely the concept of pain for pain's sake that a character like Cohn embodies. He signifies for Jake the incredibly anxious possibility of pain's ineffability. It is in addressing this state that we run into the limitations of psychoanalyzing these characters and of psychoanalyzing Hemingway as their primary fantasist.

If we focus too much on latent motivations and drives behind these characters and their creation, we then must find some hidden pleasure at work in the novel's presentation of the experience of pain. There can be no pain desired for its own sake from the psychoanalytic perspective. A character/person like Cohn is incomprehensible to the psychoanalyst. Jake's disgust at Cohn and how others treat him stems from precisely such a perspective. Jake, seen in this light, performs psychoanalytic work. As does Freud, Jake and his entourage attempt to purge themselves of and overcome the "economic problem" posed by Cohn.<sup>64</sup> To offer a psychoanalytic reading of the novel or its characters would be to recapitulate the scapegoat-ism and bigotry of Jake's group of expatriates. Cohn would then become a hollow psychic specter motivating the other characters' more robust psychologies. As Freud claims in his extended study of the relation between pleasure and unpleasure in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, at worst, we might experience "the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure" (7) or as "pleasure that cannot be felt as such" (8). According to the most fundamental understandings of psychoanalysis, the experience of pain is defined precisely by its existing *outside* of psychoanalysis and can only be recuperated as deferred or transformed

pleasure. That Freud would return a year after the initial publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to add the line “we may be driven to reflect on the mysterious masochistic trends of the ego” (12) suggests the importance he increasingly placed on the contradiction posed by the willful experience of pain. However, as we’ve seen above, his later essay on masochism would only return him to where he began—with the “long indirect road to pleasure”—showing just how “mysterious” this problem remained for Freud throughout his work.<sup>65</sup> He’s left us with the remarkably unhelpful conclusion that pain is nothing more than “pleasure that cannot be felt as such.”

Since psychoanalysis will not help us to resolve a problem that is defined precisely by its existing outside of the purview of the discipline, I instead want to posit an aesthetic model for understanding Hemingway’s approach to Cohn, to the experience of pain, and to boxing generally. Through his aesthetic approach to “violent death,” Hemingway engages an ongoing cultural discourse between boxing and aesthetic experience. As my prior chapters show, boxing at the beginning of the twentieth century lay at the heart of a pervasive discourse over the limits of realist modes of representation. Moreover, boxing also highlighted the place of “aesthetics” in its older sense, as sensory experience.<sup>66</sup> At the time of the Hemingway works I’m discussing, boxing (in practice and on film) was heavily regulated and all but totally illegal, ostensibly because of the presumed sensory effect on its impressionable spectators, to say nothing of the boxers themselves. Only within this context can we begin to understand the proper place and function of Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises* and of boxing in Hemingway’s *oeuvre*.

Gilles Deleuze begins to point us in the right direction. He claims that psychoanalysis has generally misread the relationship between masochism and sadism and that psychoanalysis all too often posits a dialectical relationship between the two pathologies. In the forward to his extended study of Sacher-Masoch’s work, Deleuze claims that “the judgment of the clinician is prejudiced, [so] we must take an entirely different approach, the *literary approach*, since it is from literature that stem the original definitions of sadism and masochism. It is no accident that the names of two writers were used as labels for these two perversions” (*Masochism* 14). Of course, Deleuze goes on to try to restore a useful psychoanalytic definition of masochism via literature. I share no such interest—nor, I believe, does Hemingway—and wish instead to maintain a strictly literary goal. Nevertheless, in Deleuze’s remark that sadism and masochism need to be understood as literary entities and that the two perversions are distinct from one another, we can better see Hemingway’s treatment of the aesthetic relationship between pain and pleasure. Hemingway not only recasts pain and pleasure as stylistic categories, but he also works to create between pain and pleasure a dialectical relationship. What we see in the character of Cohn, however, is a wholly distinct and unassimilable aesthetic possibility.

Psychoanalyst Theodor Reik describes the pleasure found in masochism as “victory through defeat” (*Masochism in Modern Man* 429), a defeat that exists as a “detour” (428) to pleasure. Importantly, he also claims that “one of the most striking features of masochism, the reversal of all pleasure values, has proved to be fictitious” (428). In this last descriptor, not only does Reik analyze away the apparent paradox of masochism, but he also provides a salient term for Jake and company’s distaste for Cohn and his passé beliefs and behaviors: “fiction.” For Freud, Deleuze, and Reik, the willful experience of pain marks a distinct boundary of psychoanalysis, a mystery dismissed as a “fiction.” Cohn is a novelist and boxer while Jake is a journalist and spectator. Cohn’s laughable credulity, foolish innocence, and misplaced idealism all correspond directly to his adherence to cultural and aesthetic “fictions.” To relegate Cohn to “outsider” status is to call the willful experience of pain “fictitious.”

Robert Cohn cannot articulate his pain as pleasure. It is the novel's other characters who perform this work. Cohn himself—the writer of fiction—cannot voice his own pain. Most frequently, it is the novel's narrator Jake who seeks to make psychic sense of Cohn's situation, often at Cohn's expense. That is to say, Jake finds the pleasure in Cohn's pain. Importantly, the pleasure Jake finds has crucial *stylistic* components meant to guard against the *stylistic* threat posed by Cohn and his masochism. Jake's journalistic impulses, his (psycho-physical) impotence, and his ironic detachment are stylistic castigations of Cohn's incoherently fictional tendencies. Jake's relationship to Cohn articulates the novel's dialectic between the experience of pain and its articulation, between fiction and journalism. Cohn is a social and stylistic other, the negation constitutive of Jake's aesthetic philosophy and of the expatriate group's social coherence.

The famously bittersweet irony with which *The Sun Also Rises* ends—"Isn't it pretty to think so?"—ironizes the project of fictive, imaginative projection. A novel—in the style of Cohn—could be said to be exactly that: a "pretty" fantasy. In making light of fiction and of Cohn, Jake transforms (psychic and aesthetic) pain into pleasure. Jake plays the role of analyst, solving the "economic problem" posed by masochism. Cohn and the raw experience of pain have no place in art. Jake (as journalist) understands the psychic interplay of pain and pleasure as the foundation for a new aesthetics and for a revitalized culture, while Cohn (as fiction writer, boxer, and Jew) signifies a stylistic dead end.

### Section 3: "The Simplest Things"

At the heart of the bullfighting spectacle lay "violent death," and as we know from the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter, Hemingway "was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things of all and the most fundamental is violent death" as seen in the bull ring. Precisely whose "violent death" this is remains unclear throughout *Death in the Afternoon*. We know, for example, that the bull will nearly always die in a bullfight. We also know from this book and from *The Sun Also Rises* that Hemingway saw in the frequent deaths of horses in the bullring something profoundly "indefensible" (*DitA* 1), "comic" (*DitA* 6), "not important" (*TSAR* 170), and "dreadful" (*TSAR* 170). Bullfighters, too, face the constant possibility of their own death (104). Though he claims that a bullfight presents an utterly *simple* picture of "violent death," pinning down the movement of violence in the spectacle is slippery at best.

There are moments in Hemingway's descriptions of bullfights that do suggest some sense of the absolute simplicity of the event. For example, during one of Pedro Romero's fights in *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake observes that "each time [Romero] let the bull pass so close that the man and the bull and the cape that filled and pivoted ahead of the bull were all one sharply etched mass. It was so slow and controlled" (221). Romero's apparent mastery and control parallels Jake's carefully distilled description of the bullfight. Later in the same fight, during the climactic *quite* (a bullfight term for the sword thrust, or "finish"), "for just an instant he and the bull were one, Romero way out over the bull, the right arm extended high up to where the hilt of the sword had gone in between the bull's shoulders. Then the figure was broken" (222). Again, during a second attempt with the sword, "[Romero] became one with the bull, the sword was in high between the shoulders, the bull had followed the low-swung flannel, that disappeared as Romero lurched clear to the left, and it was over" (224). The deliberateness and sureness of the two figures meeting in a moment of violent consummation directly corresponds to the absoluteness of the prose style. The photographic imagination at work in these moments closely resembles the

over eighty inset photographs Hemingway includes in *Death in the Afternoon* and is reminiscent of the poetic “still-lives” of the Modernist poets.<sup>67</sup> Critic Anthony Brand argues that Hemingway’s thinking and writing about bullfights is inextricably photographic in nature, and points out that from his earliest writing on bullfighting Hemingway was including photographs (“Far From Simple” 165). However, not only are these moments of “simplest things” short-lived (if they’re photographic, they can only be immeasurably small moments), but they are also uncommon. Critics tend to align these moments all too often with the whole of Hemingway’s stylistics when they are far more the exception than the rule.

More often than not in Hemingway’s descriptions of bullfights, his ideal image of the “simplest things” runs up against a variety of problems. He wanted to avoid “the complications of death by disease, or so-called natural death, or the death of a friend or some one you have loved or have hated” because authors who attempted to do so “only produced a blur, and [he] had decided that this was because either the author had never seen it clearly or at the moment of it, he had physically or mentally shut his eyes” (*DitA* 2). Hemingway’s inclusion of the eighty-one photographs in *Death in the Afternoon* disallows our looking away. He’s less concerned with *what* we see than *that* we see at all. The spectacle of violent death is an indivisible atom to the Hemingway of *Death in the Afternoon*; it is a zero-point upon which he can then proceed to build his aesthetic model. According to this model, violent death simply *is* and has no context, no cause, nothing whatsoever that might be construed as fictional or subjective. The stillness of Hemingway’s representations of violent death runs directly counter to the expected forward progression of narrative. Violent death exists in a realm of pure objectivity: it is completely other and entirely external. For Hemingway, there is no “meaning” to be gleaned from the spectacle; rather, violent death can only be “understood” empirically via the senses. The fact that this aesthetic model depends upon a specific subject matter—i.e., “violent death”—is only relevant insofar as Hemingway sees this subject as the only empirical absolute, the only subject free from “subjectivity.” Violent death is also, quite literally, the *end* of narrative. He thus can emphasize the fact of seeing over the subject matter itself. Hemingway turns to a supposedly transparent technology—photography—in an effort to emphasize the aim of his writing. This certainly made an impression on critics since, as Brand points out, very few studies of *Death in the Afternoon* discuss the photographs; in fact, I would go further than Brand and claim that critics see the photographs as entirely self-evident, and therefore not worthy of analysis.<sup>68</sup> The addition of photographs in *Death in the Afternoon* is less a compliment to Hemingway’s writing than an admission of an essential shortcoming.

As I will show below, the possibility that writing may be ill-suited to this aesthetic project will reappear in other works, most clearly visible in his attempts to approach (and ultimately avoid) depictions of boxing. Wherever contradictions and complications arise in the direct representation of “simplest things,” boxing is nearly always present. That Robert Cohn is both the emblem of fictionality and the metonymic target of the violent death at the center of the bullfight in *The Sun Also Rises* highlights this central contradiction.<sup>69</sup>

Just as with Muybridge, Hemingway’s technological imagination reflects an overriding concern for contextualization. The “violent death” at the heart of the bullfight supposedly provides Hemingway with an image of “simplest things” divested from unwanted “complications,” but for all the apparent aesthetic unity and absoluteness of those moments in *The Sun Also Rises* that I cite above, the contextual support for those moments riddles them with complications. Cohn does not merely serve as an emblem of fictionality, but more broadly he stands for an unwanted contextual presence.<sup>70</sup> Cohn adheres to a moral code where the others in



the group do not; he carries with him the label “Jew” anywhere he travels; he writes fiction while Cohn writes journalism; and, most importantly, Cohn is a boxer. Unlike the other expatriates, wherever Cohn goes, so too goes his environment.

On the surface, Hemingway’s turn from boxing to bullfighting provides a way out of the problems of context. In the same way that Muybridge found some odd ways around the unavoidably contextual nature of boxing, Hemingway too had to take some odd detours. As I argue in my chapter on Muybridge, boxing oozes context. In a non-hierarchical way, it pits cultural, regional, ethnic, national, and ideological differences against one another. It “gambles” with identitarian politics, offering no certain and reassuring outcome of one affiliation over another (hence, for example, the series of “Great White Hopes” through the 1910s). Where in bullfighting, the violent death of the bull provides an absolute, hierarchical, decontextualized, and objective center, boxing has no such center; in the violent spectacle of boxing, two men fight one another as embodiments of a mass of fluctuating social affiliations. Writing about and watching (foreign) bullfighting readily decontextualizes the familiarity of (American) boxing. That the boxer has become the bull is less a metaphorical move than it is a crucial shift in aesthetic models. For Hemingway to represent boxing and boxers faithfully would also bring the sport’s concomitant complications of all-too-familiar identitarian uncertainties.<sup>71</sup>

Looking more carefully at the interplay of boxing and bullfighting in *The Sun Also Rises*, however, what appears to be Hemingway’s supposed preference for simplicity, directness, transparency, and absoluteness gives way to something far more nuanced. It has been far too easy thus far to align Hemingway’s aesthetic goals with those of Jake and those of the narrator of *Death in the Afternoon*. Setting aside questions of intentionality and authorship for the time being, the situatedness and, dare I say, *context* of the “simplest things” described in Hemingway’s work suggest a stylistic goal that runs counter to those found in many (if not all) of Hemingway’s narrators. For example, surrounding the singular moments of visual unity and imagistic purity during Pedro Romero’s bullfight lie a number of important contextual details. This fight comes at the reader in a number of directions through a handful of sources told multiple times in multiple ways. The first account of the fight comes as simple reportage:

The bull who killed Vicente Girones was named Bocanegra, was Number 118 of the bull-breeding establishment of Sanchez Taberno, and was killed by Pedro Romero as the third bull of that same afternoon. His ear was cut by popular acclamation and given to Pedro Romero, who, in turn, gave it to Brett, who wrapped it in a handkerchief belonging to myself, and left both ear and handkerchief, along with a number of Muratti cigarette-stubs, shoved far back in the drawer of the bed-table that stood beside her bed in the Hotel Montoya, in Pamplona. (202-203)

The only “context” present in the first sentence is a simple genealogy of the bull and the outcome of the bullfight. All the details significant to bullfight reporting are here present: the bull’s name and breeding, and its place in the day’s fights. The agent-less passive voice of reportage is here as well (“was killed by,” “was cut by”). However, key circumstances bookend the passage. First, this passage directly follows the story of the death and funeral of the man who was gored by the bull. This was not simply any bull, but this was *the* bull that had killed a man who “had a farm, a wife, and two children” and “came from near Tafalla” (202). Prior to the above reportage-like passage, Jake describes the funeral in detail up to and including the poetic return of the Girones’ family “out into the fields of grain that blew in the wind on the plain on the way to Tafalla.” Immediately following this last phrase arrives the journalistic prose first describing Romero’s fight as cited above.

On the other end of the passage lies a chain of apposition following the trail of the bull's ear. The ear is first "cut by popular acclamation," then "given to Pedro Romero," then given to Brett, then put in Jake's handkerchief, then left beside cigarette butts in the drawer of Brett's hotel nightstand. The straightforward language of reportage gives way, in a single sentence, to a convoluted hypotactical construction embedding the bull's ear as deeply in the sentence as it has been buried in the handkerchief in the drawer. Similarly, the abstract agency of the passive voice and of collective sentiment ("was cut by popular acclamation") gives way to direct agency in the appositive-chain (Pedro "gave," then Brett "wrapped"). In effect, the grammatical and syntactic transition marks a transition from reportage to narrative. At the center of the passage we see a moment much like the photographic moments described later during Romero's fight with the bull (discussed above). While true that the image of "violent death" at the heart of the passage is given in simple, abstract terms, the presence of the fight's context surrounds it on all sides. The chain of appositives acknowledges a desire to avoid or disregard context while simultaneously building context. In burying the ear syntactically, the sentence brings the ear to narrative life. Stashing deeply away the bull's ear is not merely a physical repression of the disconcerting violence of the bullfight, but as we learn in the later more detailed retelling of the fight, Brett's treatment of the ear has everything to do with Cohn's treatment throughout the novel.

We next learn from Bill and Mike that the night before the fight, Cohn had confronted Romero in his hotel room. A comical fight ensued during which Cohn pummeled Romero, "but he kept getting up and getting knocked down again" (205).<sup>72</sup> Eventually, Cohn's sense of honor and bottomless masochism (which amount to the same thing) kicks in and Cohn lets the bullfighter hit him without fighting back. Romero hits Cohn, but because of Cohn's inhuman ability to take any amount of punishment, it is Romero who falls to the floor; he tells Cohn he'll kill him and hits him a second time in the face. According to Bill and Mike's retelling, that "ruined Cohn" (206). It is with the obvious marks of the beating on his face that Romero enters the bull-ring the next day. During the bull-fight, Jake "could not see [Romero's] face clearly under the hat, but it looked badly marked" (216). As Romero approaches their side of the ring, Jake can see that "Romero's lips were puffed, both eyes were discolored. His face was discolored and swollen" (217). Then Jake goes on to describe (yet again) the day's fights. The fight's "simplest things" are anything but; its complexities are clearly visible on Romero's face. It is the marks of (Bill and Mike's) narrative that Romero carries with him into the ring. With each piece of background context feeding into each successive retelling of the bull-fight, we see more and more visible signs of that context.

While it could be said that Brett physically "represses" the fight's context (which is ultimately traceable back to the violent exclusion of Cohn) by burying the ear in her bedside table and that Jake syntactically "represses" it in a convoluted chain of appositives, this ignores the fact that the so-called repressive act is what gives birth to narrative. The causal (or "repressive") chain that traces the significance of the ear from the death of Vicente Girones to the death of the bull and outward into the many acts of violence done by and to Cohn is a specifically *narrative* chain. In contrast, the ephemeral (and impossibly static) moments depicting the violent death in the bullring attempt to work in the opposite direction, toward a journalistic objectivity free from all narrative context and movement. Understanding the relationship between these two seemingly opposed aesthetic directions is only visible by looking closely at Hemingway's articulation of the experience(s) of pain. Bullfighting and boxing each, according to Hemingway, approaches the experience of pain in very different ways with each leading to very different aesthetic possibilities. More precisely, the transition from boxing to

bullfighting marks the etymological and epistemological shift in aesthetics itself, from “aesthetics” as raw sensation to “aesthetics” as a highly structured artistic philosophy. The bull’s ear, instead of serving the erotic purpose of a fetish object, never enters into the sexual economy of the characters’ lives. The ear bears the burden of narrative; it has an actual and a grammatical history.

#### Section 4: The Style of Sadoomasochism

Over and over again in studies of Hemingway’s work, critics cannot escape the lure of arguing for one of two overriding modes in his work. Either they argue that his work is dedicated to developing an aesthetic of absoluteness, simplicity, and directness, or they instead highlight the presence of silences and of what is left unsaid or unwritten.<sup>73</sup> In the first case, critics align themselves with the stated goals of the narrator of *Death in the Afternoon* and see in Hemingway’s work an attempt to describe objectively the fundamental simplicity of the world in a simple style. In the second case, they take a pseudo-psychoanalytic stance and look for signs of a textual “unconscious” as they track down textually repressed elements in his works. Such absolutist stances miss the dialectical exchange everywhere at work between “simplest things” and a sublime poetics, or between a journalistic objectivity and a fictive other world. Unquestionably, both operate together.

In order to understand better what this dialectical style looks like in Hemingway’s work, I would like here to turn to Bakhtin’s notion of “heteroglossia.” According to Bakhtin, the novel as a genre appropriates any number of the qualities, styles, and languages of other genres (as in the above “journalistic” passage). Additionally, the language of the novel itself operates at a number of different levels of utterance (author, narrator, characters) and between and among these different “speakers.”

Another’s speech—whether as storytelling, as mimicking, as the display of a thing in light of a particular point of view, as a speech deployed first in compact masses, then loosely scattered, a speech that is in most cases impersonal (“common opinion,” professional and generic languages)—is at none of these points clearly separated from authorial speech: the boundaries are deliberately flexible and ambiguous, often passing through a single syntactic whole, often through a simple sentence, and sometimes even dividing up the main parts of a sentence. (308)

The pseudo-authorial speech of Jake-as-narrator clearly vacillates between journalistic prose and sublime poetics. Turning again to the passage I discuss above in which Romero kills the bull and its ear ends up in Brett’s nightstand, we see a clear example of this sort of stylistic fluidity. It’s this slipperiness that makes it all too easy to align Hemingway’s aesthetic beliefs with those of his narrators. Rather than try to draw too distinct a division between the narration of Jake and the presence of Hemingway as author, I would claim that the difficulty in parsing one from the other is central to the novel’s aesthetic interests. Moreover, if we try to identify what may or may not be “realist” about Hemingway, looking more closely at the forms of narrative mediation is crucial. Realism assumes at its most fundamental that the narrator directly mediates between reader and text, faithfully and transparently bringing his subjects to his reader.

Hemingway (or his texts, or his narrators, or his characters) does not merely represent what Bakhtin describes as “the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions” (263). Instead, he seeks to present a distinctly hierarchical environment; as such, the interrelationships between characters, languages, and styles in his

work reflect that move toward hierarchy. The language and imagery of bullfighting is, to him, free from the taint of various socio-historical contingencies and instead carries its own history and contexts separate from that of the purely “heteroglot” world. This, more than any other reason, is why he chooses bullfighting over boxing, a too-familiar activity in which he cannot help but recognize its heterogeneous intentions and consequences. Following Bakhtin further:

Concrete socio-ideological language consciousness, as it becomes creative—that is, as it becomes active as literature—discovers itself already surrounded by heteroglossia and not at all a single, unitary language, inviolable and indisputable . . . Consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language*. (295)

The linguistic “consciousness” exhibited by Hemingway’s texts finds itself beset by the contextual, heteroglot threat posed by his boxers. Rather than resort to (the impossible) solution of creating a “unitary language,” Hemingway chooses a middle option. He neither gives himself over wholly to the fullness of the diversity of the socio-historical milieu, nor does he retreat entirely to the other extreme, what Bakhtin describes as “a closed environment, one without writing or thought, completely off the maps of socio-ideological becoming, [where he could] rest assured in the inviolability of his own language, the conviction that his language is predetermined” (295). Instead, as I’ve suggested above, Hemingway finds a dialectical, hierarchical solution.

In *Death in the Afternoon*, the Hemingway-narrator describes bullfight spectatorship in sadomasochistic terms: “From observation I would say that people may possibly be divided into two general groups; those who, to use one of the terms of the jargon of psychology, identify themselves with, that is, place themselves in the position of, animals, and those who identify themselves with human beings” (5). Unlike boxing in which spectators align themselves with one or the other human boxer (starkly differentiated, but equals nevertheless), bullfighting pits a human killer (“matador”) against an animal victim. Significantly, the original title Hemingway had in mind for his short story “The Killers” was “The Matadors”;<sup>74</sup> literally translated, “matadors” is “killers,” but more than a literal translation, this is also a translation in context. “Matadors” aren’t merely “killers” but *bullfighters*, hence Hemingway translates the Spanish bullfight into a Gangland hit, and more importantly translates a bull into a boxer. In bullfighting, the positions of pain-giver (the human) and pain-receiver (the bull) appear clearly defined and presented. There is no “human” possibility for masochistic identification despite Hemingway’s claim that bullfighters (unlike boxers) face the persistent possibility of their own death. The hierarchy of experience and identification is crystal clear. The translation of boxing to bullfighting actively refuses to acknowledge human masochistic experience and clarifies the distinction between the two identificatory positions. The abundantly predictable ritual of the bullfight clarifies Freud’s description of the sadomasochistic economy. By putting bullfighting in boxing’s place, Hemingway has tautologically clarified the “truth” of sadomasochism while simultaneously making a “lie” or a “fiction” of purely masochistic experience. Like a Rorschach Test, the bullfights serve as a primary method for Hemingway to act like an analyst and “read” people; he goes so far as to include an appendix to *Death in the Afternoon* detailing people’s reactions to watching their first bullfight (465-471). Just as the Hemingway-narrator divides people along these identificatory lines (within the sadomasochistic dialectic), so too does the expatriate group in *The Sun Also Rises* make these divisions. Cohn, of course, is the only one disturbed by the sight of the bull goring the horses (169-170). The group chides him and his labeling of Brett as a “sadist.” Despite Jake’s warning not to look at the horses after the bull hits them (165), “Brett never took her eyes off them” (169).

Cohn, however, cannot help being deeply troubled by the experience/sight of the horses. The fact that Cohn's primary identification lies with the horses highlights again that Cohn's obsessive masochism exists outside of the purview of the bullfight-psychoanalytic ritual. The proper terms of the sadomasochistic dialectic are the bull and the bullfighter; the horses are extraneous to the ritual. As Hemingway claims in *Death in the Afternoon*, "The tragedy is all centered in the bull and in the man" (6). Further, "the tragedy of the bullfight is so well ordered and so strongly disciplined by ritual that a person feeling the whole tragedy cannot separate the minor comic-tragedy of the horse so as to feel it emotionally" (8). Cohn, of course, has a deep emotional response to the horses. As I mentioned in my discussion at the beginning of this chapter, the goring of the horses is for Hemingway's narrators "indefensible" (*DitA* 1), "comic" (*DitA* 6), "not important" (*TSAR* 170), and "dreadful" (*TSAR* 170). Jake guides the group's spectatorial practice away from the goring since it is irrelevant to the bullfight ritual proper. According to the narrator of *Death in the Afternoon*, "If [spectators] sincerely identify themselves with animals they will suffer terribly, more so perhaps than the horse" (9). As we know already, Cohn's suffering is depthless. The death of the horses is not merely comic in itself; it is comic because it exists outside of the tragic bullfight. Humor is not a way to cope with the horrific goring of the horse; rather, the horse's brutal death is comic because it *cannot* be coped with.<sup>75</sup>

The model I've outlined above wherein the objective experience of pain and the subjective articulation of its pleasurable transformation exist in a dialectical relationship with one another that I call Hemingway's "style of sadomasochism," and the other model wherein pain is not objectified nor transformed (as in Cohn's case) has no manifest stylistic presence nor absence. Cohn's masochism has no representational possibility; it is for Hemingway too fictional, too imaginative, and too heterogeneous. The distinction has everything to do with how pain is understood and what its aesthetic implications are. Elaine Scarry identifies a similar distinction between "pain" and "imagining" wherein each is the "other's missing intentional counterpart, and [...] they together provide a framing identity of man-as-creator within which all other intimate perceptual, psychological, emotional, and somatic events occur" (*The Body in Pain* 169). In *The Sun Also Rises*, we see that process at work as Hemingway's narrator Jake attempts to assemble both pain and its articulation into a coherent, sadomasochistic whole. The boxer's pain has no other end but pain itself, but the majority of other characters' pain has some imagined, psychic pay-off. The movement between the "still-lives" of the bullfight into their inevitable contextualization is part of the style of sadomasochism, and while that movement is often fomented by Cohn, his experience of pain is always *outside* of that aesthetic dialectic. At best, Cohn's experiences and actions are comical (just as they are for the horses and for Ad in "The Battler"). Pain in *The Sun Also Rises* is comprehensible only when it is the bull's or Jake's or Romero's, but never when it is Cohn's.

Unlike the representations of the violence of the bullfight and its concomitant language of absoluteness, when Cohn knocks out Jake and Mike, neither Jake nor Mike *sees* the violent action itself; instead, Edna reports it to them after the fact (195).<sup>76</sup> In typical fashion, Jake must reinterpret his experience of violence as a transformative, transcendent experience. As he walks back to his hotel, "everything looked new and changed . . . It was all different" (196). He goes on to compare the experience to one of returning home from playing in a football game during which he was kicked in the head: "It was all strange . . . everything seemed to come from a long way off" (196-197). He converts the experience of pain into the experience of alienation. Being knocked out is a perfect emblem of anesthesia; in both its physiological and artistic sense,

“anesthesia” is the absence of sensation—i.e., “aesthetics.” Mike “never saw [Cohn] hit [him] . . . [He] saw him just before, and then quite suddenly [Mike] was sitting down in the street, and Jake was lying under a table” (204). Everything appears as the “blur” that the Hemingway of *Death in the Afternoon* seeks to avoid where “the author had never seen it clearly or at the moment of it, he had physically or mentally shut his eyes” (2). Jake can only comprehend his personal experience of violence as a transformative and alienating experience. It is neither direct nor simple. Like Freud, Jake overcomes the “economic problem” by reinterpreting the experience along sadomasochistic lines. Where the raw experience of pain (without an erotic component) presents the possibility of something absolutely incomprehensible, Jake almost instantly transforms his experience into alienation and, ultimately, into sadomasochistic voyeurism.

When Jake is physically and psychically faced directly with the experience of pain, he proceeds to understand it as an alienating event. In order to close the sadomasochistic circle, the following day’s bullfight performs the group’s vengeance-fantasy on Cohn (as the bull). The bullfight reenacts, re-presents, and reverses the previous night’s violent conflict with Cohn. Even more crucially, it is Jake’s way of articulating the inarticulable experience of pain, an experience during which he was notably unconscious—a literal state of “anaesthesia.” When the night before Jake could not sufficiently comprehend his experience of pain, he now can begin to interpret it from a distance. Simultaneously, the positions of pain-giver and pain-receiver have reversed.

In Freud’s essay “A Child Is Being Beaten,” Freud describes childhood beating fantasies and their place in the sadomasochistic economy. He describes three stages in the development of this fantasy: “*My father is beating the child (whom I hate),*” “*I am being beaten by my father,*” and “*A child is being beaten*” (103-104). The first phase plays out a sadistic fantasy borne of jealousy for one’s siblings (105). The second manifests—via masochistic fantasy—the repression of incestuous desire for love from one’s father (106-108). In the third phase of the fantasy, “the child who produces the phantasy appears at most as a spectator, while the father persists in the shape of the teacher or some other person in authority. The phantasy, which now resembles that of the first phase, seems to have become sadistic once more . . . But only the form of this phantasy is sadistic; the gratification which is derived from it is masochistic” (109). According to Freud, this last phase is a conscious translation of the repressed content of the second phase (the acknowledgment and simultaneous repression of incestuous and masochistic desire). The sequence of events following Jake’s being knocked out plays out too perfectly—suspiciously so—the psychic sequence of “A Child Is Being Beaten.” Jake cannot see (nor truly experience) his own pain; it must be projected backward onto a prior adolescent failure (the first phase) and forward onto the next day’s spectacle (the third phase) before it can be examined “unblinkingly.” In sum, Jake incorporates the experience of pain into a psychoanalytic framework. For Jake—as for Freud—violence and pain can be experienced only in sadomasochistic terms. Jake feels no pain in itself in the present; his adolescent self felt it, and he will witness Cohn-as-bull feel it.

Similarly, Jake consistently represses his nameless war-injury, and—as a good Freudian analyst/analyst—he also literally represses its sexual content (since his wound is responsible for his impotence). However, this again does not account for all. Instead, Jake’s psychoanalytic rationalizing only evades the very real possibility of pain and masochistic experience. Freudian psychology becomes part of a literary game being played. When Jake and Bill discuss—in roundabout fashion—Jake’s unnamed injury, they decide it’s best “to work [it] up into a

mystery” (120). That Bill adds “Like Henry’s bicycle” (an allusion to Henry James’ story of a mysterious psycho-sexual trauma, simultaneously suggesting James’ impotence and/or homosexuality) only adds to the sense that this is a *literary* game they are playing. It is a game that is more interested in style than it is in psychology. At that moment in Bill and Jake’s conversation, silence strikes. Jake “was afraid [Bill] thought he had hurt [him] with that crack about being impotent. [Jake] wanted to start him again,” so he makes it clear that they’re joking. “It wasn’t a bicycle . . . He was riding horseback.” Bill later tells Jake that he’s “fonder of [him] than anybody on earth. [He] couldn’t tell [him] that in New York. It’d mean [he] was a faggot,” and he goes on jokingly to claim that the Civil War was fought over a variety of homosexual relationships (121). Then silence strikes again.

Just as boxing has been translated into bullfighting, so too has homosexuality (in New York) been translated into fondness (in Spain). The constant back-and-forth motion of cultural and stylistic “translation” is crucial to Hemingway’s sadomasochistic style. Likewise, this passage belies the stylistic motion between loquacity and silence. Bill and Jake’s conversation flirts with seriousness, homosexuality, impotence, silence, and Jake’s injury all at once. The deployment of irony itself is yet another manifestation of the style of sadomasochism. Jake’s war wound might, in fact, be a physical wound as much as it is a psychic one. The very “real” experience of pain could also simply be a fabricated “mystery.” Jake concludes that “certain injuries or imperfections are a subject of merriment while remaining quite serious for the person possessing them” (35). Not only might his injury (acknowledged only as “certain injuries”) be funny, but it might also be serious. His wound is funny and/or serious, physical and/or psychic.

The novel’s famously ironic final line, “Isn’t it pretty to think so?” demonstrates just how deeply irony is expressed throughout the novel. It’s “pretty” to imagine an end to the serious/comic futility of Jake and Brett’s sexual/non-sexual relationship. The title of the novel expresses an almost identical stance. “The sun also rises” is the ironically glass-is-half-full end to the sentence, “The sun sets, but . . .” As with Jake’s final line, the title projects an imagined future in which the sun ultimately rises after it has already set in some remembered past. The ironic stance that Jake and the other characters adopt suggests far more than the disaffection and alienation with which readers so commonly associate it. Instead, I would argue that the resolution-to-irony has everything to do with the double-sided aesthetic project Hemingway employs. The characters’ use of irony continually suggests two possibilities simultaneously: either they really feel as they say or they feel something they do not say. Perhaps better said, they do not feel either one or mean the other, but both one and the other. In the stylistic dialectic of sadomasochism, pain is experienced in the past and imagined in the future. Both the novel’s final line and its title perfectly embody the irony of the sadomasochistic situation. The sun “set” in the past, but will “rise” in the future. Brett and Jake can’t have sex in the past, but it’s “pretty to think” they might in the future. No matter the manifestation, the novel repeatedly glosses over the pain of the present by turning to past or future articulations of the experience of pain.

That an ironic projection “resolves” the novel stands testament to its crucial stylistic indeterminacy. Bakhtin claims that novelistic (“dialogic”) discourse always serves two ends: one is a unifying impulse that allows for the definition of a single style, the other is a differentiating “heteroglot” impulse that deploys numerous overlapping styles simultaneously (272). As a direct result, “the sharpest and externally most marked manifestations of this [multiform] stylistic category [are] the polemical style, the parodic, the ironic” (274). For Bakhtin, irony is the inevitable outcome of a literary form (i.e., the novel) that reflects the abundant multiplicity of the present. However, as we’ve repeatedly seen in Hemingway’s work, the experience of the present

is deeply troubling. Rather than a reflection of the present, irony in a work like *The Sun Also Rises* provides a way around the stylistic implications of the present. The boxer and his experience of pain are too present, too incomprehensible. Instead, Hemingway develops a sadomasochistic style that vacillates between a past remembrance of pain and a future projection in which pain is made over into a structured spectacle. The tendency among Hemingway's critics to read him as dedicated either to an absolutist, direct style or to moments of silent, unspeaking sublimity have fallen prey to a "stylistic analysis [that] is not oriented toward the novel as a whole, but only toward one or another of its subordinated stylistic unities" (Bakhtin 263). The style of sadomasochism depends upon a stylistic and hierarchical interplay of these two different aesthetic goals.

At its heart, the irony of *The Sun Also Rises* radiates out from the central aesthetic contrast between sublimity (the unsaid) and Imagist-like objectivity ("simplest things" said simply). The contrast between these two possibilities plays out in innumerable manifestations throughout the novel: Cohn v. the group, fiction v. journalism, Romero v. the bull Bocanegra, prose v. photography, abstraction v. context, Spanish v. English, and so on. The "heteroglot" outcome of Hemingway's representation of aesthetic conflict simultaneously motivates and resolves the novel. Repeatedly in this novel (and in almost every other of his works), Hemingway turns to representations of violence to articulate this aesthetic conflict, hence the climactic conflict between Cohn and Jake (and others in the group) the night before Romero's fight.

However, this still leaves Cohn's place undetermined, and I would argue this is precisely the goal of Hemingway's sadomasochistic style. It aims to leave Cohn's non-transformative, pain-ridden experience unaccountable. As I've claimed, the elegant simplicity of "violent death" continually rubs against an ever-present, contextual, fictive entity. In *The Sun Also Rises*, that entity is most clearly manifest in the character of Robert Cohn; elsewhere in Hemingway's work, that entity is similarly manifest in his boxers. The style of sadomasochism aims to circumvent a style and experience of "present-ness." Hemingway's boxer—like Cohn—is a black hole that both radiates and absorbs context, fictionality, and pain. It's worth noting here, too, that the bull Romero kills in the novel's climactic bullfight is named Bocanegra, or "Black mouth." Like Cohn, the bull functions as a black hole of pain, ridicule, and mistreatment. It's only because the bull is an animal and is a sure loser that the bull can occupy this position with no concomitant stylistic anxiety. In contrast to the rampant, asystematic violence associated with Cohn and his boxer-ness, the bull—or more precisely the bull's ear—is a far less problematic subject. Similarly, the violence done to and by the bull is far more *aesthetically pleasing* than that done to and by Cohn.

Psychoanalytically speaking, the pain of the masochist is made pleasurable via its incorporation into a fuller sadomasochistic dialectic, and pain as such cannot exist in the realm of pleasure or, by extension, psychoanalysis. According to my reading, psychoanalysis cannot provide us with a satisfying answer to the psychic question posed by Cohn. His experience can only be explained by forcibly incorporating it into the ritual killing of the bull. For Hemingway, Cohn's embodiment of the overwhelming multiplicities of the present threatens to overdetermine the entirety of the aesthetic work; however, Cohn is simultaneously indispensable to the aesthetic work being done. While Cohn's experience exists outside of the sadomasochistic economy, his presence is central to its proper functioning. He is not only an emblem of fictionality (as a masochist and as a novelist), but he is the *source* of fiction. In the opening pages of *The Sun Also*



*Rises*, Jake focuses on Cohn's nose and imagines a number of stories explaining his misshapen nose:

I always had the suspicion that perhaps Robert Cohn had never been middleweight boxing champion, and that perhaps a horse had stepped on his face, or that maybe his mother had been frightened or seen something, or that he had, maybe, bumped into something as a young child. (12)

Cohn's nose not only marks his difference as a boxer and as a Jew, but it's that very marked-ness that makes him rife with fiction itself. In my discussion of Muybridge's boxing photos, I describe the relationship between anxieties over contextualization and the development of proto-cinematic narrative. Cohn's separateness shows that this attitude toward boxers as embodiments of narrative and context is not confined to Muybridge alone.

In his "Narrative-Men," Tzvetan Todorov describes the inescapability of a narrative "supplement," a narrative feature that always exists just outside of the confines of the story proper (77). In Todorov's model, narrative is constantly working in two directions: embedding and being embedded. An "embedding narrative" incorporates other, smaller narratives within its tale, and "embedded narratives" find themselves bound within other, larger ones. The supplement is the remainder of a narrative that always manages to escape these boundaries, implying a further unaccounted-for narrative layer. The supplement makes the dizzying implication that narrative escapes its own boundaries, that all might be "embedded" (78). Cohn functions as the supplement to *The Sun Also Rises*. He is not bound by the style of sadomasochism, but continually provides it with an endless supply of material to incorporate into its dialectical economy. Cohn provides Jake and the group (and, by implication, Hemingway) with the raw fictional substance that then is brought to bear on the sadomasochistic style. His experience is continually outside of the stylistic work happening in the novel, but it is simultaneously a consistent necessity to that work. Said otherwise, Cohn embodies the raw, unrefined pain of the present that fuels the sadomasochistic fire.

For Todorov, the supplement is most clearly manifest in totalizing morals or truisms that imply a further narrative layer that is not accounted for by the story itself (a feature much like Derrida's conundrum of the bibliographic encyclopedia that must include itself in its entries). Similarly, the closing line "Isn't it pretty to think so?" is a reminder of Cohn's unresolved and persistent presence in (and outside of) the novel. Like Todorov's moralizing supplements, this line suggests an impossible and fictive presence outside of the novel and its characters' psyches. The cynicism associated with irony is simply another way of marking the boundaries of the novel; if we imagine this last projection as a true and earnest hope, we cannot help but associate it with Cohn and with the possibility of a sublime "outside" to the novel, a present not delimited by the backward-looking conception of pain and trauma nor by the forward-looking translation of pleasure-through-(another's)-pain.

### Section 5: The Discourse of Expertise

One of Jake's great pleasures in *The Sun Also Rises* lies in introducing bullfighting to his friends. During one particular day's fights, Jake sits beside Brett and "explained to Brett what it was all about . . . so that it became more something that was going on with a definite end, and less of a spectacle with unexplained horrors" (171). The terms of sadomasochism reappear, both as the comprehensible (i.e., pleasurable) exchange of pain and as "a spectacle with unexplained horrors." Jake draws Brett's attention to a number of technical details, paying particular attention to Pedro Romero's skills in the ring. Not only does Brett enjoy the bullfights, but the pleasurable

exchange of knowledge between Jake and Brett cathects in the later teacher-student sexual relationship between Brett and Romero. At first glance, Jake's instruction appears entirely desexualized, but as we've already seen above, understanding bullfights is a practice loaded with sadomasochistic energies. Brett even remarks afterward that "these bull-fights are hell on one . . . I'm limp as a rag" (173).<sup>77</sup> Brett carries the sexual resonance of the bullfights (and of her position as Jake's pupil) further by getting involved with the young bullfighter Pedro Romero. The desexualized relationship between Jake and Brett is recast in the relationship between Brett and Romero. To emphasize the dialectical nature of the sadomasochistic situation, Brett shifts easily between her roles as student and teacher. Central to these relationships is the language or style used to convey the expert's knowledge.

The language of *aficion* is the exclusive language that exists among an elite brand of bullfight spectator and/or participant.

There was no password, no set questions that could bring it out, rather it was a sort of oral spiritual examination with the questions always a little on the defensive and never apparent, [then] there was this same embarrassed putting the hand on the shoulder, or a "Buen hombre." But nearly always there was the actual touching. It seemed as though they wanted to touch you to make it certain. (*The Sun Also Rises* 137)

*Aficion*'s intangible qualities are marked by two tangible characteristics: first, it is communicated in Spanish, and second, it can be articulated via photographs and other non-verbal forms of communication (like touching). Montoya's room is defined by its collection of photographs of bullfighters. "The photographs of bull-fighters Montoya had really believed in were framed. Photographs of bull-fighters who had been without *aficion* Montoya kept in a drawer of his desk" (136). The definition of *aficion* is dictated visually and tactilely. It exists in photographs and touching. After Jake's talk "about bulls and bull-fighters" with Montoya, Jake comes up to his room to talk with Bill who immediately asks, "Well, . . . talk a lot of Spanish?" (137). To someone without *aficion*, that's all the language of *aficion* sounds like. It is a language not marked by a specific content; rather, it's a language marked by *a style that has no style*.<sup>78</sup> It is a style without any stylistic markers. It is "felt" and "known," but ultimately ineffable.

When Jake teaches others how to watch the fights, he teaches them to distinguish between "real" and "fake" performances. Romero is a "real one" (168) in contrast to others who merely "simulated the appearance of danger in order to give a fake emotional feeling" (172). Only someone with *aficion* can recognize the difference. There is no direct translation of the Spanish word *aficion*. Its closest English cognate is "affection," but this misses the fact that the word is used almost exclusively as a bullfighting term in Spanish that is perhaps most correctly translated as "expertise." The loose meaning of the word ("expertise") and its cognate ("affection") reflect a similar relationship that I'm arguing exists in Hemingway's prose aesthetics: negotiating expert discourse is the same as the erotic interplay of sadism and masochism.

Jake defines Romero's real-ness as "straight and pure and natural" movement; he has an "absolute purity of line" (171). Jake even makes claims about the crowd's misreading of the fights and their lack of proper bullfight knowledge. For example, "they preferred Belmonte's imitation of himself or Marcial's imitation of Belmonte" and "thought Romero was afraid" when he has to lure a bull with bad eyesight. "He had to get so close that the bull saw his body, and would start for it, and then shift the bull's charge to the flannel and finish out the pass in the classic manner" (221-222). Just as Doyle in "Fifty Grand" recognizes what's happening in the boxing ring while the crowd does not, Jake points out the real danger Romero faces and derides

the crowd for feeling Belmonte's "imitation" of danger is authentic. The language Jake uses to describe the bullfight both reflects his "real" understanding of the fight—his *aficion*—and resembles Romero's more authentic ("straight and pure and natural") fighting technique. The style associated with expertise is articulable through—but not in—language as well as through action.

Outside of the bullring, we see Bill and Jake pass similar judgment on Cohn's writing. While traveling through Basque country, Bill and Jake receive a telegram from Cohn. They ridicule his writing for its brevity, an odd insult coming from a Hemingway narrator. More, the message is in Spanish, the language of *aficion*: "Vengo Jueves Cohn" (132). However, it's not the brevity or the Spanish of the note but its lack of authenticity that draws their ridicule.

"What a lousy telegram!" I said. "He could send ten words for the same price. 'I come Thursday.' That gives you a lot of dope, doesn't it?"

"It gives you all the dope that's of interest to Cohn." (133)

Bill and Jake have *aficion* and Cohn doesn't. It's been far too tempting for critics of the novel to read such moments as a sign of the arbitrariness of Cohn's mistreatment. Since nothing clearly differentiates Cohn's writing style from Jake's, critics assume it must be just an arbitrary and unfair way of saying that Cohn's an outsider. However, it's this precise misunderstanding that guides Hemingway's stylistic attitude and underpins the very notion of *aficion*. It is a language with no definable characteristic; it is a wholly unmarked style. From Jake and Bill's perspective, it is *Cohn* who is arbitrary, not them. As a boxer, he embodies all of the uncertainties and imprecisions of the present.

However, expertise has no singular style. It works in (at least) two directions. It is both absolutely ineffable and sublimely direct. In another of his bull-fighting narratives, Hemingway explores again the double-nature of the style of expertise:

Now, facing the bull, he was conscious of many things at the same time. There were the horns, the one splintered, the other smoothly sharp, the need to profile himself toward the left horn, lance himself *short and straight*, lower the muleta so the bull would follow it, and, going in over the horns, put the sword all the way into a little spot about as big as a five-peseta piece straight in back of the neck, between the sharp pitch of the bull's shoulders. He must do all this and must then come out from between the horns. He was conscious he must do all this, but his only thought was in words: "Corto y derecho." ("The Undefeated" 260, emphasis added)

That the Spanish phrase *corto y derecho* translates literally as "short and straight" and that the phrase appears in English in the above technical description shows that this is not an issue of translation between Spanish and English. Rather, this is a translation of the discourse of expertise into multidirectional, technical prose. The direct, literal translation of *corto y derecho* into English lies embedded in the passage as only one among "many things at the same time." Hemingway, here, openly draws attention to the heteroglossia natural to the discourse of expertise. The "simplest things" in *Death in the Afternoon* reappears as "many things at the same time" in "The Undefeated." The implication is that the expert phrase *corto y derecho* is infinitely parse-able into lay-speech, though admittedly a very technical lay-speech. It is the job of the expert to understand and navigate the many different discursive registers. Looking back at my earlier discussion of "Fifty Grand," we can now see the presumed power of Doyle's manner of speaking. His ability to navigate a wide range of dialects is his expert ability to perform a constant act of mutual translation.

Like Doyle and Jake Barnes, the narrator of “The Undefeated” becomes a de facto teacher, one who educates his reader in the intricacies and otherwise invisible aspects of Spanish bullfighting. The narrator of *Death in the Afternoon* adopts this role so fully that the book is written as a Socratic dialogue between the narrator and “The Old Lady.”<sup>79</sup> Part and parcel of the student-teacher situation is a narrative pose that must occupy both positions simultaneously. This pose has less to do with occupying the ambiguous position of the “participant-observer,” and more to do with occupying the fraught and varied position of the observer alone.<sup>80</sup> The question in these works is not *whether* one is a participant or an observer, but rather *what kind* of observer one is. Am I an expert observer or an inexpert observer? Am I learning how to observe like an expert or teaching someone else how to do so? In fact, it is this critical misunderstanding of Hemingway’s work that explains the treatment of Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises*. Cohn’s “mistake” is that he tries to work out a functional relationship between thought and action, while everyone else works hard to manage a functional position of critical distance (evidenced through their resolution-to-irony).<sup>81</sup> The axis of representation shifts in *The Sun Also Rises* from one between words and deed to one between student and teacher.

Bull-fighting language and bull-fighting in action become united in Manuel’s character as we see in the following passage:

He thought in bull-fight terms. Sometimes he had a thought and the particular piece of slang would not come into his mind and he could not realize the thought. His instincts and his knowledge worked automatically, and his brain worked slowly and in words. He knew all about bulls. He did not have to think about them. He just did the right thing. His eyes noted things and his body performed the necessary measures without thought. If he thought about it, he would be gone. (“The Undefeated” 260)

However, “action” speaking properly is not concerned with the deed, but with a different linguistic register. The contrast in this passage is between “thinking” and “knowing.” Even though the narrator claims that Manuel’s knowledge and action cannot be articulated in thought (which “worked slowly and in words”), action instead appears as a different language. The narrator’s job, then, is not merely faithful representation but more it is faithful reproduction of the linguistic difference between thought and action. It is the narrator’s job, according to Hemingway’s stylistics, to educate the reader in skills of proper observation. Key to this educational process is teaching the reader to recognize the multiplicity of linguistic registers operating concomitantly. Not only is there a measurable difference between “*corto y derecho*” and its technical explanation, but also between what is and is not articulable. The discourse of expertise involves a convincing and operable navigation of all of these registers simultaneously. The narrator speaks to us as novices being taught how to understand and “read” a bullfight; however, he speaks to us in a wide array of languages, each operating in measurably different ways.

Again turning to Cohn as our aesthetic foil, we see that he adheres to a moral code and to an outmoded conception of language that understands a more direct relationship between signification and the object world being signified. His masochistic experience is unending, perpetually painful, and forever non-transformative because there is no route to pleasure (even via a “detour”) according to this worldview. Because the psychic economy—wherein sadism and masochism work interoperably toward the goal of pleasure—does not apply to Cohn, he is ostracized and forever doomed to pain without the possibility of pleasure. Jake (and the narrator of *Death in the Afternoon*) stake out a sadomasochistic economy, one in which there is no place for an outsider like Cohn whose masochism is not dialectically related to sadism. Jake claims, “I

like to see [Mike] hurt Cohn. I wished he would not do it, though, because afterward it made me disgusted at myself. That was morality; things that made you disgusted afterward. No, that must be immorality” (152). Whether Jake’s voyeuristic relationship to pain is moral or immoral is uncertain and, of course, ironic. Jake occupies a “both-and” sadomasochistic position, while Cohn’s is doomed to a singular “either-or” position.

Expertise depends upon its ability to travel between different registers, languages, and styles. It purports an ability to transpose one register to another (as a type of “translation”) and dialectically unites sadism and masochism. It imagines a student-teacher multi-positionality in an attempt to reconcile any of its parts into a unified experience, language, or style. While there is no functional place for Cohn in the sadomasochistic economy, he persists nevertheless.

### Conclusion: The Curious Absence of Hemingway’s Boxer

In Hemingway’s work, bullfighting appears far more suited to sadomasochistic thinking than does boxing. The title of his first work on bullfighting sums up the difference: “Bullfighting is Not a Sport, It’s a Tragedy.”<sup>82</sup> Unlike boxing, bullfighting is a fight between obviously unequal fighters: the matador and his entourage on one side, the bull on the other (with the horses being inconsequential and comic bystanders). As such, there is nothing “sporting” about it. The bull will lose. Bullfighting is blatantly, brutally, and ritually unfair. And while the narrator of *Death in the Afternoon* claims that spectators can (and do) identify variously with the bull or the bullfighter, identifying with one or the other fits neatly into the sadomasochistic paradigm. The exchange of identification between bull and bullfighter works as a dialectically aesthetic whole. Imagining and valorizing a bullfighter who will lose (i.e., die) does no more than play out the psychic economy already at work in the bullfight at large (as in “The Undefeated” and “The Capital of the World”). As tragedy, the bullfight is conventional and portrays a predictable set of psychic identifications.

Hemingway’s determination that boxing lies outside of his sadomasochistic aesthetics resembles and reflects a Progressivist Era residue in the popular mind expressed toward boxing. It was perceived as a brutal sport and was legislated against very heavily through the 1910s and ‘20s. Attitudes toward boxing at large were and remain essentially mixed. Throughout various media (popular and exclusive) in America, boxing has rarely been presented as anything other than inherently “tragic.” Either its practitioners are doomed to death, defeat, and pain or the sport itself is; often both. The sadomasochistic style in Hemingway’s work reveals a profound cultural difficulty via boxing. The idea of two men beating each other is indefensible, but if one man loses and another wins, then all is forgiven. The classist rhetoric undergirding such thinking is everywhere present in rhetoric about boxing, as are the inescapably racist undertones. If boxing can be understood according to the terms of sadomasochism, then it can also be understood hierarchically. If, however, that hierarchy is absent, the whole thing becomes an incomprehensibly brutal spectacle.

At the beginning of Book II in *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake meets up again with Bill Gorton in Paris. Bill had been in the States for a while and had witnessed a “whole crop of great young light heavyweights. Any one of them was a good prospect to grow up, put on weight and trim Dempsey” (75-76). Bill then departs for Vienna, then Budapest, and then returns again to Paris. He describes a “remarkable thing” in Vienna that “seemed better than it was” (76). He relates to Jake the events surrounding a prizefight, told in the subject-less, article-less, efficient style of a telegraphed note:

“Remember something about a prize-fight. Enormous Vienna prize-fight. Had a nigger in it. Remember the nigger perfectly.”

“Go on.”

“Wonderful nigger. Looked like Tiger Flowers, only four times as big. All of a sudden everybody started to throw things. Not me. Nigger’d just knocked local boy down. Nigger put up his glove. Wanted to make a speech. Awful noble-looking nigger. Started to make a speech. Then local white boy hit him. Then he knocked white boy cold. Then everybody commenced to throw chairs. Nigger went home with us in our car. Couldn’t get his clothes. Wore my coat. Remember the whole thing now. Big sporting evening?”

“What happened?”

“Loaned the nigger some clothes and went around with him to try and get his money. Claimed nigger owed them money on account of wrecking hall. Wonder who translated? Was it me?”

“Probably it wasn’t you.”

“You’re right. Wasn’t me at all. Was another fellow. Think we called him the local Harvard man. Remember him now. Studying music.”

“How’d you come out?”

“Not so good, Jake. Injustice everywhere. Promoter claimed nigger promised let local boy stay. Claimed nigger violated contract. Can’t knock out Vienna boy in Vienna. ‘My God, Mister Gorton,’ said nigger, ‘I didn’t do nothing in there for forty minutes but try and let him stay. That white boy musta ruptured himself swinging at me. I never did hit him.’”

“Did you get any money?”

“No money, Jake. All we could get was nigger’s clothes. Somebody took his watch, too. Splendid nigger. Big mistake to have come to Vienna. Not so good, Jake. Not so good.”

“What became of the nigger?”

“Went back to Cologne. Lives there. Married. Got a family. Going to write me a letter and send me the money I loaned him. Wonderful nigger. Hope I gave him the right address.”

“You probably did.”

“Well, anyway, let’s eat,” said Bill, “Unless you want me to tell you some more travel stories.” (76-78)

Even though this fight takes place in Vienna, there are many signs that the terms of the fight have been significantly displaced from a specifically American context. Bill only vaguely recalls the fight, and even though the story is told to Jake many days after he’s seen Bill return from the US, it appears in the text immediately following Bill telling Jake that he’d seen a “whole crop of light heavyweights” in the US. Moreover, riots such as the one described in Bill’s story were the primary justification in the various states in the US legislating against boxing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In addition, while the terms of the crowd’s ire seem to be about a foreigner (a black American) defeating a local “Vienna boy,” Bill’s repeated focus on the unnamed “nigger” and the whiteness of the crowd gives the riot a distinctly racial flavor. The fact that there’s also a “local Harvard man” confuses the location even further.

My point, however, is not to say that Bill (or Jake) misremembers where the fight took place, but instead to highlight a geographic and cultural displacement at work. While the fight

happens in Vienna, it's a distinctly American event. Exactly like the boxer Rivera in Jack London's story, "The Mexican," Bill's unnamed "nigger" lies at the heart of a double-cross. He was told by the promoters to let the local Vienna boxer stay in the fight a while, but ultimately they told him he would win. The Vienna boxer takes what appears to have been a deliberate fall (too early) which not only angers the crowd enormously, but also allows the promoters to con the American boxer out of his earnings by claiming that he was responsible for the damage to the hall. But where London's Rivera is a Mexican who comes to the US to fight against a sea of "gringos," Bill's boxer is an American who comes to Vienna to fight against a sea of white boys. Certainly, no American black boxer in the 1920s would have to travel so far for the experience.

Bill "remember[s] the nigger perfectly," but the fight itself first appears as a chaotic event in which, suddenly, "everybody started to throw things." The uncertainty of the fight's events remains—so much so that Bill can't even remember if he translated for the boxer or not—and its geographical ambiguity only grows in the retelling, but the boxer at its center is remarkably vivid to Bill. Like Cohn's nose, the black boxer is the origin of a series of fictions, and the ambiguities and vagaries surrounding the fight only serve to solidify the vividness of the remembered boxer. As with bullfighting itself, this incident translates a uniquely American situation from its familiar, multifarious context and attempts to endow it with a predictable, hierarchical, foreign one. The black boxer is made literally a black hole, a highly visible center responsible for the unpredictable chaos it produces and attracts. In Bakhtin's terms,

the way in which the word conceives its object is complicated by a dialogic interaction within the object between various aspects of its socio-verbal intelligibility. And an artistic representation, an "image" of the object, may be penetrated by this dialogic play of verbal intentions that meet and are interwoven in it; such an image need not stifle these forces, but on the contrary may activate and organize them . . . the social atmosphere of the word, the atmosphere that surrounds the object, makes the facets of the image sparkle. (277)

The visible sign of Cohn's nose, of Bocanegra's ear, and of this black American boxer stand as stunningly clear emblems of an inarticulable swirl of meanings and contexts.

Uniquely, however, Bill's story only appears to do a partial job of disguising or displacing the fight's lack of clarity. In shifting the aesthetic uncertainty of the fight to a fight between nations (the US and Austria), Bill shifts the multi-ethnic question to a multi-national one. Significantly, Austria lay at the heart of the outbreak of WWI—which is its own magnificently absent signifier in this novel—and the initial result of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand was the dissolution of Austria into its many ethnic factions. Hence, in a round-about way Bill is displacing American ethnic conflict onto the ethnic conflict that led to WWI. The deep contradictions running beneath American Progressive Era politics become "resolved" through the events of the war, and it is in this act of cultural translation that we see that as much as this novel has been perpetually described as a response to WWI, it also importantly refers obliquely back to specifically *American* politics of ethnic plurality. Said otherwise, the events of WWI and its aftermath provides Hemingway (and the characters of *The Sun Also Rises*) with a clear—if still importantly anxiety-inducing—"myth" accounting for the malaise and alienation of the 1920s. Translating the aesthetic uncertainties of the American present into the aesthetic clarities of the European recent past gives articulation to the pain Hemingway feels so compelled to voice.

The boxer exists as an unmistakably sore spot in Hemingway's aesthetics. Not only can he not account for the boxer stylistically, but he can only understand the boxer as a no-place of

representational possibility. The boxer has no voice in Hemingway's work. According to Bakhtin's take on novelistic discourse, though there are many different aspects of language and words that refract an author's intentions, there is a possible position that is "completely denied any authorial intentions: the author does not express *himself* in them (as the author of the word)—rather, he *exhibits* them as a unique speech-thing, they function for him as something completely reified" ("Discourse in the Novel" 299). Similarly, the boxer is a wholly alien "thing" to Hemingway; the boxer so fully embodies that extra-linguistic object-ness that he exists without style, subjectivity, or language.<sup>83</sup> The sense of the sport's "realism" is too immediate for Hemingway, thus the need for a mediated, foreign, ritualized, and hierarchical substitute like bullfighting. The boxer is an emblem of the exigencies of social, economic, and ethnic mobility/mutability. In boxing's place, rises an expert discourse layered with its own hierarchies, social realities, and styles. Boxing itself is wholly alien to Hemingway's conception of aesthetics and intention, even a loosely constructed one built with its own layers of styles and intentions. The spectacle is too loose and ultimately impossible to understand aesthetically. It is masochistic without any pleasurable pay-off, completely other, and entirely too real.



## Chapter 5

### The Property Man: Violence and the Spectacle of Serial Unemployment in the Films of Charlie Chaplin

Much like boxing itself, Charlie Chaplin's slapstick films present working-class subjects to a middle-class audience. Just as slapstick reflects the familiar iconography of day labor—brooms, ladders, bricks, and hammers in city streets, tenement housing, and corner shops—the genre also includes the immediately recognizable visual tropes of boxing. Over the course of his career, Chaplin continues to revisit the spectacle of boxing as a theoretical tool that articulates the institutional violence of serial unemployment. More than any other of the works I analyze in my project, Chaplin's films demystify the formalizing structure and power of boxing. In these films, boxing becomes more than a simple metaphor for mechanization and dehumanization; it is a crucial part of the visual history of urban labor and of the chronic instability of employment. Thus, the boxing ring is the site of some of Chaplin's strongest and clearest political views in his films, a physical space within which he attempts to identify and dismantle the objective structures of economic disparity.

According to Karl Marx, because labor has become a commodity in the post-feudal era, all labor is "itinerant"; even the most seemingly specialized and skilled labor is ultimately parsable as unskilled, exchangeable labor (Marx 31). Charlie Chaplin's work begins with a similar assumption, but over the course of his filmmaking career in the mid 1910s through his features of the 1930s, he doesn't content himself simply to display the endless circulation of labor—despite what many critics have said of his work.<sup>84</sup> More specifically and systematically, Chaplin tasks himself with uncovering how and why the culture of itinerancy is also distinctly violent. He attempts in his films to find a visual language and logic that can best describe the violence everywhere present in the condition of the urban working class. In his earliest work at Mack Sennett's Keystone Studios and his later work for Essanay, Chaplin turns first to a bodily logic, contrasting his slight frame with physically large embodiments of institutional structures. In his subsequent work at Mutual and in his earlier features at First National, he gives great attention to the objective structures of the working class environment, locating violence in the things of labor (bricks, hammers, ladders, houses, and so on). By the time of his later features under his own United Artists banner—in films such as *City Lights*, *Modern Times*, and *The Circus*—he has developed a complex theoretical approach to spectacle and spectatorship.

Chaplin's turn to spectacle as the locus of violence in the culture of itinerant labor predates and prefigures the decades' later theory of Guy Debord, who claims in *The Society of the Spectacle* that the "dictatorship [of the bureaucratic economy] must . . . be attended by permanent violence" (42) and that this violence is disguised by "spectacular antagonisms" and "false conflicts of ancient vintage" (40, 41). Early in his career, Chaplin clearly suspects that something else lies beyond the surface of the comic violence between his wily tramp and the litany of muscle-bound men. While Chaplin's characters are put in violent conflict with a series of large waiters, bosses, police officers, fathers, and suitors, they almost all belong to the same social class. However, at the same time, these figures embody institutional barriers to employment, citizenship, wealth, marriage, and so on. While Chaplin exploits (and continues to exploit) bodily contrast for its humorous effect, he early on begins looking for the ideological structures that support it—and then exploits those, as well.<sup>85</sup>

A defining trope of slapstick comedy is the violent opposition of obviously disparate body types. Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd all rely on their ability to

accentuate their bodily slightness in contrast to some large, muscular tough guy.<sup>86</sup> Chaplin in particular takes this to an extreme in his Tramp character by wearing oversized clothes and shoes to make himself appear even smaller. For Chaplin, this central opposition took on an even deeper and more symbolic resonance through his later films as the “Little Tramp” faced off against a series of social, cultural, and economic “heavies”—abject poverty, labor exploitation, police brutality, etc. The David and Goliath situations found throughout Chaplin’s films have been the topic of much discussion in his films since the time of their release.<sup>87</sup> Most frequently, this structure is used as a way for critics to frame political discussions of Chaplin’s work, pitching him as the wily little guy standing up against impossibly overwhelming odds. Because critics of Chaplin’s work generally take those conflicts at face value, such readings most typically identify a suspiciously simplistic politics of the underdog.

I believe it’s for this reason that critical attitudes towards Chaplin’s work have also been so divided. Many, such as Charles Musser, see his characters’ tricksterism and loafishness as direct critiques of the establishment (by refusing to work and by fooling his bosses), while others like Theodor Adorno see in their acts (and in Chaplin the person) “a predator ready to pounce” (Musser 39; Adorno 59). Because neither of these readings looks to the structural and ideological engagement of Chaplin’s films, they only see the surface level conflicts and—like those easily distracted by Debord’s “spectacular antagonisms”—pay too much attention to the most immediately visible violence on the screen between the tramp and the series of heavies he faces. But even in his earliest work for Sennett, I argue that Chaplin was already attempting to pull the curtain back and look beyond the readily digestible conflicts between body types, not by doing away with them, but by emphasizing (and thereby negating) them.

### Section 1: Bodies and the Logic of Type

Type casting was a central feature of slapstick comedies, and Chaplin’s films had their own internal logic based on these circulating character types predicated on physical build—frequently played by the same few actors whose size determined their place within the film’s dramatic structure. After leaving Mack Sennett’s Keystone Studios, Chaplin’s work at Essanay (and on into his later work with Mutual) honed these types to simple, predictable, and highly legible characters within tightly constructed situations. While Sennett had similarly relied on exaggerated and visible physical attributes in his films, they were far less regular and consistent. For example, in Sennett’s films, Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle could play the funny falling fat man in one film and play a nondescript member of the Keystone Kops in another, and sometimes in a single film an actor could freely—often jarringly so—move between types (as Arbuckle does in *The Knockout*, which is discussed at greater length below). Sennett’s films resorted to chaos, unpredictability, and improvisation at every turn, and this approach bears out in his “insensitive” attention to type.<sup>88</sup>

At Essanay, however, Chaplin became so regular in assigning particular actors to particular types and roles that critics like Charles Musser think of his work as one large and internally consistent “meta-film.” In doing so, Musser unites Chaplin’s tramp character and his drunk gentleman character into a contiguous whole, united by cultural history and social reality (Musser 54). Moving between films is, according to such an approach, no more cognitively dissonant than an extended film cut between shots or scenes. The internal consistencies and structural logic of Chaplin’s post-Keystone work leads film historian Walter Kerr to claim that in Chaplin’s work “violence has been rooted in sanity” (74). While Kerr refers specifically to the way in which Chaplin’s tramp character “adjust[s] the rest of the universe to his merely reflexive

needs” (75), Kerr’s implication is that his character’s sadistic and rational reordering of the world also plays out on the level of Chaplin—as writer and director—“adjusting the universe” according to immovable character-body types in his films.

The little guy-big guy opposition was a common convention of the slapstick genre, even in its concurrent manifestations on the vaudeville stage. But it wasn’t until Charlie Chaplin left Sennett’s Keystone Studios and began his work with Essanay in 1915 that this structure became so heavily foregrounded. In Chaplin’s post-Keystone work, the stark contrast between his character’s body and that of his antagonist was no longer just one tool among many, but was instead the central conceit around which nearly every plot and gag revolved.

While Sennett’s films rely on exaggerated character types for their gags, his early films are highly unpredictable in their structures. As a filmmaker, Sennett encouraged improvisation among his production crews and actors, frequently taking advantage of non-cinematic events (the draining of a municipal reservoir, an auto race, etc) and rushing a crew to figure something out once they got there. Nearly all of Sennett’s films were structured simply by mounting chaos and conflict culminating in some final hosing down—essentially little more than updated retellings of the Lumieres’ *L’Arroseur Arrosé* or of the Edison Company’s *A Scrap in Black and White*. The small-big contrast was only one of many possible productive contrasts in Sennett’s films; there were also contrasts of young and old, thin and fat, male and female, rural and urban, and so on. And, as I argue above, even these oppositions themselves were highly unstable and irregular.

Chaplin’s roles at Keystone, however, emphasized his slight build and short stature. His size was as much his signature as were his cane, bowler hat, and mustache. In films like *The Property Man*—written and directed by Chaplin while under contract at Keystone—we can already see the beginnings of Chaplin’s later iconic conflicts. In the film, he plays a property man for a vaudeville stage who flirts with a performer’s wife. The performer—a strong man—stands in stark contrast to Chaplin’s inept and wiry property man. The film ends with Keystone’s conventional watery chaos involving the entire cast, crew, and audience of the theater, but it’s been instigated by the ongoing violent mischief between the property man and the strong man. *His Prehistoric Past*, Chaplin’s last film for Sennett, similarly relies on this contrast, pitting the upstart Chaplin against the burly tribal chieftain for control of the women in a comic version of Freud’s “band of brothers” scenario.

Once Chaplin moves to Essanay in 1915, this visible bodily contrast becomes a principle feature of his work. His first film with Essanay, *His New Job*, echoes *The Property Man* in many clear ways. Not only does Chaplin again play a property man—this time for a film studio—but he’s been set in direct opposition to a large, muscular star, by literally stepping into the larger man’s shoes. His slim build also contrasts with the much more substantial builds of the film’s director and even of the elderly casting agent. He isn’t simply a rube bumbling his way in front of the cameras; he’s a *small* rube bumbling his way in front of the cinematic institution run by *large* men. In *A Night Out* he faces off against a large waiter. In *The Champion* the tramp takes on large boxers. In *Work*, Chaplin is outsized by his boss and the homeowner for whom they’re both working. And so on. While Kerr claims that it is Chaplin’s ability to earn audience sympathy that brings “sanity” to the violence of his films, I believe it has far more to do with the regularity of these bodily contrasts that brings “logic” to the violence in his films. It’s almost as if the violence acted out between the characters operates according to the laws of equilibrium, attempting to compensate for obvious disparities in body mass. Not only is an audience’s sympathy impossible to quantify and explain formally, but it is the very notion of “quantity” and “form” that are brought forward through the logic of Chaplin’s body types. If the unpredictable

violence found in Sennett's films is a primitive and inarticulate babble, Chaplin's subsequent films give violence a coherent voice.

However, it is the very quantitative nature of that logic that Chaplin explores in these films. As I've argued in my earlier chapter on Eadweard Muybridge, the sense of the obvious in the cinematic apparatus needed to be cultivated and formally created. Far from the natural and inevitable outgrowth of filmic technology, "obviousness," "quantification," and "visibility" were *produced* by the cinema. The sense that the camera was transparent, objective, and indifferent with respect to its subjects was not inevitable. Muybridge's bodies in motion were laid bare by the technological apparatus as much as they were by their own exposed musculature. It is this supposed "truth" of the cinema that Chaplin explores and attempts to exploit.

As had been the case with Muybridge, nowhere was this clearer than in Chaplin's studies of boxing. As a firmly established and pervasive cultural fantasy of the "self-evident" visibility of bodily difference articulated through a violent logic, boxing was a foundational visual trope of filmmaking from its earliest moments. As I claim in my earlier study of Eadweard Muybridge, the formal interests of boxing blend readily with the sciento-technological discourse of early film. The emphasis on bodily difference within the ring leads directly to filmic structures designed to convey and reify difference cinematically (camera angles and distances, film edits, framing, etc.). Along with other activities associated with urban working class culture, boxing is a common subject and feature of slapstick. The unique ontological and epistemological claims of boxing—that bodies can be laid bare, that violence can be seen, that violence operates according to a ritualized and rule-bound logic, and that what happens in the ring is real—serve an important role within slapstick comedy, and within Chaplin's work in particular. Like boxing, Chaplin's films foreground body types, and the structures of his filmmaking style all exist in service to these types. And as in boxing, violence is the language spoken between characters; their "obvious" and visible differences invite violence and give it a specific logic and "sanity."

The visual tropes and discursive structures of boxing appear as embedded parts of the urban working class milieu within which Chaplin's films operate. Even though boxing itself doesn't appear all that often in his work, its tropes and structures are pervasive. Boxing is the subject of only one of his films (*The Champion*) and only appears in one of his feature-length films (*City Lights*), so I do not mean to imply that the sport often appears with all its familiar signs, structures, and rituals in Chaplin's films. I want to suggest that his films turn to boxing as a theoretical tool, one that provides him the ready cultural material and visual language with which to play out and critique the structures and assumptions of violence in the environment of the urban working class.

As I claim throughout this dissertation, the central fantasy of boxing is that it clarifies social relations (especially with respect to race and class), reifying difference and violence as visible truths that define those relations. By comparing the Keystone film *The Knockout* to Chaplin's Essanay film *The Champion*, we can begin to see what distinguishes Chaplin's cinematic logic and then closely examine other films' deployment and development of that logic. In particular, I aim to draw out of this contrast the specifically bodily logic of Chaplin's film and its extreme regularity.

The Sennett-produced film *The Knockout* follows Fatty Arbuckle through a series of very loosely related events revolving around his entering a prizefight. The film begins with Arbuckle successfully fighting off a group of "mashers" flirting with his girlfriend. Feeling particularly good about his act of chivalry and physical prowess, he then enters a prizefight (which Chaplin officiates). On the verge of losing the fight, Arbuckle steals a gun from a nearby sheriff and

begins shooting wildly. He chases his opponent out of the ring, through the fight's spectators, and out into the streets. The Keystone Kops are called in to chase him down. A wild rooftop chase ensues. At one point the Kops loop ropes around Arbuckle's waist, but he simply drags the lot of them down the street effortlessly. The film ends with everyone ending up in a lake.

The improvisatory and dream-like associations that structure *The Knockout* are clear examples of what might be called the "roughness," "incoherence," or, less derogatorily, the "unconsciousness" of Sennett's style. The plot's only coherent arc is the gradually building chaos that ends abruptly with everyone getting wet, but none of the individual elements or scenes has any rational relationship to any other. Arbuckle is a completely inconsistent character, moving from capable defender to comically inept fighter to manic criminal to calmed beast at the drop of a hat. While Sennett may have been insensitive to the talents of his actors, the underlying implication behind dismissive readings of Sennett by scholars like Kerr is that Arbuckle doesn't adhere to the expectations of how a "fat man" should behave. He doesn't act according to type. His size merely makes him well suited to the genre, part of the carnivalesque display that was a defining feature of Sennett's films. But Arbuckle's body doesn't correspond to any particular characteristic or set of characteristics, but rather to an excess of competing and incompatible characteristics.<sup>89</sup>

Arbuckle's body contributes to the overall tone and attitude of the film. It's treated as an amorphous thing that is itself out of control. Rather than standing for or embodying something, his body moves in the opposite direction. It is too big to be any one thing or one person. It is an emblem of the film itself: chaotic, grotesque, and structure-less. In the boxing ring, he attempts to put his demonstrated physical prowess to use. He loses in the ring to a thinner man, and his failure is made all the more improbable in retrospect after we witness his incredible feats of strength in the film's final scenes (dragging a dozen men behind him and leaping from rooftop to rooftop). The ring bears no relation to the rest of the film's world and the bodily contrast at its center conveys no truth. Or put more accurately, the truth that these bodies convey is that bodies convey no reliable truth.

In the same way that Sennett's film flies in the face of social mores, it also defies logic and realism. His film makes the assertion that to do one is the same as doing the other. That the expectations and conventions of boxing are turned on their head at the film's "center" (as much as there is one) comes as little surprise, especially in light of my ongoing claim that boxing is a defining trope of social theory and claims to realism in the cultural output of the period. Our expectations are utterly confounded, and our attention as spectators is also frustrated. Chaplin, the fight's referee, steals the show. As the fight runs its course behind him, Chaplin sits and stands and falls in the foreground, drawing our attention away from the fighters like a stage magician performing sleight of hand. Chaplin's distractingly entertaining pantomiming in the foreground diverts our attention from the fight happening in the background. When Arbuckle finally grabs the sheriff's gun from a nearby balcony seat, we're just as surprised by the shooting of the gun as we are by the fact that one of the fighters has done something worth our attention. Far from being a site of increased legibility, the prize ring is an occasion for heightened and deliberate confusion in *The Knockout*. Its bodies are obscured from sight and from reason.

## Section 2: In Plain Sight

Less than a year later in *The Champion*, Chaplin provides a very different vision of the ring. Rather than obscuring the bodies in the ring, Chaplin performs his sleight of hand by emphasizing the body types in ring's center. Where Sennett overturns the ideological

assumptions of boxing by countermanding the ring's claim to clarity, Chaplin puts that claim to comic effect. In *The Champion*, Chaplin plays a "completely broke" man "meditating on the ingratitude of humanity." He sees an advertisement calling for sparring partners for boxer Spike Dugan. Hungry, he gives it a shot. After taking a few hits from the boxer during tryouts, he returns for his paid session with a horseshoe stuffed in one of his boxing gloves. He knocks out the boxer, sends him running out of town, and is taken on as the new prospect. A match is then set with Bob Uppercut.<sup>90</sup> With the help of his lucky horseshoe and his pet bull dog, Chaplin wins the match.

The entire plot and comic engine stems from the obviousness of Chaplin's bodily distinction from the two boxers he fights (and defeats). The film emphasizes the consistent incongruity of a small and mild-mannered tramp defeating two large, strong boxers. There's no miraculous and inexplicable transformation, nor do any of the characters behave out of type. The bodies exist in plain view for all to see. If this weren't a comedy, we would instantly recognize the inevitable tragedy that would unfold (in which our hero would be hopelessly overpowered, beaten senseless, and returned to a state of abject poverty); however, the comedy lies in the unlikely victory of Chaplin's character. In contrast to Sennett, Chaplin doesn't simply overturn our expectations. He creates an alternate system of logic. The small man doesn't just unexpectedly defeat the two large men; he does so because of the horseshoe hidden in his glove.

The tramp merely takes advantage of one of the formal idiosyncrasies of boxing: the large gloves. A central fantasy of boxing is that the two boxers have been laid bare, that the only thing on display is their muscle and willpower. Everything else has been stripped away so that what remains is an accurate, transparent, and precise depiction of reality and of truth. The rules, structures, paraphernalia, and rituals of boxing all point to this central claim of boxing. In the ring, there is no chance, no circumstance, and no unfair advantage. But in a very simple and obvious way, Chaplin takes humorous advantage of the apparatus everywhere present in the ring. By hiding a horseshoe in plain sight, he goes for a low blow against boxing's central claim to absolute visibility. Just when bodily difference is at its most embodied, it's brought crashing to its knees. Chaplin aims square at the ideological structure of the ring—a target he'll return to again in the famous boxing sequence in *City Lights*.

By the same act, he also targets the ideological and formal apparatus of silent cinema. In a sound film, the horseshoe would have been immediately given away once it made contact with the boxer's chin. But in a silent film, no one knows it's there. Even the film's audience—who saw Chaplin put it there in the first place—has been duped. In order to stage the sequences, the horseshoe has obviously long since been taken out, but in order to believe that the little tramp is winning these fights, we in the film audience also have to believe that the horseshoe is still there while knowing nevertheless that it couldn't be. The horseshoe isn't just hidden beneath the surface of the ideological structure of the ring, but also beneath the surface of the ideological structure of the cinema. The logic of the film dictates that it be there, but the logic of its staging dictates that it not be there. It is both there and not there, a Schrodinger's Cat responsible for generating the humor of the film. By a clever sleight of hand, Charlie has conjured a horseshoe out of thin air that we believe we see and simultaneously know can't be there.<sup>91</sup>

If the bodily contrast between the tramp and the boxers is the initial comic problem, the horseshoe is its resolution. According to Kerr, Chaplin "began to feel a need to justify—emotionally or rationally—the violence, even the randomness, with which he would not part. He found himself looking for the other half of the joke" (79). Kerr conceives of this logical "other half" as a crucial structure in Chaplin's comedy. For example,

Chaplin, as the janitor in *The Bank*, paused in his labors to glance at a waiting customer, then—gratuitously as ever—took his pulse. Showing concern over the pulse, he asked the man to stick out his tongue. The man complied, whereupon Chaplin promptly used the man's tongue to lick a stamp, which he immediately affixed to a letter he wished to mail. The joke has been completed, come whole, its two unrelated parts perfectly juxtaposed in time and space. (79)

Kerr's reading explains the rampant incongruity found in Chaplin's work through some underlying purpose that's revealed in the joke's "other half." The first incongruity (a janitor playing the part of doctor) is resolved through a second incongruity (using the other man's tongue to lick a stamp for his letter). There is an underlying purpose to the bit that only becomes clear in its second step. Hence the horseshoe bit in *The Champion*.

If the initial "half" of the joke in *The Champion* is the obvious disparity between Chaplin's slight frame and the large, muscular figures of Spike Dugan and Bob Uppercut, the "other half" is the ideological framework that makes that contrast signify. *The Champion* emphasizes and exaggerates the difference between the characters' body types and then undermines the structural apparatus responsible for creating the sense of difference in the first place (both in the ring and in the cinema generally). Even in Mack Sennett's earlier Keystone films, self-referential jokes abounded, but as in *The Knockout* these "fourth-wall jokes" more closely resembled the raw trickery of early filmmaking—closer to Gunning's "Cinema of Attractions." But Chaplin incorporates the apparatus into the logic of his violent humor.

According to the truth claims of both boxing and the cinema, what we see is a direct and accurate reflection of the world as it truly is. The technological apparatuses of both ring and screen facilitate the fantasies of clarity and disclosure. Chaplin commits a sort of pugilistic heresy by going for the gloves, demonstrating that the apparatus of the prize ring isn't as clear as it claims. And in his double-legerdemain in hiding the horseshoe from the other characters—but showing it to the film audience—then hiding it from the film audience in the performance itself, he demonstrates the inherently unreliable truth claims of the cinematic apparatus. My point is not to claim that either of these tricks is new—doubt has been a constant part of modern boxing culture from its beginnings in Regency Era England and technological trickery is as old as film technology itself—instead my interest is in highlighting the logical structure behind Chaplin's articulation of violence and humor. As we see in *The Champion*, the "other half" of his jokes almost always embeds itself within and relies on an ideological structure.

In *The Bank*, for example, we see a very similar visual and ideological relationship at work. Not only do we see the same familiar bodily contrast between Chaplin and the customer, but he has undermined a critical structure (here, of the workplace). He has turned the customer into his patient, then his employee, and finally into a tool. Our eyes deceive us, and just as Chaplin had conjured an invisible horseshoe out of thin air (or out of our gullibility as a part of the credulous film audience), he has here summoned a stamp sponge. The obviousness of the body types is a crucial technique in the trickery at work. Bodies are a literal manifestation of the ideology of (cinematic and boxing) form. The underlying "purpose" of Chaplin's comedic logic is ideological in nature.

Chaplin found a great facility in the use of types. Importantly, the large figures are not simply physically threatening, but they are also institutionally threatening. In Sennett's films, bodily contrast was merely a visual gag, but the characters were generally of the same class and social position, and as I've argued with respect to actors like Fatty Arbuckle, Sennett's bodies are rarely true to type. However, once Chaplin moves to Essanay, that contrast transforms into

something more socially tangible and significant. We've seen this already in the two Essanay films discussed above—*The Champion* and *The Bank*—but it appears throughout Chaplin's work immediately upon leaving Keystone. Borrowing from the nineteenth-century melodramatic tradition, Chaplin's bodies take on legible social and political valences. The muscular film star in Chaplin's first Essanay film *His New Job* embodies regular employment, the cultural capital of film stardom, and the aptitude and virility of a smooth leading man. In contrast to Chaplin as the small-bodied property man, the bodies of the much larger star, casting agent, and film director all reflect a disparity in social position (while simultaneously embodying the ideological structures of filmmaking itself). In *A Night Out*, the large waiter embodies middle-class sobriety and sexual propriety. In *A Jitney Elopement*, the large father stands guard against the fiduciary and sexual advances of Chaplin's poor tramp.<sup>92</sup> And so on.

The obviousness of bodily contrast in his films makes social and political conflicts seem equally legible and unmistakable. But it is this very sense of the "obvious" that Chaplin found so rich and, I would argue, why boxing provided him such a useful model for theorizing ideology and its relation to film performance. Moreover, there's a distinct parallel at work in Chaplin's repeated returns to the structures of stage and prize ring. Not only is there a long history running back through the nineteenth century that ties stage performance to the boxing ring, but Chaplin exploits and explores that historical bond in the nascent technology of the cinema. The ideology inherent in our sense of the obvious and its relation to film, boxing, and theatrical performance all come to bear on the politics of Chaplin's films. The logic of Chaplin's humor relies on a firmly established sense of the obvious. Without it, a horseshoe couldn't be hidden in plain sight.

Of course, not all critics have seen his attention to politics as necessarily liberating. On the contrary, because critics like Musser see Chaplin's films as workplace fantasies of empowerment and wish-fulfillment, they can be no more politically engaged than showing up to work late. According to such a reading, Chaplin is a disturbingly conciliatory figure at home in the exploitative and alienating structures of labor. Further, the attention to type would appear merely as a cinematic product of reification and as a simplification of social relations, but I would argue that such readings overlook the important ways that Chaplin utilizes reification and frequently turns it against itself in his comedy. However, my point is not to resurrect the political content of Chaplin's work; instead, I'm more interested in how he structures that content, how he understands and articulates the violence of that content, and how and why boxing in particular is an important part of that structure.

Many critics totalize Chaplin's work and its politics, often reading backwards from his political exile from the United States in the wake of the HUAC hearings.<sup>93</sup> Frequently, this teleological approach traces the development of a political and social voice through his work at Essanay and Mutual and identifies its fruition in later features like *City Lights* and *Modern Times*. But because of this teleological approach, few critics have paid much attention to the significance and specificities of the transformations that his work undergoes. As argued above, much of his work at Essanay emphasized body type above all else, drawing heavily on the tradition and structures of boxing and stage melodrama. Social conditions play out in these films as (violent) relations between reified bodies, and humor comes from the ways in which Chaplin reminds us that obviousness is a deceptive and mutable ideological structure.

### Section 3: Reification and the Logic of Objects

By the time he left Essanay and moved to Mutual Films in 1916, Chaplin's stock characters grew less and less clearly identifiable with specific institutions and conditions. We



begin to see a diffusion of the strong man type (the embodiment of institutional power and authority) into the environment itself. This transformation is most visible in films like *One A.M.* and *The Cure* where Chaplin's "opponents" are things (with his own body as yet one more thing). Perhaps more than any other aspect of Chaplin's films, it is his relationship to the object world that has resonated most with audiences and critics over the past century. Most typically, the teleological approach to Chaplin's work reads his greater involvement with objects in his films as part of the "culmination" of his "genius," coming to a head in *Modern Times* (a reading which frequently completely ignores everything about the movie except for its first fifteen minutes in the factory). My approach differs in that I want to hold onto my earlier reading of Chaplin's attention to body types in my reading of the environment. I want to examine how his understanding (and manipulation) of obviousness plays out in his more object-interested films and ultimately to identify how boxing feeds into this structural transformation.

Even in his earlier work with Mack Sennett, Chaplin demonstrated fluency with objects and props, and their relative size played an important part in how we understand Chaplin's relationship to them. In *The Property Man*, for example, Chaplin wrestles with an oversized trunk and fumbles with large weights. In *His Musical Career*, Charlie struggles with an enormous piano. In *Mabel's Married Life*, the connection between large men and large objects is made even more explicit. After his wife is accosted by a large man in a park and Charlie fails to chase him away, Charlie heads to the bar to get drunk. Meanwhile back at home, his wife—played by Mabel Normand—has arranged to have a boxing dummy delivered to their apartment so that Charlie can train to fight off future mashers. When Charlie returns home drunk, he sees the large dummy and mistakes it for a man his wife is having an affair with. He fights with the dummy, but is repeatedly knocked down and hit by the dummy. His wife finally explains to him that it is in fact just a dummy. They laugh, and the dummy gets a final successful "swing" in.

Here in *Mabel's Married Life* we see Chaplin experimenting with obviousness via type in a much more focused way than in his other Keystone work. It stands out from the rest of Sennett's work of the time and even from Chaplin's own work for Sennett's studio in its focused structure. While there's little social import attached to the bodily contrast, the ideological structures of film and boxing are being brought into the logic of the film's humor. More importantly, this is one of the early signs of a conflation of bodies and objects. Charlie's misrecognition fuels much of the film's humor.<sup>94</sup> We in the audience know that Charlie is fighting a dummy (and losing). Even though the dummy is larger than Charlie, we know that because it's "obviously" an object, he shouldn't be losing. Charlie has fallen victim to a slightly different ideology of bodily contrast than what I point out in *The Champion*, and we laugh because we know he is misreading the situation. However, even after he learns that he's been mistaken, the boxing dummy still has enough apparent strength and superiority to knock both him and Mabel to the ground one last time. We've all been fooled by film trickery—characters and film audience alike.

The boxing dummy returns in Chaplin's later Essanay film *The Champion*. When Charlie first enters the training yard after reading the sign asking for sparring partners, he runs square into a boxing dummy. Directly echoing the performance in *Mabel's Married Life*, the dummy knocks Charlie down. The difference, however, is that here it carries with it the added weight of its socio-political dimension. We're reminded of how "low" Charlie is because of this initial defeat at the hands of a boxing dummy. He's poor, hungry, and alone and the dummy forcefully and violently reminds him of that fact. The significance of this short moment is its revision and

revitalization of the conflict that was the subject of *Mabel's Married Life*. It briefly encapsulates perfectly the entire plot and conflict of the remainder of *The Champion*.

The boxing dummy literalizes and materializes the objective forces of Charlie's social condition. Like Murray Pomerance's description of the revolving door in Murnau's *The Last Man* (44), the boxing dummy greets Charlie, draws him into the yard, violently strikes him, turns him around, and forces him to sit in line next to the other would-be employees ("sparring partners"). Like Murnau's revolving door, Chaplin's dummy is the perpetual motion of labor reified. The dummy sends each prospective sparring partner to fight Spike Dugan, and each returns insensate after his "audition." Rather than an inert thing, the boxing dummy is a machine tasked with violently arranging laborers within the structure of the workplace. It is a robotic employment agent recruiting potential laborers and sending them directly to their interview. The agent figure also appears in human form in many of Chaplin's films, frequently as a casting agent. In *His New Job*, the casting agent even wears a large mechanical hearing aid, suggesting something robotic already in play in the figure before *The Champion*. More than demonstrating the alienation and mechanization of human labor, the mechanized agent suggests the more profound assertion that it is the *process* and *relation* between people that is mechanized. The agent is the go-between who finds, processes, and transforms people into workers. In *The Champion*, those laborers who have arrived before Charlie have themselves been transformed into "dummies" not only because they are there to work as professional boxing dummies, but also because they are rendered unconscious and inert by the process. The horror that Charlie witnesses before him is a literal process of dehumanization and reification on par with science-fiction narratives of humans transforming into mindless robots or zombies.

Only because Charlie has happened upon a trick, does he manage to avoid (temporarily) the fate of the other sparring partners. The "trick" is to dress like a machine himself.<sup>95</sup> By putting the horseshoe in his glove, he intuits that the difference between him and the large boxer is both objective and invisible (the secret truth of reification). As I've argued above, the act of hiding the horseshoe is enabled by the ideology of obviousness. Boxing and film are both structures that adhere to fantasies of clearly portraying the world "as it is." Charlie the character and Chaplin the actor can hide the horseshoe because no one would think to look beneath anything because both boxing and film claim that there is nothing "underneath" their respective surfaces. Despite his small size, Charlie is accepted at face value as the superior boxer. To think otherwise would be to admit to the lie of both boxing and the cinema.

In *The Champion* while there are two large boxers that Charlie faces, the real opponent lies elsewhere and has been diffused throughout his environment. As the bodies of his opponents begin taking on greater social significance—employment, food, and love—the objective environments come more and more to the fore. Thus a later film for Mutual like *One A.M.* where Charlie finds himself in a house full of objects that has suddenly turned against him during the witching hour. Returning home drunk in a cab late at night, Charlie struggles with doors, windows, tables, rugs, stairs, railings, closets, clocks, stuffed dead animals, beds, clothes, and his own body just to get to sleep. His house and his body collude to expel him and prevent him from finding rest. Bourgeois animosity toward drunkenness (among both the working and leisure classes) were a frequent subject of Chaplin's films, so it's no coincidence that the objective heart of bourgeois sensibility—the house—would turn against him.

#### Section 4: Spectacle and the Logic of Machines

In one of Chaplin's feature-length films, *City Lights*, boxing again appears, and as in *The Champion*, the "fight" takes place more through its objective structures rather than between the two fighters at ring's center. Charlie enters a prizefight to make some quick money. He had initially conspired with his opponent before the fight to split the earnings 50-50 regardless of the victor; however, his original opponent runs off before the fight starts, leaving Charlie to fight a much larger and less agreeable fighter who refuses to make any sort of deal. Charlie panics at the prospect of fighting fair, recognizing his own obvious bodily disadvantage.

Like *The Champion*, his first recourse is to charms and fetishes. Instead of a horseshoe, he borrows another boxer's good luck charm—a rabbit's foot—and rubs it all over himself in a combination of incantatory gesture and bathing ritual. But when that boxer returns to the locker room from his fight knocked cold, Charlie panics yet again and frantically tries to rub off the effect of the rabbit's foot after seeing its presumed effect on the other boxer.

As in *The Champion*, the Charlie of *City Lights* turns to the objects hidden in plain sight within the ring. But rather than entering the ring with something heavy hidden in his glove, he uses the objects of the ring to his advantage. Things that are designed to be invisible are made both visible and useful in the ring. In particular, the ropes, the posts, the bell, and the referee are all brought into the fight. These are material objects of the ring ritual designed with the express purpose of clarifying and highlighting the actions of the fighters and their bodies; however, Charlie sees them as the real stuff of the fight. In his desperation and panic, he literally "deconstructs" the fight. The referee becomes a material presence in the ring, used as both obstacle and tool throughout the fight. Ordinarily, fights are designed to make the referee more of a disembodied officiator and voice with no material relevance to the fight (a quality made visually manifest by the fact that the vast majority of photographs and paintings of boxing matches depict no referee whatsoever). But the instant the bell first rings to begin the fight, Charlie runs for cover behind the referee and a "dance" ensues.

But this is no ordinary dance. The fight in *City Lights* consists of a very specific set of repeated visual motifs and predictable rhythms. The first motif is the swaying back and forth movements where Charlie is trying to keep the referee between him and his opponent. Charlie establishes a predictable and regular pattern of movement. Just as he sets his opponent and the referee into a regular pattern, he breaks it in order to get a successful swing in and then go into a clinch. He repeats this same tactic throughout the fight: set a rhythm, break it, strike, clinch. Other "motifs" also appear. For example, Charlie repeatedly tries to force his opponent to the ground by pushing down on his shoulders. Whenever his opponent gets weak in the knees, Charlie pushes down on his shoulders, but the opponent rises suddenly back up each time like a compressed spring, swings at Charlie, who then ducks and repeats the process. Another is a brief interlude where Charlie repeatedly flies at his weakened opponent (Chaplin is supported by an invisible wire for the bit). A few other repeated motifs appear in this sequence as well, often interwoven with others such that you can't help but sense the repetitive and mechanical quality of the entire fight. Charlie proves such a deft master at establishing and breaking these rhythms that he seems sure to win. He again takes on the appearance of a machine (or at least of a mechanized performer), only to break free in order to get his licks in. However, Charlie's neck ultimately becomes tangled in the bell's rope sending him into a quick back and forth routine that ends with his getting knocked out.

Often this sequence has been read as a particularly virtuosic reflection of the film's greater interest in mechanization and dehumanization. While there's an undeniably strong case to be made for such a reading, it also doesn't take into account the specificities of this scene and

stops at the surface appearance of the fight. As I've argued above in my reading of *The Champion* and *The Knockout*, boxing serves a unique function in the universe of slapstick. It is a ritual of violence designed with the express purpose of reifying social relations through bodies and violence. It depends entirely on convincing audiences that it is an authentic, real, and intensely visible ritual. Chaplin turns these epistemological and ontological claims against themselves in *The Champion*. The same can be said of *City Lights*, but Chaplin digs even deeper in this film. While he does, as he had in *The Champion*, emphasize the objective structure of the ring, he simultaneously draws upon and parodies boxing as a specifically *visual* object.

As much as Chaplin implicates and utilizes the objects within the ring, he is also in this sequence drawing on a specific history in both boxing and cinema. For example, when we first see the ring from one of the aisles in the audience, with the ring asymmetrically arranged and its left side off screen, Chaplin is obliquely referencing Thomas Eakins' famous boxing painting *Between Rounds*. Moreover, the individual motifs and rhythms pointed out above reference the large body of short boxing films first made famous by Muybridge and later shot and widely exhibited by Thomas Edison and many other early American filmmakers. The circularity and repetitiveness of the motions closely resemble the dozens of short films that were a central part of early film programs.

In this series of film gestures, Chaplin has returned to Muybridge's work not merely because it was familiar (and likely comically quaint) to his audience, but because it gave him a ready material history and formal structure to draw upon.<sup>96</sup> Rather than rely solely on the objects and props within the diegetic film world (as he had in *The Champion*), he could turn this ring performance into an object in itself, a cinematic and pugilistic spectacle recognizable as a completely visible thing. The pervasive film images of boxers by Muybridge (and later popularized by Edison, Edison's licensees, and their successors) returns to the ideology of the spectacle. Where in *The Champion*, Chaplin turned the ontological fantasies of cinema and boxing against themselves, in *City Lights* he goes a step further by attacking the very technologies and epistemological assumptions that make film spectatorship possible.

Charlie has inscribed himself within the very material of film and its history—an act not unlike the pathological cinematic fantasy of Woody Allen's *Zelig* or even of Robert Zemeckis' *Forrest Gump*. There's also something tragic about that recognition. Not only does Charlie ultimately lose the fight, but like the boxer he had seen return from the ring unconscious before him, Charlie too is taken from the ring unconscious. Laid out inert on a table in the locker room, a wooden post inscribed with initials lies just above his head. As if the immediately recognizable visual trope of a soldier's death weren't obvious enough, one of the trainers hangs his gloves on a nail on the post immediately above his head in imitation of a dead soldier's helmet. As much as this directly references the hanged gloves of the retired boxer, it also visually resembles the familiar iconography of the dead soldier on whose wooden grave marker hangs his helmet. Charlie briefly wakes up from his insensibility long enough for one of the gloves to fall on his head and knock him out again, emphasized by the film itself fading to black.<sup>97</sup>

The mixture of citations (film footage of boxing matches and of the war dead) seems astonishingly out of place in *City Lights*, but there's an eerie and challenging contemplation at work. If film spectatorship was built upon the formal structures of boxing films (as I claim it largely is in my chapter on Muybridge), then this second citation is an indictment of that contemplative stance. If the danger of spectacle is that it makes the world appear inert and mechanistic, then here is a startlingly self-conscious moment in Chaplin's work attempting to shock us into recognition of that fact. In *The Champion* only localized objects in the material

world—like the boxing dummy, the horseshoe, or the boxing glove—convey the sense of mechanization. The ethereal horseshoe occupies a unique space both within the fictional world of the film and within the cinematic apparatus itself, belying the ideological structure of both.

But in the boxing sequence in *City Lights* the entire world is revealed as a spectacle, a single object made up of the pieces of its own material history. The ideological structures and histories of boxing and the cinema here congeal into a totalized vision of Charlie's world. The mechanical movements on screen combine with the mechanical nature of film and the citational structure of the sequence. Boxing here becomes more than a simple metaphor for mechanization. It is a crucial part of the visual history of mechanization. Boxing is a "world view transformed into an objective force" (Debord 13). The boxing sequence in *City Lights* is rife with cinematic and cultural history, but it is crucially a history become spectacle.

After Charlie has been carried insensate from the ring and placed on the table in the locker room into his temporary grave, one of his gloves "comes to life"—falling (jumping?) from its hook above his head—and knocks him back out. It's impossible not to see in this disembodied action a direct reference to the glove in *The Champion*. In *City Lights*, we see nothing go into the glove that might explain the weight it would need to knock him out, but we had seen Charlie hide a horseshoe in his glove in *The Champion*. According to my reading above of that earlier film, the trick of the horseshoe is that it has been conjured out of the ether; it is both there and not there. It was the great equalizer that allowed Charlie to defeat a much larger and more capable boxer and avoid being chewed up and spit out unconscious by the mechanisms of serial unemployment. But here it returns, seemingly of its own will, to pay Charlie back. Charlie is defeated in the boxing ring by the ring's own material structures. Amidst the mechanistic movements and citations, the material history of boxing and cinema return as briefly liberating but ultimately destructive presences. The totalizing spectacle of the match subsumes him. That the sequence draws to a close with his old glove and horseshoe taking revenge only makes that history seem all the more present and powerful.

Between the time Chaplin had made *The Champion* in 1915 and *City Lights* in 1931, the spectacle of serial unemployment had become more than an oddity associated with a fringe figure of the urban environment. Seeing a man looking for work in 1931 registered very differently for audiences than it had in 1915. Even if the attire of Chaplin's tramp figure was already anachronistic by late 1920s and early 1930s, it was that very sense of being "out of sync" with the times that characterized much of the visual discourse of unemployment, increasingly so in the wake of the crash of 1929 and the subsequent Depression Era. Boxing films themselves were something of a cultural throwback, as well. Through the Simms Act of 1912 boxing films were for all intents and purposes made illegal in the United States. While they were shown privately and illicitly, the films and the sport had been confined to the cultural fringe. But this sequence in *City Lights* refers back to a time when those films were a highly visible and important part of the cultural imaginary.

In his later films, we see more elaborate examples of objects behaving badly. Famously, in *Modern Times* we witness Charlie's subjection to mechanization and objective structures of labor. After moving through a series of jobs and institutions (prison and a mental hospital), he returns to the factory that first sent him spiraling into serial unemployment. While working to repair one of the factory's large machines, he drops a tool box into its gears. The tools come flying back at Charlie and he falls defensively into a boxer's stance, fists in a guard position ready to fight. The moment is absurd not just because he squares off against a machine a hundred times his size. We've seen Charlie square off against hopelessly oversized opponents before (and

win). Rather the absurdity of the moment arises from what it means for him to fall into a boxer's pose. He instantly grants form and consciousness to a formless, unconscious thing (or group of things). In that moment, the flying tools figuratively become fists and the machine's collection of gears and unidentifiable bulk (whose purpose remains a mystery throughout the film) become imaginatively constituted as a single, thinking, acting thing. The humor comes from that moment of unexpected recognition.

It's a testament to the discursive power of boxing that in that single act, Charlie reifies the machine as a single, coherent body. The machine becomes a legible thing with a violent purpose. We also see it "digest" Charlie as he circulates through its internal "organs," and we witness his boss get stuck in one of the machine's "orifices." Charlie later feeds lunch to his boss, who cannot feed himself because he's still stuck in the "sphincter"; the logic of the digestive joke has found completion. This organistic depiction is the "other half" of the joke begun with the boxer's pose. That initial act of reification is followed by its *reductio ad absurdum*. The machine isn't just a body because it's a boxer, but it's also a body because it has an appetite, a digestive tract, and a sphincter.

In *The Champion* the idea of being consumed by the machine of capital was horrifying and unimaginable. Charlie saw unconscious bodies returning from the other side as inert, lifeless things. To be transformed into an exchangeable commodity could only be imagined as a state of insensibility. He disguised himself as a machine, but never actually became one himself. He avoided facing the reality of being consumed by adopting the mechanisms of consumption. But in this sequence in *Modern Times*, we see him dive headlong into the machine and attempt to display unflinchingly the absurdity of that "digestion." This is reification taken to an extreme, to the point where the process of reification is itself reified. The order of the universe has been turned on its head: humans are the objects of consumption while machines are the consumers.<sup>98</sup>

It's no small point that the spectacle of boxing is the jumping off point for this sequence. As I've explained in my prior chapters, boxing (and its surrounding discourse) was a primary site for describing the means and mechanisms of reification in early-twentieth-century American culture. If boxing is the first half of the equation for the commodification of labor, then Charlie's journey through the machine's intestines is the second half. Rather than resorting to tropes of unconsciousness and being knocked out as he had earlier done, this is how Chaplin imagines what it would be like to be conscious of one's own consumption.

The recursive quality of Charlie's motions in the ring and of his cinematic citations point forward to his later work in *Modern Times*, a film whose entire style, subject, and structure is built on the recursiveness and circularity of semi-employment. *City Lights*, like almost the entire body of Chaplin's work, follows Charlie through a series of short-term jobs. In contrast to Charles Musser's reading which conflates Chaplin's "tramp" figure with the actual historical figure of the tramp, my reading understands Chaplin's characters less as a literal reflection of the historical reality of tramps and read them instead as an embodiment of the condition of itinerant labor in a broader and far more pathological sense than Musser or any other Chaplin critic acknowledges. He is the imaginative projection of the state of much of the urban working class at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Musser himself briefly points out—and then promptly ignores—the tramp's serial employment closely resembles the labor practices of young working class men. The difference is subtle but crucial. The historical figure of the "tramp" to which Musser refers is homeless, with no possessions other than what he can carry, has no family life to speak of, travels widely, and is more closely associated with the rural environment.

In contrast, the itinerant laborer as found in the urban working class of early-twentieth-century America is less geographically mobile, semi-housed, and has some sort of family.

While tramping certainly has its own deep history and relevance in turn-of-the-century American culture, the situations Chaplin's characters find themselves in more accurately reflect the more familiar and widespread condition of America's urban working class—albeit as seen through a mirror darkly. The tragic-comic freedom of Chaplin's tramp is the ambivalent transformation of the traumatic condition of semi-employment, near homelessness, and indebtedness into something that seems potentially liberating. More specifically, this condition has become spectacle. Even the (often unrequited) romance plots that structure the many of his short films and features are translations of the uncertainty of employment, income, and housing into the uncertainty of love. The tramp's entire sense of the world is defined by its constant mutability and endless circularity.

In *His New Job* we see the tramp begin the film unemployed. By the end of the film, he has taken on the roles of the property man's assistant, the property man, the star of the film, and ultimately the director himself. In *Modern Times*, he is a factory worker, a shipyard worker, a street sweeper, a mechanic, a night watchman, and a cabaret singer. And looking at the sum total of Chaplin's film roles as the tramp as one large "meta-film," we see him occupying a wide array of jobs and social positions.

If we return to the boxing dummy found in *The Champion*, we see a machine tasked with keeping Charlie moving and circulating. It (violently) pulls him into the training yard and (just as violently) sits him down in a line of other men looking to put their bodies on the line for the sake of temporary and debilitating work. This boxing dummy is the heart of the spectacle we see reappear much later in *City Lights*, only instead of an isolated and defined object like a boxing dummy, the entire sequence is itself a giant machine, a spectacle whose inner workings and "gears" we see spinning and working as Charlie futilely puts his (dumb) body on the line for the sake of untenable employment. We in the audience have taken on the role of Charlie as the clerk in *The Pawnshop*, purposely peering into and dissecting a grand pocket watch, taking pleasure in seeing the machine torn apart and fall to pieces.

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<sup>1</sup> See Metz's *The Imaginary Signifier* and Gunning's "An Aesthetic of Astonishment."

<sup>2</sup> Sutpen's mixed-race daughter Clytie also watches at Judith's side, though at this point in the text she is named merely "the negro girl" (30). It's also worth noting Joyce Carol Oates' patrilineal attachment to the sport fulfills the fear that Ellen had for her daughter Judith: Oates avidly watches boxing in a detached way, without pleasure.

<sup>3</sup> The Ancient Greeks distinguished between *αἰσθητά* (perceived by the physical senses) and *νοητά* (perceived in thought). However, as the term came to be used in the late-eighteenth and -nineteenth centuries, "aesthetics" came to mean the precise opposite of its original meaning—moving away from its physiological meaning and into the realm of the intellect. I return to this distinction in greater depth in my chapter on Ernest Hemingway.

<sup>4</sup> This particular image is a visual convention of boxing photography and painting, one boxer standing victorious above his fallen opponent. See, for example, George Bellows' painting *The White Hope* which shows Jack Johnson standing over the fallen Jim Jeffries (a painting Faulkner may even have had in mind, particularly because of its overdetermined racial inflection), and the later well-known photograph of Muhammad Ali standing victorious over Sonny Liston in May of 1964.

<sup>5</sup> In my chapter on Jack London and Stephen Crane, I describe the ways in which London relies on a similar schematization between Jack Johnson (the black man who is made up purely of symbol and "cool" intellect) and Jim Jeffries (the white man who is all body, muscle, and action).

<sup>6</sup> Eagleton points out that Alexander Baumgarten, in his seminal *Aesthetica* of 1750, uses the word "confusion" in a double sense, both as an indication of the pre-rational state of aesthetic experience and as a sense of a "fusion" that links together the opposing poles of aesthetics (the real and the rational) (15).

<sup>7</sup> As my chapter on Ernest Hemingway will show, this particular gender division proves troublesome in Hemingway's treatment of boxing. Because it is such a physical and painful sport, his boxers are frequently feminized. As a result, he turns to bullfighting in order to rationalize, aestheticize, and *masculinize* violence and the experience of pain (where the figure of the bull, as a stand-in for the boxer, bears the brunt of the violence).

<sup>8</sup> Ralph Ellison's opening chapter to *Invisible Man* recasts this in racial and gender terms, just as Jack London's "The Mexican" recasts it in national, political, and ethnic terms.

<sup>9</sup> "Actuality" films ("actualités" in French) were so named for their depiction of short scenes taken from everyday life. The Lumière brothers are the genre's best remembered practitioners with shorts such as "La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon" (1895), "l'Arroseur arrosé" (1895), and "l'Arrivée d'un train en gare de la Ciotat" (1895).

<sup>10</sup> Part and parcel of this teleological approach is to refer to the period either as the "primitive" or "pre-narrative" era of cinema.

<sup>11</sup> Though I use the word "published," *Animal Locomotion* was presented to subscribers who paid \$100 for a collection of 100 printed plates (of a total of 781 in the entire series), and subscribers were asked to pay separately for plates beyond the initial 100. Thus, the work was only produced piecemeal initially and was not "published" in the proper sense for many decades. This was meant to ensure Muybridge's work would pay for itself and return his benefactors' initial investment of \$50,000. Needless to say, he fell short of the 500 subscribers he needed to repay his guarantors' money.

<sup>12</sup> See Anita Ventura Mozley's introduction to the 1979 Dover Edition of *Animal Locomotion* for a more thorough treatment of Muybridge and Stanford's joint projects.

<sup>13</sup> The gap in time between the second photo in 1873 and the third in 1877 not only allowed for a further refinement of the necessary technology, but it also allowed Muybridge time to recover from the tumult surrounding his murder trial (having murdered his wife's lover and later acquitted on a plea of insanity). He spent some of these intervening years in South America where he returned briefly to more conventional photography depicting local landscapes and native peoples.

<sup>14</sup> It's also worth noting here, too, that the experience of the uncanny resulting from witnessing new recording technologies (photography, telephony, sound recording, etc.) was a commonly documented phenomenon and one that led to a number of mystical associations with these technologies (and persists today in video and computing technologies).

<sup>15</sup> Fellow chronophotographer Etienne Jules Marey adopted a much more apologetic stance for the "strangeness" of his and Muybridge's photographs: "Is it not that the ugly is only the unknown, and that the truth seen for the first time offends the eye?" (*Movement* 183, quoted in Burch 11).

<sup>16</sup> I should also note here that many of the models throughout the collection (both men and women) wear only a simple fez-like skullcap. The purpose of this hat seems to be an aid to marking the position of the head on the printed plates. The hat itself is dark-colored with a small, light-colored button at the top. Visually it adds a greater sense of geometry (cylindrical) in contrast to the more elusive-to-photograph dark hair (bald and balding men never wear the cap, nor do light-haired women). Overall, however, the use of the cap seems somewhat arbitrary and



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incidental. Needless to say, the “farmer” in plate 385 wears this cap, but its appearance adds nothing to his being labeled a “farmer” and adds much to his appearing in the work as just another model in motion (i.e., transparent subject under scrutiny).

<sup>17</sup> Muybridge draws a loose distinction between “mechanics” and “laborers.” According to him, “mechanics are experts in their particular trades, and the laborers are accustomed to the work in which they are represented as being engaged” (1588). We could equate this distinction to that between *skilled* laborers and *free* laborers. A more in-depth discussion of this distinction will follow later in this study since it carries some significance within boxing culture (particularly in the nineteenth century).

<sup>18</sup> Again, to remind us where this argument is leading, nineteenth century boxers were almost always identified by and known for their “day job.” These, of course, were always working class, pseudo-artisan titles like “carpenter,” “butcher,” “tavern keeper,” etc. (Gorn 45).

<sup>19</sup> These last two (“Winchester Arms Factory at Noon Time” and “Columbia Bicycle Shop”) directly adapt the Lumières’ “La Sortie de l’usine” into two different (American) factory contexts.

<sup>20</sup> The word “cinematography” could variously translate into English as “motion *recording*” or “motion *writing*” since the Greek root is ambiguous in this distinction. The central concern of early cinematic practice is precisely this ambiguity between technology’s ability to record reality “as it truly is” and to recreate reality to the filmmaker’s own specifications.

<sup>21</sup> The ubiquitous question of racial identification in representations of boxing only further troubles the place of this fetish structure. Racial identification, too, comes to play a crucial role in working through this problem, a problem which Muybridge will also attempt to elide (discussed below).

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Carolyn Porter’s *Seeing and Being*. Following a Marxian line of thought, Porter argues for a particular brand of alienation in American fiction as expressed in the relationship between narrators and the action they describe. Her move toward rethinking the Russian formalists in this regard seems well placed; the novel as a form rising out of capitalist culture has always had to confront this central (and likely *defining*) issue of what Dudley calls the “problem of the artist as both insider and outsider.”

<sup>23</sup> In adding to the psychoanalytically inflected term “fetishization” the Marxian term “alienation,” I also shift slightly the nature of the anxiety being described. As I hope to make clear throughout my study, this particular version of masculinity builds on both gender and class difference (fetishism and alienation, respectively). I mean to point out the ambivalence and anxiety embedded in the supposedly “unmarked” and “unadorned” category manifested in these portrayals of male athleticism; this will similarly carry over into my later more in-depth discussions of the formal interests and effects of realism generally.

<sup>24</sup> That boxing was a frequent subject for authors such as Jack London to test their journalistic acumen strikes me as far more than coincidental, and that early American filmmakers such as Thomas Edison chose boxing as a frequent (and immensely popular) subject only iterates the importance of boxing in developing this sense of objectivity, masculinity, and formlessness.

<sup>25</sup> Critics such as Dudley, who talk about boxing as distinct from other sports of the time, make much of the sport’s intensely rule-bound structure, its physical bounded-ness, and others of its traditions and customs. From this perspective, boxing fits well into such a rigidly structured and planned technological apparatus.

<sup>26</sup> I also don’t want to overdetermine the relationship between Muybridge’s work and early film since many of his formal/technical choices don’t become embedded in cinematic discourse (for example, his use of a “foreshortened” angle to supplement his “lateral” photos).

<sup>27</sup> The difference between what I’m calling “context” and “narrative” could also be understood as the same difference that exists between “reality” and “realism.” Regardless of terminology, Muybridge’s studies of athletes in motion attempt to abstract men from both (similar to Marxian “reification”). That “reality,” “realism,” and “reification” all so closely resemble one another etymologically and semantically and are often confused—even among the most rigorous theorists, artists, and critics—is part of my reason for choosing differently inflected terms (“context,” “narrative,” and “abstraction”).

<sup>28</sup> Women do, however, perform athletic activities for the camera. These include various views of walking and running as well as a handful of series devoted to lawn tennis.

<sup>29</sup> I’m being somewhat disingenuous in this statement about the “waning” of boxing’s popularity since boxing has *always* thought of itself as in decline and on the verge of total extinction. Ernest Hemingway’s *Death in the Afternoon* obliquely borrows much from his interest in the sport in his descriptions of bullfighting; fundamental to his *afición* for bullfighting is his understanding that it, too, is in a perpetual state of decline and corruption.

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<sup>30</sup> In his 1975 documentary, *Eadweard Muybridge, Zoopraxographer*, filmmaker Thom Andersen identifies Muybridge's "model 22" as Ben Bailey.

<sup>31</sup> A common misconception (then as now) about the introduction of the Queensberry rules is that they "civilized" the sport by making it safer. Because gloves prevent hand injuries (which were commonplace in the bare-knuckle era), they dramatically *increased* the force with which boxers could hit an opponent. As a direct result, the incidence of permanent head injuries and ring deaths rose drastically with the adoption of the Queensberry rules.

<sup>32</sup> Muybridge's studies of animals (and of horses in particular) built on long-standing and widespread spectatorship. Suffice it to say, Muybridge's choice of title for his work, *Animal Locomotion*, already implies the underlying Darwinian principles meant to bind these studies (of humans and "other" animals) together.

<sup>33</sup> The other exception would, of course, be the Classical Olympic-style athletes who would have performed in the nude (hammer throw, running, jumping, discus, etc.), but whose context only could be justified when understood to be subjects of artistic study and practice—i.e., made familiar by way of prevalent and abundant Neo-Classical works of household art. Though the modern Olympic games began in the 1890s, they were performed by fully clothed athletes.

<sup>34</sup> Rather than devote too much time to making a case for the boxing world's old and consistent claim that it is both a "science" and an "art," I here will only refer the reader to some of the classics in the field like Pierce Egan's *Boxiana* and Patrick Timony's *The American Fistiana* for a sense for just how deep-rooted and by-now-idiomatic these two words are in the sport.

<sup>35</sup> Clifford Geertz, in his essay "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," calls this level of spectator investment, "deep play," a term borrowed from Jeremy Bentham. The more money one has at stake in the fight, the more meaning it carries.

<sup>36</sup> The form of viewership I'm here describing can perhaps best be understood in terms of its contemporary analogue: live television. While this form of "vested" viewership doesn't disappear entirely from film, it is important to note that one of the technologies responsible for overcoming the 1912 legislation outlawing the interstate distribution of fight films was television.

<sup>37</sup> Outside of combative athletics (fencing, boxing, and wrestling) only in his "leapfrog" series (plates 166-169) do males appear together, and in all but one series (plate 166) the two subjects are called "boys," a move which shifts—if only slightly—the idea of a rigorous study of men appearing together to a study of not-quite-men. The not-so-latent sexual content of the leapfrog series is only somewhat alleviated by the subjects' being labeled "boys" rather than "men," and in the single plate (166) where they aren't labeled "boys," the title says somewhat ambiguously: "Jumping over a man's back (leapfrog)." The subject of the action (the jumper) remains undefined as either boy or man and his adolescent appearance does nothing to alleviate the ambiguity. However, my goal here is not to reveal the "repressed" sexual content of the boxing series (seeing men fighting naked), but rather to better understand the formal attributes and nature of the type of (a)fetishization Muybridge enacts. The leapfrog series insist upon (and the boxing series hammer home) a vision of an unencumbered male subject under scrutiny, a masculinity seemingly so obvious that it cannot be questioned.

<sup>38</sup> Countless books, articles, films, and other pieces have been devoted to this particular fight and its importance in American cultural history. To name a few: Al-Tony Gilmore's *Bad Nigger*, Geoffrey C. Ward's *Unforgivable Blackness*, and Randy Roberts' *Papa Jack*. I defer to those works for a more thorough discussion of Jack Johnson's biography and of the Johnson – Jeffries fight's immediate political, social, and cultural impact.

<sup>39</sup> This phrase is strongly echoed in Ernest Hemingway's later account of the Spanish bullfights. In his account, Hemingway claims that he "was trying to write then and [he] found the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing truly what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action." And that "the only place where you could see life and death, i.e. violent death now that the wars were over, was in the bull ring" (*Death in the Afternoon 2*). See my following chapter for a more in-depth discussion of this passage and of the relevance of boxing to Hemingway's account of bullfighting.

<sup>40</sup> For more in-depth discussions of London's treatment of race and racial memory, see Jeanne Campbell Reesman's *Jack London's Racial Lives*, Colleen Lye's *America's Asia*, and Patrick Sharp's "The Great White 'Race Adventure': Jack London and the Yellow Peril."

<sup>41</sup> In staking these historico-biological claims, London is tapping into already familiar tropes of apologist prize-fight journalism extending back through the nineteenth century. Elliott J. Gorn discusses this journalistic convention at length in his *The Manly Art*.

<sup>42</sup> British boxing histories speak often of "the Fancy," a loose conglomeration of upper and lower class spectators from different neighborhoods, countries, and other affiliations.

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<sup>43</sup> In his *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism*, Walter Benn Michaels identifies in this aesthetic conflict a reflection of major economic shifts, and in *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration*, Michael Fried points to a heightened anxiety over the relationship between artist and artwork.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States* marks a similar divide in all twentieth-century conceptions of race and ethnicity, wherein "there is a continuous temptation to think of race as an *essence*, as something fixed, concrete and objective . . . And there is also an opposite temptation: to see it as a mere illusion, which an ideal social order would eliminate." Their solution to this impasse is to reconceive of "race" as "an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (68).

<sup>45</sup> Stephen Best has noted a similar operation at work in the period's cinematic works which confine black subjects to historically disconnected acts marked by repetition and fetishization.

<sup>46</sup> London's short story "The Mexican" recapitulates this exact situation, but the role of the lone black boxer delivering a "monologue" to the white audience has been transformed into a lone Mexican.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Keith Gandal's tellingly titled *The Virtues of the Vicious: Jacob Riis, Stephen Crane, and the Spectacle of the Slum*.

<sup>48</sup> This structure of violence closely resembles Derrida's conception of "différance," according to which signifiers perpetually *defer* signification through an endless chain of *differential* referents.

<sup>49</sup> Kasia Boddy, in her thorough study of the sport *Boxing: A Cultural History*, points to the significance of boxing slang ("flash") to the sport's fans and practitioners. "Flash," similar to Hemingway's sense of bull fighting *aficion*, permeates boxing culture prior to the twentieth century.

<sup>50</sup> Many critics associate these character types with Crane's larger "Impressionist" tendencies. See, for example, Rodney Rogers' "Stephen Crane and Impressionism," Bert Bender's "Hanging Stephen Crane in the Impressionist Museum," James Nagel's "Stephen Crane and the Narrative Methods of Impressionism," Allan Gardner Smith's "Stephen Crane, Impressionism and William James," as well as Nagel's "Crane Is a Literary Impressionist."

<sup>51</sup> While European fascism would be the obvious extension of London's thinking, it would be a mistake to assume that such thinking only has European analogs. The United States had its own share of popular discourse linking cultural decadence to the integration and acculturation of racial and ethnic others. See, for example, Theodore Lothrop Stoddard's widely read *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*. American Modernists such as Pound, Hemingway, and Eliot each in his own way expressed very similar beliefs, linking race to the fall of language and its ability to signify as it once had. Pound in particular cultivated and crafted such thinking into an elaborate literary and cultural theory of anti-Semitism.

<sup>52</sup> Robert W. Trogon, for example, refers to *Death in the Afternoon* as "Hemingway's first and most complete essay on art and his first public articulation of his opinions on writers and writing" (21). Michael Thurston goes further and finds in the work "a portrait of the artist as sexually and stylistically complex, as torn between the search for authoritative truth and the acknowledgement of that truth's locus in performance."

<sup>53</sup> Jack London, for example, wrote news coverage for some of the most important world championship boxing matches in the early-twentieth century, and in James Joyce's *Ulysses* boxing appears in a section imitating the prose style of sports journalism.

<sup>54</sup> See Joseph Frank's essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" for a more in-depth discussion of the relationship between Modernist literature and the plastic arts. While I disagree with Frank's conclusion that this formal resemblance lends an "ahistorical" slant to Modernist literature, his claims about the prevalence of the plastic arts in Modernist poetry and prose are useful.

<sup>55</sup> Erich Auerbach identifies a similar split in realist literature. His study of the history of realism in *Mimesis* traces the division between psychological realism and the literature of "everyday reality" back to ancient roots. He claims that only in nineteenth century do these two Western traditions fully combine "in keeping with the constantly changing and expanding reality of modern life" (554). My study, however, looks at how that combination of approaches (or "styles," as Auerbach calls them) disintegrates over the course of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

<sup>56</sup> Most famously, American painters Thomas Eakins and George Bellows. Later, vorticist painter-poet Wyndham Lewis turns to boxing as a subject in his painting *Boxing at Juan-le-Pins*. Perhaps not coincidentally, Lewis was first introduced to Hemingway while Hemingway was giving a boxing lesson to Ezra Pound.

<sup>57</sup> This is also a convention of fight stories more generally. The vast majority of fight stories are told from the perspective of someone who is not the boxer, usually a trainer, promoter, or manager. The uneasiness that Hemingway demonstrates for representing the boxer too directly is not unique to Hemingway; but he, better than any other author, gives the clearest sense for why that is.

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<sup>58</sup> In his study of American detective fiction, *Moderating Masculinities: Fantasies of Gender and Violence in the American Crime Novel*, Greg Forter argues that the hardboiled detective genre returns obsessively to (male) masochistic experience. Part and parcel of this experience is the contiguous alignment of passivity, femininity, and death. That Ad would be characterized both as dead and as feminized (“his eyes were slits”) highlights the assumed gendered-ness of the masochistic experience. Of more contemporary interest to Hemingway’s work, though, is this situation’s resemblance to slapstick routines of the 1910s and 1920s, which often incorporated boxing and boxers into their comic depiction of violence. My later chapter on slapstick films describes the relevance of this association in greater depth.

<sup>59</sup> In addition, Bridgman—like many other Hemingway critics—mistakes “silence” for a literal speechlessness, a mistake I discuss in greater depth below.

<sup>60</sup> In “The Killers,” the two gangsters are self-conscious enough of their appearance and language that the story alludes constantly to their staginess. Al “was like a photographer arranging for a group picture” (283), Max “looked in the mirror all the time he was talking” (282), George periodically spies tableaux-like performances through the kitchen window, and as the two men leave “they [look] like a vaudeville team” (285).

<sup>61</sup> The use of the possessive adjective “your” in the phrase doesn’t necessarily refer to the “Old Lady’s” boxer, but is instead part of the casually demonstrative language used by the narrator in *Death in the Afternoon*. It’s a usage similar to a tour guide saying “And over here we have your x, and over there your y.” However, also playing into the appearance of the word “your” is the narrator’s (and Hemingway’s) continued and persistent attempt to distance himself from the world of boxing; thus, not “his” or “our,” but “your” boxer.

<sup>62</sup> Though seldom mentioned in Hemingway criticism, Hemingway resembled many other Modernist authors and artists in his anthropological interests. The festival of San Fermin was not merely a market festival (where cattle were traded), but has long-standing ties to the martyrdom of San Fermin and to pre-Christian practices, as well (both of which drew from martyrdom and sacrificial rites). In particular, the ancient Mediterranean practice of Mithraism may have been a source for Hemingway (via James Frazer) for addressing the social function of bull sacrifice. According to Frazer, the bull was a sacrificial manifestation of a Mithraic corn-spirit associated with the harvest. On certain Mithraic monuments, “the tail of the bull ends in three stalks of corn, and in one of them cornstalks instead of blood are seen issuing from the wound inflicted by the knife” (10). Seen in this light, Jake and Bill’s conversation about the steers parodies the anthropological function of bull sacrifice while simultaneously allegorizing their treatment of Cohn. Interestingly, bull fighting may have been introduced to Spain via the Romans as a “warm up” for gladiatorial sport (including Roman-style boxing).

<sup>63</sup> Many have pointed out the inherent paradox in Freud’s formulation in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and “The Economic Problem in Masochism.” At once, Freud claims that the death instinct is primary and is translated outwardly into sadism. However, in order to resolve the problem of masochism, he must also posit a primary position for sadism that is “inverted” into masochistic pleasure.

<sup>64</sup> It may be, also, that the “economic problem” posed by Cohn is more than a psychic one. His being a Jew forms a central part of the others’ justification for their treatment of him. More than once, Jake and his group refer to the Jews as interest-hungry bankers, even when “they’re not really Jews. [They] just call them Jews. They’re Scotsmen” (234). I don’t think it’d be a stretch to see the parallel between their disgust at Cohn’s bottomless masochism and the bottomless greed of the “Jews” in this novel. Pound expresses a similarly anti-Semitic sentiment in his *Cantos*; there, “usury” is portrayed as a bottomless pit plaguing civilization. Through Cohn, Freud’s “economic problem” becomes truly economic in nature.

<sup>65</sup> It wouldn’t be a stretch to say that the “mystery” of the experience of pain and unpleasure drove Freud more and more in his later years. So much so, that his later psychic model moves away from the structural ego-superego-id formulation into a more dialectical formulation of the relation between Eros (the life drive) and Thanatos (the death drive).

<sup>66</sup> As Elaine Scarry notes, the sensation of pain is also “exceptional in the whole fabric of psychic, somatic, and perceptual states for being the only one that has no object” (*The Body in Pain* 161). I would argue that in the slipperiness of the word “aesthetics” as both a bodily sense and an abstract philosophy of representation we begin to account for what Scarry sees as the objectless-ness of the experience of pain.

<sup>67</sup> See Beatriz Penas Ibáñez’ “‘Very Sad but Very Fine’: *Death in the Afternoon*’s Imagist Interpretation of the Bullfight-Text” for a more in-depth discussion of Hemingway’s affinities with Modernist abstract minimalism.

<sup>68</sup> See my earlier chapter on photographic transparency in Muybridge for a deeper study of this effect and the role of context in displays of male athleticism on film.

<sup>69</sup> Similarly, boxing has far more often found itself the subject of the visual arts than of the literary arts. I would contend that it is because of the proliferation of a Hemingway-like anxiety that this is the case. Because a medium

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like film is from its beginning met with the contradictory impulses to both (subjectively) narrate and (objectively) mediate, boxing is early on a very common and important cinematic subject.

<sup>70</sup> Of course, as my chapter on Muybridge explains, “fictionality” and “context” go hand-in-hand.

<sup>71</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin argues in his essay “Epic and Novel” that the novel as a form “comes into contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present” (27). Hence, according to Bakhtin, uncertainty is a foundational trait of the novel. Brought to bear on Hemingway’s work, the (ethnic, cultural, national, gendered) uncertainties presented by boxing run counter to Jake’s journalistic aims.

<sup>72</sup> The close resemblance of the absurdity of this scene closely resembles the scene from “The Battler” where Bugs explains to Nick that he often has to knock Ad out in order to stop his outbursts. As with that short story, this sequence from *The Sun Also Rises* draws upon conventions of slapstick violence, marking not only the situation as “absurd” but even more marking the boxers Ad and Cohn themselves as “absurd.”

<sup>73</sup> In Stephen Portch’s revealingly titled *Literature’s Silent Language*, we see a clear example of the most common reading of Hemingway’s style: “Hemingway uses the unspoken to suggest all the voices and kinds of language operating at every level of the human psyche” (112). In Robert O. Stephens’ “Language Magic and Reality in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*,” we see an extreme example of the opposite critical tendency. According to Stephens, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* “reality is imagined as residing within the word rather than beyond it” (162). Robert Jordan is a “prophet whose words are self-contained in reality” (164).

Some critics come close to pointing out the dialectical quality I’m attempting to identify in Hemingway’s prose style. For example, Louise K. Barnett argues that Hemingway employs a “dialectic of discourse” in *The Sun Also Rises* through which “the felt necessity of imposing discipline on speech wars with the desire to express and communicate” (169). Barnett argues that Hemingway’s language is “drained of societal coloration or hollowed out so that a denotative meaning remains while ordinary connotations are lost” (169). While Barnett attempts to define a “dialectic” at work in Hemingway’s prose style, she falls prey to the impulse to categorize Hemingway’s language as singularly inert in order to claim that Hemingway’s ultimate goal is the dissociation of language from meaning. Elsewhere, Zoe Trodd attempts to identify in Hemingway a “multi-focal aesthetic” that relies on cinematic tropes of editing and multi-perspectivalism. However, she falls short of making clear the dialectical nature of these cinematic editing techniques. Nearly always there exists in Hemingway critics the impulse to conclude that Hemingway is *either* interested in a simple and direct language *or* interested in a transcendently inarticulable language.

<sup>74</sup> See Kenneth G. Johnston for a fuller discussion of the implications of this change in title.

<sup>75</sup> This provides us with yet another way of reading the “slapstick” sequences described earlier in “The Battler” and *The Sun Also Rises*.

<sup>76</sup> Female spectators of violence (boxing, bullfighting, etc.) are a common subject in Hemingway. I would argue that this offers further evidence of the (sexist) irony at work in these moments. For example, the interlocutor of *Death in the Afternoon* is an old woman (doubly ironic because she is both old and female). The same trope appears in other pulp and hardboiled fiction, and also appears in Jack London’s earlier boxing works. See also Dan Streible’s chapter “*The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight: Women at the Veriscope, 1897*” from his *Fight Pictures* for an historical discussion of female viewership at boxing matches and boxing films.

<sup>77</sup> I’m also ignoring for the time being the fact that the terms for Brett’s post-coital state are in exclusively male terms. The student-teacher relationship is understood as a solely masculine enterprise similar to the pre-“scientia sexualis” mode of male sexual apprenticeship described by Michel Foucault in his *The History of Sexuality*.

<sup>78</sup> I’ve adapted this phrase from one of Bruce Lee’s famous maxims about martial arts practice. For Bruce Lee, the ideal martial arts practice is not confined by the idiosyncrasies and ideologies of a particular style.

<sup>79</sup> For Bakhtin, the Socratic dialogues are the source and model for all subsequent novelistic discourse (*The Dialogic Imagination* 24).

<sup>80</sup> Both Carolyn Porter and John Dudley argue that the defining characteristic of the American novel is its narrators’ negotiation between *doing* and *watching*; however, as my argument shows, it may be more correct to point to different methods of watching. Sadomasochism, from Hemingway’s vantage, provides an aesthetic model to account for multiple spectatorial positions.

<sup>81</sup> As I hope my argument has made clear at this point, Cohn operates in the novel as Jake’s (and Hemingway’s and the reader’s) stylistic foil.

<sup>82</sup> Originally published in *Toronto Star Weekly*, October 20, 1923.

<sup>83</sup> Further, I would argue that is this same perceived difficulty that led boxing to become so thoroughly a *cinematic* rather than *literary* subject. The perception of the cinematic apparatus as inherently demonstrative obviates (so the assumption goes) the need to develop an added discursive layer with which to describe its subject. The overriding fantasy of the cinema is that it merely *shows* without the mediation of expertise.

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<sup>84</sup> See, for example, Garrett Stewart's "Modern Hard Times: Chaplin and the Cinema of Self-Reflection" and Mark Winokur's "*Modern Times* and the Comedy of Transformation."

<sup>85</sup> This includes, of course, the frequent uses of stage allusions and meta-filmic winks and nods. Film comedy has always been self-referential and often draws upon tropes of performances within performances for its humor. Not only does this meta-filmic slipperiness facilitate the sort of ideological revelations necessary to the humor of slapstick generally, but Chaplin in particular found in it something crucial to his entire project. In his later films like *The Great Dictator* and *Limelight*, meta-theatricality dominated his other thematic interests and structures.

<sup>86</sup> Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle took the opposite approach of accentuating his too-large size to comic effect. Later, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy would epitomize the bodily oppositions of slapstick by embodying both poles simultaneously.

<sup>87</sup> One of his films for Mutual, *Behind the Screen*, even uses the names "David" and "Goliath" to refer to Charlie and his boss.

<sup>88</sup> Walter Kerr defines Sennett's work by its various "insensitivities." He describes his films as directionless in their structure and politics: "the form is iconoclastic to the bone, its gestures are as gratuitous as they are extravagant, the conduct of all involved is utterly heartless" (63).

<sup>89</sup> In contrast to most critics, I don't see this inconsistency as a sign of any deficiency in Sennett as a filmmaker or in Arbuckle as an actor. On the contrary, there's an admirable liberatory impulse at work in the chaos of Sennett's work.

<sup>90</sup> Note, too, that even the melodramatic names of the characters (Spike Dugan and Bob Uppercut) closely resemble the familiar nicknames of many boxers. Like melodrama, boxing relies on a language of overdetermined names that reduplicate the features, strengths, and personalities of fighters.

<sup>91</sup> This, of course, is a key feature of what Tom Gunning calls the "Cinema of Attractions" which relies on audiences' simultaneous belief and willing disbelief.

<sup>92</sup> The sexual economy informing Chaplin's logic grows to dominate many of his films, so much so that his later feature-length films could as easily be described as "romantic comedies" as "slapstick films." Women, as much as violence, grow to embody the subversive energies that Chaplin's characters unleash on their environment. For every ideological structure that Chaplin takes critical aim at, sexual and gender politics frequently simply step in and replace whatever structure existed before. As early as his film *The Champion*, we see how his romantic involvement with the trainer's daughter fills in the gaps left behind by the dismantled structures of the boxing ring and unemployment.

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, Charles Maland's "The Strange Case of *Monsieur Verdoux*," D. William Davis' "A Tale of Two Movies," and Constance Kuriyama's "Chaplin's Impure Comedy."

<sup>94</sup> A common trope in his films finds his character falling in love with statues and dummies. Objects are not only given human qualities, but they're given human relationships, as well.

<sup>95</sup> Charlie repeats this same trick in other films. For example, in *The Circus* Charlie hides from the police by disguising himself as an animatronic figure.

<sup>96</sup> Whether or not this was a direct citation is not terribly relevant to my argument, nor is there any existing evidence that Chaplin or his audiences would have been familiar with Muybridge's work from thirty years earlier. Chaplin was, however, certainly familiar with the formal conventions of boxing films which took their cues directly from Muybridge's early proto-cinematic work.

<sup>97</sup> Chaplin had earlier explored the relationship between mortality, war, and insensibility in *Shoulder Arms*. Charlie captures a group of German soldiers, sneaks behind enemy lines, and captures the Kaiser only to be woken from a dream at the end of the film where he is still in boot camp waiting to be sent off to war.

<sup>98</sup> Christian Hite reads this visual metaphor as a psychoanalytically inflected allegory for the logic of consumption in the Depression Era. In contrast, I'm attempting to move away from the tendency to allegorize this sequence and see it instead as an attempt on Chaplin's to capture reification itself in the literal—and, consequently, absurd—act of reifying.

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