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- 1 Though Samuel Delany is best known as a science-fiction writer, his novel, *Hogg* is not typically science fiction, though it does offer up a vision of American society as an alternative world. The novel is narrated by the unnamed eleven-year-old protagonist—who we simply come to know as “Cocksucker” after his general proclivity throughout the novel—and the narrative details both his *polymorphously perverse* sexual exploits as companion to the eponymous Hogg (outcast, murderer and rapist for hire) and acts also as chronicle of Hogg’s experiences over 72 hours. This critically underexplored novel is fascinating; its pornographic nature *per se* being of least interest, nevertheless, absolutely essential to its overall effect. The novel, though written in 1969 just before the Stonewall riots, but caught-up in the increasing politics of the time that would subsequently find expression in the riot, was not actually published until 1995 during the “transgressive turn” in American literature. This dual temporality allows the novel to be located as an intervention in two key moments in America’s LGBT+ history: first, the developments in identity politics coming out of the socio-political cultural shifts of the 1960s; and, second, post-AIDS awareness 1990s. The first intervention is as a challenge against post-World War II American culture. By raising issues of child sexuality, rape, self-mutilation, murder, incest and paedophilia, the novel challenges post-war America with its political and cultural demands for social homogeneity: the general socio-cultural push towards a depoliticized sense of what Lauren Berlant has come to call “the good life” situated, at that time, in the white-picket-fence idealism of the suburban family. The second intervention is obviously less direct in terms of authorial intention, but its eventual publication in 1995 meant the novel now appeared in a very different context. Within the context of post-AIDS awareness, the novel allows the reader to engage critically with ideas of non-normative sexualities and, moreover, ideas of disgust that were so carefully and politically linked to the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, especially the use of the rhetoric of

disease and disgust to damn gay communities wholesale.¹ Interestingly, whilst these two periods have differing historical contexts, it is the nation's ideation of the family and of the family's social place in the maintenance and protection of innocence that links them. In the following, I engage primarily with the former context, though I am mindful of the latter, and it is, overall, this ideological use of innocence that I am chiefly interested in, especially as it inter-plays with atemporal ideals of both family governance, and the containment of a coherent national identity as a universality.

2

The novel is replete with generally unsavory sexual and sexually violent exploits. Cocksucker engages willingly throughout the novel in oral, anal, and vaginal sex; sexual play with both urine, excrement and other bodily fluids; rape; and a libidinous interaction with dirt and scum of all kinds. He narrates each event with no sense of being coerced or abused; indeed, he represents himself as a willing participant, and often as instigator of these events. After telling the reader that “[t]his story is mostly Hogg’s”, Cocksucker, true to his name, narrates himself into the story by stating, “[t]hat summer... I used to suck off a sad looking thirteen-year old spic named Pedro”; “Squatting , I’d nose between the brass teeth to smell his sweat. He would push penis, both testicles, and the two little fingers of his left hand into my mouth. Holding his thin hips, I trowelled my tongue inside his foreskin till, leaning and grunting, he would spurt his greasy juice and, quickly limp, a tablespoon of urine” (13).

3

From the first page, the reader is plunged right into both the pornographic detail that occupies every page of the novel, and also the narrator's willing engagement and enjoyment. Delany, here and throughout the novel, details what he himself calls the “unspeakable” as a way to reveal that which is always present in society, but abjected from “civilized” thought and representation.² Karin Wachter-Grene has taken up Delany's term for her own detailed exploration of *Hogg*. She also sees the novel as closely confined to its contemporary moment in the 1960s. She notes that, “[g]iven its location at the intersection of countercultural sex, race, and gender-based resistance movements, one can situate *Hogg's* portrayal of outlaw bikers, criminals, “freaks,” queers, and “niggers” as existing in a queer counterpublic pornotopia.” (333). I admit I am influenced by Wachter-Grene's detailing of Delany's intentions within the novel, especially her discussion of how “his work represents subjects that play with their own limits or boundaries to trouble containment” whereby “containment here means those delineations of value inherent to epistemological, political, or social forms of suppression, delimitation, and control” and how, as she notes, “[s]uch forms of containment are most often considered in relation to racist and heterosexist power structures... [which] flatten, silence, or manipulate subjects and objects in an attempt to stabilize race, sex, and gender identities” (Wachter-Grene 333-334). Nevertheless, we part ways on a number of key issues. First, it is, I feel, an error to think of the novel as a pornotopia. The novel does not present any kind of futurity, not even a pornographic or orgiastic one; the narrator's only spoken word in the entire novel, and the last word of the narrative, is “nothin’,” foreclosing possibilities of any kind of reproductive teleology in the novel. The novel, instead is an opening out of the always-already presence of abjected desires and sexual practices at the heart of America's pursuit of innocence or sense of innocence lost or embattled.

4

Second, the whole concept of the “unspeakable” that Wachter-Grene relies upon is problematized by the very novel that speaks it. Pre-Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, this novel, written in a period in which the clinical language of sexuality spilled out into socio-political climate, implicitly demonstrates the Foucauldian notion that sex is everywhere spoken in discourses of sexuality that shape everyday life. Delany, with this novel, is like Prometheus, but instead of stealing fire from the gods, he steals sex from the specialists to give voice to the abject.

5

Finally, Wachter-Grene invests too much in reading the narrator as a “real” child. Cocksucker, as will be discussed later, is a “Wonderland” child. His narration as an eleven-year old is a device to discombobulate narrative expectations so as to destabilize those ideologically manipulated perceptions of “race, sex and gender identities” and allow the reader to see behind the scene of ideology; this is not simply an inverted reflection of the real world image, which simply reinstates the primacy of the latter. The novel presents us with an empty child, or a child emptied of all the ideological imposition of innocence to re-shape the connections between the concept of the child and the imposed desires of the nation as a way to “look through” the reflection.

6

Like the camera shift from picket fence to bugs in the opening scene of David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet*, *Hogg* presents us with a world very alike to our own, but governed by a lack of morality, or more accurately, a total lack of moral judgment. However, unlike in *Blue Velvet*, this is not a nightmare vision conjured up once the rule of law breaks down, but the always-already present life within social respectability: an image that presents civilized society as an optical illusion when looked at awry. The novel ends, as previously noted with nothing: there is no framing of the narration within images of normal society; this is not a space to which we are returned. The narration of Cocksucker’s experiences is the only “normality” the reader is given. The only nod the novel gives to a world outside of Cocksucker’s experience is to Mr Jonas, the employer of Hogg as rapist for hire, and, as Hogg notes “I used to think he was some Kinky faggot... [b]ut he’s as straight as a bee-flight from clover to the hive” Though as Hogg continues, “[h]e likes his women on the young side—if he gets it on with a bitch more than seventeen, all his friends are gonna start thinkin’ he’s turnin’ into a gerontophile.” (51-52). Delany undermines the sense of normal here, he uses the image of the bee to evoke the naturalness of Mr Jonas’ heterosexuality, which he then undermines by indicating his sexual predilection for very young women. Delany returns to this problem of “normal” latter in the novel when he has Cocksucker narrate Hogg’s philosophy on the subject:

‘I think I ain’t never met a normal, I mean *normal*, man who wasn’t crazy! Loon crazy, take ‘em off and put ‘em away crazy, which is what they would do if there wasn’t so many of them. Every normal man—I mean sexually normal, now—man I ever met figures the whole thing runs between two points: What he wants, and what he thinks should be. Every thought in his head is directed to fixing a rule-straight line between them, and he calls that line: What *Is*.... That’s what a normal man thinks is reality. On the other hand, every faggot or panty-sucker, or whip jockey, or SM freak, or baby-fucker, or even a motherfucker like me, we know—’ and his hands came down like he was pushing something away: ‘We know, man, that there is what we want, there is what should be, and there is what is: and don't none of them got anything to do with each other unless—’

The bartender was shaking his head.

‘—unless we make it,’ Hogg went on anyway. (150-151)

- 7 Both Hogg and the narrator “know” and are indifferent to the symbolic world of laws and societal limitations, they occupy a loiterly space (Ross Chambers) free from causality whereby any and all desires can be acted upon irrespective of consequence. Departing from Wachter-Grene’s reliance on the notions of both pornotopia and the unspeakable, and, instead, framing my analysis using the figure of the child as discussed by both Lee Edelman in *No Future* and Kathryn Bond Stockton in *The Queer Child*, I will explore how Hogg and his prodigy, Cocksucker, problematize the trope of innocence, and the moral investment of futurity in the figure of the child, to expose the always-already present dystopian core to America’s investment in innocence that produces and maintains an ideologically coherent narrative of national identity. Thus, it is not that the characters in the novel are marginalized or simply hidden away as a distinct, but separate realm of experiences: the effluence that is drained off leaving social respectability. They are all this, but, more so, they are the unconscious constituents of society: the fetishistically disavowed desires of America’s insistence upon innocence as the nation’s defining understanding of itself.

The Misrecognized Child “Through the Looking Glass”

8

The figure of the child, as Jo-Ann Wallace notes, has often been used as a lens to explore the development of literary, and subsequently cultural studies. This is especially as it is, she argues, the “idea of ‘the child’ which makes thinkable both nineteenth-century... colonialist imperialism and many twentieth-century forms of resistance to imperialism” (171). The child itself also becomes and remains a transatlantic, if not transnational, figure of concern for both colonialists and reformers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as societies adapted to the changes wrought through both industrialization and modernization, and through the growth of a middle-class that looked in desperation at the increasing vagrancy and moral turpitude of children in major European and American cities (Marten).

9

So thinking about the figure of the child, let’s begin not in America, but in nineteenth-century England with the archetypal literary child, Lewis Carroll’s Alice. For the beginning, as Maria would have it “is a very good place to start.”³ Alice, similar to her nineteenth century American sister, L. Frank Baum’s, Alice inspired Dorothy, occupies two worlds: one highly governed by strict codes of behavior, learning and conduct, the other is the world looked at awry with all its arbitrariness and (logical) illogicality.⁴ One world engages language as a transparent medium through which order is experienced, the other exposes language in its literal absurdity playing with the fluidity or at least the multiplicity of meanings that language can engender as it attempts to render order. In its own way, *Hogg* takes the reader to another world: an Oz or a Wonderland of graphic sexuality, that looks-through the strictures of the “real-world” from a child’s-eye view to highlight the inconsistencies in that world. It is this sense of “looking through” ideology with which *Hogg* is concerned.

10

Despite trafficking in the concept of the child as the trope of innocence *par excellence*, Lewis Carroll’s eponymous creation, along with the conception of seeing not in,

but through the looking glass, offers up a superb model for considering the figure of the child in all its “fabulous retroactivity” (Derrida 10) allowing the adult world to be looked at awry. That Carroll’s child protagonist is conceived as female allows for a reading of the concept of the child within the psychoanalytic perspective of the exception to the Lacanian symbolic order; the feminine “not all” who, through not being fully captured within the phallic function, becomes both the exception to, and the very appearance of, the phallic function. The child becomes the *objet a* of America’s constant re-cycling of the trope of innocence in its search for its ultimate designation as the new Eden.⁵ It is a figure in which America over-invests its desire in a bid for its own sense of cohesion as a national subject: the ideation of itself as an eternally youthful nation replete with promise and exceptional potential. However, this sense of cohesion is always-already a failure; through the gap that marks the exception of the figure of the child from fully bearing the mantle of innocence (the not-all), America’s “political fantasy,” as Slavoj Žižek calls it, is undermined.⁶

11

While Alice offers the archetype of the literary child, and also while Carroll’s narratives provide a useful critical lever, let’s broaden our focus away from nineteenth century England, away from Wonderland, and even Oz to the Mississippi; from Alice and Dorothy to Huck, who, himself, “looks through” American social cohesion and comes to create for Jim and himself a world elsewhere: a world to which he can escape from the rituals and societal expectations (and limitations) of the American South in the late nineteenth century. Let’s jump 75 years from Huck to Scout and Jem, whose childish play focalize the arbitrary injustices of the complicated legal and racial relations of 30s to 60s America. However, all these child narrators, by re-creating the world in its radical otherness, engage in a fantastical innocence through which America comes to see itself as on the verge of achieving utopia. Theirs is a world presented as innocence lost as they are used as narrative devices to both show disappointment in the violence of the symbolic order of America’s socio-cultural systems, and also to represent an enlightened vision of a more tolerant future society. Nevertheless, while the texts put emphasis on a potentially alternative futurity, an emphasis which the reader is all too often too keen to accept, the figure of the child occupies the position of the Lacanian “not-all” and thus becomes, at once, a figure whose simplistic understanding of the adult world in which they move, undermines this reading to expose the often duplicitous conventions, contradictions, and hypocritical nature of that world. In this, the figure of the child defamiliarizes the very narrative of innocence that positions it at its centre. By opening up a gap in the symbolic order, the figure of the child in America opens up the potentialities for the staging of alternative futures, or moreover, as Hogg demonstrates, opens space through which futurity itself can be undermined and foreclosed to destabilize the symbolic order itself.

12

This process of defamiliarization stems from the difference between what is public—the homosocial, patriarchal world of rules and laws and what is private—the heterogeneous space of the Lacanian not-all, the space of contingencies, and of play/jouissance. Guy Hocquenghem notes this difference in his *Homosexual Desire* as a distinction between the public nature of the phallus vs. the private nature of the anus (82). Indeed, in *The Anatomy of Disgust*, William Ian Miller notes how compared to the mouth, which is not a discerning orifice, the anus is clearly seen as more sacred, thus, like the sacred nature of the innocent child, in need of control and protection. Nevertheless, as Miller also notes “[t]he anus as endpoint of the reductive digestive process is a

democratizer. It not only levels food, but reminds us... that we the eaters of that food are not immune to its levelling powers" (99-100). As a novel, *Hogg*, offers the taboo of anal receptivity, through the receptivity of the child narrator and thus brings the anus, traditionally abjected to the phallus, into the public both in terms of the events in the novel and of the novel as event. This anal politics of the novel, however, should not be matched up to Freud's anal stage of child development, which, as its name suggests is teleologically driven, *Hogg's* "excremental vision," to borrow a much borrowed phrase from Norman O. Brown, is not about reading the excrement into a symbolic framework, misrecognized as gift or child, but to render the symbolic network itself into excrement; to bring back to the fore all that had been "cleaned" away (abjected) by the ideology of the child as the ambassador of futurity: sex, violence, the body and its waste, homosexuality, racial differences, class differences, poverty and exploitation. The phallus is, if you like, turned inside-out to expose the very absence it seeks to hide, and as marker of the public symbolic network, the phallus, all too often rendered as the penis, is given its greatest drubbing by Delany in the novel through the plight of the character Denny.

13

Denny, an overly-enthusiastic man-child—though an adult, he is not much older than the narrator—and overly-enthusiastic masturbator, is inspired by his older and fellow group member's penile piercing; so much so, that he drives a nail through his own penis in imitation. Denny's overemphasis on his penis as the source of his energy, which leads him to adorn it in celebration of his phallic power, has destructive consequences as the resultant blood poisoning, as Delany writes it, causes him to go on a killing spree.

14

Through this promotion of an anal politics and its problematization of the phallus, *Hogg* politicizes sex, bringing sex and all its linkages to power and abuse to the fore. Nevertheless, it is not a politics that offers a stricture on sex, or provides any kind of didactic message, for it is also a politics of sexual enjoyment. There is an uncomfortable link between the two: abuse and enjoyment, and the two are often too easily conflated. Chris Hedges for example in *Empire of Illusion* has a long discussion about sexuality and specifically pornography in his chapter "The Illusion of Love" From the outset of the very chapter title, love and sex are made mutually exclusive, with the emphasis being place upon the former. Hedges writes significantly about the problematics within and around the pornographic industry, and his work is especially important in discussing and exposing the exploitation of women by the industry. However, Hedges adopts too much of a tone of moral disapproval and disgust. In doing this he, to a certain degree, infantilizes the women his text is meant to represent as a means to information and empowerment. "We accept a culture flooded with images of women who are sexual commodities," he notes quoting Robert Jensen. "Increasingly, women in pornography are not people having sex but bodies upon which activities of increasing cruelty are played out. And many men... like it" (42). It is difficult to argue with this important observation, however, both Jensen and Hedges here fail to consider the women and their agency, and chose to speak for their thoughts and actions only through the lens of exploitation.

15

In the same chapter, Hedges narrates the experience of Ariana Jollee and her 65-man gang-bang and more significantly her enthusiasm about this. Hedges is looking for any sign of her reluctance, and refers to her enthusiasm as a façade, narrating her as girlish and foolish. What he doesn't consider is that she might be telling the "truth"; that

her enthusiasm is genuine and that being abjected sexually might be something she enjoys. This, of course, is an argument fraught with problems for the exploitation and abuses, as Hedges catalogues and discusses, are real and detrimental to individual women, and pornography is a root cause of more general violence against women. However, what *Hogg* proposes is that there is a connection between sexuality and abuse and that a) the connection is not straightforward, in that sexual abuse and sexual enjoyment are not mutually exclusive, and b) abuse does not simply go away through ideological blindness, or through, what James Kincaid has termed, “pious pornography” (11): the fascinated enjoyment of child abuse stories displaced through moral damnation of the perpetrators.

16

Hedges, despite his good intentions, traffics in chivalry and misogyny as he promotes love over sex, and takes on the mantle of white-knight to, academically at least, rescue these women “brought low” by pornography. For Hedges, women in pornography become visions of fallen innocence and his discussion reduces them to the level of the idealized child in need of protection by a good man; what Hedges fails to deal with are real women with real sexualities along with the possibilities of pleasure in abjection.

Governing the Real Child

17

Childhood and issues about the child became central concerns in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century America. In 1909, Ellen Key, the Swedish sociologist, proclaimed the twentieth century as the “Century of the Child.” She saw the “new century... represented as a small naked child, descending upon the earth, but drawing himself back in terror at the sight of a world bristling with weapons” (1). Here Key captures the imagining of a whole century through the image of a vulnerable child, and she puts this image at the centre of her call for an alternative future society. “American reformers” of the early twentieth century, notes James Marten, “embraced Key’s optimism and ideas and frequently borrowed the phrase, which reflected their high hopes and serious purposes” (5).

18

Nevertheless, the American child is a problem: on one hand, the child, as the end-product of a heterosexual union and focus of the need for the much vaulted *family-values*, is the screen for the unbearable weight of both absolute innocence and “reproductive futurity” to use Edelman’s phrase. On the other hand, the “real” child is a mess of confusion and contradiction: a half-baked creature full of love, hate, care, spite, joy, malice, dirt, wholesomeness, and disgust; in short the whole spectrum of human interactions and emotions. “What a child ‘is,’” notes Bond Stockton, “is a darkening question. The question of the child makes us climb inside a cloud... leading us in moments, to cloudiness and ghostliness surrounding children as figures in time” (2). Bond Stockton continues by sourcing the problematic of the child to its place as an adult conception. She claims that, “[t]he child is precisely who we are not, and, in fact, never were. It is the act of adults looking backward.” (5). Nevertheless, the “idea of ‘childhood’”—as a separate stage in life characterized by the need for protection and education, as Wallace notes, can be traced back to the middle to late seventeenth century. She continues by noting how “Foucault (1979) reminds us [that] this was the period which

saw the birth of the school and the prison and, indeed, 'childhood' is a discourse marked by this contradiction: 'the child' represents potential or futurity, both of which need protected spaces in which to flourish, and a subjectivity and corporeality in need of discipline" (173).

19

To unhappily wed Freud to Foucault, the child is a potential site of uncontrolled (sexual) desire; this is a potential American society has been attempting to control with a leaning towards negation through family policing of gender and sexuality throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Indeed, much attention has been paid to establishing the parameters for the definition of the American child—especially in relation to the male child. To reach back into the nineteenth century, Theodore Roosevelt in his 1899 Address, "The American Boy," for instance, captured the tone of protection and discipline that was to pervade the twentieth century view of the child. The address starts by telling the reader that the American boy, "[m]ust be clean-minded and clean lived, and able to hold his own under all circumstances and against all comers." It ends by warning that despite all "his strength [It] will be a curse to himself and to every one else if he does not have a thorough command over himself and over his own evil passions" (Roosevelt 73-77). Throughout the address, Roosevelt creates an American boy of his own imagination and desire for vigor. He emphasizes the essential value of his "cloudy" and "ghostly" American boy and, moreover, the need for the *proper* framework of governance to ensure this essential value of this imaginary child does not become corrupted.

20

While using the terms "child" and "childhood," moral reformers were most often focused on boys, as with the previously noted Roosevelt's address, or Albert Beveridge's *The Young Man and the World* (1905). Their concern had a double strand: they were concerned about the external threats to boys, but also concerned about how a boy, himself, could potentially grow into a threat. Estelle B. Freedman explores this threat in detail in her article on the sexual psychopath. Freedman demonstrates how sex crimes became a public concern at the end of the 1930s, and how the early decades of the twentieth century saw a shift from the "nineteenth-century emphasis on maintaining female purity and a movement toward a modern concern about controlling male violence" (85). Freedman continues by noting how during the 30s economic depression,

the male sexual deviant became the subject of special attention, particularly if he was inadequately masculine (the effeminate homosexual) or hypermasculine (the sexual psychopath). Both categories of deviant males were thought to attack children, thus simultaneously threatening sexual innocence, gender roles, and the social order. (89)

- 21 Concerns over the sexual psychopath became paramount in mid-century America especially as they merged with the promotion of a unified and exceptionalist American national identity through the white-picket-fence image of the American family. This image of the white nuclear family in a suburban setting, usually gathered around a television set, became ubiquitous in mid-century American culture.⁷ Fears of the attack on this image, through an attack on the child, were keenly prevalent during the time, especially following a spate of kidnappings and murders across the country including the 1955 kidnapping of Steven Damman and the 1957 "boy in a box" discovery.⁸ Running alongside this fear was another: the "lavender scare." In the 1940s and 50s, homosexuality increasingly became seen as a mental illness and was all too often linked, especially in the media to child sexual-abuse all of which combined into the moral panic

about sexual psychopaths. “[T]he panic encouraged a public understanding of homosexuality in which the criminal sexual psychopath and the homosexual were just different points on the same continuum—the difference between their psychological makeup a matter of degree, not of kind,” Fred Fejes observes. “In the legal and psychiatric literature the terms ‘sex criminal,’ ‘pervert,’ ‘psychopath,’ and ‘homosexual’ frequently overlapped, and ‘psychopath’ served as a code word for homosexual at a time of heightened consciousness of homosexuality” (318-319).

22

This overlapping is notably visible in the 1960s Public Service Announcement, *Boys Beware*.⁹ This film, significantly there is not a similar version aimed at girls, presents male homosexuality as an invisible sickness, and homosexuals as predatory sex-fiends who prey on young white boys. Interestingly, the film also engages in victim blaming. It castigates those boys who are easily duped by their predators, while commending those who show reserve and caution and who are keen to report things to adult authorities. The film also subtly warns parents about the need to keep a panoptic presence in their sons’ lives. Beyond being declared a sickness, homosexuality is given no substance. Watched without sound, for instance, the film represents stock images of innocent boys—pre-teens engaged in “wholesome” activities such as sports or doing their paper-rounds—being manipulated by suspicious older men—wearing sunglasses or very dark suits, or both—and could easily stand for many forms of perceived exploitation such as communist or other radical political groups. Despite the narration, which does specifically locate the threat as being homosexuality (deliberately coupled to fears of pedophilia), the images themselves simply create a duality between threat and those in need of protection and governing. This highlights the key ideological concern of the time; namely the maintenance of childhood innocence and the importance of maintain a strong family government.

23

By the end of the century, the figure of the innocent child, coupled to ideals of the family still held a central place in America’s imagination especially for moral crusaders who looked back despairingly on the secularization of American society that occurred throughout the century. In their book, *Children at Risk*, James Dobson and Gary L. Bauer, commenting on secularization since the 1960s, exclaim with no sense of hyperbole that “[s]omething far more significant than money is behind the contest for the hearts and minds of children. Nothing short of a great Civil War of Values rages today throughout North America” (19). Again they use the figure of the child to locate what they see as the problems affecting American society—abortion and homosexuality. For instance Bauer informs the reader of his nightly ritual of looking in on his children as they slept:

I wanted to know that the world my children would grow up in would still embrace and honor the love and commitment between a man and a woman united before God in marriage. I wanted to know that they could have their own children and raise them in a free society that knew the difference between virtue and vice, good and evil, right and wrong. (Dobson and Bauer 118)

24 Here Bauer establishes the heteronormative family as natural (united before God) and as the only hope for a “free society.” All other social arrangements clearly, for Bauer,

unthinkably fall on the sides of vice, evil, and wrong. To emphasize his point he continues by speaking for the majority of the nation

I believe millions of Americans agree. One of them, at least, was quoted in an otherwise biased edition of *Newsweek*, devoted to 'the changing American family.'

This unknown gentleman said it best.

'You can call homosexual households 'families' and you can define 'family' any way you want to, but you can't fool Mother Nature. A family is a mommy and a daddy and their children.' (Dobson and Bauer 118-9)

- 25 Such moral crusading and its links to the innocent figure of the child is critiqued in an episode from an early season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* titled "Gingerbread." In this episode, evoking the Hansel and Gretel fairy-tale, Buffy's mother, Joyce, comes across two dead children—a boy and a girl between 6 and 9 years old—late at night in a playground. This find stirs her into action to create the parent-network group MOO (Mother's Opposed to the Occult) whose moral outrage ferments to the point whereby they end up attempting to burn their own children as witches on pyres of books deemed too dangerous. The episode humorously critiques the moral outrage that is often stirred-up in small American communities; a moral outrage which most often circles around misrecognized children, and notions of innocence lost or threatened. The dead children, it transpires are an effect created by a demon to create this very moral outrage and its subsequent destructive potential. It is Buffy and her gang of misfits who have to embrace their diversity in the face of this moral outrage to free themselves from their parents' destructive capabilities and to re-educate them. While a series like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* made many inroads into promoting diversity in the 1990s, it still positions children as the bearers of political potentiality and thus fails to fully transform the reproductive teleology of the heteronormative script. However, what the episode does expose is the inherent violence that circulates within the ideological imposition of the family as a social unit.

26

Hogg, however, does so much more than just expose this violence; it is a deliberately crass novel that traffics in stereotypes of race and sexuality, and hyperbolically represents the fears of moral crusaders writ large to bring the politics of such stereotypes and fears to the fore. *Hogg* gives the reader no shelter from its narrated abuse for the novel is presented as though the imagined threats to America's white-picket-fence self-conception were as real and as ubiquitous as rhetoric maintained they were. The novel, though deliberately excessive in its representations of violence and especially sexual violence, also suggests a more universal corruption hidden by the rhetorical threats and tacitly denied. Mr Jonas is, of course, one moment of this, but as Hogg states after publicly soiling himself in a roadside diner, "People are funny"; "We could come back tomorrow, you and me, in a couple of different shirts, maybe clean pants, the both of us actin' half-proper and people would look at us. But that's all.... 'Cause people don't even wanna see shit like that. I mean they'd be happier pretending it didn't even happen" (52).

27

To underscore the thin veil between acceptability and the abject, the narrator comments on how the truck-drivers in the diner used the confusion caused by Hogg's antics to avoid paying their bill. The narrative quietly yokes together Hogg's antisocial self-abjection with a more universal sense of inherent human lawlessness.

The Innocent Child and Family Values

28

Though the figure of the child is a retroactive reflection of adult desires, and the innocence is an established pattern that is able to be whittled out of the material of the “real” child only through adult strictures and careful governance, the family itself is also a retroactive creation. Contrary to expected understanding, as seen in the linear historicity of the child evoked above by both Dobson and Bauer and by Roosevelt, the figure of the child is not simply the end-product of a heterosexist union expressed as a family; it is the reverse; the heterosexist union is validated as authentic through the figure of the child whose retroactive innocence subsequently gives recognition to the maternal support and validates the need for paternal protection, in situ and as symbolic order; all together, the figure of the child legitimizes the primacy of the heteronormative family as an idealized socio-political structure informing the shape of American society.

29

Though the child becomes the central configuration point of the heteronormative family, it is only as figure displaced by an idealized and nostalgic adult fantasy, a fantasy which is in need of promoting and protecting from becoming dispelled; when measured against this fantasy, the real child, as previously noted, can only ever fall short and thus there enters the need for stern guidance both individually and collectively to make the child comply with the fantasy. A tension comes into existence between the fantasy, and the real of the child leading to a binary between the disciplined and undisciplined child. Caught in this binary, the child becomes the catalytic influence for the potential (both good and bad) future shape of society. Though the central configuration point around which the notion of the family coheres, the child, through this binary is ideologically shunted into the role of being the *product* of the family-union over which others (most often father) knows best. This theme of “father knows best” is a perennial one when the notion of the family—centered around childhood innocence—is politically evoked. Cocksucker’s narration of extreme sadomasochism, however, puts under scrutiny such a benign sense of paternalism and implicitly asks: best for whom?

30

While futurity is centered through the innocence of the child—its need for protection and governance—children themselves are deferred from this centre to be replaced with the figure of the ghostly child and the legitimization of the idealized family, *Hogg*, through emphasizing the abusive paternal power, returns the child to the centre, both as the novel’s consciousness, and as the ambassador for the abject that is denied under the imaginings of innocence. The child narrator is everything adult nostalgia denies, and excessively so. Cocksucker, as the vehicle for Delany’s anal politics, “is deliberately fashioned as the opposite of the ‘corruptible child.’ He is corruption itself,” observes Rob Stephenson in his introduction to the novel. “In contrast to all the rape that Hogg initiates towards women in this novel, he never has to force this boy to do anything. Anything Hogg wants him to do, he relishes. He wants to experience everything that comes his way. He craves all of the nastiness that Hogg dishes out” (n.p.).

31

The family, as represented in *Hogg* is totally homosocial, and fraught with power-plays, the libidinous nature of which are directly expressed as sexual acts. The figurative

violence towards women and children, inherent in the homosociality of patriarchy are through Delany's "excremental vision" rendered into literal acts of pedophilia and rape. Hogg puts the traditional ideal of the family under erasure. In general, Cocksucker's narration shows that the child narrator comes from nowhere and goes nowhere; he is neither the site for the origin story of the family, nor for its utopian futurity. More than this though, the novel critically untethers the family from the political fantasy in which it is situated in specific ways that are unfolded throughout the narrative.

32

First, Delany, moving the concept of the family far from its traditional base has Hogg assemble an all-male multi-racial family of murderers, thieves and rapists to assist him with his "jobs." In the scene where Hogg gathers these men together, Cocksucker is given a central role, though it is not one of idealized innocence in need of both protection and guidance, but one in which he comes to service his new family:

'Evenin', Hogg. Ray said you— *Now!* Hey, nigger, ain't that a cute little thing cleanin' up Hogg's old pecker? Must've needed it too, 'cause I know just what a cheesy bastard you are, Hogg. How you doin', motherfucker?'
 There was a bass rumble from some nigger, chuckling.
 'Sure looks like a hungry little pig-sucker!'
 'Nigg, how'd you like to feed my boy's face here awhile—I see that look you got.' Hogg was still slipping it in and out. 'He been chewin' on my pecker all day'....
 Still sucking, I looked down when something nudged my knee. A nigger's bare foot, crossed by sunlight, pulled in its toes on the cracked concrete. The ankle went up into the frayed cuff of faded blues. Above me, I heard his laughter.... Then the nigger said: 'Hey, Hogg. I *know* this blond-headed little cocksucker!' I came off Hogg's dick and looked up past a black cock fucking a black fist right by my face. Above it, the bullet-headed buck with the crazy scar grinned down:
 'I done paid me a quarter already to get into that sucker's face. Got a sweet asshole on him, too. You should try it out, Hogg.' (56)

- 33 The child narrator in this scene becomes a cohesive force for this new family, but it is one of direct (sexual) exploitation, and the family unit is itself one of low level racial abuse and its paternal authority (Hogg) is the prime abuser out to exert his power in order to simply satisfy his own desires.

34

Unlike with Cocksucker, however, the reader is provided with Hogg's origin story, when Hogg reminisces about his family. Despite such reminiscence, however, Hogg does not present a nostalgic view of the family, but provides the reader with scenes of incest and violence:

'My old man, he was somethin' else. Kept the old bitch pregnant all the time, I remember. He'd drink up half the relief check and she'd drink up the other. Then they'd fuck and fight—bust up the whole damn shack—and fuck some more. Once, he told my older brother, Bo, he could stick it to the old lady if he wanted, 'cause he was tired of her and by this time Betsy was old enough to take a growed-up cock.... Well, Bo, who was about seventeen at the time, he'd been sneakin' looks at Momma in the can and like that a long time anyway. He took him a big drink out the bottle and went over to Momma, just a grinnin'. Momma was in the big green chair, pretty drunk—but maybe she done told the old man she was after Bo anyway, 'cause she just lunge off across for his pants, and pullin' them open and gruntin' 'cause she couldn't get the rope he'd got on for a belt untied at first, and he's tuggin' at her dress till one of Momma's old tits flops out. I remember they got down on the floor and was just goin' at it, right there. And by this time, Daddy—he's got Betsy laid back on the dinner table.' (113-114)

- 35 *Hogg's* family, again, rests not on childhood innocence, but on paternal abuse, and the usual domestic space (the big green chair and dinner table) becomes wrenched from its usual economy and renarrativized as a space of incestuous violence. *Hogg* is very much the product of his family, and Delany uses him to emphasize how abuse and exploitation and not some utopian futurity are the patriarchal dividends of a society structured around an idealized and limited perception of the family. Delany throughout the novel keeps subtly pushing this same message about the violence and exploitation at the heart of the family. There is one scene in the novel, though, where the seemingly idealized traditional family is both presented and torn apart. Accompanying *Hogg* on one of his "jobs," Cocksucker narrates a family scene he spies through a window:

A heavyish woman sat on the couch. She wore a house dress. Her hair was curly and brown and loose. She had on slippers and she was frowning at a paperback novel.... Her husband—I guess he was her husband—sat in a big, green chair by a fireplace.... He wore a sleeveless undershirt. His hair was gray; gray hair stuck out from the crease of his armpits. He was very red in the neck. But his arms were pale. He was looking at a newspaper folded small. A redheaded kid, maybe my age, maybe a year older, sat crosslegged on the tan rug, at a chess board.... We could hear the television set: it must have been right below the window—because we couldn't see it. (124)

- 36 Though a typical, and in this novel, one may say serene family moment, the scene is rather sterile as each person—mother, father, and child are put into separate spaces absent of any kind of connections. Though the child is sitting on the rug and taking a seemingly central place between his mother and father, the child is actually displaced to a submissive level—a place associated with the family pet—and is as neglected as the television set which nobody watches. His parents are engaged in solitary activity (reading) while he plays solo a typically two player game, further indicating the lack of family connection. Even before the violence to come, the novel destabilizes the common image of the family indicating a rigidity and sterility—hauntingly similar to the visuals of the mock suburban family in nuclear test films—that speaks of neglect. The woman is one of *Hogg's* targets and it is only through the violence that he, and his group bring, that family becomes dynamically engaged: the father is beaten and tied, while the woman and child are sexually abused, suggesting that Delany perceives the family relation to the child as either, at best, sterile and disinterested, or, at worst, invested but abusive. To further emphasize the dysfunction of the family, the red-haired boy, despite having just been raped, abandons his family to follow *Hogg* to his truck, which *Hogg* reads as his desire to take on Cocksucker's role, but which "Dago" reads as his desire to seek retribution. Either way, his chess playing—indicating a mature mind and strategic game play—and his attempts to engage *Hogg* give the child an agency beyond innocence.

37

The family or more so of the idealized image of the family as the safe-haven for the protection of childhood innocence is one which the novel tears apart. In *Hogg*, Delany gives no respite from his assault on the political fantasy of the innocent child and the retroactive legitimization of the idealized family which in Delany's final analysis is not a safe-haven but a social construct from and through which all abuse flows; the notion of the idealized family, just like the idea of the innocent child are notions that the novel renders redundant.

“There’s No Place Like Home”

38

In the end Alice awakens; Dorothy clicks her heels; Huck lights out, though not before being offered the prospect of being “sivilized.” Cocksucker, however, has “nothing,” he muses on his choice of being the piggy-in-the-middle of Rufus and Red’s spit-roast, or returning to the coprophagia of Big Sambo, or of remaining with Hogg; all choices are choices to continue on the interminable spiral of sexual abjection. Nothing is resolved in this novel, even Denny’s murderous ways go unpunished, despite the massive police manhunt. In this novel, all structures of power are shown to be complicit with patriarchal abuse and exploitation that masks itself through the rhetorical and retrospective ideology of the innocent child. The corrupt child or the child corrupted by patriarchy allows us, however, a very different perspective. *Hogg* empties out the child of the ideological imposition of innocence. It is a kind of truth through exaggeration that the novel shows us, but it is not necessarily one that offers any kind of futurity, only the experience of fully subjecting ourselves to the difficult pleasures of the abject in which the novel revels.

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NOTES

1. There is a third temporal intervention that develops from this second, linked to Nikki Sullivan's titular question: "Queer: a question of being or doing" The characters in the novel engage in a range of sex-acts(doing), but there is very little sense of the ways these acts actually constitute an identity (being). The novel, then can be read to question current LGBT+ liberal politics: in contemporary America, as gay has become more liberally accepted (up to and including gay marriage), what has happened to the ideas (ideals) of freedom that were bound up in the diversity of non-normative sex-acts?
2. See Samuel R. Delany "On the Unspeakable," 58, 66.
3. *The Sound of Music*, of course, stages a love story through children in need of a mother's touch, while also contrasting this childhood innocence, captured through both the children and the scene of a pastoral Austria, against the encroaching threat of totalitarianism. In terms of starting, however, childhood offers an origin point for society; to protect the child is to engage in a utopianism that is invested in the futurity of childhood innocence. *Hogg* begins *in media res* and is focused only on 72 hours of *Cocksucker's* life. Just as the novel forecloses on reproductive teleology, it excludes both an origin story for *Cocksucker* and *Cocksucker* as an origin story for any kind of utopian futurity.
4. Alice and Dorothy are overlapped here clearly to identify the transatlantic influence of Carroll on Baum and to establish the pattern of the theme of children's literature and a sense of a world elsewhere, which is also a much repeated trope of American cultural and socio-political expression. Alice, but more so Carroll's particular interests in mathematics, moreover, allows not only to establish a transatlantic literary pattern in the representation of the child, but demonstrates how the figure of the child is a fascinating problematic; at once the bearer of innocence endangered, the child is also the representation of an exploration of and challenge to the logic of its contemporary governance, and a vehicle for imagining alternative possibilities.
5. I have discussed elsewhere this desire for a sense of the nation needing a forever deferred designation from God of itself as a new Eden. [See J. Mitchell, *Revisions of the American Adam: Innocence, Identity and Masculinity in the Twentieth Century*. (London: Continuum, 2011)
6. See the introduction to Slavoj Žižek, *Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), 1-54.

7. Indeed this is still an image that can be found in the majority through an internet search.
 8. See <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/news-archives-steven-damman-airman-son-kidnapped-cops-sift-b-klyn-tip-article-1.377402> and <http://americasunknownchild.net/>
 9. <https://youtu.be/ijbovskICjk>
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ABSTRACTS

This essay examines Samuel Delany's novel, *Hogg* to interrogate the figure of the innocent child and the role of the family in America, especially in mid-century America. The essay contends that the novel, narrated by the unnamed eleven-year-old protagonist who details both his *polymorphously perverse* sexual exploits as companion to the eponymous Hogg (outcast, murderer and rapist for hire) and acts also as chronicle of Hogg's experiences over 72 hours, destabilizes the ideology of innocence that acts as a utopian foundation to America's national understanding of itself as exceptional.

INDEX

Keywords: abject, Albert Beveridge, anal politics, boy in a box (1957 murder), child sexuality, Childhood, Chris Hedges, David Lynch, Derrida, Ellen Key, Estelle B. Freedman, family, Foucault, Fred Fejes, futurity, Gary L. Bauer., Guy Hocquenghem, Hogg, Homosexual, innocence, James Dobson, James Marten, Jo-Ann Wallace, Karin Wachter-Grene, Kathryn Bond Stockton, Lacan, Lauren Berlant, Lee Edelman, Lewis Carroll, LGBT+ history, Ross Chambers, Samuel Delany, sexual psychopath, Slavoj Žižek, Steven Damman (1955 Kidnapping), Theodore Roosevelt, unspeakable, William Ian Miller, Wonderland, "excremental vision," Norman O. Brown

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