

1.

Three Analogies

History, Psychoanalysis, Literature

No sooner is a form seen than it *must* resemble something:
humanity seems doomed to Analogy.

—Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*

SHORTLY AFTER HIS TENURE AS U.S. PRESIDENT, in June 1910, Theodore Roosevelt addressed an Oxford audience on the subject of “Biological Analogies in History.” Assuming an academic posture, he drew on evolutionary theory to explain the determining factors of national success and failure. After a survey of extinct fauna, Roosevelt compared the rise and fall of human civilizations to that of animal species:

[A]s to all of these phenomena in the evolution of species, there are, if not homologies, at least certain analogies, in the history of human societies, in the history of the rise to prominence, of the development and change, of the temporary dominance, and death or transformation, of the groups of varying kind which form races or nations.¹

Exploring the potential causes of national and racial “extinction,” Roosevelt goes on to warn his listeners against various social perils, from “centrifugal” fragmentation to pampered lassitude to the moment when “the average woman ceases to become the mother of a family of healthy children.”² His argument insists that temporal “development and change” is inextricable from issues of sexuality, reproduction, race, and nation and, invoking “the evolution of species,” it suggests the broad influence of nineteenth-century evolutionary theory not only in the sciences but also in other discourses.

While Roosevelt's "biological analogies" compared the development of nations to animal evolution, the late nineteenth century saw a host of other analogies elaborated from the theories of Darwin, Haeckel, and others. Among these was the rhetoric that borrowed from evolutionary science to equate sexual backwardness to racial backwardness—the rhetoric, that is, through which sexologists defined homosexual identity by analogy with blackness and primitivism. It is a "biological analogy," after all, that informs the diagnosis of lesbianism in *Diana: A Strange Autobiography* in 1939.³ And it is the legacy of that analogy, now divorced from science, that structures today's persistent comparison of homosexuality with blackness, whether in conservative arguments or in defense of gay rights and civil rights.

In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler calls for a critical methodology that would "resist the model of power that would set up racism and homophobia and misogyny as parallel or analogous relations."⁴ How should such resistance take shape? Theories of arrested development and primitivism have already lost empirical credibility; in the twenty-first century they are themselves relics of an earlier era. But the bigotry that fed them continues unabated, and their traces linger in less visible forms. We cannot merely debunk such notions, for no reading can change culture by unmasking its hidden workings. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes, an ideological formation need not be veiled to be effective.⁵ Slavoj Žižek puts this axiomatically: "they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it."⁶ Racism and heterosexism may enjoy a certain willful ignorance, but they do not depend on it. Indeed, if we live in ideological illusion, perhaps the paramount illusion is our belief that we can do otherwise. Critical acts of unveiling themselves risk perpetuating a fantasy of progress, a temporal movement from mystification to enlightenment, structurally similar to the time lines that subtend scientific racism. The task, then, is not to dispel the illusions of analogy, history, race, and sexuality, but to explain what work they perform *as* illusions in American culture. The persistent analogy between queerness and blackness must be denaturalized—which is to say, examined *as analogy*, as a discursive artifact shaped by its rhetorical form. While Roosevelt scrupulously distinguishes between homology and analogy, he treats analogy—the articulation of a contingent likeness not produced by a common origin—as a sound basis for argument. What does it mean that this particular device has formed a copula between "black" and "queer"? How does this engine of sameness work in defining the differences whose

exclusionary effects will mark American culture? And how does analogy articulate the specific relations of homosexuality to blackness?

By way of introduction, this chapter will trace the temporal analogy between homosexuality and blackness across discourses of science, psychoanalysis, and literary criticism, considering charges of backwardness and primitivism, childishness and retrogression, atavism and arrested development. The three archives in which I locate the analogy—nineteenth-century scientific theories, Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) and other writing, and Leslie Fielder's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960) suggest that the effect of anachronism is not merely attached to racial and sexual alterity, but also structurally implicated in the logic of hegemony. The analogy between blackness and homosexuality retroactively creates the similarities it purports to observe, defining race in terms of sexuality much as sexuality is defined by race. Moreover, its assertion not infrequently rests on the same backwardness it attributes to others: normative time lines of psychoanalysis and literary history are themselves organized by anachronism.

Though the analogy between homosexuality and blackness takes its modern form in the last decades of the nineteenth century, racist charges of primitivism and sexual perversity date back much further. From the eighteenth century, the idea that people of color, whether individually or as a group, occupied a different historical or developmental time than white Europeans was presented as a scientific theory. Throughout the nineteenth century, racist precepts were promoted as biological facts. In 1797 the German physician and professor Johann H. F. Autenreith compared the "adult African" to the "embryonic condition" of the European, and Scottish publisher Robert Chambers made a similar claim in 1844, with *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*.⁷ Scientific racism adopted the vocabulary of biology; old myths of civilization and savagery, of progress and backwardness, joined with new evolutionary developments, notably after the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859. While evolutionary science suffered significant distortion in the service of scientific racism, Darwin's writing itself contains the tropes of cultural progress that would bolster racist rhetoric. In *The Descent of Man*, for example, he notes the cultural development of "western nations of Europe, who now so immeasurably surpass their former savage progenitors, and stand at the summit of civilization."⁸ In other hands, however, evolutionary theories were invoked to delineate not only temporal differences (Darwin's "now" and "former") but also ethnic and geographic disparities. In the United States, as Claudia

Tate notes, conservative white observers after the Civil War “contended that the (alleged) sexual excesses of the recently emancipated were the result of their unrestrained retrogression into savagery.”⁹ When the complaint was not retrogression, it was a supposed lack of evolutionary progress: in an 1890 *Atlantic Monthly* article titled “Science and the African Problem” Nathaniel Shaler warned that “the negro is not as yet intellectually so far up in the scale of development as he appears.”¹⁰

In the time line of scientific racism, it was the recapitulation hypothesis proposed in Haeckel’s 1879 study *The Evolution of Man* that cemented the analogic coupling of cultural progress with individual development. Haeckel’s formula, *ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny*, proposed that the growth of any single organism mirrors the evolution of its species.¹¹ Under this “biogenetic law,” the development of a human being from fetus to adult will traverse the same stages as the evolution of humankind from lowliest organisms to modern man—stages, in each case, along a time line whose straightening teleology the analogy serves to naturalize. Nineteenth-century scientific racism adopted Haeckel’s theory, equating people of color with immaturity by assigning them, as a group, the same developmental place that the white child held as an individual. The child/savage analogy had appeared generations earlier, in the work of Autenreith and Chambers, as well as Heinrich Kaan’s *Sexual Pathology* (1844), which compared “primitive” sexuality to infantile sexuality in what Sander Gilman calls “a crude type of chronological primitivism.”¹² But the recapitulation hypothesis lent such equations a more pointed form and a firmer theoretical basis, extending to questions of cultural evolution. Thus, the anthropologist James Frazer asserted in 1913 that “a savage is to a civilized man as a child is to an adult” because, he wrote, “the gradual growth of intelligence in a child corresponds to, and in a sense recapitulates, the gradual growth of intelligence in the species.”¹³ This “gradual growth” could not be continuous, for the savage could never become the “civilized man”: instead, he would remain a victim of arrested development, historically stunted and doomed to trail behind the white standard.

Beginning in the 1870s, the first sustained efforts to theorize homosexual identity borrowed from such racist theories as well as extant discourses of criminality, sexual impropriety, physical abnormality, and mental illness. It cannot be coincidental that the publication of Haeckel’s work in 1879 falls historically between Karl Benkert’s coinage of the term *homosexuality* in 1869 and Krafft-Ebing’s discussion of sexual inversion in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886). In that interval, sexologists working

from evolutionary models assigned homosexuals the abject place of the past, attributing to them the racialized attributes of degeneracy, arrested development, regression, and primitivism. As early as 1869, Jennifer Terry explains, Karl von Westphal had advanced an implicit analogy between race and sexuality, finding in homosexuals “many of the same characteristics that distinguished ‘primitive’ races from their ‘advanced’ European heterosexual counterparts, namely degeneracy, atavism, regression, and hypersexuality.”¹⁴ In the decades that followed, however, Haeckel’s recapitulation hypothesis formed the crucial hinge between sexual and racial time lines, for its correlation of human evolution with individual development allowed sexologists to equate non-normative sexualities with primitivism, the past, and blackness. The recapitulation theory aligned the supposed arrested development of homosexuals with the imagined primitivism of people of color: while scientific racism consigned blackness to the historical and developmental “before,” naming Africans as primitive or undeveloped, sexology discovered the same atavism in queer desires. Thus, the multivalent problem of sexual deviance took shape as a temporal problem tied to race by the force of “historical analogies.”¹⁵

The evolutionary model extended to matters of sexual difference, for the language of sexual inversion posited same-sex desire as fundamentally a gender disorder, of which confusion of object choice was merely a secondary effect. As Siobhan Somerville notes, in their 1889 work *The Evolution of Sex*, biologists Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson read the gender-variant body as atavistic, asserting that “hermaphroditism is primitive” whether it appears as “persistence or reversion.”¹⁶ Sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing shared this view, deeming sexual inversion a form of arrested development with both psychic and physiological consequences. In *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Krafft-Ebing proposes that “cases of precocious as well as retarded sexual development . . . may be found due to abnormal evolutionary conditions,” which by preventing the “differentiation of the sexes and the development of sexual types,” allows the persistence of a hermaphroditic mode that “still exists in the lowest classes of animal life and also during the first months of foetal existence in man.”¹⁷ In that taxonomic age, the newly framed category of homosexuality was commonly understood as an atavistic eruption. Theories that extended evolutionary theory to questions of sexual propriety—such as the American sexologist James G. Kiernan’s 1892 article “Responsibility in Sexual Perversion”—shaped the public framing of same-sex desire, including, as Lisa Duggan argues, the Alice Mitchell lesbian murder case in Memphis,

Tennessee, in the same year.¹⁸ Even efforts to defend homosexuality spoke the language of post-Darwinian science: in 1896, Magnus Hirschfeld explained same-sex desire as a “congenital impediment of evolution.”¹⁹ In each case, the iteration of arrested development, failed evolution, atavism, and regression, whether individual or cultural in scope, cemented the conceptual bond between homosexuals and “primitives.”

The formula “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny” is thus both an analogy and an entrance into a constellation of analogies.²⁰ Ontogeny *is like* phylogeny; individual development *is like* humankind’s evolution; blackness *is like* savagery; homosexuality *is like* immature sexuality; the homosexual *is like* the primitive; and the person of color *is like* the child. As the *OED* tells us, and as anyone who has taken the SAT test knows, analogy consists in an “equivalency or likeness,” a “resemblance” or “similarity”; rhetorical theory defines analogy as an argument derived from parallel cases. But the notion of parallelism or equivalency is misleading, for analogies, unlike mathematical equations, are never fully reversible. Instead, they explain the unknown in terms of the known, the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar; they both demand and reproduce a narrative sequence of primary and secondary terms.²¹ Though scientific racism will interpret recapitulation as evidence that savages are like children, Haeckel’s theory itself says (and why, one wonders, does this seem less objectionable?) that children are like savages. Human evolution is the original point of reference that explains individual sexual development. A racialized savagery is reified as the known past, in contrast to the unknown or becoming-known time of homosexuality.

In both the nineteenth and twentieth century, analogic structures would determine the sequencing of queerness and blackness. Race constitutes a primary form of difference while sexuality remains secondary—a formation that recalls Annamarie Jagose’s mapping of “the regulatory technologies of sequence” in which female homosexuality, and arguably male as well, denotes both an imitative second-best and a “perverse anteriority.”²² Although both homosexuality and primitivism represent developmental origins, the primitive is the primary term of primacy, while homosexuality is only secondarily primary, belatedly posited as anterior. The recent axiom “gay is the new black,” which will be discussed further in chapter 4, exemplifies the analogy’s asymmetrical form and distinct narrative sequence, as well as its paradoxical effects. While its chainlike directionality places homosexuality as secondary to and derivative of racial alterity, it thereby claims for “gay” the immanence associated with

“black” and moves homosexuality toward the status of an essential, even biological identity. Moreover, with its implicit allusion to the civil rights movement, “gay is the new black” seeks to rehabilitate a trope that once signified, in Diana Frederics’s words, a trace of “archaic inclinations.”

The race/sexuality analogy, however, relies on a certain temporal inversion, for it *creates* the similarities it purports to observe. The supposed “equivalency or likeness” between queer and black *follows after* the sexological construction of homosexuality as analogous with “primitive” backwardness. That is, the theory of homosexual identity does not describe, but invents, a racialized valence of sexual inversion, projecting that construct retroactively into the place of essence. And in the century that followed, both reactionary and progressive comparisons between black and queer have strengthened the original analogy. What blackness and homosexuality most have in common today is their history of *being considered* in common and their identitarian efforts to mobilize against such constructions. In the black/gay temporal analogy, from the recapitulation theory through the civil rights and gay rights movements in the United States, the first term of the analogy is retroactively defined by the second; following nineteenth-century sexology, blackness must to some degree signify in relation to queerness. One instance of this, as David Eng argues, can be found in Freud’s use of Haeckel’s biogenetic law to posit a mutually constitutive relation between racial alterity and homosexuality: in “On Narcissism,” he writes, a “displaced racial otherness is made legible in the lexicon of pathological (homo)sexuality” such that “the figure of the homosexual is racialized as the figure of the primitive is (homo)sexualized.”²³ To put this another way, the most durable similarity between race and sexuality is that *produced by* the analogy itself, which is to say, by their shared (though by no means identical) marginalization: the analogy between race and sexuality represents as metaphorically essential what is in fact a contingent, metonymic relation.

Freud’s Prehistory

What time is it in the unconscious? Is it too early or
already too late?

—Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan*

Psychoanalysis plays its own part, of course, in the history that knits together race, sexuality, and evolutionary time lines. Seeking to replace

moralizing views of non-normative sexuality with scientific insight, Freud's theories borrow from nineteenth-century evolutionary theory. We need not hold, as Jerome Bruner does, that "Freud is inconceivable without Darwin" to acknowledge his overt references to Haeckel's biogenetic law.²⁴ Chief among its uses for Freud is its theoretical support for his description of childhood as a prehistoric epoch akin to the primitive days of human civilization. In the preface to the third edition of *Three Essays of the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud foregrounds the recapitulation hypothesis as a central principle of his research: although, he acknowledges, "more weight is attached to ontogenesis than to phylogenesis" in his study, "ontogenesis may be regarded as a recapitulation of phylogenesis."²⁵ Thus inspired, Freud compares individual development with the progress of human society. Other scholars, he writes,

have devoted much more attention to the primaeval period which is comprised in the life of the individual's ancestors—have, that is, ascribed much more influence to heredity—than to the other primaeval period, which falls within the lifetime of the individual himself—that is, to childhood. (173)²⁶

Taking evolution as a metaphor for psychic processes, he names childhood the prehistory of adulthood, analogous with the cultural prehistory of humankind.

The notion that children repeat or recapitulate the actions of their primitive ancestors recurs regularly in Freud's writing. "A Child Is Being Beaten" describes a phase in which children "are compelled to recapitulate from the history of mankind the repression of an unconscious object-choice."²⁷ Thus, in the Wolf Man case study Freud names the primal scene as a form of "phylogenetic heritage" whereby the child "fills in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth; he replaces occurrences in his own life by occurrences in the life of his ancestors."²⁸ Freud continues,

[H]is mental life impressed one in much the same way as the religion of Ancient Egypt, which is so unintelligible to us because it preserves the earlier stages of its development side by side with the end-products . . . and thus, as it were, spreads out upon a two dimensional surface what other instances of evolution show us in the solid.²⁹

The Wolf Man's adult life, Freud suggests, coexists on a single temporal plane with his childhood, having failed to advance the former through the subsumption of the latter. The possibility of coeval temporalities represents an evolutionary mutation of Haeckel's theory in the hands of Freud: the analogy that originally compared two rigidly linear time lines now joins two instances of anachronism that collapse past and present into simultaneity. Nonetheless, the equation between childhood and savagery remains unchanged; long after Haeckel's influence in biology had waned, this equation preserved his analogy in the discourse of Freudian psychoanalysis. Writing in 1934, Marie Bonaparte put the matter succinctly: "[T]he child generally reproduces, in the course of its development, the attitudes of the primitive. The biogenetic law is verified in the psychic as well as in the physical sphere; in it ontogeny reproduces phylogeny."³⁰

In *Three Essays*, the discussion of "sexual aberrations" turns, as if inevitably, to the past. In what Philip Rieff terms an "evolutionist" view of "sexual normality," Freud proposes that normalcy develops, though incompletely, out of perversion.³¹ Accordingly, Freud's developmental narrative posits homosexuality as a kind of atavism, a refusal of progress: "When, therefore, any one has *become* a gross and manifest pervert, it would be more correct to say that he has *remained* one, for he exhibits a certain stage of *inhibited development*" (50). All sexual identity has as its origin the "choice of an object independently of its sex," which exists "in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods of history" (145). The phrase is not redundant, for Freud renders "primitive states of society" the modern analogue of "early periods of history"; the "primitive" lives in the present only to represent the prehistoric past.³² While heterosexuality requires the restriction of this "primitive," original object choice, Freud continues, homosexuality maintains "a predominance of archaic constitutions and primitive psychical mechanisms" (146). The sexual invert, then, occupies an inverted temporality; he looks back when he should press forward. Although the past for Freud is not exclusively homosexual, both male and female homosexuality belong distinctly to the past.³³ Despite his differences from the sexologists, Freud shares their attribution of sexual inversion to a psychic prehistory from which it returns to trouble the present with atavistic impulses, vestiges of sexual and cultural history. He traces inversion to childhood, the historical past, and early evolutionary stages: both homosexuality and pre-Oedipal incestuous desire belong to the "primaeval" infantile origins, the

polymorphous perversity, out of which adult, Oedipal, genital, exogamous heterosexuality must emerge.

However gratifying it may be to find in perversion a universal point of origin, the logic of the “prehistoric epoch” links Freud to a chain of racist analogies: the homosexual *acts like* the modern “primitive,” who *acts like* a child, who, per the recapitulation theory, *acts like* the early hominid. The evolutionary theory used to consign Africans to prehistory has become the prehistory of Freud’s thought, and as such, that of psychoanalysis. True, *Three Essays* begins in a relativist posture with regard to diverse sexual practices, acknowledging the socially validated male homosexuality of ancient Greece. Indeed, Freud continues, “the perversion which is the most repellent to us, the sensual love of a man for a man, was not only tolerated by a people so far our superiors in cultivation as were the Greeks, but was actually entrusted by them with important social functions” (50). He later notes that homosexuality “was a frequent phenomenon—one might almost say an institution charged with important functions—among the peoples of antiquity at the height of their civilization” (139). In the following sentence, however, Freud turns from the past to the present, and from cultures he deems superior to those he finds inferior: homosexuality, he writes, “is remarkably widespread among many savage and primitive races” (139). For Freud, such “races” are atavistic embodiments of the non-Grecian past in the present. Diana Fuss notes the ways in which Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* imagines contemporary “savages” as atavistic relics of history, “temporally other to modern European man” and “psychically frozen in this indeterminate past.”³⁴ So in *Three Essays*, though the Greeks may have been homosexual, modern homosexuality is akin not to past epochs of civilized “antiquity” but to what Freud elsewhere names “the primitive races of whom we have knowledge, whether in past history or at the present time.”³⁵

Freud’s effort to situate homosexuality and savages in a “prehistoric” past serves the future of Freudian theory by cementing his own claim, by contrast, to modernity. Through its engagement with evolution, the nascent field of psychoanalysis, fundamentally a discourse of memory and the past, grasps the future emblemized by empirical science. The time lines of evolutionary theory lend narrative form to what Freud calls his own “scientifically sifted observation” (136). Yet Freud also seeks to disavow his debt to the natural sciences; earlier in *Three Essays*, a few lines after invoking the recapitulation hypothesis, he states that psycho-

analysis is “deliberately independent of the findings of biology” (131). How can psychoanalysis be “deliberately independent” of biology while recapitulating the logic of recapitulation? And why is the possibility of Freud’s own recapitulation so difficult to accept? In fact, Freud’s nod to the natural sciences aligns his psychoanalytic theory with modernity through a curious backward glance. His stake in the future requires the evolutionary theories of prehistory that form the prehistory of his theory. It is not difficult to hear in Freud’s insistence that psychoanalysis is “deliberately independent of the findings of biology” a certain anxiety of influence—a horror of repetition without a difference, of mere, mechanical recapitulation.

Composing his own analytic history, Freud stands in the place of the child who, in his words, fills in gaps in “individual truth” with “prehistoric truth.” His anxiety about recapitulation resonates in the additions and revisions that record the evolution of Freud’s thought in successive, increasingly palimpsestic editions of *Three Essays* from 1905 to 1920. It is perhaps not coincidental that the text’s most sedimented addition comes in a four-page sequence of footnotes on inverted object-choice (144–47). Here, discussing “stunted” sexuality and “primitive states of society,” Freud labors to demonstrate that psychoanalysis is not itself a victim of arrested development. The accretion of notes bespeaks an obsessive restlessness—a desire, perhaps, for the continual revision that would prove his own progress. (If the footnotes in *Three Essays* record the evolution of Freud’s thought, it is appropriate that in the 1975 printing of Volume Seven of the *Standard Edition* the last installment of this note ends at the bottom of page 147 in a sentence without a period—a typographical error that both mimics Freud’s refusal of closure and, with its accidental pun, suggests a refusal of chronology, an absence of periodization.) The desire for temporal progress becomes explicit in the 1909 preface to the second edition, where Freud expresses the “earnest wish” that the text should “age rapidly—that what was once new in it may become generally accepted, and that what is imperfect in it may be replaced by something better” (130). The *text itself* must evolve and mature, however stubbornly and materially writing also preserves the past.

Although Freud’s appeal to biology reveals both a search for scientific legitimacy and a horror of imitative “inhibited development,” the structure of the analogy complicates his effort. When he pursues the therapeutic and theoretical future he does so through suspiciously figural appeals to the “careful and impartial observation” (133) of the natural

sciences. But Freud's use of evolutionary theory to bind sexuality to race turns his claim to scientific authority back on itself, betraying a backward, superstitious, "primitive"—which is to say, literary—discourse whose place he cannot fully acknowledge. Thus, his recapitulation of recapitulation is at once a "scientific" postulate and a fall back to a quite different prehistory of psychoanalysis—the rhetorical tradition encoded in the formal structure of analogy. Throughout his writing, Freud favors analogy as a means of argumentation; the index to Volume Seven of the *Standard Edition*, in which *Three Essays* may be found, includes some fifteen entries for "analogies." Following one citation, we find a passage in which Freud explains that the double mechanism of repression "may be compared to the manner in which tourists are conducted to the top of the Great Pyramid of Giza by being pushed from one direction and pulled from the other" (176). We must look elsewhere to find Freud's caveat: "Analogies, it is true, decide nothing, but they can make one feel more at home."³⁶ The remark cannot help but recall his discussion of the homelike, the *Heimlich*, in his essay on "The Uncanny." Analogies make one feel more at home, in contrast to the uncanny, which is both *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. With a nod to the recapitulation analogy, Freud describes the uncanny as an object of atavistic return: "[E]ach one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to this animistic stage in primitive men," so that "everything which now strikes us as 'uncanny' fulfills the condition of touching those residues of animistic mental activity."³⁷ The home-like structure of analogy, then, guards apotropaically against the horror of uncanny anachronism.

Freud remains self-conscious, however, about analogy's appeal. As Jane Gallop has explained, Freud acknowledges that his susceptibility to what he elsewhere calls "the seduction of an analogy" leads him to treat weighty topics in a "cursory fashion," impatiently hastening to conclusions made easy, perhaps too easy, by the comforting embrace of the familiar.³⁸ That skepticism about the logic of analogies is echoed in Edward J. Corbett's text *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, which cautions against this "the most vulnerable of all modes of argument": "[A]n analogy never proves anything; at best, it persuades someone on the grounds of probability."³⁹ Far from empirical proof, analogy is faulted even in rhetoric for a want of persuasive power. Freud's use of evolutionary biology, then, presents in the guise of science what is in fact a turn to the rhetorical, an appeal to the logic of metaphor that governs condensation in the dream-work. In "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis," Freud suggests

that dreaming “harks back to” an early state of intellectual development, maintaining a structure that is “*archaic or regressive*”:

[T]he prehistory into which the dream-work leads us back is of two kinds—on the one hand, into the individual’s prehistory, his childhood, and on the other, in so far as each individual somehow recapitulates in an abbreviated form from the entire development of the human race, into phylogenetic prehistory too.⁴⁰

One might say that the analogies between ontogeny and phylogeny and between perversion and a racialized primitivism inhabit the dreamwork of Freudian psychoanalysis, the place where an element of the unconscious—not merely Freud’s own, but that of his cultural moment—finds representation. Here we might recall his remarks on repetition and remembering, which promote memory as the therapeutic goal of analysis, in contrast to the pathological repetition of past events.⁴¹ Freud’s use of the biogenetic law shares in the compulsive repetition he attributes to recapitulation when, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he calls Haeckel’s theory one of “the most impressive proofs of there being an organic compulsion to repeat.”⁴² And if biogenetic recapitulation is a model of repetition-compulsion, his repetition of this theory of repetition may be no less compulsive.⁴³ Freud’s recapitulation would then be an avoidance of remembering, even a form of forgetting. But what is it that he forgets? However pointedly he may foreground the evolution of his own thought, Freud’s evolutionary analogy seems an unconscious reenactment—which is to say, another recapitulation—of the process through which white, heteronormative culture incessantly forgets and reenacts the trauma of its encounters with alterity.

Still, the linear time lines of evolutionary theory are not the only temporality operative in psychoanalysis. While Freudian theory participates in the discourses linking primitivism and sexual perversity, it also provides both critical tools and alternative temporal models. Fundamentally, it insists that temporal “aberrations” are normal in psychic life: deferred action or *Nachträglichkeit* delays the impact of events and effect precedes cause in analysis.⁴⁴ Paradoxically, then, psychoanalysis denaturalizes temporality by renaturalizing backwardness, for everyone, Freud insists, lives through retroactive effects. The process of analytic therapy, moreover, has its own backwardness, as Jean Laplanche notes, proceeding from present to past to future as if retracing the “afterwardsness” of psychic

structures.⁴⁵ Lacan's return to Freud elaborates the radical anachrony of subjective experience: subjectivity, suspended between nostalgia and the future perfect, always fails to coincide with itself.⁴⁶ Indeed, we are so thoroughly subjects structured by "the retroaction of the signifier" that each present moment contains both "a past futurity and a future pastness."⁴⁷ So if nineteenth-century scientists posit a linear developmental time line propped up by a backward, double time, Freudian psychoanalysis is equally ambivalent. From the "scientific" recapitulation theory, Freud gains the authority he then spends on theories of more complex, retroactive temporalities. Anachronism underlies the mythology of linear progress, the chronology used to join blackness and homosexuality, while the radical temporality of Freudian thought bears within it, as a kind of prehistory, the linear sequence of the recapitulation theory.

The Seduction of an Analogy

Nothing of futurity will be brighter than the mere
remembrance of what is now passing.

—Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The May-Pole of Merry Mount"

The analogies that symptomatize Freud's literariness—whether the recapitulation hypothesis or the rhetoric of homosexual primitivism—also, of course, inhabit the realm of literature. This study's later chapters will consider a number of fictional and nonfictional narratives that refract such analogies through specific prisms of genre, narrative form, and literary history. I begin, however, with literary criticism, as one instance of the ways in which hegemonic discourses have articulated relations among blackness, queerness, and the past. The critical text in question, at once radically strange and deeply conservative, is Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel*. In this 1960 study, Fiedler argues that in canonical American fiction conventional marriage plots are supplanted by gothic intrigues, morbid sexuality, and idealized, often interracial, male homoeroticism. *Love and Death*, he writes, seeks to show "the failure of the American fictionist to deal with adult heterosexual love and his consequent obsession with death, incest, and innocent homosexuality"—the latter yielding "the archetypal image, found in our favorite books, in which a white and a colored American male flee from civilization into each other's arms."⁴⁸ That trope of

male bonding recurs, Fiedler suggests, in such texts as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), whose narrator Ishmael famously recalls how "in our hearts' honeymoon, lay I and Queequeg—a cozy, loving pair."⁴⁹

Figuring "innocent" homosexuality as infantile and restricting blackness to that childish realm, *Love and Death* recalls the nineteenth-century analogies between cultural evolution and individual development, blackness and homosexuality. Fiedler regards the white man's loving relationship with the black man as fundamentally atavistic, representing his return to, or failure to progress beyond, a "juvenile and regressive" epoch (344), as remote as "the dimmest reaches of pre-history" (347). The analogic pairing of a childish homosexuality and a primitive blackness is not, however, solely mediated by the figure of the child. If the "pure marriage of males" must unite a black man and a white man, if this model of American literary sexuality contrasts the white heterosexual norm with interracial homosexuality, if blackness thus appears on the side of immaturity and perversion, then Fiedler recapitulates once again the temporal analogy between homosexuality and racial alterity whose lineage reaches back beyond the recapitulation theory. "Come Back to the Raft," the first sketch of the reading that would become *Love and Death*, links blackness and homosexuality through the notion of subcultural "ghettos," imagining a "special night club . . . in which fairy or Negro exhibit their fairyness, their Negro-ness." Even Fiedler's effort to differentiate race questions from homosexual ones underscores their resemblance: "The situations of the Negro and the homosexual in our society pose precisely opposite problems, or at least problems suggesting precisely opposite solutions."⁵⁰ Later, reading Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Fiedler argues that Dirk Peters not only "represents the terror and the allure of the homoerotic evasion made flesh," but also recalls "stunted proto-men," a "Neanderthal gnome," and "the primordial figure that symbolizes our broken link with the animal world" (366). The "homoerotic evasion"—by which Fiedler curiously designates an evasion of heterosexuality, not an effort to escape queer desire—reenacts on the level of the individual, and in the person of Dirk Peters, a distinctly racialized past, "stunted" and "Neanderthal," brutish and "primordial." The language is plainly pejorative, and yet, as other passages attest, Fiedler's fascination with this queer, racialized backwardness separates *Love and*

Death from earlier incarnations of the race/sexuality analogy. As a refusal of white modernity, his “homosexual evasion” is imbued with impossible pleasure and murderous enjoyment.

Although its discussion of nineteenth-century American novels reveals more, in the end, about Fiedler’s own twentieth century, *Love and Death in the American Novel* is remarkable for its prescient attention to intersections of race and sexuality in American literature. True, the text seems ahistorically embedded in its own historical moment, a time capsule of dubious assumptions and canonical constriction. Eclipsed by more recent psychoanalytic approaches and rightly assailed by feminist and African American critics for its less than inclusive view of the American canon, *Love and Death* stands at odds with today’s historicist and queer criticism.⁵¹ But if reading Fiedler today seems a little backward, a touch “retro,” it may be worth doing precisely for the sake of anachronism. As a white fantasy about white fantasies, a straight dream about straight dreams, *Love and Death* shows how the rhetoric of anachronism binding blackness to queerness is itself structured by anachronism.

First, credit where credit is due: despite its oddly homophobic homophobia, *Love and Death* counters the repressive hypothesis by recognizing perversity as an internal and constitutive part of the American tradition, not an external threat or a minor contamination.

[H]orror is essential to our literature. It is not merely a matter of terror filling the vacuum left by the suppression of sex in our novels, of Thanatos standing in for Eros. Through these gothic images are projected certain obsessive concerns of our national life. (xxii)

Though the gothic is the “terror” supplanting ordinary sexuality here, Fiedler will include homosexuality in his literary “chamber of horrors” (xxii). Even the “pure marriage of males” (345), whose boyish, unconsummated innocence he takes pains to separate from the vulgarity of adult homosexuality, takes its place alongside gothic horror.⁵² Elaborating the dualistic structure of its title, *Love and Death* makes all love heterosexual: queer relations turn out not to be love at all, but instead another kind of death, for even when unconsummated, homosexuality joins gothic morbidity at the nether pole of this literary topography. But Fiedler’s uncharitable inclusion of homosexuality in the category of “horror” does not negate the power of imagining the American canon, to borrow from Foucault, as a literature of “blatant

and fragmented perversion.”⁵³ Our national literature does not repress perversity but depends on it; we do not shun deviance but seek and speak it endlessly.

Still, despite Fiedler’s psychoanalytic interests, the figural constellation of blackness, same-sex love, and the childhood past on which his thesis depends forgets Freud’s central insight on infantile sexuality.⁵⁴ In the Freudian model, there can be no “pure,” boyish, homosexual love, because there is no moment of human life, no form of human relationship, outside the pale of the libido. This strategic amnesia bespeaks the role played by race in Fiedler’s fantasy. Why must the beloved be black? Could not an immature homosexuality step in to fill the place of failed adult heterosexuality without the element of racial difference? Fiedler’s answer falls back on a vulgar Freudianism: the beloved must be black because blackness represents the unconscious, because African Americans belong to “a race suppressed and denied, even as the promptings of the libido are suppressed and denied” (362). Indeed, he continues, “Edenic nature, the totem, and the dark spouse: these are three symbols for the same thing—for the primitive world which lies beyond the margins of cities and beneath the lintel of consciousness” (362).⁵⁵ The comparison of people of color with an unrepressed, “primitive” sexuality is surely troubling, but troubling too is the way in which that comparison obviates Fiedler’s own insistence on the innocence of the male-male relationships he names—relationships now infused with the libido, the unconscious, and the forbidden. Predictably, then, the innocence at stake in *Love and Death* is white innocence. The black man must represent desire so that the white man may disavow it; the beloved must be black to purify white childhood, to absolve Huck Finn of his own polymorphous perversity.

Fiedler’s story of this innocent horror offers a fictional (one might say novelistic) account of race and sexuality in and out of narrative sequence. In his account, it is the “failure of love”—which is to say, the failure of normative heterosexuality—that first opens a void to be filled by perversity. “The death of love,” Fiedler explains, “left a vacuum at the affective heart of the American novel into which there rushed the love of death” (126–27). In this view, gothic morbidity and a no less fatal homosexuality are opportunistic or compensatory formations that take the place of straight romance when that “true” love falters. This notion, however, invites questions both within and beyond the scope of the text. First, where Fiedler regards sexual normalcy and deviation as mutually exclusive and distinctly opposed, other readers, including Freud, would

see them as inextricable.⁵⁶ Foucault writes, “Modern society is perverse, not in spite of its puritanism or as if from a backlash provoked by its hypocrisy; it is in actual fact, and directly, perverse.”⁵⁷ Perversity, that is, inhabits the discourse of sexual propriety not as an exception to the rule of law but as a mainstay of that law. Second, *Love and Death* goes astray by inverting the temporal relation of homo and hetero. We might more accurately say that normative sexuality arises from the failure of corruption—as in a text well within Fiedler’s canon, Hawthorne’s “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” which expresses marital heteronormativity as the *remainder* that appears after illicit enjoyment is subtracted from the whole of sexuality.⁵⁸ While Fiedler identifies homosexuality as a symptom of heterosexuality (the appearance of a vital homosexuality is *an effect of* an attenuated heterosexuality), today’s readers are more likely to see heterosexuality as a symptom of homosexuality (the appearance of a “natural” and culturally validated heterosexuality is *an effect of* a demonized homosexuality). Third, though Fiedler imagines the homo trailing after the hetero, he also offers a precisely opposite time line. While Fiedler represents homosexuality as secondary, following after the “death of love,” he also represents homosexuality—the “innocent” kind, at least—as *primary*, rooted in childhood and only *later* supplanted by the straight and narrow path of socially responsible bonds.

Love and Death, then, understands homosexuality *both* as what comes before, the relic of a racialized past, *and* as what follows after, the symptom of a failed heterosexuality. How can this be? While the homosexual relation represents the primitive, infantile origin of adult heterosexuality, homosexuality also appears as a sort of parasite, feeding on the failure of normative heterosexuality. Discussing the relation of speech to writing in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida questions our ability “to conclude that what . . . comes ‘after’ is parasitic.”⁵⁹ The writing that is reputedly secondary to speech becomes, in his reading, inherently primary. Similarly, in *Love and Death* homosexuality seems parasitic in relation to heterosexuality when it arrives to profit from straight love’s collapse. As Derrida hints, however, this “parasite” comes before, not after. The queer parasite *precedes* its host—not merely because perversity, like writing, is always present in the structure it seems to disturb, but also because the heterosexuality *that produces it* is also *produced out of it*. One might protest that same-sex desire does not really postdate the heteronormative, but merely rushes back from the past to fill the void left by the “death of love” in the present. But even this formulation renders the queer past both

originary and secondary: homosexuality becomes anterior after the fact, coming later to fill the place of the past. It can only be imagined after the hetero; it is *invented* by the normalcy it purportedly precedes.

Fiedler elaborates this temporal sequence in his introduction, explaining that the book “does not spring to life unbegotten, unaffiliated, and unsponsored,” but was born in “the moment that I read aloud to two of my sons (then five and seven) for their first time *Huckleberry Finn*” (xi). The novel that Fiedler will go on to name “a myth of childhood, rural, sexless, yet blessed in its natural Eden by the promise of innocent love” (561), here begets, along with a scholarly book, a cozy familial scene, motherless but secure in its claim to the heterosexual norm. Here the child is father of the man, who is father of a rather different child: the “sterile” and “infantile” homosexual relation of Huck and Jim, in this fantasy, *enables* the properly filial masculine relations it will also seem parasitically to follow and perversely to oppose. The paradox suggests one way in which white heteronormativity is sustained by the temporal involutions it ascribes to others. It is not that the homo is “really” primary, supplanting the hetero, but that the very notion of the primary is a fantasy, fleshed out by the figures that best serve each narrative contingency. If queer boyishness only follows straight maturity by preceding it, this anachronism also functions in the reverse: the wholesome adult heterosexuality that Fiedler views as de facto lost or compromised in American fiction is actually a retroactive projection from the “later” vantage point of infantile perversity. Though Fiedler names the world of homosexual relations as a “natural Eden”—the chapter on Twain is subtitled “Faust in the Eden of Childhood”—in fact *Love and Death in the American Novel* presents *heterosexuality* as the lost Eden of American literature. It is heterosexuality whose idyllic order must have been displaced by a fall into perversion—whether gothic morbidity or interracial homosexuality—and nostalgically invested with a longing possible only in the absence of its object. The straight libidinal economy that, in its absence, forms the cornerstone of *Love and Death* is always already lost, produced only in the act of mourning, such that Fiedler’s account of what happens in the aftermath of heterosexuality in American literature is in fact a project of inventing *heterosexuality* as a mythic lost origin.

Like nineteenth-century sexology, evolutionary theory, and Freudian psychoanalysis, Fiedler’s literary history shares the analogy that links queerness and blackness with the anachronistic obtrusion of the past into the present, binding all of them within the circuit of a structuring

temporal loop. Here again, the time line circles back on itself; the cult of progress, development, and futurity sustains itself through its own perverse temporality. *Love and Death*, we might say, is not only anachronistic now; it was always anachronistic, informed by the backwardness it attributed to others. But the critical response to Fiedler, in whose optic his work now seems a relic of the critical past, cannot speak from outside ideology. How, after all, might the “progressive” critique of Fiedler’s backwardness avoid his own disdainful fascination with a (politically, if not sexually) deviant past? If rereading *Love and Death* prompts us to question its fantasy of linear temporality, it must also call into question narratives of political and literary progress, to ensure, at the least, that the critique of straight time does not itself carelessly accept to the geometry of straight time.

There is no structure, no narrative, that does not in some way contain its other. Going back historically to the mid-nineteenth century, the next chapter will examine other ways in which efforts to resist temporal hegemony take shape within the structures they critique. There, we find texts by Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs which attempt to redress the exclusion of African Americans from prominent temporal structures, but do so at the cost of replacing notions of regressive blackness with those of regressive sexual perversity. The racist equation of blackness with primitivism and with anachronism that this chapter has traced through history, psychoanalysis, and literary criticism becomes the provocation and problem against which both Douglass and Jacobs write. Still, such texts repeat in inverted form the logic that descends from what Frederic’s *Diana* calls “archaic inclinations” through the analogies of Freud, Fiedler, and the sexologists. If the straight time lines that sustain racial and sexual hegemony cannot escape anachronism, conversely, efforts to resist that dominant order may find it impossible not to keep that time.