

The Other Orpheus

A Poetics of Modern Homosexuality

Merrill Cole



LITERARY CRITICISM AND CULTURAL
THEORY

OUTSTANDING DISSERTATIONS

edited by
William E. Cain
Wellesley College

A ROUTLEDGE SERIES

OTHER BOOKS IN THIS SERIES:

WORD OF MOUTH

Food and Fiction after Freud

Susanne Skubal

THE WASTE FIX

Seizures of the Sacred from Upton

Sinclair to The Sopranos

William G. Little

WILL THE CIRCLE BE

UNBROKEN?

Family and Sectionalism in the

Virginia Novels of Kennedy,

Caruthers, and Tucker, 1830–1845

John L. Hare

POETIC GESTURE

Myth, Wallace Stevens, and the

Motions of Poetic Language

Kristine S. Santilli

BORDER MODERNISM

Intercultural Readings in American

Literary Modernism

Christopher Schedler

THE MERCHANT OF

MODERNISM

The Economic Jew in Anglo-

American Literature, 1864–1939

Gary Martin Levine

THE MAKING OF THE

VICTORIAN NOVELIST

Anxieties and Authorship in the

Mass Market

Bradley Deane

OUT OF TOUCH

Skin Tropes and Identities in

Woolf, Ellison, Pynchon, and Acker

Maureen F. Curtin

WRITING THE CITY

Urban Visions and Literary

Modernism

Desmond Harding

FIGURES OF FINANCE

CAPITALISM

Writing, Class, and Capital in the

Age of Dickens

Borislav Knezevic

BALANCING THE BOOKS

Faulkner, Morrison, and the

Economies of Slavery

Erik Dussere

BEYOND THE SOUND BARRIER

The Jazz Controversy in Twentieth-

Century American Fiction

Kristen K. Henson

SEGREGATED

MISCEGENATION

On the Treatment of Racial

Hybridity in the U.S. and Latin

American Literary Traditions

Carlos Hiraldo

DEATH, MEN, AND

MODERNISM

Trauma and Narrative in British

Fiction from Hardy to Woolf

Ariela Freedman

THE SELF IN THE CELL

Gender and Genre in Woolf,

Forster, Sinclair, and Lawrence

James J. Miracky

SATIRE AND THE

POSTCOLONIAL NOVEL

V.S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe,

Salman Rushdie

John Clement Ball

THROUGH THE NEGATIVE

The Photographic Image and the

Written Word in Nineteenth-

Century American Literature

Megan Williams

LOVE AMERICAN STYLE

Divorce and the American Novel,
1881–1976

Kimberly Freeman

FEMINIST UTOPIAN NOVELS
OF THE 1970s

Joanna Russ and Dorothy Bryant
Tatiana Teslenko

DEAD LETTERS TO THE NEW
WORLD

*Melville, Emerson, and American
Transcendentalism*
Michael McLoughlin

THE OTHER ORPHEUS

A Poetics of Modern
Homosexuality

Merrill Cole

ROUTLEDGE
NEW YORK & LONDON

Published in 2003 by
Routledge
29 West 35th Street
New York, NY 10001
www.routledge-ny.com

Published in Great Britain by
Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane
London EC4P 4EE
www.routledge.co.uk

Copyright © 2003 by Taylor & Francis Books, Inc.

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group.

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.”

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the publishers.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Cole, Merrill, 1966

The other Orpheus: a poetics of modern homosexuality/by Merrill
Cole.

p. cm.—(Literary criticism and cultural theory)
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-203-50927-7 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-57873-2 (Adobe eReader Format)

ISBN 0-415-96705-8 (Hardcover : alk. paper)

1. American poetry—20th century—History and criticism.
2. Homosexuality and literature—United States—History—20th century.
3. Homosexuality and literature—France—History—19th century.
4. Eliot, T.S. (Thomas Stearns), 1888–1965. Waste land.
5. Crane, Hart, 1899–1932—Criticism and interpretation.
6. Rimbaud, Arthur, 1854–1891. Illuminations.
7. Modernism (Literature)—United States.
8. Orpheus (Greek mythology) in literature.
9. Erotic poetry—History and criticism.
10. Sex in literature. I. Title. II. Series.

PS310.H66C65 2003

811'.509353—dc21

2003007030

La musique savante manque à notre désir.

—Arthur Rimbaud

Contents

	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	viii
INTRODUCTION:	The Intellectual Life of the Feelings	1
CHAPTER ONE:	The Anatomy of Decision: <i>Modernist Bodies and the Meaning of “No”</i>	17
CHAPTER Two:	The Rack of Enchantments: “ <i>New Love</i> ” in <i>Rimbaud’s Illuminations</i>	39
CHAPTER THREE:	Jouissance of the Commodities: <i>Rimbaud against Erotic Reification</i>	69
CHAPTER FOUR:	Empire of the Closet: <i>Erotic Colonization in The Waste Land</i>	91
CHAPTER FIVE:	Perversion’s Permanent Target: <i>Hart Crane and the Uses of Memory</i>	116
	AFTERWORD: A Lovely End	141
	EPILOGUE: Wine	144
	NOTES	146
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	166
	INDEX	174

Acknowledgments

Writing *The Other Orpheus* has been a long-term project. I have many people to thank.

In 1991, Phyllis Janowitz, my MFA thesis advisor at Cornell University, told me that my suspicions about homoeroticism in the poetry of T.S.Eliot were right on target. That was the beginning. Four years later, at the University of Washington, Tim Dean and Jeanne Heuving assisted me in developing an extended analysis of Eliot, which would become the starting-point and fourth chapter of the dissertation. Christopher Lane's criticism of this essay helped to make it appropriate for publication in *Discourse*. Leroy Searle guided the entire dissertation, and also provided a great deal of moral support. Nancy Rubino helped me with the Arthur Rimbaud chapters. Ranjana Khanna's comments on the completed dissertation were highly useful in figuring out what to do next. Tim Dean helped me sharpen my argument about Hart Crane; Tim's assistance and support have been invaluable through my graduate career and beyond. The third chapter owes a debt to Ann Kibbey, who published it in *Genders*, after providing excellent editorial advice. Brian Reed offered highly useful commentary on the complete manuscript, as I prepared to resubmit it to Routledge.

The Graduate School at the University of Washington gave me a scholarship to France, which helped to make the Rimbaud chapters possible. The one-year position I held at the University of Minnesota, Morris allowed me a good deal of time to develop this book. I thank Gulf Coast Community College for hiring me as an adjunct at the last possible moment, thus giving me time to complete final revisions.

I thank Paul Foster Johnson, my editor at Routledge, for encouraging me to find a better title for the book.

All four of my parents, Carole and Lee Lapensohn, and Paula and Grant Cole, provided material support at various points in the process. I thank my Mother, Carole, for proofreading the manuscript and offering substantive criticism.

An enormous debt of gratitude goes to my former partner, Tony Potts, who gave me a life outside of academia during graduate school; and to

Frank Mersand, whose friendship since college has been a blessing. Finally, I thank my current partner, Jeff Stuckey, for all the reasons he knows.

CREDITS:

“Asphodel, That Greeny Flower (excerpt)” by William Carlos Williams, from *COLLECTED POEMS: 1939–1962, VOLUME II*, copyright © 1944 by William Carlos Williams. Used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

“Bad Blood,” “Alchemy of the Verb,” and “Farewell (excerpts)” by Arthur Rimbaud, translated by Louise Varèse, from *A SEASON IN HELL & THE DRUNKEN BOAT*, copyright © 1961 by New Directions Publishing Corp. Used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

“By Way Of A Preface,” “After the Deluge (excerpt),” “Childhood (excerpt),” “Tale (excerpt),” “Side Show (excerpt),” “Antique,” “Beauteous Being (excerpt),” “Departure (excerpt),” “To a Reason,” “Morning of Drunkenness,” “Working People (excerpt),” “City (excerpt),” “Vagabonds (excerpt),” “Common Nocturne,” “Historic Evening (excerpt),” “Democracy,” “War,” “Genie (excerpt),” “Youth (excerpt),” and “Sale,” by Arthur Rimbaud, translated by Louise Varèse, from *ILLUMINATIONS*, copyright © 1957 by New Directions Publishing Corp. Used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

“Canto I, LXXXI (excerpts)” by Ezra Pound, from *THE CANTOS OF EZRA POUND*, copyright © 1934, 1937, 1940, 1948, 1956, 1959, 1962, 1963, 1966, and 1968 by Ezra Pound. Used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

“The Death of Saint Narcissus” from *POEMS WRITTEN IN EARLY YOUTH* by T.S.Eliot. Copyright © 1965, renewed 1995 by Valerie Eliot. Reprinted with permission of Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, LLC.

“Empire of the Closet” by Merrill Cole, from *Discourse* 19.3, copyright © 1997 *Discourse*. Used by Permission of *Discourse*.

“Eurydice” and “Tribute to the Angels (excerpts)” by H.D.(Hilda Doolittle), from *COLLECTED POEMS, 1912–1944*, copyright © 1982 by The Estate of Hilda Doolittle. Used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Excerpt from “Legend” by Marc Simon, editor, excerpt from “Emblems of Conduct,” “Paraphrase,” excerpt from “Possessions,” excerpt from “Lachrymae Christi,” “Passage,” excerpt from “The Wine Menagerie” by Marc Simon, editor, excerpt from “Recitative,” excerpt from “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen” by Marc Simon, editor, excerpt from “Voyages I” by Marc Simon, editor, excerpt from “Voyages III,” excerpt from “Voyages VI,” excerpt from “C 33” by Marc Simon, editor, excerpt from “The Broken Tower,” excerpt from “Forgetfulness” by Marc Simon, editor, and excerpt from “Episode of Hands” by Marc Simon, editor, from *THE COMPLETE POEMS OF HART CRANE* by Hart Crane, edited by

Marc Simon. Copyright 1933, 1958, 1966 by Liveright Publishing Corporation. Copyright © 1986 by Marc Simon. Used by permission of Liveright Publishing Corporation.

“Hugh Selwyn Mauberley II: The Age Demanded (excerpts)” by Ezra Pound, from *PERSONAE*, copyright © 1926 by Ezra Pound. Used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

“Personism: A Manifesto” from *COLLECTED POEMS* by Frank O’Hara, copyright © 1971 by Maureen Granville-Smith, Administratrix of the Estate of Frank O’Hara. Used by Permission of Alfred A.Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.

Purgatorio. The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Volume II (excerpt), translated by Allen Mandelbaum, University of California Press, 1982. Used by permission of Bantam Books.

INTRODUCTION

The Intellectual Life of the Feelings

In the opening salvo of “A Boy’s Life: For Matthew Shepard’s Killers, What Does It Take to Pass as a Man?,” a September 1999 *Harper’s Magazine* article published eleven months after the murder, JoAnn Wypijewski sets out to distance her critical investigation from the more aesthetic and sentimental accounts preceding it. “From the beginning,” she writes, “there was something too awfully iconic about the case” (61). After a preliminary outline of the “real and fanciful detail” surrounding the sequence of events in Laramie, Wyoming, Wypijewski provides a cautionary tale about the professional journalist, Melanie Thernstrom, who became too emotionally involved:

At the site where Shepard was murdered, in a field of prairie grass and sagebrush within eyeshot of suburban houses, a cross has been laid out in pink limestone rocks. In crotches of the killing fence, two stones have been placed; one bears the word ‘love’; the other, ‘forgive/ The poignancy of those messages has been transmitted out and beyond via television; it is somewhat diminished if one knows that the stones were put there by a journalist, whose article about the murder for *Vanity Fair* was called The Crucifixion of Matthew Shepard.’

Torture is more easily imagined when masked in iconography but no better understood. (61)

It is doubtless that attention to the social conditions enabling homophobic aggression, or the spelling-out of how American culture engenders an always potentially violent masculinity, serves better political purpose than merely enshrining Shepard as a sacrificial hero. As Wypijewski argues, it is “the culture of compulsory heterosexuality,” rather than Shepard’s personality, that deserves interrogation (73). Whatever catharsis the tragedy of the individual sufferer renders available to its audience, or however much pathos the untimely death of an attractive young man elicits, would appear a poor substitute for cultural critique. Wypijewski’s trenchant analysis, along with such endeavors as Beth Loffreda’s 2000

academic study, *Losing Matt Shepard: Life and Politics in the Aftermath of Anti-Gay Murder*, and Moisés Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project's 2001 *The Laramie Project*, points us toward critical self-reflection as a society.

What Wypijewski's antisentimentality elides, nonetheless, is its enabling condition: it was the murder's sacrificial scripting, its suitability to a representational economy she dismisses as "myth" (61), that made Shepard's story eminently reproducible, a national and international news sensation, and thus a narrative available for sophisticated interventions such as her own. An explanation of the media's interest simply referencing the victim's youth, beauty, social class, and light skin-color would mistake enabling conditions for causes. Like his gender, these attributes rendered Shepard susceptible to aesthetic universalization; they are precisely the markers that our culture tends to receive as unmarked. No one lacking such characteristics could become a "child-saint" (71), Christ figure, and sacrificial victim. Jim Osborn, then chair of the University of Wyoming's Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Association, tells Loffreda that Shepard was "someone we can identify with. Matt was the boy next door. He looked like everybody's brother and everybody's neighbor. He looked like he could have been anyone's son" (Loffreda 27). In the context of his demise, Shepard's homosexuality is anything but a disqualifying factor, for death had once been the prerequisite for the male homosexual's full entry into social representation. The homosexual's death, in the decades between Oscar Wilde's disgrace and the Stonewall Riots, had wielded a particular aesthetic force, the power of which remained apparently undiminished in the era of celebrity outings and lesbian sitcom kisses. The incident's brutal and evocative unfolding, Shepard "hijacked to a lonely spot outside of town, bludgeoned beyond recognition, and left to die without his shoes" (Wypijewski 61), together with the man's empathetic small loveliness, set the stage for a fully embodied representation of sacrifice, the most enduring, and perhaps the most potent, mythology in the Western imaginary.¹

Although Wypijewski would have our sentimental experience of the crime scene "somewhat diminished" by the journalist's participation, we could just as easily read Melanie Thernstrom's physical intervention, her positioning of the inscribed stones, as a sign of how emotionally compelling that site was. This is especially so, if we subscribe to the stereotype of the "hardboiled" reporter. What Wypijewski implies to be the betrayal of professional protocol, we can, to follow the sacrificial logic, interpret as a sacrifice itself in fidelity to something "deeper" or "higher" than professional ethics. Antisentimentality, as a rhetorical technique that must take recourse to its opposite, courts the risk of reproducing it. More problematic is Wypijewski's ideological assumption that the commemoration of a friend or fellow towns person should seem more

authentic to us than Thernstrom's, as though the journalist's responsibility to represent "what really happened" renders her a less innocent witness. Wypijewski explicitly engages in ideology critique. She cleverly uncovers the contradictions of cowboy mythology: "For the men of Laramie who didn't grow up on a ranch riding horses and roping cattle—that is, most of them—the cowboy cult appears to be as natural as the antlers affixed to a female elk's head hanging on a wall at the Buckhorn [Bar]" (68). Wypijewski shows how a cowboy image that in one context seems a straightforward, traditional depiction of masculinity, in another becomes pure gay camp (69). Given this, her assumption that a proper ordering of representation should be maintained in the control of maudlin excess deserves scrutiny. "A Boy's Life" argues that our culture teaches men not to express emotion, and that the man who attempts to suppress his emotions may end up releasing them in violence. To dramatize one's feelings means to display weakness, or, in the particular vocabulary of American boyhood, to expose oneself as a "wuss" (63). Like Wypijewski's readers, boys, it would seem, are enjoined against indulgence in sentimentality.

The awful iconicism of Matthew Shepard's murder is not at all easy to circumvent. If Thernstrom becomes a compromised participant in its production, Wypijewski's more rigorous argument deconstructs in the effort to evade its affective pull. In his introduction to *The Laramie Project*, Moises Kaufman references the modernist playwright, Bertold Brecht. The play, concerned with how "a particular event brings the various ideologies and beliefs prevailing in a culture into sharp focus" (v), has to do with the community of Laramie after Shepard's death, rather than with a dramatization of the murder. Unlike other artistic representations of the event and its aftermath, *The Laramie Project* abjures the representational strategies of conventional tragedy, instead relying on Brecht's concept of alienation, whereby the spectator's emotional disengagement from the staged action should open space for a more critical response. Nor is the spectator encouraged to identify with a tragic hero. Dialogue consists, for the most part, of the unaltered words of local residents and their interviews with Tectonic Project members, a technique avoiding the playwright's rhetorical amplifications. The arrangement of speakers into scenes that the script terms "moments" breaks up the Aristotelian unity of action, sometimes abating dramatic tension. Even though the three acts center upon the crime, the discovery, and the funeral, respectively, multiple digressions in time and place work against tragic sequencing. The stage directions stipulate that the performance space should "suggest, not recreate" the original scenes (vi); and the same actors perform multiple roles, with minimal costume changes. Where the conventions of dramatic realism encourage an audience to receive a self-contained stage representation passively, the staging of *The Laramie Project* works to

engage spectators as critical participants. The performance, therefore, does not deliver an encapsulated message or moral, even as it problematizes aspects of American day-to-day ideology: it is the task of audience members to draw their own conclusions from the multiple perspectives voiced therein.

While structured to make its audience think, *The Laramie Project* also engages the emotions. Intent on representing the full range of Laramie's response to the murder, the play has Shepard's lesbian friend, Romaine Patterson, recount how she helped to orchestrate an "Angel Action" against the Reverend Fred Phelps and his anti-gay protest entourage (80). Its dramatic reenactment is a metatheatrical interlude, for the "Angel Action" was itself a performance:

So our idea is to dress up like angels. And so we have designed an angel outfit—our wings are huge—they're like big-ass wings—and there'll be ten or twenty of us that are angels—and what we're gonna do is we're gonna encircle Phelps...and because of our big wings—we are gonna com-plete-ly block him.

So this big-ass band of angels comes in, and we don't say a fuckin' word, we just turn our backs to him and we stand there.... And we are a group of people bringing forth a message of peace and love and compassion. And we're calling it 'Angel Action.' (79–80)

Again, the exhortation is to "love" and "forgive." Here the sacrificial script, elsewhere somewhat withheld by the play's Brechtian structure, releases its affective charge.² Patterson mentions briefly that her protest was held during the trial of one of the perpetrators, which took place more than six months after the murder; however, in placing her monologue in unbroken proximity to the funeral liturgy, wherein salvation is promised, the play intensifies the action's symbolic appeal. This is evidence for what Loffreda terms *The Laramie Project's* "redemptive heart" (127).

The Laramie Project acknowledges that the boundary between theater and "real life," like the one between performer and audience, is provisional. However, another "Moment," a few short scenes after Patterson's monologue, might appear to reestablish demarcations blurred by the "Angel Action." University of Wyoming theater major Jedediah Schultz expresses perplexity concerning his parents' hostility toward his intention to audition for *Angels in America*, a gay-themed play, when previously they had not objected to seeing him perform as a murderer in *Macbeth* (85). There is a problem, the play would imply, when parents would prefer to cast their boys as killers, rather than as queers. While we might conclude that the parents should have known how to separate their son's role in any given play from his ordinary self, this is hardly the sole instance in *The Laramie Project* when homosexuality confuses the ordinary

drawing of distinctions. Schultz's ordinary self, of course, becomes part of the content of what is arguably another gay-themed play. When Doug Laws states the Mormon faith's objection to homosexuality, that "God has set his boundaries" (25), his unintentional irony evokes the image of the fence on which Shepard died.

A play dramatizing the courtroom discourse of both perpetrators subtly raises the question of whether we can ultimately separate action from dramatic representation. And we cannot say with certainty that Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson were not themselves, in the night that they left Shepard to die on the fence, performing roles in a script that had been written long before they were born, the same script to which Thernstrom and Patterson, among innumerable others, responded. In Act III of *The Laramie Project*, McKinney confesses, "it was like somebody else was doing it" (90). "'The story' passed into myth," Wypijewski writes, "even before the trail had been set, and at this point fact, rumor, politics, protective cover, and jailhouse braggadocio are so entangled that the truth may be elusive even to the protagonists" (61). That "truth" may have been a myth all along.

Wypijewski suggests as much when she hypothesizes that Henderson and McKinney's adherence to an impossible-to-fulfill masculine ideal played a causal role in their crime. Yet her disdain for the affective dynamics of the murder scene precludes investigation of a darker possibility. As Donna Minkowitz asserts in "Love and Hate in Laramie," an article published in the June 12, 1999 issue of *The Nation*, "[m]edia reports to the contrary, gay bashing is an erotic crime, not just a violent one" (22). Minkowitz considers Shepard's killing a sacrifice, imagining that at the "holy place" of the crime, the perpetrators found "all their worthlessness ...redeemed" (23). What Loffreda in her preface calls the "American transubstantiation" (x) of Matthew Shepard deserves critical scrutiny. This is not to argue against how important it is for critics to counter the easy stereotype of Wyoming as "the hate state," whereby we might lose the sense that an anti-gay murder could indeed happen anywhere (Loffreda 12). It is also crucial to oppose the simplistic portrayal of the perpetrators as "monsters," for the unexceptional character of the two young men suggests they could have grown up, with minor variations, in any American locale (Wypijewski 62). However, pointing out that Shepard "was not crucified" in "the most literal definition of the word" does not suffice as demystification (Wypijewski 62).

All accounts of Shepard's death have had to deal with an economy that this study will term "sacrificial." The sacrificial economy, not necessarily a narrative, drama, or poetics, is a signficatory system that, while first articulated in poetry, proves adaptable to television, newsprint, or any other means of representation. It forms an "economy" because it entails the regulation and mobilization of affect. The ideology of feeling as the

natural or spontaneous expression of the self, beyond and behind the mediations of language, from which, among other concomitants, follows the disconnection of critical thought from emotional response, is part of this economy. To critique it means to consider affect in terms of signification. That affect belongs to the order of representation, though, does not render it always amenable to conscious mediation. As part of the libidinal economy theorized in the writings of Sigmund Freud, affect is also unconscious.³ If, as Jacques Lacan famously states, the unconscious is the discourse of the Other—that is to say, of the symbolic order—then it may be affect that articulates and disarticulates the volitional self, as opposed to the commonsense notion that the self expresses emotion. The self repressing emotion would also be an over-simple formulation. Instead of advancing the basic Freudian thesis that McKinney and Henderson reacted violently to repressed homoerotic desire, as Minkowitz suggests, it would be better to consider how they responded to the discourse of the Other. To do so would not be to abjure them of the crime, for Lacanian ethics consists in keeping a certain distance from the violent injunctions of the unconscious. McKinney's abdication of responsibility, his statement that the crime felt "like somebody else was doing it," makes horrifying sense from this perspective.

Christian symbolism is everywhere evident in the response to the murder, even where the religion would appear to have little more status than metaphor. To figure interpersonal relations in the language of Christian devotion, and thereby to make sacrifice the proof and substance of human love, is the inaugural strategy of Western love poetry. As Lacan explains in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, the courtly love poetry of the troubadours helped to bring about in the West a reorganization of "sentimental attachments" that remains very much in effect today (148). *The Other Orpheus* concerns the specific challenges posed to the sacrificial economy by male homoeroticism in modernist poetry. While not an analysis of current events, except insofar as it intervenes in contemporary queer and cultural theory, this study is premised on the conviction that attention to poetry can reward serious cultural critique. "Queer" modernism, I will argue, can help us better to understand the contemporary situation, as well as the past, the history of which has been written in such a way as to obscure all it has to offer us. My analysis of the discourses surrounding Matthew Shepard's murder serves not only to introduce the continuing entanglement of male homosexuality in the sacrificial economy, but also to suggest that the aesthetic deserves much more critical attention than it currently receives. Analyzing the work of the sacrificial economy in representations of Shepard's death does not point us towards alternatives to that economy. The close readings in the chapters that follow will serve to demonstrate, among other things, that we can locate

less violent constructions of masculinity, as well as better ways to mobilize affect, in homoerotic poetry.

Although the irrelevance of poetry is tacit in much of recent cultural critique, Terry Eagleton's *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* states it rather bluntly. Opposing nonetheless the "automatic condemnation" (8) of his titular subject in leftist political discourses, Eagleton argues for a more nuanced and dialectical understanding of the various meanings attached to "the aesthetic" since its bourgeois conception, taking his reader from Enlightenment rationality to postmodern indeterminacy. It is worth considering how he dismisses poetry. After "the work of Blake and Shelley," he writes, "'political poetry'" becomes "an effective oxymoron": "There can be little truck between an analytical language of political dissent and those subtly sensuous intensities which are now coming to monopolize the meaning of poetry." (61) This statement would remove all modern—not to mention, all postmodern—poetry from leftist consideration.⁴ Eagleton does not back up his summary claim with textual evidence. The rejection of poetry as a subject of discussion reinforces the bipolar dichotomy of thought and affect, for in upholding a distinction between "the analytical language of political dissent" and "subtly sensuous intensities," Eagleton rehearses the Kantian aesthetic he elsewhere subjects to critique: "Kant associates the sublime with the masculine and military, useful antidotes against a peace which breeds cowardice and effeminacy." (90) The ideological effect of the sublime is to wrench the implicitly male subject "from the maternal pleasures of Nature and experience," in order to lift him to a "higher" location, "the phallic law of abstract reason" (91). Feminine "peace" is the beautiful; in other words, it is nothing other than the realm of "subtly sensuous intensities."

Sexism relies upon the symmetrical opposition of two genders. We should note that the language of homophobia, structured in borrowed sexist bifurcations, contrasts the "real" man, who takes interest in serious matters, such as politics, with the homosexual, whose pursuits are frivolous and empty of meaning. In much of traditional Marxism, the "nonproductive" male homosexual was an important sign of bourgeois decadence, just as he symbolized aristocratic decadence for the Victorian bourgeoisie. Eagleton lapses into a masculinist ideology of dissent, which, if taken to its extreme, would not only preclude the playfully effective innovations of queer activism, but also the queer idea that affective displays are political, as illustrated by the Queer Nation "kiss-in" and Romaine Patterson's "Angel Action." Eagleton's lapse occurs at the very moment he kisses off poetry, and this may be no coincidence: the dismissal of poetry, usually also a defense against affect, dovetails with the belittlement of men who engage in untoward emotional display and verbal extravagance. The traces of homophobia in Eagleton's discourse do not render the critic an active homophobe; rather, they suggest the unconscious

work of ideology. Nor do I wish to imply that all queer males adhere to Wildean stereotype: it is enough that the homophobic imaginary conceives them thus. “Wussitude,” Wypijewski quips, “haunts a boy’s every move” (63). One sure sign of it is an interest in poetry. In Nicki Elder’s Laramie High School creative writing class, “students who wrote love poetry were deemed ‘faggots’” (Loffreda 116).

In her discussion of Elton John’s charity performance in Laramie, Loffreda writes, “it seemed to me, as I listened to straight professors tell me how moved they had been by the concert, how important it was, that a purchased ticket and a few shed tears didn’t count much as political action; and that it was a dearly bought mistake to let oneself think otherwise” (101). Emotional extravagance that assuages liberal guilt, or that serves to take the edge off the distressing sense that one should do something, ultimately confirms the status quo. Loffreda then criticizes “a national political style that proceeds, all too often, through the mechanisms of iconhood and adoring identification, through the expression of emotion itself as a political good” (102). If America’s therapeutical culture can so easily substitute sentiment for action, as though the two were mutually exclusive, and as if feeling self-redeeming sorrow about an event were incompatible with thinking hard about how to prevent its recurrence, then perhaps we should see the sacrificial economy not only a shaper of affect, but also as an impediment to activism. This is not at all to say that we should “get over” our feelings, that we should “act like men,” in order to behave as responsible citizens. *We need to revoke affect’s sacrosanct status and submit it to critical analysis.* One aim of this study is to advance the notion that feeling thinks. The sacrificial economy is a long chapter in the intellectual history of affect. In his introduction to *Beyond Sexuality*, “Beyond the Couch,” Tim Dean emphasizes the importance of “thinking about sexuality and desire in different, less psychological terms” (3). This study follows Dean in using psychoanalysis to theorize beyond psychology’s fixation on the individual: it is worthwhile to consider the impersonality of affect.

Loffreda observes a change in Laramie commercial practice after the media spread knowledge of Shepard’s murder:

local businesses announced, on signs usually reserved for information about nightly rates, indoor pools, and bargain lunches, their dismay with the crime. The Comfort Inn: ‘Hate and Violence Are Not Our Way of Life.’ The University Inn: ‘Hate Is Not a Laramie Value.’ Arby’s: ‘Hate and Violence Are Not Wyoming Values 5 Regulars \$5.95.’ Obviously, these signs suggested a typically American arithmetic, promiscuously mixing moral and economic registers. Underneath the sentiment lingered the question: what will his death cost us? (17)

If, as Loffreda claims, the contamination of sentiment by commerce is not the most salient aspect of the response to the crime, it is absolutely crucial to understanding of poetry in the era of commodity culture. Another reason that I employ the term, “economy,” in speaking of sacrifice is to contrast sacrifice with commodification. *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* brilliantly links the supposedly autonomous Kantian subject to the form of the commodity. Eagleton proceeds by structural analogy, locating the commodity precisely where the philosopher would most want to exclude it. In modernism, however, commercial relations intrude as a thematic, as well as a formal, concern. Subjected to the conditions of commodity exchange, which include the dissemination of “popular” culture, modernist poetry responds politically to a world far different from the medieval one of the troubadours, wherein a religion centered on sacrifice regulated even the marketplace, and also markedly different than Kant’s. Eagleton seems to imply that intellectual dissent, at least since Shelleyan Romanticism, necessarily follows the formal structure of the philosophical or political essay.⁵ Yet radical modernist practice subjects such formal preconceptions to critique. To read the departure of modernist poetry from poetic convention merely as empty innovation or elitist obfuscation is to mistake its import. Even modernist poetry that seems “a preserve of the political right” (Eagleton 61) can prove rewarding to political study.

The Other Orpheus aims to reestablish an interest in poetry by integrating questions of prosody and aesthetics with political literary inquiry. The broader theoretical goal is nothing less than a rehabilitation of the concepts of affect and imagination, though the study also argues against antiformalist approaches to literature. It does not, however, advocate a simple return to the New Criticism, nor even to Russian Formalism. Rather, it utilizes the methodological insights of contemporary theory, most intensively psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and Marxism, to elaborate the social significance of poetic experiment. The study focuses on the works of Arthur Rimbaud, T.S.Eliot, and Hart Crane. At issue is the extent to which homoerotic affect influences formal innovation, what unconventional sexualities have to do with new poetic practices. The neglected genealogy that I delineate evidences how the coincident, but hardly accidental, historical emergence of modernism and homosexuality has pro-found repercussions on our society as a whole. Much as the concept of homosexuality challenges the normative regime of Western sexuality and human relations, so the poetry here under consideration rewrites the dominant representational economy of Western poetry. That economy, which centers upon sacrificial love, depends upon the nostalgia effects of traditional mimesis for poetic efficacy, enlisting discourses of impossibility, inaccessibility, inexpressibility, fatality, and forfeiture to articulate the profundities of interpersonal feeling. Rimbaud, Eliot, and Crane, while retaining to varying degrees the romantic ideal of redemptive