# 1NC

TW: Mentions of HIV, violence against queer people, probably some yelling, graphic descriptions of gay sex, pretty much everything tbh.

## 1NC

### Anger

#### How can you see that which is nothing? The lack of consistent phenotypes creates queerness as a conceptual invisibility. The queer exists in the abstract as a void of nothingness and only truly exists during a process of collision between both difference and violence.

**Stanley ’11**, *Near Life, queer death: Ontological capture and overkill,* (<https://queerhistory.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/near-life-queer-death-eric-stanley.pdf>) //GrouchoMarxist

Dirty faggot!” Or simply, “Look, a Gay!” These words launch a bottle from a passing car window, the target my awaiting body. In other moments they articulate the sterilizing glares and violent fantasies that desire, and threaten to enact, my corporal undoing. Besieged, I feel in the fleshiness of the everyday like a kind of near life or a death-in-waiting. Catastrophically, this imminent threat constitutes for the queer that which is the sign of vitality itself. What then becomes of the possibility of queer life, if queerness is produced always and only through the negativity of forced death and at the threshold of obliteration? Or as Achille Mbembe has provocatively asked, in the making of a kind of corporality that is constituted in the social as empty of meaning beyond the anonymity of bone, “But what does it mean to do violence to what is nothing?”1 In another time and place, “ ‘Dirty nigger!’ Or simply, ‘Look, a Negro!’ ” (“Sale nègre! ou simplement: Tiens, un nègre!”) opened Frantz Fanon’s chapter 5 of Black Skin, White Masks, “The Lived Experience of the Black” (“L’expérience vécue du Noir”), infamously mistranslated as “The Fact of Blackness.”2 I start with “Dirty faggot!” against a logic of Near Life, Queer Death Overkill and Ontological Capture Eric Stanley 2 Stanley · Near Life, Queer Death !HUJA s Abu Zubaydah and the Caterpillar flattened substitution and toward a political commitment to non-mimetic friction. After all, the racialized phenomenology of blackness under colonization that Fanon illustrates may be productive to read against and with a continuum of antiqueer violence in the United States. The scopic and the work of the visual must figure with such a reading of race, gender, and sexuality. It is argued, and rightfully so, that the instability of queerness obscures it from the epidermalization that anchors (most) bodies of color in the fields of the visual. When thinking about the difference between anti-Semitism and racism, which for Fanon was a question of the visuality of oppression, he similarly suggests, “the Jew can be unknown in his Jewishness.”3 Here it may be useful to reread Fanon through an understanding of passing and the visual that reminds us that Jews can sometimes not be unknown in their Jewishness. Similarly I ask why antiqueer violence, more often than not, is correctly levied against queers. In other words, the productive discourse that wishes to suggest that queer bodies are no different might miss moments of signification where queer bodies do in fact signify differently. This is not to suggest that there is an always locatable, transhistorical queer body, but the fiercely flexible semiotics of queerness might help us build a way of knowing antiqueer violence that can provisionally withstand the weight of generality. 4 Indeed, not all who might identify under the name queer experience the same relationship to violence. For sure, the overwhelming numbers of trans/queer people who are murdered in the United States are of color. 5 Similarly, trans/gender nonconforming people, people living with HIV/ AIDS and/or other ability issues, undocumented and imprisoned trans/ queer people, sex workers, and working-class queers, among others, experience a disproportionate amount of structural violence. In turn, this structural violence more often than not predisposes them to a greater amount of interpersonal violence. Yet many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) folks in the United States who have access to normative power may in their daily lives know very little about either structural or personal violence. The long history and magnified present of gay assimilation illustrates these varying degrees of possibility and power available to some at the expense of others. In contrast, I am marking queer as the horizon where identity crumbles and vitality is worked otherwise. To this end, queer might be a productive placeholder to name a nonidentity where force is made to live. This is not to suggest that the negativity of queer and methodologies of violence define the end of queer worlding or that the parameters of opposition are sedimented as such. 6 On the contrary, the very fact that queers do endure is evidence, as Fred Moten has beautifully argued about the history of blackness in relation to slavery, that “objects can and do resist.”7 I start here, in reference to Fanon’s text, because he continues to offer us among the most compelling analyses of structural abjection, (non)rec- Social Text 107 s Summer 2011 3 ognition, and psychic/corporal violence. “Look, a Negro!” violently freezes Fanon in a timeless place as a black object, overdetermined from without, as a signifier with no meaning of its own making. In a similar way, the “dirty faggot” of my opening places queerness in the anonymity of history and shocks it into the embodied practice of feeling queer in a particular place, body, and time. This meditation will attempt to understand how the queer approximates the cutting violence that marks the edges of subjectivity itself. Race and gender figure the contours of my thinking on the work of violence in the gathering up of queer remains. Here the force of violence that interests me is not introduced after the formation of something that might be called queer. I am using the term queer to precisely index the collision of difference and violence. In other words, queer is being summoned to labor as the moment when bodies, non-normative sexuality/genders, and force materialize the im/possibility of subjectivity. Against an identity that assumes a prior unity, queer disrupts this coherence and also might function as a collective of negativity, void of a subject but named as object, retroactively visible through the hope of a radical politics to come.

#### How can you cure that which is nothing? Discussions of HIV mark individual bodies as deviant where being gay is found in the blood this localizes queerness into the very collision that allows it to be targeted.

**Morris and Paasonen 14** [RISK AND UTOPIA A Dialogue on Pornography Paul Morris and Susanna Paasonen, GLQ, © 2014 by Duke University Press] J|L

Whether or not there’s something like a blood difference or a brain struc- ture difference for gayness, my life experience tells me that my difference isn’t curable, but is as deep—and as variable—as any other aspect of my identity. I don’t believe that there’s an essential monolithic gayness, an identity that is ready- made and suitable for monogamy or marriage. Gayness—queerness—is, among other things, an ineluctable organic process that requires the exploration among multiple gay contacts (both sexual and social) to determine the specific “facet” of one’s individual nature. In the public mind—the American public mind, perhaps—HIV is the great symbol for a blood presence that is identifiable as “gay.” Among my employ- ees, for example, when as young men each of them discussed with their parents the possibility that they were gay, the first and most emotional reaction on the part of the parents was a terror that being gay above all automatically meant that their child would seroconvert. So I use the metaphor of HIV: being gay is not in the genes, perhaps, but in the blood. And it remains a stigma and for many a terrible social experience—being gay or being poz. And the problem with assimilation into American society today is that it would require gay men to reduce themselves to the state of restrictiveness that heteronormative American society embraces. A gay man (a poz man) pretending for the comfort of others that he isn’t quite all that he really is—that, to me, is accepting a kind of madness. I react to that by saying that we are, all of us, diseased and can’t be assimilated into the mass neurosis of American life. While we are profoundly different, our difference is read by American society as a disease (damaged but curable through damaging “therapy”). I choose to define gayness as perhaps diseased and without doubt incurable, in our blood, and the result of our being wildly and specifically who we are. SP: This formulation reminds me of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s insistence on becoming as contagion rather than filiation: as a “multiplicity without the unity of an ancestor.”8 For them, the question is one of becoming rather than being. The issue here would be one of becoming gay, and queer, as a process where seropositive status links with resistance and viral contagion replaces hereditary production. In other words, forms of queer breeding do not reproduce the species but a sexual subculture based on alliance. The notion of queer kinship created through breeding and seeding involves a sexual and communal utopia that is detached from what Lee Edelman calls reproductive futurism: the promise of and commit- ment to a better future, as encapsulated in the figure of the Child.9 PM: No one understands who I am and what I’m about better than Lee Edelman. SP: Edelman has written on your films as “Foucauldian resistance to the aesthetic conformity and sexual conservatism embedded in the representational politics of the mainstream studios producing gay porn.”10 Rather than celebrating sero- conversion, he sees your work as embracing the material substances of bodies having sex and “immersing itself in celebrations of contact with cum.”11

#### How can we speak about that which is nothing? HIV is no longer just a disease but has mutated into an empty signifier where heteronormative society can inject it’s hatred into a linguistic form. Demanding the ballot as a symbolic mechanism in the fight against HIV triggers an affective response of fear to the gay communist druggie that justifies vilification and destruction.

**Rechner ’97**, *Discursive Infections: A critical theory of Virus,* (<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk3/ftp05/mq21139.pdf>) //GrouchoMarxist **[WE DO NOT ENDORSE GENDERED LANGUAGE]**

As AiDS spread from body to body through sex and drugs, an even more powerful discursive virus began making the rounds through strategic leaks to the media. It soon became common knowledge that AiDS was an African disease, a product of uncivilized sexuality and unsterilized health care that had been contracted to the equally 'dirty' populations of gays and hard-core addicts. Conservative American politicians and evangelists (what's the difference?) such as Jesse Helms, Norman Podhoretz, Pat Buchanan, and Jeny Faiwell took advantage of AIDS to formulate metaphors of social decay and "moral bankruptcy," transforming a disease that infects peoples of all races and sexualities without preference into a forum for bigotry, homophobia, and the fascist ideology of the Christian Right Wing (Sontag, 6 1). With the taming of syphilis and other venereal diseases in the antibiotic decade of the 1940's the public was left with a nostalgia image of the diseased ~~whore~~-the promiscuous and morally repugnant sexed body without a deadly disease to identify with (Gilman, 258). The emergence of AIDS, signified in the blotchy flesh of Kaposi's Sarcoma, capitalized on this empty sign, invading and inhabiting the pre-existing image of sexual disease with a new kind of self-righteous, moral vigilance. As Christopher C. Taylor points out in "AIDS and the Pathogenesis of Metaphor," the imaginary tracings of AIDS from the green monkey, to the African National, to the Haitian tourist, to Caribbean islands, to the gay American tourist, to urban America and IV hg users, into the blood supply and out to the white heterosexual innocent follows the pseudo-Darwinian, neo-capitalist fantasy of the great chain of being (Taylor, 58-9)-a metaphor that polarizes dong axis of race, class, and sexuality to protect the prized demographic consumer from having to share the blame. Almost immediately, discussions of how AIDS attacks the immune system took on the Cold War rhetoric of a high-tech military metaphor that echoed the language of pollution paranoia that surrounded the proposed STAR WARS defense satellite and was reflected on middle class television screens in the form of popular video games like Space invaders and Missile Command. AIDS attacks the body like an alien storm-the only defense is a moral purification that will fine-tune our bodies and minds to fight back against the embodiment of gay, communist, druggies that want to infect our children. Sontag quotes the foreign minister of Apartheid South Africa, "The terrorists are now coming to us with a weapon more terrible than Marxism: AIDS" (62). AIDS ripened at a historical moment obsessed with the viral manifestation of ideology: like a radioactive tracer inserted into the international body, AIDS illuminated the reactionary rhetoric of the far right, a rhetoric that had insidiously wormed its way into poplar consciousness to the point of naturalization. Like all viruses, the social discourse of AIDS resonated with an irony that signified a coming reversal, an interna1 infestation that exploded into uneducated and unprepared Caucasian, heterosexual populations. People began to talk about AIDS with an increased fear, refusing to mention the disease directly, preferring to use metaphors and metonyms like 'positive,' related conditions like 'pneumonia,' code words Like 'Slim,' or scientific jargon like 'retrovirus' to signify infection (Leap, 141-50). A paranoia emerged within the discourse of disease that signified a linguistic fear--a paranoia that the disease could be spread (and it could) simply through talking about it. William Leap analyzes the metonymic associations of the disease with other hostile acronymic compounds like iRS, FBI, LSD, PCB, etc. (140) that first invested GRID, then AIDS, with a cold, institutional logic that reflected the threatening power of bureaucratic agency. AIDS sparked a growing mistrust of institutions, leading to a proliferation of conspiracy theories that spread to the highest levels of government: 'Notions of conspiracy translate well into metaphors of implacable, insidious, infinitely patient viruses" (Sontag, 68)

#### How do you kill that which is nothing? The characterization of the queer as a state of nothingness localized onto specific bodies as a void of non-subjectivity demands a violence that not only destroys the individual body but also the concept of queerness as a whole.

**Stanley 2,** *Near Life, queer death: Ontological capture and overkill,* (<https://queerhistory.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/near-life-queer-death-eric-stanley.pdf>) //GrouchoMarxist

Overkill is a term used to indicate such excessive violence that it pushes a body beyond death. Overkill is often determined by the postmortem removal of body parts, as with the partial decapitation in the case of Lauryn Paige and the dissection of Rashawn Brazell. The temporality of violence, the biological time when the heart stops pushing and pulling blood, yet the killing is not finished, suggests the aim is not simply the end of a specific life, but the ending of all queer life. This is the time of queer death, when the utility of violence gives way to the pleasure in the other’s mortality. If queers, along with others, approximate nothing, then the task of ending, of killing, that which is nothing must go beyond normative times of life and death. In other words, if Lauryn was dead after the first few stab wounds to the throat, then what do the remaining fifty wounds signify? The legal theory that is offered to nullify the practice of overkill often functions under the name of the trans- or gay-panic defense. Both of these defense strategies argue that the murderer became so enraged after the “discovery” of either genitalia or someone’s sexuality they were forced to protect themselves from the threat of queerness. Estanislao Martinez of Fresno, California, used the trans-panic defense and received a four-year prison sentence after admittedly stabbing J. Robles, a Latina transwoman, at least twenty times with a pair of scissors. Importantly, this defense is often used, as in the cases of Robles and Paige, after the murderer has engaged in some kind of sex with the victim. The logic of the trans-panic defense as an explanation for overkill, in its gory semiotics, offers us a way of understanding queers as the nothing of Mbembe’s query. Overkill names the technologies necessary to do away with that which is already gone. Queers then are the specters of life whose threat is so unimaginable that one is “forced,” not simply to murder, but to push them backward out of time, out of History, and into that which comes before. 27 In thinking the overkill of Paige and Brazell, I return to Mbembe’s query, “But what does it mean to do violence to what is nothing?”28 This question in its elegant brutality repeats with each case I offer. By resituating this question in the positive, the “something” that is more often than not translated as the human is made to appear. Of interest here, the category of the human assumes generality, yet can only be activated through the 10 specificity of historical and politically located intersection. To this end, the human, the “something” of this query, within the context of the liberal democracy, names rights-bearing subjects, or those who can stand as subjects before the law. The human, then, makes the nothing not only possible but necessary. Following this logic, the work of death, of the death that is already nothing, not quite human, binds the categorical (mis)recognition of humanity. The human, then, resides in the space of life and under the domain of rights, whereas the queer inhabits the place of compromised personhood and the zone of death. As perpetual and axiomatic threat to the human, the queer is the negated double of the subject of liberal democracy. Understanding the nothing as the unavoidable shadow of the human serves to counter the arguments that suggest overkill and antiqueer violence at large are a pathological break and that the severe nature of these killings signals something extreme. In contrast, overkill is precisely not outside of, but is that which constitutes liberal democracy as such. Overkill then is the proper expression to the riddle of the queer nothingness. Put another way, the spectacular material-semiotics of overkill should not be read as (only) individual pathology; these vicious acts must indict the very social worlds of which they are ambassadors. Overkill is what it means, what it must mean, to do violence to what is nothing. Surplus Violence After finishing a graveyard shift washing dishes for minimum wage at a local Waffle House, eighteen-year-old Scotty Joe Weaver stopped by his mom’s to give her some money he owed her before heading home to his green and white trailer in the rural town of Pine Grove, Alabama. Scotty Joe was a drag performer in local bars with a fondness and talent for working Dolly Parton. He had dropped out of school some years before in the hope of escaping constant harassment and daily physical attacks. Scotty Joe, like many eighteen-year-old queers, was excited about his recent move to his own place with his “best friend” Nichole Kelsay. Kelsay’s boyfriend, Christopher Gaines, had also been staying at their trailer along with his friend, Robert Porter. Weaver’s modest trailer home was, according to his mother, “not much” and was puzzled into a neighborhood of thirty or so trailers. 29 Returning home in the early morning hours, worn out from a long night’s work, Weaver, alone, took a nap on his couch. As Kelsay, Gaines, and Porter ate pancakes in a restaurant and made last-minute decisions regarding the plan to murder Weaver that had begun the week before, Weaver slept for the last time. Kelsay, Gaines, and Porter returned to the trailer home in the early afternoon and found Weaver still asleep. Kelsay Social Text 107 s Summer 2011 11 locked herself in the bathroom as Gaines said to Porter, “OK. Come on. Let’s do it.”30 Porter first struck Weaver in the head with a blunt object. As blood poured down the back of his skull, Kelsay, Gaines, and Porter tied him tightly to a kitchen chair. Over the next few hours, Weaver was beaten repeatedly and stabbed with an assortment of sharp objects. Gaines and Porter then strangled him for about ten minutes with a nylon bag until he fell unconscious to the floor. Blood was oozing from Weaver’s ears, which according to the prosecutor was a sign that he was still alive. Unsure, Gaines kicked Weaver’s seemingly lifeless body to see if they had been successful. The details of what happened, and what actually ended Weaver’s life, are lost within a collage of accusations and denial. Dr. Kathleen Enstice of the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences, through her sketches and snapshots at the trial, suggested that Weaver was also stabbed twice in his face and at least nine more times in his chest with several cuts to the rest of his body. He was also partially decapitated. Weaver’s body was then, according to a jailhouse phone interview with Gaines, wrapped in a blanket (and his head in a towel), dragged into Weaver’s bedroom, and placed on his mattress. Thinking that if the airconditioning temperature was turned way down, the incriminating smells of decomposing queer flesh might be slowed, Gaines and Porter cooled the room, took $80 in cash that Weaver had on him, along with his ATM card, and left. Kelsay, Gaines, and Porter’s original plan was to throw Weaver’s body into a nearby river, and the three had even purchased cinder blocks to weigh him to the river’s floor. However, the three feared that the body would surface, so after the murder they returned to the Walmart where the supplies had been purchased and received a $2.11 refund for the cinder blocks. After hitting up the local Dairy Queen and Arby’s for lunch, they went to Kelsay’s mother’s house to play some cards and relax. Later that evening Porter and Gaines returned to the trailer to dispose of Scotty Joe’s body. They stuffed the blanket-wrapped body into the trunk of Gaines’s car, then stopped by a gas station and filled an empty Coke bottle with gasoline. About eight miles deep in a nearby pine grove, Porter and Gaines laid out Weaver’s body, along with other incriminating evidence, and doused it with the gasoline. After the two urinated on the body, they set it afire and drove back to town. Weaver’s charred and mutilated remains were later found by a person on an ATV. Wounds of Intimacy The queer, here Rashawn Brazell, Lauryn Paige, or Scotty Joe Weaver, is forced to embody to the point of obliteration the movement between abject nothingness at one end—a generality that enables queers to be killed so easily and frequently—and at the other end, the approximation of a terrorizing threat as a symbol of shattering difference, monstrosity, and irreconcilable contradiction. This fetishistic structure allows one to believe that queers are an inescapable threat and at the same time know that they are nothing.

#### How can we preserve that which is nothing? The alternative is to adopt the methodology of the bug-chaser. Bug-chasing stands in opposition to “the queer as nothing” through the creation of a queer communion. Barebacking creates a chain that ties queers together throughout time removing the finality of extemporal violence.

**Dean 08**~Dean, Tim. 2008. "Breeding Culture: Barebacking, Bugchasing, Giftgiving." Massachusetts Review 49, no. 1–2: 80–94. Found here: <http://bit.ly/1BOHrxW~~> AMB [Some of the text is minimized down to 4 to tone down graphic descriptions of sex if that’s an issue I can send out an edited doc during perp time – NS]

Another way of putting this would be to say that if the prospect of same-sex 81 THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW marriage raises the possibility of gay in-laws, then the subculture of barebacking ensures that some queers will retain the status of outlaws. A primary context for making sense of this counterintuitive phenomenon is the campaign for same-sex marriage during the last decade or so; as one of the earliest and most notorious proponents for abandoning condoms said in 1997, "Now I believe in exchanging bodily fluids, not wedding rings" (O'Hara 69). Barebacking may be understood as an alternative to gay marriage not so much because it authorizes promiscuity as opposed to monogamy, but because HIV makes the exchange of bodily fluids homologous to the exchange of wedding rings, insofar as both sets of exchanges confer forms of permanence on their participants. About as far firom casual sex as one can possibly get, barebacking entails lifelong commitments—commitments more permanent than those of marriage—since what's at stake is HIV-transmission. By contrast with marriage, straight or gay, what's exchanged at a "conversion party"—where gay men gather for unprotected sex and to exercise some choice over which man will infect them—what's exchanged is guaranteed to last a lifetime. In speaking of unprotected anal sex as in some weird sense homologous to marriage, I am simply bringing into academic vernacular one of the terms in which it is spoken about within bareback subculture. The discourse of barebacking isn't quite as nihilistic or antisocial as some might imagine, but instead affirms a community of outlaws. While repudiating heterosexual and gay norms, bareback subculture nonetheless has created its own norms and standards of behavior. What particularly interests me is how unprotected sex has given rise to a discourse of kinship, based on the idea that the human immunodeficiency virus may be used to create blood ties, ostensibly permanent forms of bodily and communal affiliation. To conceive of exchanging bodily fluids as a viable alternative to exchanging wedding rings is to think about barebacking as the basis for not only one's sexual identity but also one's place in a kinship network. The deliberate transmission of HIV through bareback sex isn't anomalous but should be understood as part of the ongoing history of sexuality at the turn of the millennium. Bareback subcultural practices are connected to the campaign for same-sex marriage, the exponential increase in lesbian and gay parenting, and broader changes in kinship that have received considerable media attention over the past several decades. Although one might think that a lesbian couple's decision to have a baby together has nothing to do w^ith what gay men are up to in the sex clubs of San Francisco or New York, in fact both represent experiments with elective kinship that bear consideration. To simply pathologize bareback subculture as irresponsible, selfdestructive, or crazy would be to obscure its profound connections with the 82 Tim Dean social reorganization of kinship that has been under way in North American culture for quite some time. It is here that I claim psychoanalysis may be sdU of some use, because the clinical practice of psychoanalysis furnishes an especially valuable approach to thinking about disturbing material. The psychoanalytic rule of free association—"that whatever comes into one's head must be reported without criticizing it"—requires a suspension of judgment that permits different forms of thinking to emerge (Freud, "Dynamics" 107). Once you commit to following a train of thought irrespective of where it leads or how risky it seems, then you may find yourself thinking new thoughts and discovering spaces you would not have come across otherwise. We might say that psychoanalysis, Unlike cocksucking, entails taking risks with one's mouth. Thus although psychoanalysis has an appalling institudopal history of pathologizing nonnormative sexual behavior and forms of desire, the actual practice of analysis depends on not pathologizing any desire in order to see where its logic takes you. Rather than the conservative moralism of Just Say No, psychoanalysis involves the permissive ethic of Never Say No—^because the unconscious never says no. This practical refusal to pathologize desire amplifies thought. The fact that barebacking often involves deliberate decisions does not mean that such decisions can be explained fuUy according to a rationalchoice model of human behavior. One needs something other than a rational-choice model to appreciate how sex may involve maximizing risk rather than minimizing it. An early proponent of barebacking reports that, "over and over, I asked myself why it was so appealing for me to get fucked without a condom. I'm a bottom, and I honestly can't tell whether someone is fucking me with or without a condom. It feels the same to me.Yet I still didn't want the barrier, and it really disturbed me that I didn't know why" (Gendin 106). In suggesting that sexual behavior is permeated by the nonrational, I'm arguing not that barebacking should be considered irrational, only that it cannot be understood without taking seriously the fantasies that animate it. Psychoanalysis originates with a fiindamental distinction between the irrational and the nonrational, a distinction that exempts the nonrational from the taint of pathology. Freud's value lies in his insistence that all sexuality, even its most routine and vanilla expressions, involves nonrational logics that may be bracketed under the rubric of the unconscious. On those odd occasions when sex is undertaken primarily for reproductive purposes, still it isn't exempt from fantasies about reproduction—fantasies that inform nonreproductive sex too. By tracing subjectivity's nonrational logics, Freud revealed gender and sexuality as particularly dense sites for the elaboration of fantasy; gender and sexuality provoke our most wildly counterintuitive 83 THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW Stories about ourselves. With respect to the pernicious hierarchy of normal and perverse, Freud leveled the playing field by showing how nobody has a gender—or a fuck—free from the baroque complications of fantasy, whether they're aware of it or not. The category of unconscious fantasy thus undermines the distinction between normal and pathological, and this is one of its most important political implications. Much of bareback discourse occurs online, where virtual communities coalesce around the exchange of words, images, and fantasies. Many of these fantasies involve exchanging bodily fluids too, and some even go so far as to articulate the desire to trade viruses—to literalize the exchange. No longer regarded as outcasts, HIV-positive men have become especially desirable in some quarters by virtue of their serostatus. Barebacking websites (such as ultimatebareback.com and raw-ride.com) have spawned intriguing new sexual identity categories, such as "bugchasers" and "giftgivers": bugchasers are those who fetishize HIV-infected semen and want it inside their bodies; giftgivers are those positive men who are willing to oblige. Based on the model of sperm-donors, giftgivers consensuaUy inseminate other men with HIV. They transmit the virus intentionally rather than inadvertently, and they understand their actions as creative rather than as destructive. Since most states have criminalized deliberate HlV-transmission, it is hardly surprising that giftgivers remain shadowy figures. My research suggests that while the proportion of North American men who bareback is larger than one might expect, the proportion of those in the bareback community who identify as bugchasers or giftgivers is quite small. Most barebackers remain committed to the ethical principle that, as one man put it, "I don't do conversions"—in other words, they'll have unprotected sex only with men presumed to share the same serostatus. Yet this principle also concerns community and kinship, not only disease prevention, since choosing to have sex with other[s] HIV-positive men establishes a sense of camaraderie among those who, in the 1980s, were treated as pariahs. The precise number of men who explicitly identify as either bugchasers or giftgivers is ultimately irrelevant, because these identity categories refer to fantasies of kinship—q—that may be shared by large numbers of those who feel no conscious connection to stigmatized subcultural identities. The popularity of bareback pornography testifies to the widespread appeal of these fantasies and suggests, moreover, that fantasy offers a means of understanding the subculture as distinctly permeable. You don't need to embrace the identity of bugchaser to get off on the idea of being bred. 84 Tim Dean The fact that very few men wish to assume complete responsibility for another's seroconversion also helps to account for the subcultural phenomenon of "conversion parties"—ritualized group initiations into the "bug brotherhood"—during which men are penetrated bareback by multiple partners, thus making the specific source of infection difficult to identify. On a practical level, this arrangement confers a measure of legal protection on the participants; bareback parties often are advertised with the motto "Don't ask, don't tell." Gay men have appropriated the military's homophobic policy of nondisclosure for their own ends. But the practice of nondisclosure in a situation of group sex also enables the source of infection to be given over completely to fantasy: one can construct w^hichever narrative he finds most satisfying about the paternity of his virus. That is to say, bugchasing makes seroconversion something you can practice; it sustains a fantasy of repeating the unrepeatable. This helps explain why some gay men refuse to take an HIV test. By not doing so, they are able to imagine each unprotected encounter as the one that transmits the virus, which intensifies every fuck quite considerably. This idea rationalizes the unprotected sex pursued by Carlos, the pseudonymous Manhattan bugchaser profiled in a controversial Rolling Stone article, who allegedly thinks that "every date is potentially The One" (Freeman 47).Thus sexual risk can be perpetually renewed, and one's capacity for tolerating risk ever more enhanced. From this perspective, it isn't hard to see how barebacking and bugchasing involve quite familiar ideas about masculinity. The presence of HIV has allowed gay men to transform the practice of taking it up the butt from a sign of failed masculinity into an index of hypermasculinity. In bareback subculture, as in the military, masculine status is achieved by surviving a set of physical ordeals, including multiple penetrations, humiliations, piercings, tattooings, brandings, and infections.The more men you're penetrated by, the more of a man you become. The prophylaxis afforded by condoms is reserved for those who can't handle the real thing. Rather than offering protection, then, a condom makes you and your masculinity vulnerable to doubt or derision. Latex comproinises not only sensation and intimacy but also masculine identity. From this perspective, HIV becomes simply another trial, the endurance of which proves your mettle. Being HIV-positive is like having a war wound or a battle scar. For some gay men, the desire to avoid HIV thus has mutated into its opposite; indeed, some men who practice bareback sex are not interested in having an HIV-negative man ejaculate inside them: they want only semen that contains the virus—"poz" or "pozcum," as it is colloquially known. Semen containing HIV is radioactive w^ith significance, and the slang term "poz" suggests that, for some men, infected semen paradoxically has come to 85 THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW have a positive rather than a negative connotation. It has become a good object to be incorporated, rather than a bad object to be kept outside oneself. In bareback subculture the exchange of semen has become heavily ritualized; getting infected with HIV is now understood as a rite of passage, an initiation into a fraternal community from which one can never be exiled. Electing to become infected with the virus entails choosing a permanent identity; it marks the inside of your body somewhat akin to the way that tattooing marks the outside (self-identified barebackers tend to be heavily tattooed). Bugchasing and giftgiving involve fantasies about making an indelible connection with someone else's insides. Much bareback discourse uses metaphors of insemination, pregnancy, and paternity. "Let's breed" is one of the refrains heard regularly on barebacking websites, though I've encountered it only once in a sexual context that was not marked explicitly as a subcultural venue. Men who used not to w^orry about condoms because there was no fear of pregnancy in gay sex now understand their abandonment of condoms as an attempt to conceive. Gay men have discovered that they can in some sense reproduce without women. In breeding a virus, these men are propagating also a way of life, a sexual culture w^ith its own institutions, codes of communication, ethical norms, representational practices, and kinship arrangements. When the Texan asked me to breed him, he was expressing a desire for intimacy with not only me but also an entire subcultural community. We might understand his request—made in his own SOMA home on the evening of the Folsom Street Fair—as a yearning for direct corporeal connection with the thousands of men who congregated in that historic neighborhood on that particular day. At the time, I was disturbed by his assumption that I was HIV-positive and that, without so much as a how-do-you-do, I wouldn't hesitate to ejaculate inside him; looking back now, I realize that perhaps I shouldn't have taken his request personally. The notion of an imagined community isn't sufficient for grasping what's happening in such scenarios. Instead, the metaphorics of breeding, of reproducing a subculture through bodily exchange, require a reconfigured notion of kinship. One early lesbian feminist critique of kinship, Kath Weston's Families We Choose, charted a shift in the lesbian and gay community from thinking about kinship in terms of the obligations of consanguinity to thinking about kinship in terms of consensual, largely symbolic affiliations. Drawing on interviews with San Francisco lesbians and gay men in the mideighties, anthropologist Weston noted that members of this urban enclave already were intuiting connections between the "gayby" boom and the AIDS epidemic. What both the epidemic and experimentation with alternative families made apparent were the various ways that people covild 86 Tim Dean become related to each other by blood without involving heterosexuality. Weston observes that "as the practice of alternative insemination spread among lesbians, relations conceived as blood ties surfaced where one might least expect them: in the midst of gay families that had been defined in opposition to the biological relations [that] gays and lesbians ascribed to straight family" (Weston 169; original emphasis). During the eighties, against the background anatomized by Weston, gay men made the traumatic discovery that they were connected to each other in hitherto unanticipated ways. The identification of a blood-borne pathogen as the cause of AIDS entailed recognizing, among other things, that gay men sharing an urban space such as San Francisco had been creating viral consanguinity among themselves without knowing it. With the dawning realization that tricks one practically had forgotten might have permanently marked his insides came a sense that one's bodily condition could be related to that of strangers with whom ostensibly he shared nothing but a few hours of pleasure. Such connections could affect one's body as much as—or more than—his genetic inheritance. It was almost as if you were discovering in forgotten strangers long-lost kin. And it is but a small step from this discovery to deliberately creating kinship links, thus seizing agency in a situation where previously one wasn't aware of having any. Rather than thinking about how to do things with words, barebackers have been conducting unregulated experiments in how to do things with HIV. Understanding a virus as the basis for one's kinship network may have been inspired also by the idea of "contact tracing," a public health diseaseprevention strategy that was floated in the 1980s and that aimed to control the epidemic by tracking who had transmitted HIV to whom. The strategy of contact tracing never quite caught on, due in part to the disturbing civil liberties implications of recording the identities of those who were infected (recall that when AIDS first emerged, some conservative politicians called for universal mandatory testing and then quarantining, even tattooing, of those who tested positive for HIV) .Yet the discourse of contact tracing may have encouraged recent efforts to organize kinship around viral transmission. To identify as a giftgiver can entail assuming parental responsibility for the man who chooses you to convert his serostatus. Other men infected by the same giftgiver become your brothers, and one can start a single-sex family this way. Here is an unexpected twist on the Republican rhetoric of "family values." Patterning kinship on the contact-tracing model also alludes to the conceit that each time you have sex with somebody you're also having sex with everyone he's ever had sex with—that is, the idea that each of us brings our entire sexual history to any erotic encounter. Of course, this familiar idea. 87 THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW which is part of high school sex education, effectively txansforms every erotic encounter into a gangbang, a multipartner orgy. In the context of sex education, this idea is supposed to act as a deterrent, by conjuring the multiple, menacing shadows of previous partners hovering behind the single person with whom one has consented to have sex. But it might just as well act as an incentive, by conjuring a history and a community attendant on every coupling. It is far from coincidental that bareback subculture privileges not merely unprotected sex but specifically group sex, often with a single man taking the position of "bottom" while all the other men penetrate him. The gangbang represents barebacking's paradigmatic form, in which at least one man gets to literally have sex with everybody present, thereby establishing a corporeal connection, a kind of bodily community, among all those who enter the space in which this activity occurs. Overcoming the barrier that a condom represents is related to overcoming the numerical limit that a single partner represents.3 The man on the bottom in a bareback gangbang occupies something akin to the position of the father of the primal horde, as Freud describes it in Totem and Tafcoo.Whereas the father ofthe primal horde has sexual access to all the women in the clan, the multiply penetrated bottom in a gangbang represents the one to whom all other men have access; he gets to enjoy all the men, sexually possessing them all, and his proof of that elevated status consists in his containing all their semen inside his body. Totem and Taboo concerns the primitive rituals that establish kinship relations, and what we see in bareback subculture is an attempt to invent the rituals that enable a community to come into existence. One does not enter a community, just as one does not enter adulthood, wdthout rites of initiation, and gay men have had to invent their own. In our culture of adolescence, with its intense pressure to remain youthflil, adulthood has become a problem rather than a given. The sexual rites of initiation I've been describing are partly about establishing generational differences that help make evident what adulthood without heterosexuality means. By establishing generational differences, they also provide a structure that enables transmission of the culture from one generation to the next. Another way of putting this would be to say that the ritual enacted in a bareback gangbang involves sexual contact not only among all members of the group via the intermediary of the bottom; it also involves contact, via the intermediary of the ritual form, with what the "primitive societies" described by Freud would call their ancestors. By taking all the other men inside him and storing their semen inside his body, the bottom in a bareback gangbang may be establishing communication (through impersonal, formal identification) with previous generations ofthe culture. This kind of 88 Tim Dean connection through ritual is especially important for a culture that, thanks to AIDS, has lost whole generations of its members. It is owing to their role as impersonal intermediaries—and not just because they endure so much pounding and take so many loads—that famous bareback gangbang bottoms (such as Dawson, Max Holden, JefF Palmer, and Billy Wild) are regarded as subcultural heroes. For some people, reproducing the culture takes precedence over their own survival as individuals; these people are willing to sacrifice their lives so that something vitally important to them lives on. Just as a nation-state perpetuates itself through the ideology of patriotism, by convincing its members that the life of their country may be worth dying for, so one dimension of gay subculture survives through the sacrifices of barebackers. These men are not simply enjoying sex, they are also suffering it on behalf of others. From a certain perspective, their sex is altruistic rather than merely self-indulgent. In order to illustrate this counterintuitive idea, I want to quote a passage from Paul Morris, the most interesting documentary pornographer of barebacking. In his manifesto on the necessity of sexual risk, Morris describes the sacrificial ethic on which gay cultural transmission relies: "Unsafe sex" is not only insane, it is also essential. For a subculture to be sustained, there must be those who engage in its central and defining activities with Httle regard for anything else, including life itself.... At the heart of every culture is a set of experiences which members hold not only to be worth practicing, but also necessary to maintain and transmit to those who follow. In the case of a sexual subculture, one often has only one way to do this: by embodying the traditions. Within the complex system of beliefs and practices of an American male sexual subculture, there can be little that is more defining than the coinmunion and connections that are made possible through these central practices. The everyday identity evanesces and the individual becomes an agent through which a darker and more fhgile tradition is enabled to continue. Irresponsibility to the everyday persona and to the general culture is necessary for allegiance to the sexual subculture, and this allegiance takes the gay male directly to the hot and central point where what is at stake isn't the survival of the individual, but the survival of the practices and patterns which are the discoveries and properties of the subculture The subculture and the virus require the same processes for transmission. (See Morris) If the subculture can be kept alive only through bodily exchanges that also permit viral communication, then we might suppose that gay subculture has wedded itself to death. Paradoxically the life of the subculture depends on the death of its members. Yet this sacrificial ethic isn't as alien as it might appear, 89 THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW because its structure is identical to that of patriotism. The communities of men formed around barebacking bond together like communities of soldiers during wartime. And it s worth recalling that since the first decade of the AIDS epidemic killed off whole generations of gay men, those who survived resemble survivors of war. Barebacking may be, among other things, a way of connecting with the dead through the medium of a shared substance. Rather than necessarily disregarding and thus dishonoring those who have died from AIDS-related illnesses (as some critics charge), barebacking may represent an effort to maintain their vitality in the bodies of the living. By means of a virus, some part of the deceased can be imagined as living on. Bareback subculture thus may be as much a culture of survival and imaginative reinvention as it is a culture of death (or of something called "the death drive"). It needs to be acknowledged that the subculture emerged in San Francisco at around the same time that the first generation of antiretroviral drugs became available for treating HIV. While the medications and the subculture are both features of the late nineties' gay landscape, it would be a mistake to conclude from this historical coincidence that the introduction of the drugs "caused" barebacking. Certainly a pharmacological substrate—including the shadow epidemic of crystal methamphetamine abuse—underlies the subculture, though it hardly explains the fantasies of kinship that animate bareback discourse and practice. Part of what is so striking about these practices is that, in contrast to youth-oriented subcultures, barebacking cuts across different generations and demographics; it cannot be explained adequately by reference to either a younger generations sense of invulnerability or its ignorance ofthe AIDS-related suffering ofthe 1980s, just as it cannot be explained by what some commentators have described as an older generation's sense of "survivor guilt." Barebacking not only cuts across generations of gay men, it also connects these generations. Indeed, the idea of bareback breeding involves creating different generations—and hence a minimal kinship structure— without resorting to the heterosexual matrix that otherwise determines relational intelligibility. This notion of kinship involves replication rather than reproduction. The emergence of organized sexual risk suggests that some men are not only survivors but also propagators of a subculture. Thinking about gay sexual culture as a culture allows us to approach it anthropologically and to view it as we might another "foreign" culture, with our reflex value judgments suspended in the face of social and sexual variation. Just because bareback subculture departs from many ofthe ethical norms of both mainstream U.S. culture and mainstream gay culture does not mean that it is devoid of ethics or norms. To consider barebacking less as a failure of the individual's 90 Tim Dean responsibility to practice safer sex than as the basis for subcultural participation and kinship alters the way that one thinks about erotic risk. When regarded in anthropological terms, the counterintuitive designation of HIV as a gift—and its deliberate transmission in ritualized sexual encounters— makes a certain kind of sense.

# Core

## Alts

### Toxicity

#### Thus, reject the aff in favor of toxicity. Contagion disrupts proper conceptions of politics embodied in the affirmative’s investment in normative framings of addiction, politics, self, and other that subtend how we view illegal drug usage. The resolution is an invitation for toxic wording and worlding – animating new configurations of thought that make us think of health contagion differently. Our method of intoxication reorients our relationship to geopolitics and capitalism.

**Chen 12** [Mel, Assoc. Prof. Gender and Women’s Studies and Vice Chair for Research, Dir. of the Center for the Study of Sexual Culture @ UC Berkeley, Animacies: Biopolitical Racial Mattering and Queer Affect, p. 185-8]

Queer Licking Let me return to the visual symbolic of media coverage of lead toxicity. The florid palette of toy-panic images yielded two prominent and repeating icons. The media representations favored a pairing of images: on the one hand, the vulnerable child, more frequently a young, white, middle-class boy; and on the other hand, the dangerous party: Thomas the Tank Engine. The iconic white boy’s lead toxicity must be avoided: he should not be mentally deficient, delayed, or lethargic. His intellectual capabilities must be assured to consolidate a futurity of heteronormative (white) masculinity; that is to say**, he must not be queer.** This is not only because one of lead’s toxicities reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is reproductive disability and infertility; I suggest here that one aspect of the threat of lead toxicity is its origin in a forbidden sexuality, for the frightening originary scene of intoxication is one of a queer licking. Here again is the example of the white boy, who in the threatening and frightening scene is precisely licking the painted train, a train whose name is Thomas, a train that is also one of the West’s preeminent Freudian phallic icons.59 This image of a boy licking the train, though clearly the feared scene of contamination, never appears literally, or least I have not found it appearing literally; rather, if a boy and a train are present, the boy and the train are depicted proximately, and that is enough to represent the threat (the licking boy would be too much, would too directly represent the forbidden). But suggestions are sometimes loaded onto the proximities. In one representative image from a website alerting its readers to rc2’s recall of Thomas the Tank Engine trains, we see the head and chest of a blond boy lying alongside a train that is in the foreground. The boy’s moist lips are parted and smiling, his eyes intent and alert; he grasps a dark-hued train car with his right hand, gazing slightly upward at it. The other cars, receding toward the camera, fall out of focus. The scene is—at the very least—physically and emotionally intimate, pleasurable, and desirous.60 On its website, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a fact sheet about lead, including the following statement under 186 the heading “how your child may be exposed”: “Lead is invisible to the naked eye and has no smell. Children may be exposed to it from consumer products through normal hand-to- mouth activity, which is part of their normal development. They often place toys, fingers, and other objects in their mouth, exposing themselves to lead paint or dust.”61 The language here, which means to reassure anxious parents, twice uses the word normal in describing children’s orality: their handto- mouth activity is “normal . . . part of their normal development.” This redundancy betrays a nervousness about children, with its language of proper development and its delineation of what is or is not permissible in normal play. Returning to that fantasy that images could only approximate: what precisely is wrong with the boy licking the train? Two things are wrong: one, the boy licking Thomas the Tank Engine is playing improperly with the phallic toy, not thrusting it forward along the floor, but putting it into his mouth. Such late-exhibited orality bears the sheen of that “retarded” stage of development known as homosexuality. I am invoking the impossible juncture between the queernesses “naturally” afforded to children and the fear of a truly queer child.62 I recently had a conversation with a British man in his seventies about the lead panic within the United States. With a twinkle in his eye, he said, “We had that lead in toys when I was young! Perhaps we just didn’t suck them?” To me, his comment highlights the kind of temporal limitations on some kinds of national memory, the invested forgetting that is necessary for such a lead panic to become so enlivened. Given that lead’s very threat is that it produces cognitive disabilities, the scene of the child licking his toxic train slides further into queerness, as queer and disabled bodies alike trouble the capitalist marriage of domesticity, heterosexuality, and ability. The queer disability theorist Robert McRuer writes of the development of domesticity within capitalism that the “ideological reconsolidation of the home as a site of intimacy and heterosexuality was also the reconsolidation of the home as a site for the development of able-bodied identities, practices, and relations.”63 Exhibiting telltale signs of homosexuality and lead toxicity alike is simultaneously to alert a protected, domestic sphere to the threat of disability. One could say that lead itself is queered here as a microcosmic pollutant that, almost of its own accord, invades the body through plenitudes of microcosmic holes (a child’s skin), sites the state cannot afford to acknowledge, for the queer vulnerabilities they portend. 187 Animacy theory embraces the ramified sites and traces of shifting being. It claims first that the tropes by which lead threatens to contaminate “healthy” privileged subjects relies fundamentally on animacy hierarchies. Lead can drag vulnerable people down, through variously “lesser” positions of animateness, into the realms of the “vegetable” or the nonsentient. At the same time, it has already weighed on some bodies more than others. The strength of anxieties about lead toxicity microcosmically, and very compactly, demonstrates that race, class, sexuality, and ability are unstable. These are not assured categories or properties that could operate intersectionally in a binary analysis, but are rather variably “mattering participants” in dominant ontologies that cannot therefore securely or finally attach to any body. Animacy theory objectifies animate hierarchies, assessing their diverse truth effects against the mobilities and slippages that too easily occur within them, and asks what paths the slippages trace. The next chapter focuses on the peculiar affective mediations wrought by toxicity, expanding beyond the paranoid images of altered bodies and minds produced by the fearful ensembles of U.S. biosecurity that are recounted in this chapter. Notwithstanding my claims about lead’s racialization in relation to a Chinese context, lead is of course not always specific to China. Rather, like any toxin, perhaps especially because it is not alive, it can be detached and reattached to diverse cultural and biological forms. This means that it is readily racialized, but with a set of preferences provided by the discursive structures it inhabits. Lead as a toxin, more generally, has already become in this global context racialized in excess as nonwhite; for instance, Mexican lead-tinged candy also received much media attention in 2007.64 Yet lead’s attachment preferences are perhaps not so flighty as one might first think; the “yellow hue” of today’s lead seems to swirl in with the “brown” and “black” layers of lead’s naturalized image. I have suggested here that the mediation of lead in and around categories of “life” in turn undoes lead’s deadness by reanimating it. In other words, lead has the capacity to poison definitively animate beings, and as such achieves its own animacy as an agent of harm. By examining the signifying economies of health, imperialism, and degradation that paint race onto different bodies, and by directing attention to the multiplicity of “contact zones” of those engaging lead—from working on the assembly line, to using the new products that contain them, to the downstream use of the products, to the recycling and mining of them—we witness the inherent brokenness of “races,” “geographics,” and “bodies” as systems of segregation, even as they remain numbingly effective in informing discourses of combat, health, and privilege. An environmental history of toxic objects must minimally register the gendered, laboring, and chronically toxically exposed bodies of globalized capital, which systematically bear less frequent mention in narratives of toxicity than the cautionary warnings from the seat of U.S. empire. With this registration, lead’s spectacle remains connected to the possible forging of justice.

### Trans Rage

**Thus the alternative is an affective transgender rage. A redirection of violence done to trans people can provide a way to overcome the cultural stigma around non-normative subjects. This monstrous fury allows for an identity free of gender.**

Stryker 94. Susan, Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage” *GLQ,*pp. 248-251

A formal disjunction seems particularly appropriate at this moment because the affect I seek to examine critically, what I've termed "transgender rage," emerges from the interstices of discursive practices and at the collapse of generic categories. The rage itself is generated by the subject's situation in a field governed by the unstable but indissoluble relationship between language and materiality, a situation in which language organizes and brings into signification matter that simultaneously eludes definitive representation and demands its own perpetual rearticulation in symbolic terms. Within this dynamic field the subject must constantly police the boundary constructed by its own founding in order to maintain the fictions of "inside" and "outside"against a regime of signification/materialization whose intrinsic instability produces the rupture of subjective boundaries as one of its regular features. The affect of rage as I seek to define it is located at the margin of subjectivity and the limit of signification. It originates in recognition of the fact that the "outsideness" of a materiality that perpetually violates the foreclosure of subjective space within a symbolic order is also necessarily "inside" the subject as grounds for the materialization of its body and the formation of its bodily ego. This primary rage becomes specifically transgender rage when the inability to foreclose the subject occurs through a failure to satisfy norms of gendered embodiment. Transgender rage is the subjective experience of being compelled to transgress what Judith Butler has referred to as the highly gendered regulatory schemata that determine the viability of bodies, of being compelled to enter a "domain of abjected bodies, a field of deformation" that in its unlivability encompasses and constitutes the realm of legitimate subjectivity (16). Transgender rage is a queer fury, an emotional response to conditions in which it becomes imperative to take up, for the sake of one's own continued survival as a subject, a set of practices that precipitates one's exclusion from a naturalized order of existence that seeks to maintain itself as the only possible basis for being a subject. However, by mobilizing gendered identities and rendering them provisional, open to strategic development and occupation, this rage enables the establishment of subjects in new modes, regulated by different codes of intelligibility. Transgender rage furnishes a means for disidentification with compulsorily assigned subject positions. It makes the transition from one gendered subject position to another possible by using the impossibility of complete subjective foreclosure to organize an outside force as an inside drive, and vice versa. Through the operation of rage, the stigma itself becomes the source of transformative power. (10) I want to stop and theorize at this particular moment in the text because in the lived moment of being thrown back from a state of abjection in the aftermath of my lover's daughter's birth, I immediately began telling myself a story to explain my experience. I started theorizing, using all the conceptual tools my education had put at my disposal. Other true stories of those events could undoubtedly be told, but upon my return I knew for a fact what lit the fuse to my rage in the hospital delivery room. It was the non-consensuality of the baby's gendering. You see, I told myself, wiping snot off my face with a shirt sleeve, bodies are rendered meaningful only through some culturally and historically specific mode of grasping their physicality that transforms the flesh into a useful artifact. Gendering is the initial step in this transformation, inseparable from the process of forming an identity by means of which we're fitted to a system of exchange in a heterosexual economy. Authority seizes upon specific material qualities of the flesh, particularly the genitals, as outward indication of future reproductive potential, constructs this flesh as a sign, and reads it to enculturate the body. Gender attribution is compulsory; it codes and deploys our bodies in ways that materially affect us, yet we choose neither our marks nor the meanings they carry. (11) This was the act accomplished between the beginning and the end of that short sentence in the delivery room: "It's a girl." This was the act that recalled all the anguish of my own struggles with gender. But this was also the act that enjoined my complicity in the non-consensual gendering of another. A gendering violence is the founding condition of human subjectivity; having a gender is the tribal tattoo that makes one's personhood cognizable. I stood for a moment between the pains of two violations, the mark of gender and the unlivability of its absence. Could I say which one was worse? Or could I only say which one I felt could best be survived? How can finding one's self prostrate and powerless in the presence of the Law of the Father not produce an unutterable rage? What difference does it make if the father in this instance was a pierced, tatooed, purple-haired punk fag anarchist who helped his dyke friend get pregnant? Phallogocentric language, not its particular speaker, is the scalpel that defines our flesh. I defy that Law in my refusal to abide by its original decree of my gender. Though I cannot escape its power, I can move through its medium. Perhaps if I move furiously enough, I can deform it in my passing to leave a trace of my rage. I can embrace it with a vengeance to rename myself, declare my transsexuality, and gain access to the means of my legible reinscription. Though I may not hold the stylus myself, I can move beneath it for my own deep self-sustaining pleasures. To encounter the transsexual body, to apprehend a transgendered consciousness articulating itself, is to risk a revelation of the constructedness of the natural order. Confronting the implications of this constructedness can summon up all the violation, loss, and separation inflicted by the gendering process that sustains the illusion of naturalness. My transsexual body literalizes this abstract violence. As the bearers of this disquieting news, we transsexuals often suffer for the pain of others, but we do not willingly abide the rage of others directed against us. And we do have something else to say, if you will but listen to the monsters: the possibility of meaningful agency and action exists, even within fields of domination that bring about the universal cultural rape of all flesh. Be forewarned, however, that taking up this task will remake you in the process.By speaking as a monster in my personal voice, by using the dark, watery images of Romanticism and lapsing occasionally into its brooding cadences and grandiose postures, I employ the same literary techniques Mary Shelley used to elicit sympathy for her scientist's creation. Like that creature, I assert my worth as a monster in spite of the conditions my monstrosity requires me to face, and redefine a life worth living. I have asked the Miltonic questions Shelley poses in the epigraph of her novel: "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay to mould me man? Did I solicit thee from darkness to promote me?" With one voice, her monster and I answer "no" without debasing ourselves, for we have done the hard work of constituting ourselves on our own terms, against the natural order. Though we forego the privilege of naturalness, we are not deterred, for we ally ourselves instead with the chaos and blackness from which Nature itself spills forth. (12) If this is your path, as it is mine, let me offer whatever solace you may find in this monstrous benediction: May you discover the enlivening power of darkness within yourself. May it nourish your rage. May your rage inform your actions, and your actions transform you as you struggle to transform your world.