

THE ENFREAKMENT OF LANGUAGE: DISABILITY, EUGENICS, AND
RHETORIC

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This project is motivated by the presence of eugenics in our dominant approaches to meaning-making: what does it look like, and why should we care? To begin to answer these questions, this dissertation works from two concepts: *enfreakment* – the identification of elements that are desirable or wanted – and *eugenicist logics*, the removal of what is not wanted or deemed necessary for the desired outcome, or alternatively, the replication of the elements that are considered useful.

To observe the interaction between the logic of eugenics and enfreakment within ableist systems, this dissertation develops *the enfreakment of language*, a term that encompasses both the process of enfreakment and the heuristic that allows us to see that process in action. The enfreakment of language uncovers how particular modes of Western and Euro-American meaning-making depend on the logic of eugenics, a dependency that is detrimental to the bodies that become subjected to the power gained through this logic.

Focusing on some of the implications of the overlap and interaction between the logics of eugenics and enfreakment within ableist systems, this project demonstrates the operation of eugenics as a logic that motivates discourses around human variation. I offer three examples of representations of disability and eugenics in America to illustrate reproductions of the freak show and eugenicist practices within the production and consumption of the “abnormal” body. I first show how a system based on eugenicist logic operates by examining how eugenicist logic in the language of U.S. Ugly Laws is

mirrored in Nazi euthanasia practices. Next, I illustrate the collapse of a system based on eradication through an examination of representations of Anne Frank, demonstrating how eugenicist logics of Nazi programs dis/able her as the “face of the Holocaust.” Finally, I look at the attempts to create an alternate, anti-eugenicist system in contemporary public rhetorics through an analysis of Lady Gaga’s references to Nazi eugenics and disability in her work. Ultimately, this dissertation argues that Disability Studies is essential if the academy is to account for the bodies and practices that have been erased in the attempt to define categories of “abnormal.”

DEDICATION

To my mom, my best friend, who took me to the library.

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To Regina: Love is to share, mine is for you.

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CHAPTER I
DERRIDA, DISABILITY, AND EUGENICS

Joe Johnston's 2011 *Captain America: The First Avenger* tells the story of Steve Rogers, a resolute young man whose small build and precarious health prevents him from enlisting for military service in the early days of World War II. Approached by German doctor Abraham Erskine, Rogers is asked to volunteer for a medical experiment developed by esteemed German and American doctors and military personnel called "Project Rebirth." Rogers agrees, and his "weak" body is suddenly enhanced to the maximum human potential, turning him into the Super Soldier known as Captain America. As Captain America, Rogers participates in war propaganda, specifically meant for young men to enlist, representing both America and the ideal American man – a hypermasculine, hyper-able soldier, used to show young American men what they were not and what they wanted to be. When the men in charge of this experiment are killed, Rogers makes it his mission to find and kill the man who is responsible – Rogers' Nazi counterpart who also participated in the experiment in Germany, but suffered injuries during the procedure, most notably the disfigurement of his face that gave rise to his nickname, Red Skull.

Yet Captain America's mission extended beyond serving his country and getting revenge on Red Skull. As the successful result of combined efforts between Nazi scientists and American doctors, the story of Captain America depends on a very specific narrative about America's relationship to eugenics, freakdom, and disability.

Captain America is a soldier who is, ultimately, the successful product of experimental medical treatments that sought to create a “superior man.” Once created, his duty was to be an example of both the extraordinary and the ordinary by performing his extraordinariness in order to promote a new idealized and expected version of “ordinary.” To protect and promote this new version of “ordinary” or “normal,” Captain America’s first real enemy is his disfigured counterpart – the version of himself that eugenicist practices failed, and consequently made disabled. Ultimately, what this story highlights is the interconnectivity between eugenics, freakdom, and disability and how this interconnectivity informs understandings of “normalcy,” “superiority,” and the various ways in which we make meaning.

Indeed, the story of Captain America relies upon ideas of superiority in both body and mind as the path to success, and disability as the element that hinders that success. In this dissertation, I bring disability rhetorics to the forefront of rhetoric to examine the ways in which understandings of Western and EuroAmerican rhetorical practices and acts of meaning-making rely on conceptualizations of disability as hindrances to “successful” deployments of making meaning. These conceptualizations of disability are largely formed by ableism, the prejudice against people with disabilities, and the ableist systems that function to maintain it. In the context of this project, ableism is used to refer to the power structure designed to construct “ability” and “normalcy” through the manipulation and removal of what deviates from models of “normalcy.” Contextualizing disability as such allows me to interrogate and confront the ways in which ableism and eugenics are implicated in cultural, linguistic, and discursive

practices. This understanding opens up new ways of recognizing the assumed able body and privileged logics in rhetorical theories, practices, and models of meaning-making.

Definitions

Central to understanding ableist systems is understanding the ways that ableist discourses affect bodies – particularly disabled bodies – in an effort to maintain power. In order to interrogate the interaction between ableism and rhetoric, the larger definition of rhetoric from which I work primarily draws on Jay Dolmage’s definition of rhetoric as “the circulation of discourse through the body” that uncovers “the conflict and variation that impels any rhetorical endeavor” (114-5). In this way, rhetoric is the way that elements come together to make meaning, and the impact that meaning has on and is used against the body. Furthermore, I call on the definition of meaning-making that Casie C. Cobos provides, arguing that “rather than assuming rhetoric equals persuasion equals argument...meaning-making [is] a more nuanced understanding of rhetoric that includes material productions, embodied practices, and identity formations, often through the handing down of knowledge or the contestation of power through communication”(13). Throughout this project, then, meaning-making – the process of collecting elements within specific systems to assign a desired meaning to signs – always comes from the body. I work from this model of rhetoric to define disability rhetorics as the way that meaning-making comes from and is felt through the disabled body, and specifically the ways that the nondisabled body and experience is decentered in meaning-making.

Practicing this definition attempts to answer Cynthia Lewicki-Wilson's call for "an expanded understanding of rhetoricity as a potential, and a broadened concept of rhetoric to include collaborative and mediated rhetorics that work with the performative rhetoric of bodies that 'speak' with/out language" (157). In this way, rhetoric and "rhetoricity" itself depend on meaning-making as something that is not bound by language, and as such, depends on the context to determine meaning – including other ways of making meaning, as well as the rhetoricity of the body. Indeed, commenting on the translation of Aristotle's use of the concept "potentiality," Lewicki-Wilson continues, saying that "rhetoricity does not necessarily reside in, nor depend on, speech, text, or any particular technology of communication. Potentiality resides in a rhetorical situation (161). This echoes Scott Lunsford's urge to become more sensitive to the use of language in meaning-making, "their kairotic natures, and the implications for using them rhetorically" (332). Privileging the body over language as the essential component to rhetoric, this project situates rhetoric through the disabled body, invoking the possibilities of thinking outside normalized bodies and terms.

This privileging of the body invites a recognition of the multifaceted ways in which various peoples and bodies develop equally varying relationships with rhetorical systems and practices through cultural rhetorics. Cultural rhetorics can be understood in this context as the impact that discourses of power have on the body, specifically in the context of understanding how "culture" is constructed through language, rhetorical practices, and meaning-making. Cobos notes that using a cultural rhetorics approach requires the awareness and purposeful situating of how we understand both rhetoric and

culture, including our orientation to the field, our methods and methodological approaches, and the “epistemologies and subjecthood of the practices in our analyses” (14). Furthermore, Cobos argues that a cultural rhetorics approach “allows for an entrance into understanding why forcing all understandings of rhetoric into the canonical history not only eliminates certain practices as rhetorical but also silences those who would offer different views in our fields” (15). Along these lines, a cultural rhetorics approach opens up spaces that highlight the ways in which normalization and standardization eliminates practices or elements that do not contribute to a larger goal. In this context, then, a cultural rhetorics approach allows for the privileging of the body over language with regard to rhetorical practices and meaning-making. In doing so, this approach responds to Malea Powell’s call to remember the bodies that were, and continue to be, erased in the building of both the concept and field of rhetoric.¹

Contextualizing rhetoric and disability in this way allows me to interrogate the processes of designating and removing unwanted elements in pursuit of normalization in rhetorical practices. More importantly, this contextualization allows me to privilege the effects this normalization has on the body, as well as the normalization practices themselves. The normalization practice that this project is concerned with is that of eugenics. Although scholars such as Bernadette Baker concur that “primarily [eugenics] refers at the broadest level to a belief in the necessity of ‘racial’ or ‘national’ improvement through the control of populational reproduction,” (665) I wish to extend

¹ “Blood and Scholarship: One Mixed-Blood’s Story.” *Race, Rhetoric, and Composition*. Ed. Keith Gilyard. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook-Heinemann, 1999. 1-16. Print.

this conversation around eugenics to include the discursive practices of eugenics itself. In doing so, this project situates eugenics as a discursive practice that goes beyond racial improvement as Baker and others have suggested, and instead will conceptualize eugenics as a discursive practice that seeks to maintain power structures over unwanted bodies and practices in the name of reaching full “potential” or “normalcy.” These power structures include the removal, prevention, and assimilation of bodies that do not contribute to or reach the level required by practices of standardization and normalcy. While scholars such as V.J. Guihan, Stephen Jay Gould² and Michelle Ballif in particular have all pointed to an understanding of eugenics as discourse that enforces power structures, this project extends that work by demonstrating the operation of eugenics as a logic that motivates discourses around human variation.

Eugenicist logics refer to the removal of what is not wanted or deemed necessary for the desired outcome, or alternatively, the replication of the elements that are considered useful. The identification of elements that are desirable or wanted occurs through a process linked to the logic of the freak show, what I call throughout this project as “enfreakment.” This term was first used by Rosemarie Garland Thomson in her 1996 anthology, *Freakery*, and is used in this project to refer to the way that rejected elements are positioned as unwanted for the purposes of establishing what is wanted. Eugenicist logics thus do not operate or exist independent from other systems or logics

² Gould’s *The Mismeasure of Man* (2006) situates eugenics as a series of scientific discourses that structure the methods, practices, and motivations that underlie biological determinism: “This book, then, is about the abstraction of intelligence as a single entity, its location within the brain, its quantification as one number for each individual, and the use of these numbers to rank people in a single series of worthiness, invariably to find that oppressed and disadvantaged groups – races, classes, or sexes – are innately inferior and deserve their status” (21).

of normalization; for the purposes of this dissertation, I will primarily focus on some of the implications of the overlap and interaction between the logics of eugenics and enfreakment within ableist systems.

To observe this interaction, I offer the “enfreakment of language,” a term that encompasses both the process of enfreakment and the heuristic that allows us to see that process in action. Using the enfreakment of language to look at selected American representations of disability, eugenics, and freakdom, this project argues that these modes of representation are inherently ableist because they function primarily through eugenicist and ableist logic. Because of this relationship to eugenicist logics, these representations of disability, eugenics, and freakdom are always in the process of “enfreakment,” producing a unique illusion of “accomplishment” that ableist systems can achieve by means of discouraging the reproduction of undesirable qualities or traits. This chapter will theorize the role of the body in dominant Western and Euro-American language and meaning-making systems to establish the relationship between language, bodies, and eugenics.

Rhetoric and Eugenics

The approach to the idealized “whole” body and the threat of fragmentation is situated through the able body, marking a distinction between a normalized body and the “abnormal” body. Despite the fact that reaching the desired “wholeness” is impossible, the body that deviates from the desirable “whole” body becomes rendered as abnormal or deviant regardless. Similarly, in many forms of Western linguistic organization and meaning-making, the quest for a “complete” meaning requires the distinction between

desirable meanings and “deviant” meanings, that is, those meanings that are unintended or unwanted in the process of creating meaning.

Michelle Ballif’s interrogation of Socrates’ question to Gorgias in the Platonic dialogue, “Is Rhetoric a *techné*?” demonstrates an example of how rhetoric and meaning-making can be understood as a re-productive craft that exists to arrive at a meaning through the careful removal of elements not pertinent to the desired outcome. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato suggests that central to the *techné* of rhetoric – literally the art or craft of rhetoric – is the speakers’ ability to “discover the kind of speech that matches each type of nature” (72). In this way, *techné* is the art of adapting arguments to varying audiences and context, and Ballif notes that despite Socrates’ claim that rhetoric is not a *techné*, “rhetoric does indeed *produce* something” (7). Thus by extending Plato’s question in the context of eugenics, Ballif is questioning the degree to which Plato theorizes the reproductive methods of rhetoric:

Plato, by interrogating rhetoric as a re-productive ‘art,’ subjects rhetorical practices to the same genealogic and eugenic demands to which those inhabiting Plato’s utopian Republic are likewise subject. Plato...sets about constructing a genealogy of rhetorical practices in order to establish a certain social/symbolic order by guaranteeing legitimacy to dialectic while denying the same to sophistry and writing (7).

Understanding Plato’s interrogation in this way implies the presence of a relationship between eugenics – that is, eugenics as a means to re-produce desired practices – and a “social/symbolic order.” This hierarchy of “legitimacy” determines not only what

practices and acts of meaning-making are acceptable, but also what bodies are acceptable. Useful to understanding the distinction between “acceptable” and “unacceptable” bodies in this context is C. Stephen Byrum’s observation regarding the evolution of the term “*techne*”:

Obsessed with wholeness and concerned with *telos*, or the "end" of a matter, [the Greeks] added an ethical and aesthetic dimension to their early definition. *Techne* came to mean not only understanding how to get the job done but also how the skill could be integrated with being a good citizen. (160)

The movement towards a larger goal – conceptualized here as “wholeness” – renders the way rhetoric is achieved as something connected to ethics, namely how to achieve the desired outcome, but also how that achievement can be replicated in the name of “being a good citizen.” As such, rhetorical practices are directly associated with social orders that rely on what Ballif notes as the guarantee of legitimacy. Ballif defines this legitimacy in Platonic terms, arguing that

for those who seek the reproduction of the proper, and all that that concept entails, it does “matter” if rhetoric is a *techne* – if it can father legitimate sons and can, therefore, properly bring forth the materialization of a body of knowledge that matters. Proper civic bodies reproduce legitimate offspring, who have ears only for proper civic discourses. (23)

Indeed, Charles Kauffman further contextualizes this “legitimacy,” arguing that such an understanding of legitimacy ensures that “there will be very few rhetoricians in any state

and that all will be members of the philosophic ruling class, dedicated to the propagation of doctrine” (363). Because the nature of rhetoric and meaning-making rely on metaphors of the body, and by extension, reproduction, eugenics becomes an integral part of understanding the distinction between rhetorical practices that have value, and those that have none. Having rhetorical value, in this case, means having a legitimacy that contributes to the idea of “normalized” rhetoric, practices, and meaning-making. The meaning-making produced from “legitimate” rhetors will always, by extension, be legitimate. Thus the idea of “legitimate” rhetoric becomes synonymous with “normal” rhetoric, implying that only select bodies can engage in meaning-making and rhetorical practices of “value,” that is, those practices that achieve “wholeness.”

Ableism as a System

In language, the desire for wholeness is indicative of the desire to maintain control over what is meant when signs are used. Often, this control is deployed as attempts to exert control of the system or structure that governs language or other modes of meaning-making. Ferdinand de Saussure’s *Course on General Linguistics* provided the foundation for many approaches to language, most importantly, the concept of the sign (the word or the thing) and its relationship to the signifier (the meaning assigned to the word or the thing). For Saussure, the meaning that is assigned to words or things is arbitrary, and arrived at only through the context that surrounds the sign, including the signs that surround it. Language is thus comprised of a series of differences without positive terms and possesses no value outside of the linguistic system that produces “conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system” (120). Derrida

explores the space of such a system and the play of signs that make meaning within these systems in “Différance,” and argues that ideas operate as signs in language, wherein there are no value-identities, only differences. The meaning of any apparently present sign is only the relationship between all the absent meanings that the term is not. To interrogate this idea, Derrida introduces *différance*, a word used to designate the play of differences that make meaning. He explains,

What is written as *différance*, then, will be the playing movement that “produces” – by means of something that is not simply an activity – these differences, these effects of difference. This does not mean that the *différance* that produces differences is somehow before them, in a simple and unmodified – in-different – present. *Différance* is the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences. Thus, the name “origin” no longer suits it. (11)

The movement between signs that, for Saussure, produces meaning, Derrida designates as *différance*, the passage of infinite and endless differentiation. Where Saussure argues that difference produces one meaning to the next, Derrida argues that the deferral of each difference renders each moment of value-assignment as infinite. More importantly, each difference is only an *effect* of difference; in other words, Saussure argues that value is placed on a sign once it is differentiated from other signs in the chain of signifiers. But because difference is determined by what a sign is *not*, it is simultaneously affirmed as what it *can be*. Thus the moment of difference that Saussure references as a moment of meaning-making is only an effect of identity, or what he believes is the consequence of

difference and value-assignment. Therefore if, as Derrida argues, meaning is endlessly deferred and differed from other signs, then the result of differing – identity – is only an illusion, because for Derrida, identity cannot ever be fixed because it is always in the process of differing from other signs. Simply put, the movement of difference has an ending point for Saussure, and that ending point occurs when value is assigned; for Derrida, that movement of difference will never end, therefore identity or “true” value will only ever be an illusion. Thus the meaning assigned to signs is infinite; at any given moment, a sign can have multiple assigned meanings, and privileged meanings can change depending on context. Because of this constant and infinite movement between what a thing is and what a thing is not, a sign cannot ever be “complete,” and meaning is arbitrary.

Thus within models of ableism, the classification of “disabled” is arbitrary – that is, always responding to the classification of “nondisabled” or “normal” that is always in flux – but the values assigned to specific bodies within ableist contexts are nevertheless subject to the classifications that operate as social rules or norms. Saussure argues that the arbitrariness of value-assignments renders the individual unable to change the system or the elements that constitute that system due to the supposed fixed identity. Derrida, however, argues that this arbitrariness allows for natural alterations, opening up spaces for recognition of the oppositional values that bind the system together. For Derrida, the values assigned to bodies are arbitrary, and not bound to the classifications that place them within value-systems. Therefore while Saussure would consider the body as a

representation of original presence, Derrida's model would consider the body as a site of neither presence nor absence, but rather the space between.

Original Presence

When bodies become regarded as signs within systems of power – ableist systems, specifically – their value is based on the relationship they have with the “original” and full presence. Within ableist systems, that original and full presence is the able (or nondisabled) body, that is, the fully present, normalized, and healthy body. Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" addresses this idea of an “original” presence, conceptualizing it as a fixed center. Derrida argues that much of Western philosophy has always disregarded the composition of the center, and indeed, the “structurality of structure,” by overlooking inherent contradictions and ambiguities that weaken it. To account for any potential weakness is the idea of a center or a fixed origin of the structure from which all meaning emanates. This fixed origin also limits the play within the structure, ensuring control over whatever occurs. This stable, immobile center in turn creates a stable structure, therefore the “structurality of the structure” has never been called into question. Understanding and accepting the role of a stable structure gives the illusion of control over whatever happens within that structure. Within an ableist system, the center holds that the nondisabled body is unchanging, and bodies can only be understood in terms of their relationship to nondisabled bodies, thus determining the level of participation and acceptance within that system. In other words, the nondisabled body is the center of an ableist system from which all understandings about bodies emanate. To be nondisabled in an ableist system, then, is to be the “right

kind” of human, a distinction that ableism relies on in the dehumanization of those whose bodies do not conform to what is normal. Thus the binary of able and disabled is both informed by, and extended to, the embodied binary of human/inhuman.

Because ableism operates on the assumption of the able body as fully present and whole, all other bodies are regarded as representations of this wholeness, implying an impossibility of full presence. Yet within this type of ableist system, the able body also cannot achieve that presence because it assumes the able body as an origin from which all other bodies move away from. For Derrida, an origin is only an effect of the movement of difference that projects the supposedly original moment that a representation reflects. He writes,

Representation mingles with what it represents, to the point where one speaks as one writes, one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than the shadow or reflection of the representer. A dangerous promiscuity and a nefarious complicity between the reflection and reflected which lets itself be seduced narcissistically. In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable. (*Of Grammatology* 36)

The concept of origin operates in metaphysics as the truth from which all meaning simultaneously emerges moves towards. When the distinction between two binaries – in Derrida’s example, between speaking and writing – collapses and reveals how deeply “representation mingles with what it represents,” the identification of an origin becomes impossible. In other words, there cannot be an origin because, as Kip Canfield reminds us, a semantic purpose is ascribed to origins, and “at the point of origins, there is no

semantics” (par. 24). Thus if all bodies are representations of the able body, that is, the body privileged within any ableist system, the differentiation between the able body and the disabled body becomes indistinct. The existence of ability thus depends on enfreakment, that is, the identification and presence of the body of the person of with disabilities.

A consequence of the enfreakment of bodies is the fragmentation of those bodies. Enfreakment goes beyond identifying what bodies are useful versus what bodies are not; enfreakment also divides bodies themselves into useful parts and useless parts. The result of such dividing produces a fragmented the body that is often associated with disability. Indeed, this fragmentation is often understood as the difference between cure and care, rehabilitation and death: if the “useless” or “abnormal” parts of the body can be returned or given the illusion of normalcy, then the status of “useless” or “abnormal” becomes challenged. This understanding and resistance is best seen in Lacanian terms, wherein the earliest and most underdeveloped experience of one’s body is the *corps morcelé*, the fragmented body. The infant experiences his or her body as an accumulation of fragmented body parts – arms, legs, etc. – the representations of which Lacan calls *imagos*. For the self to be constituted, a process begins that attempts to unify by providing an illusion of a whole body. This movement, according to Lacan, “extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality...and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity” (4). When the child reaches what Lacan terms as the “mirror stage,” he or she recognizes the image of him or herself in the mirror as a whole entity as opposed to the fragmented movements and experiences that have

constituted his or her world up until that point. Because of this opposition, the infant will first know itself as lacking a completeness that cannot ever be fulfilled.

In this way, the image that the infant sees in the mirror serves as “armor” against a fragmented body or experience. Consequently, the disabled body becomes a reminder of the unwanted fragmented body. Lennard J. Davis argues that

the disabled body is a direct imago of the repressed fragmented body. The disabled body causes a kind of hallucination of the mirror phase gone wrong. The subject looks at the disabled body and has a moment of cognitive dissonance, or should we say a moment of cognitive resonance with the earlier state of fragmentation. Rather than seeing the whole body in the mirror, the subject sees the repressed fragmented body; rather than seeing the object of desire...the subject sees the true self of the fragmented body. (60)

The disabled body comes to represent what is undesirable or not wanted: fragmented, underdeveloped, and unrepressed. Furthermore, the disabled body highlights the illusory nature of wholeness and development. The image of the disabled body calls on the fragmentary state that the “armor” of “natural” development attempted to guard against. It is a reminder that bodies and experiences are never anything but fragmented, despite the illusions of wholeness and development established in the “mirror stage.” Ultimately, this understanding of wholeness and development positions disability as never capable of being the object of desire because its role is to represent the reality of the fragmented body. Dan Goodley notes that “the cultural prerogative is to refute those who remind us

of our own fragmentation (e.g. impaired bodies)” (130), and as Ghai reminds us, “disability, by definition, implies ‘lacking’ or ‘flaw’” (51). The disabled body becomes a site of cultural projection, wherein the nondisabled viewer is positioned to see the disabled body as lacking and, in many ways, becoming another part of the “armor” that distances the (illusionary) wholeness of the “able” body from the fragmentation of the “disabled” body.

The Body as the Trace

Considering the nondisabled body as an origin point – where bodies begin, and are fragmented to the point of abnormality and disability – a space between binaries (nondisabled/disabled) is produced. Derrida refers to this space as the trace, the mark of an absence, or the movement between what *was* and now *is*. Although the trace is always already connected to the past, thereby implying an origin, it is only an effect of the past: the movement of the trace erases the difference between signifier and signified. This difference, therefore, separates nothing and distinguishes nothing. Derrida writes,

It is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called ‘present’ element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a

past or a future as a modified present. (13)

The movement between binaries is what creates meaning, yet what is required for this movement to commence is the “presence” of the two binaries. In other words, an established value must be ascribed to each element for it to be distinguished as opposite of another element, thereby creating a binary. And as each element essentially means what it is not, that is, its value is determined by elements outside of it, the value of an element can vary with the context that surrounds it. In this way, it is only “on the scene of presence” but retaining “the mark of the past element,” or what came before it in its specific context. Simultaneously, however, it is also vulnerable to the context it will be for another element, marking it for the future. As such, the trace is always both past and present, constituted by what it is not, what it always is, and what it will not ever be.

An ableist model depends on this position of the body as a trace, and manipulates it to perpetuate systems of oppression. If the body operates as a trace, it is only an effect of the difference between the two binaries that perpetuate the ableist systems. Spivak describes Derrida’s trace as “the mark of the absence of a presence [. . .] of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience.” (xvii, *Of Grammatology*). The trace is the absence of a presence, a representative of a nonexistence that has a presumed presence and origin. Derrida writes,

The trace is not only the disappearance of origin – within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which becomes the origin of the

origin. . . . The (pure) trace is differance. It does not depend on any sensible plenitude, audible or visible, phonic or graphic. It is, on the contrary, the condition of such a plenitude. Although it does not exist, although it is never a being-present outside of all plenitude, its possibility is by rights anterior to all that one calls the sign. . . . The trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. Which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute origin of sense in general. (*Of Grammatology* 61-62, 65)

The existence of the body in this model signals the disappearance of an origin, as it is acting as a trace. More significantly, it signals the nonexistence of an origin, as any origin can only be formed in opposition to a nonorigin. If the body is considered operating as the trace within an ableist model, its nonexistence is the condition of meaning-making between the binary of able and disabled. Yet, as Derrida points to, if the body is the trace and the trace is the origin of sense, there is no origin of sense at all. In other words, because Derrida argues that there is no origin, the effect that is produced from *différance* – the body – is only an effect.

The rendering of the body as an effect is the means through which bodies become disregarded, forgotten, and effaced: subject to eugenicist logics. Yet an ableist system depends on such effacement and logics: what has no utility – a full, present, and static value – in the system is vulnerable to erasure. Its utility does not extend beyond the existence and preservation of its opposite, that is, what is considered useful. Thus the project of ableism is one always connected to the determination of what is desirable

through the process of categorization and utility assessment – *enfreakment* – and is vulnerable to the eradication that eugenicist logics require.

Center as Control

Within this space between binaries where *différance* occurs, ableist models consider the body as operating in a similar way as the trace, a space where difference is written but also where difference transcends the time and space imposed on it. The body carries memory and history with it, those things that are required for the play of signs to occur. Yet because it represents that which is absent (or required within ableist structures), certain bodies become effaced, and in being recognized, they are ignored or forgotten; in other words, these structures allow for bodies to be acknowledged only in terms of what they are not and what they cannot ever be, which in turn establishes and perpetuates the existence of other bodies, those bodies upon which the “undesirable” ones are held against. Able-bodiedness becomes the presence that subjugated bodies are expected to represent. Derrida’s explication of the nature of the representational aspect of the sign demonstrates the reliance on representing a supposed “original” presence – in this model, the impossible able-bodied presence:

the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both *secondary* and *provisional*: secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation.

(9)

For people with disabilities, the body – if regarded as a sign within a system of ableism – cannot ever achieve full presence because it is secondary and provisional to the idealized image of the nondisabled body. The nondisabled body becomes the original presence, rendering the bodies of people with disabilities as always already secondary and provisional to the nondisabled body: secondary because it cannot inhabit able-bodiedness and provisional because it is always within the process of deferral and re-signification away from the nondisabled body. To be recognized and valued in this system means to occupy able-bodiedness, yet the categories of able-bodiedness and the able body are categories that make it difficult for anyone – even “able” people – to inhabit at all times, due to its constantly shifting parameters that effect different people at different times. Therefore for the disabled body, it is always in a process of deferral and signification as able-bodiedness goes through this process of construction and reconstruction. Yet even the nondisabled body is an illusion – therefore the able-body is always attempting to find a way to inhabit able-bodiedness, an impossible construct. Thus in creating the “abnormal” body, the idealized body that has been constructed cannot ever be present or truly exist. The able body as a representation of fullness or presence, then, cannot ever achieve that full presence, yet ableist systems depend on the movement towards full presence.

Conclusion

Understanding the operation language in this way underscores the function of eugenicist logics in the attempt to reach “full” meaning. If meaning-making is ambiguous and inconsistent, the center is constructed as a way to control the

reproduction of desired meanings and the eradication of undesirable meanings. Restricting the free play of the sign also restricts unwanted meanings. To restrict unwanted meanings, the contexts that surround the sign are altered to shape the desired meaning. For example, to foster the meaning of “disability,” constructions of “ability” are cultivated and encouraged so that “disability” comes to signal the absence of “ability.” When a body deviates from the image of the “normal” body – either in the medical textbook, or in the staircase that assumes all bodies can reach the top – that body is dis/abled³, abnormal, and deviant within that context. When a body cannot perform within the prescribed context, it is effectually dis/abled. This is not unlike Judith Butler’s conceptualization of performativity, which argues that what the body “means” is a production at the site of performativity:

For discourse to materialize a set of effects, “discourse” itself must be understood as complex and convergent chains in which “effects” are vectors of power. In this sense, what is constituted in discourse is not fixed in or by discourse, but becomes the condition and occasion for further action. This does not mean that any action is possible on the basis of a discursive effect. On the contrary, certain reiterative chains of discursive production are barely legible as reiterations, for the effects they have materialized are those without which no bearing in discourse can be taken. (187)

³My use of the term “dis/abled” does not refer to the lived identities of those who identify as disabled, but rather the process of disablement, wherein contexts – including environmental and social – restrict the participation of certain bodies through the assumption of abilities.

For a context to achieve its desired effect/s, the context itself must be understood as a construction produced by systems of power in order to maintain and perpetuate that power. Contexts may either be understood as discourse, as Butler uses it, or as discursive practices, as I use it in the example of dis/abling. Either use of the term “context” highlights the ways in which what happens within that context determines that “condition and occasion” for action within that context. “Normalcy” is thus constructed as a reiteration, or a constant presence in the construction of a context. Because of its constant presence in the structure, it becomes viewed as natural, until the “structurality of the structure” is interrogated. Thus because ableism, “normalcy,” and “ability” are constantly repeated in structures of power, “ability” takes on a sense of “naturality,” thus rendering bodies without ability – disabled bodies – as “unnatural.” Because this context determines what is “natural” versus “unnatural,” it also determines the where “natural” and “unnatural” are located, thereby controlling and constructing the desired effects or meanings.

This re-signification away from the nondisabled body has effects both internally and externally. “Abnormalities” become understood as markers of ableism more than markers of disability. What this suggests about ableism, then, is that ableism creates a disability that in turn manifests in the body. In other words, in the attempt to normalize and to situate bodies in controlled contexts necessarily puts the “different” or “abnormal” body into a category of disability. While this version of disability is based on bodily difference, it is also one that is socially constructed. Difference operates similarly to disability in such a way that makes a disability studies reading of

deconstruction imperative for an understanding of the implications of textualizing the body.

Considering this concept within an ableist model opens up new spaces for understanding how origins and binaries operate in the process of signification. The foundation for ableism depends on the establishment and perpetuation of the binary between able and disabled. For ableism, “able” is situated as an origin, rendering it a superior and full presence that “disabled” should – but cannot – move toward. Able bodiedness thus becomes the goal if presence is to be achieved. Yet this establishment of able opposite disabled in a binary renders able as both dependent on the existence of disabled, but more significantly, “able bodiedness” as an effect of the movement between able and disabled. It is neither full nor present, as its illusory existence depends on elements outside of it. Able bodiedness becomes the trace, always differing and deferring the effect of “able bodiedness” in the move between able and disabled.

Such a consideration of the body in ableist systems opens up new ways of understanding the relationship between enfreakment, eugenics, and disability. Derrida’s linguistic analysis leaves out the material consequences, however: if things and ideas function like signs in a linguistic system, the body necessarily becomes a text because it becomes an effect. Systems of oppression rely on this idea of the body as an effect or a text because the body then becomes manipulatable and dehumanized. When the disabled body is put at the center of ableist critiques, the reliance on the able body emerges, complicating the way that difference is understood and represented in the body and through language. When meaning is made through the body, signs no longer are

understood as lacking full meaning; when bodies are recognized as nontextual, they too are no longer understood as lacking, offering up new challenges to the project of eugenics, a project reliant upon determining the “lack” in the movement toward full meaning or presence. Thus the ableist system’s refusal to accept alignment between the able body and the disabled body reveals how significant and present this relationship is and the ways that signification is contingent upon the disabled body. Furthermore, the reliance on the logics of enfreakment and the logics of eugenics demonstrate how many modes of Western and Euro-American meaning-making are inherently ableist, as they rely on eradication of “abnormal” elements. As such, any representation of “abnormal” in dominant rhetorical systems invokes the histories and implications associated with eugenics, enfreakment, and disability.

This project offers three examples of the use of enfreakment of language as a heuristic, uncovering the interaction and relationship between eugenics, enfreakment, and disability. My first example in Chapter II traces the development of eugenicist logic, highlighting the Greco-Roman and European traditions that constructed the eugenicist logic implemented in the United States and Nazi-occupied Europe. These traditions, similar to the ones that construct what we now understand as “the Rhetorical Tradition,” are largely constituted by the erasure of other forms of meaning-making so as to achieve a desirable outcome – in the case of the Rhetorical Tradition, to achieve a desired definition of rhetoric. Because the erasure of “undesirable” traditions are often the beginning of an erasure of bodies – such as the attempted erasure of Indigenous peoples of the Americas – I demonstrate how eugenicist logic in language creates contexts in

which acts of eugenics are deemed acceptable and necessary for the desired outcome. I analyze the eugenicist logic in the language of the first “ugly law” on record – a law designed to keep people with “unsightly” disabilities out of public view – alongside the logic of the process of euthanasia programs implemented under Nazi legislation.

Chapter III offers the second example of how *the enfreakment of language* can be used to uncover ableism in dominant representations of “abnormal.” In this chapter, I extend my discussion of Nazi eugenics to postwar representations of the eugenics of the Holocaust in the United States. Focusing on the use of Anne Frank’s image as the ultimate victim of Nazi eugenics, I show how eugenicist logics take a different form and are able to continue to operate successfully through the removal of Frank’s rhetorical agency. Drawing on Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s work on representations of disability, this chapter shows that the logics used to construct Frank’s image are the same as those used to construct representations of disability, effectively rendering Frank as disabled within eugenicist systems of meaning-making. Because these logics of disablement are the same as those of the freak show, wherein “different” or “abnormal” is privileged so the audience may be distanced, audiences relate to Frank’s constructed image to confirm that they are not affected by the logics that first erased her body and then her rhetorical agency.

My last example in Chapter IV interrogates the references to eugenics and freakdom in the work of Lady Gaga. Gaga’s performances and self-positioning as a freak who has been disabled by societal norms challenge the reliance on “normalcy,” and by extension, “freakdom.” By privileging the body and relying on the histories and

implications of a body associated with eugenics, freakdom, and disability, Gaga's challenge shows the limits of systems of meaning-making based on elimination. My final chapter considers the pedagogical implications of the relationship I have outlined, and the impact that the enfreakment of language has on making the classroom and field of Rhetoric and Composition more accessible.

CHAPTER II

THE LANGUAGE OF EUGENICS

This chapter will demonstrate the movement from enfreakment to eugenics, both in language and in practice, interrogating of histories of eugenics in the United States and relating them to Nazi eugenics, specifically concerning people with disabilities. Acknowledging the relationship between European racism, American racism, and consequently, the Holocaust, eugenics provides a logic that motivates isolation and persecution of those deemed “undesirable.” The logics of eugenics assert the control over undesirable qualities in order to produce desirable results. I will explore specific examples of how this logic motivates language, and how that logic can move from language to the enactment of eugenic practices. Furthermore, I will examine the logics of freakdom, as “enfreaking” undesirable or unwanted bodies to solidify normality; freakdom as such is an essential step that led to eugenics. Ultimately, what emerges is the impact of disability and ableism in the histories of eugenics in the United States and in Nazi Germany: through acts of disablement – rendering bodies disabled via the establishment of social restrictions – bodies were enfreaked and then removed from society, either through sequestering, or through extermination.

Because eugenicist logic and acts have been recorded as early as Plato, the role of eugenics and eugenicist logic should be understood as beyond Francis Galton, and rather as a settler colonial project of “racial hygiene” in the United States. This project first emerged in the context of official genocide policies against people of color,

beginning with the colonization of Indigenous peoples in the 15th century. These policies later took the form of what became known as the “ugly laws,” laws that forbade “unsightly persons” from appearing in public. Such laws were both reflections of and precursors for the eugenicist movements that were quickly picked up by Nazi physicians. Juxtaposing the language of the “ugly laws” with Nazi eugenicist practices, the distinct relationship to medical practices in Nazi Europe emerges.

Francis Galton

I begin my discussion of eugenics much like most scholarship on the history of eugenics, with Francis Galton, “the Father of Eugenics.” Unlike most scholars, however, I begin with Galton to highlight the reliance on Western modes of constructing histories, and the impact these modes have on understanding how these histories function. Because eugenics did not begin with Galton – neither the logics of eugenics, nor the acts performed under the name *eugenics* – acknowledging his work as the starting point of eugenics and eugenicist logic is misleading. Furthermore, this acknowledgement is a product of eugenicist logic that operated and existed long before he first coined the term. Nicholas W. Gillham argues that “Galton’s scientific career did not proceed in the linear fashion outlined...but was instead a jumble of interconnected interests and approaches. [Thus] to make sense out of it, one must tease out specific sequences of events and leave out others entirely” (98). Gillham is one of many who position Galton as the man who both “coined the word and initiated the original eugenics movement” (84). This very reliance on Galton as the man who initiated the *original* eugenics movement suggests two things: Galton was the first and only man researching this subject, and that,

somehow, eugenics had an “original,” “harmless,” movement that eventually took the form that would come to be associated almost synonymously with Hitler’s project of “racial hygiene.”

I highlight this one specific history of Galton’s creation of the word to demonstrate one aspect of the relationship between language, eugenics, and history. The need to understand the origins of eugenics through Galton and his creation of the word points to what Derrida argues in “Differance,” wherein origins are always entangled in language. Thus using language to talk about origins and about what is secondary to them produces the effect of origins. In other words, an “origin” is only the effect of the movement of difference, which then projects a supposedly “original” moment (11). Indeed, what compels most scholarship on the history of eugenics to begin with Galton is his role as “originator” in the history of the word *eugenics*. Edwin Black describes the origins of the term:

[Galton] played with many names for his new science. Finally, he scrawled Greek letters on a hand-sized scrap of paper, and next to them the two English fragments he would join into one. The Greek word for *well* was abutted to the Greek word for *born*.

In a flourish, Galton invented a term that would tantalize his contemporaries, inspire his disciples, obsess his later followers and eventually slash through the twentieth century like a sword. The finest and the fiendish would adopt the new term as their driving mantra. Families would be shattered, generations would be wiped away, whole

peoples would be nearly erased – all in the name of Galton’s word. The word he wrote on that small piece of paper was *eugenics*. (16)

Black’s construction situates Galton as both prior and simultaneous to the emergence of the word and the concept of eugenics itself. He is prior because his “new science” had not been named yet, and is simultaneous because *naming* makes it visible. Michel Foucault argues in *The Birth of the Clinic* that “we must re-examine the original distribution of the visible and invisible insofar as it is linked with the division between what is stated and what remains unsaid: thus the articulation of medical language and its object will appear as a single figure” (xi). Black is re-examining the original moment where the distribution of the concept and the word came together. The concept of eugenics had existed prior to Galton, but as the attention to Galton in the history of eugenics demonstrates, it had not become wholly visible until Galton named it. Eugenics existed in the realm of the “unsaid,” and thus Galton is associated with the emergence of the concept because he “stated” it, thereby positioning him and his articulation as a “single figure.” In this way, many histories of eugenics begin with Galton because within these contexts, eugenics cannot become visible until it enters into the language of science and medicine. The reliance on the story of the word demonstrates the reliance on language to identify origins. In this original moment, Galton is positioned as the last in line of Eurocentric thinkers, such as Charles Darwin, yet the conceptualization of the difference between what the science of eugenics did before the naming versus what happened after – such as Black’s description of eugenics as slashing “through the twentieth century like a sword” – gives the effect of an origin. In other words, the effect

of assuming Galton as the origin point of eugenics is that eugenics began as a “harmless” science with Galton, because before Galton, there was no name to it.

But eugenics was never harmless, and it was hardly “original” by the time that Galton had coined the term. Diane B. Paul and James Moore argue that Galton’s work was an implication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, noting that while Darwin did inspire Galton to pursue a long-standing interest in the topics of heredity, Galton’s “intervention was the first to make an *evolutionary* argument about human nature and to link questions of human breeding to the anxieties about biological decline that Darwin had provoked” (29). More significantly, John C. Waller’s seminal essay, “Ideas of Heredity, Reproduction and Eugenics in Britain, 1800-1875” argues against this “originary” position often granted to Galton. In it, Waller, examines the historical context in which Galton worked, pointing out the continuities between pre-Victorian hereditarianism and later Victorian eugenical ideologies, ultimately arguing that “little attempt has been made to determine the range of social, ideological, and intellectual factors that rendered eugenical thought unprecedentedly credible in the mid-Victorian period” (458). For Waller, that means decentering Galton’s eugenical ideas and instead highlighting the existence and prevalence of hereditarian theories, their relationships to eugenical thought, and “the demonstrable impact that theories of heredity had upon choices of marital partner” (458). Waller further argues that

By attaching too much importance to individuals we lose sight of the fact that – in terms of causal agency – the idea of eugenics arose from a *general* fascination for heredity (intensified, but not initiated by the

publication of *The Origin of Species*) and a particular set of social, institution and political circumstances of the mid-Victorian period. These factors were not only largely responsible for producing Galtonian eugenics, but they continued to stimulate eugenical thinking independently of Galton's earlier advocacy. (484)

This tendency to attach too much importance to Galton himself was, and continues to be, the product of the attempt to situate and consequently locate eugenics at a specific point of time and place. Ignoring the “general fascination for heredity” that Waller points out ignores the operation of eugenic logic in the creation of this fascination, but more significantly, acts in the name of this logic. Waller's attention to the “particular set of social, institution and political circumstances of the mid-Victorian period” are an essential part of understanding why Galton is situated as the “father of eugenics,” but it also is significant to consider why and how these circumstances are privileged in the first place. If understanding Galton's role in the establishment of eugenicist thought depends on understanding mid-Victorian medical, political, and social circumstances, what exclusions from this history are equally dependent? What histories have been erased in the name of a linear history of eugenics, even in the act of decentering Galton himself? What does this suggest about *how* we understand eugenics and *why* we wish to understand it in the first place? What does this say about what is “required” to have a “complete” understanding of eugenical origins, logics, and actions? I cannot attempt to satisfactorily answer all of these questions; I can, however, point to some of these exclusions in the history of eugenics that has been offered to build a new perspective of

eugenics. I do not attempt to create a new history, but in the sections that follow, but to contribute to a new understanding of eugenics and its place in histories of people most affected by it.

Eugenics Before Galton

My analysis of Francis Galton's place in the "history" of eugenics demonstrates one of the ways that eugenics begins with language, as evidenced by the consistent positioning of Galton as the "founder" of the science. Yet, as David J. Galton has argued, eugenic ideas existed long before Galton, specifically in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Richard Barnett points out that "in true Victorian style, Galton – a scientific polymath and Charles Darwin's cousin – drew on Greek for his coinage: eu (true or noble) and genos (to give birth)" (1742). This suggests that the Victorian historical, political, and social context from which the word *eugenics* emerged was imbued with specifically Greek ways of understanding, recognizing, and perpetuating a certain type of value placed onto bodies. This can translate into a reliance on specifically Greek ways of making-meaning. In DJ Galton's essay, "Eugenics: some lessons from the past," he reinforces the fact that

the ideas behind eugenics are not new. As with so many other things, the Ancient Greeks were there first. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the impact that Plato and his pupil Aristotle have had on Western society. It could be said of the European philosophers who came afterwards that they have mainly picked one or two paragraphs from the works of the two Greeks and then expanded and analysed them in more

detail. The legacy of Plato and Aristotle will be discussed and debated for centuries to come, as it has been in the past. Both of them held decidedly strong views on eugenics, their aim being to provide the City State with the most able and effective children for the next generation. The methods they proposed are bold, radical and if adopted would transform family life. They go far beyond the techniques suggested by Francis Galton, who originated the term in the nineteenth century. (133)

Indeed, Plato's *Republic* suggested enforcing means onto healthy persons reproducing, but also means to prevent sick and "malformed" citizens from reproducing as well, reasoning that these children would likely share the same "deficiencies" as their parents (407d). Plato's suggestions also included abortion (461c) and removal to the "other city" (*Timaeus*, 19a). This removal, Plato argued, was essential to the perpetuation of "healthy" individual evolution (*Republic* 407e), which would in turn be responsible for a good quality of life (407e) for those deemed "acceptable" citizens. Aristotle held similar views, explicitly arguing for a mandate that deformed children must be executed, and those children of deformed or "unacceptable" citizens should be aborted (*The Politics*, 1335b). Furthermore, regulation needed to be enacted to ensure that "children produced...have bodily frames suited to the wish of the lawgiver" (1334b). Although David J. Galton argues in the above passage that the methods Plato and Aristotle proposed are "bold, radical and if adopted would transform family life" and that they "go far beyond the techniques" forwarded by Francis Galton, this is not entirely true. As demonstrated in the preceding section, Galton's rendering of these beliefs into the

concept of “eugenics” implies both an explicit adherence to Plato and Aristotle’s ideas regarding marriage and reproduction, and also suggests an implicit compliance with ideas related to the extermination of “deformed” citizens. More significantly, these regulations that would ensure productive and healthy citizenry are made mandatory through written law. In this way, it can be argued that eugenics begins and develops through the use of language against unwanted bodies.

One way that this practice emerges is through colonization and institutionalization. As noted above, Plato’s writings argued for the sequestering of unwanted bodies as a eugenic measure to attain an ideal State, saying that

the children of the good should be properly educated, but that those of the bad should be secretly sent to some other city; yet so that such of the adult among these as should be found to be of a good disposition should be recalled from exile; while, on the contrary, those who were retained from the first in the city as good, but proved afterwards bad, should be similarly banished. (19a).

In this context, the children of the “bad” refer to those whose parents were sick or “malformed.” He continues, reasoning that if these children themselves are not bad, they may re-enter the state, and alternatively, if children of those who were deemed “good” develop otherwise, they are banished from the state. In this way, Plato is arguing that the State retains control of this city, one close enough to transfer people. This is not unlike the logics behind institutionalization, whereby citizens “unfit” to contribute to society are sequestered off until they can prove themselves a “good” citizen. In the first U.S.

state-sponsored asylums in the 1800s, designed to rehabilitate those deemed “insane,” Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell argue that “mid- to late nineteenth-century eugenics authorized, anchored, and certified what we refer to as *diagnostic regimes*. Here we coin a phrase that defines the historical transition from a ‘curative’ promise of rehabilitation to an increasingly ‘custodial’ proposition involving the oversight of pathologized groups viewed as nonnormative” (71). In this way, eugenics serves to diagnose and sequester difference in the interest of maintaining standards of “normalcy” and “health.” For Plato, achieving the “ideal” community meant removing unhealthy and undesirable bodies from public view and participation. Plato’s argument for the relationship between health of the body and health of the state indicates one of the earliest moves towards Snyder and Mitchell’s “diagnostic regime.” Furthermore, as Francis Galton himself pointed out, eugenic passages in *The Republic* and *Laws* “don’t amount to much beyond the purification of the city by sending off all the degenerates to form what is termed a colony!” (312). David J. Galton argues that “it is not clear where Galton obtained this idea of colonisation as a eugenic measure; it does not appear to occur anywhere in Plato’s works. in the early ancient Greek history...establishing colonies was a way of coping with population expansion and of establishing trading contacts overseas” (263). Despite this argument, it is clear that Francis Galton had recognized Plato’s connection between colonization and eugenics, an entwined relationship that is essential to any understanding of eugenics.

Colonization and Eugenics

The relationship between colonization and eugenics must also be taken into consideration. This link between the concepts of colonization and eugenics form the basis of eugenicist movements, particularly those in the United States. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz argues that

the origins of white supremacy as it is now experienced and institutionalized – and denied – in the United States (and, due to colonialism and imperialism, throughout the world) can be traced to the prior colonizing ventures of Christian Crusades into Muslim-controlled territories, and to the Calvinist Protestant colonization of Ireland. These were the models for the colonization of the Western Hemisphere, and are the two strands that merge in the genetic makeup of U.S. society.

These models of colonization often are based on concepts of normalization that would later serve as the foundation of the laws that enforced colonization. The system of colonization of Indigenous peoples put in place by the early European settlers and government set regulations and laws in order to "normalize" and therefore take advantage of the imbalance of power and privilege. The end of the nineteenth century saw the United States government imposing strict laws onto Indigenous people in an effort to control and discipline Native bodies via Western traditions and foundations. Jacqueline Shea Murphy writes

The federal governments' stated intent in all of these institutions was to "civilize" – and thereby save – a dying people by incorporating Native

people (who would then no longer be Indian) into the state. Once differences between Native Americans and European Americans were eradicated, then no special land rights need be accorded Native peoples, and Native land could be absorbed into the United States or Canada and bought, sold, and regulated according to their laws. Thus, one consequence of this corporeal policing and assimilation would be the end of Indian claims to land. (30)

The rationale for these regulations was to establish and enforce a standard of living. This standard of living would appear to be fair: once everyone conformed to the same law, the same opportunities would be available to everyone. For Indigenous peoples, this meant a total refiguration of ideologies and practices. According to the laws enacted by the U.S. government, compliance with these laws was the only way to ensure survival and acceptance into this new, colonized society. For the government, "saving" Native people meant civilizing them through the standardization of "normal" living.

The objective of civilization was to minimize difference visible through bodily actions, a version of "normalcy" that is emphasized on the body. Murphy writes that "virtually all the institutional disciplining of Native bodies was corporeally enacted, and included, for example, the physical force sometimes used to take children from their homes and send them to boarding schools... and the imposition of Western hairstyles and clothing on Native children" (30). Native people were forced into unfamiliar spaces and forced to embody unfamiliar practices, practices that often conflicted with their ideologies or religious beliefs. Not only did the government physically remove Native

peoples from their lands, the government implemented a "normalization" of the practices and performances that would occur on the land provided to them. Not only did bodily movements have to resemble Euroamerican movements, but the bodies themselves were manipulated to *look* like Euroamerican bodies. Murphy continues, saying that "the policies worked to establish Indians as *so* irreconcilably different that they could not just be left alone...[which] then served to justify the use of force to eradicate the differences the policies had just established" (31). These efforts towards "civilization" also worked in an alternative manner, that is, it created an example of what is different, abnormal, and by extension, dangerous. In doing so, it would easily identify what was not useful to the system and then take measures to eradicate it.

The establishment of difference also proved essential for the establishment of whiteness. Murphy argues the determination of Native Americans as wholly different "served to invent an understanding of Indians that European settlers could identify themselves and consolidate their own sense of whiteness against" (31). In other words, the recognition of otherness led to a creation and recognition of "normal-ness" that in turn made whiteness accessible to those who were not considered "different." *Whiteness* became synonymous with *civilized*, wherein *civilized* bodies resembled white bodies, both literally and figuratively.

Imaginary Authenticity: Eugenics and Immigration

These concepts of "abnormality" that are rooted in ideas of recognizing "civilized" and "acceptable" bodies carried through to early twentieth century American ideas of immigration. *Whiteness*, *American*, and *civilized* are largely formed by the

logics of eugenics. In attempting to create and maintain a normality that would be distinctly “American,” systems of power were designed to identify difference through the enforcement of designated norms, and then remove those differences. In short, the nationalism of the United States was directly tied to what Étienne Balibar calls “the obsessional quest for a ‘core’ authenticity that cannot be found” (60). The eugenicist logic that formed this imaginary authenticity relied on imagining what the nation was, how it was threatened, and what it could be. By creating an imagined appearance or phenotype based on genetics and environment to characterize the citizens of the United States, this example of eugenicist logic formed the “ideal American.” Immigrants and other undesirable people threatened this imagined appearance, and from the standpoint of eugenicist logic, threatened the future of the nation by multiplying that which halted the progress and future of the United States.

Measures were taken to protect what was believed to be the existence of an ideal American citizen. For example, the 1891 Immigration Act pronounced certain groups unfit to become American citizens, specifically those who risked becoming a public charge:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the following classes of aliens shall be excluded from admission into the United States, in accordance with the existing acts regulating immigration, other than those concerning Chinese laborers: All idiots, insane persons, paupers or persons likely to become a public charge, persons suffering from a

loathsome or a dangerous contagious disease, persons who have been convicted of a felony or other infamous crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, polygamists, and also any person whose ticket or passage is paid for with the money of another or who is assisted by others to come, unless it is affirmatively and satisfactorily shown on special inquiry that such person does not belong to one of the foregoing excluded classes...(Chap. 551, Section 1)

What this law outlines is a type of eugenicist system, privileging the productive and healthy bodies, and limiting the existence of unwanted bodies in the name of producing a healthier and more industrious nation. To begin, the law identifies difference through *classes*. The use of this term is highly suggestive of a product of what Diane B. Paul and James Moore call “the Darwinian Context.” First published in 1859, Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species* argued that individuals more suited to the environment would be more likely to survive and reproduce, leaving inheritable traits to future generations. This, in turn, would lead to the process of natural selection. Distinguishing those that would be more suitable, then, depended on the methods of classification developed by naturalists. Arguing the relationship between classification and physical similarities, Darwin uses an example of the physical similarities between the Hottentot people and the “Negro race,” implying that all races of human beings are evolutionarily linked (424). The consequence of this implication is that of evolutionary human hierarchy, wherein those more suited for their environments – or for survival – would have progressed further evolutionarily than those who are unfit for survival. To use the term

classes within the context of this immigration law suggests that eugenicist logic determined how to define who was wanted and who was unwanted. Furthermore, the word itself creates a context specific to eugenicist motivation: to say that “the following *classes* of aliens shall be excluded admission into the United States,” is to say that those people who are *classed* are those who are unwelcome. In other words, those whose difference is recognized and designated “unwanted” are those who are denied admission into the United States.⁴

This law also forbade entrance to “all idiots, insane persons, paupers, or persons likely to become a public charge, [and] persons suffering from a loathsome or dangerous contagious disease.” This discrimination of persons with disabilities is coded in medical language: *idiots, insane, disease*. The context of this medical language suggests that people with disabilities are people who are, and should be, feared: *loathsome, dangerous, and contagious* all signal the fear of disability, and relate it directly to the health of the nation and its people. To code ableism in this way is to say that persons with disabilities should be feared on the grounds that they prevent the evolutionary progress of both the nation, but of the people themselves. Furthermore, to associate disability and disease within the context of immigration is to also put those same labels onto the bodies of the immigrants themselves. In other words, because the Immigration Act describes of what is *not* wanted and what is considered unhealthy to the nation, it is

⁴ Chinese laborers were excluded from this law because the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 explicitly forbade Chinese peoples from migrating to the United States between 1882 and 1892, on the grounds that Chinese laborers were a threat to order in certain localities. This law was extended to another ten years in 1892 under the Geary Act.

not insignificant that it opens up with a description of disabled bodies. By situating what is unhealthy to the nation within the context of immigration, this act is very clearly implying that the bodies of immigrants are diseased and unhealthy. The description of who is excluded continues, denying entrance to those charged with a felony, misdemeanor, or any activity considered in opposition to the beliefs and standards of society, as well as those whose ticket was paid for by another – suggesting that they could not care for themselves, or depended on the assistance of others to survive. The attempt to maintain and protect the “American norm” surfaces in the law, creating a context specific to ideas of what it means to look, think, and act like an “American.”

This requirement to fulfill the role of the ideal American was extended to the body. Snyder and Mitchell argue that “this period in American history is the first to introduce disability as disruptive to rationales of national citizenship” (39). Further, in an analysis of Ellis Island as a rhetorical space, specific to disability, race, and immigration, Jay Dolmage argues that “the social processing that Ellis Island engendered was all about identifying and sometimes manufacturing abnormal bodies: these elements are out of place; these bodies are disordered. Ellis Island created a physical space in which abnormality could be arrested or deposited” (26). Ellis Island – the gateway to the United States for millions of immigrants – served as a type of designating station, wherein bodies were subjected to a normalizing gaze that determined their level of difference and its relationship to the development of “the norm” in the United States. Victor Safford, a medical doctor stationed at Ellis Island describes in his memoir the motivation behind the medical inspection:

The scheme as it was maintained in actual operation at Ellis Island during my time there provided an opportunity for an observer to inspect an immigrant systematically both at rest and in motion at a distance of about twenty or twenty-five feet; for an observer to inspect or scrutinize the immigrant as he approached the observer, and finally after the immigrant came close at hand. Somewhere in this inspection process provision was to be made for the close examination of hands, eyes, and, if deemed advisable, of throat. No attempt was to be made on such an inspection to determine what was wrong. Suspicion that something might be wrong was alone sufficient justification for turning a person aside. (246)

Part of this “scheme” of identifying “deficiencies” that Safford describes is dependent on bodily ability. From a distance, Safford and others could determine mobility impairments by observing how an immigrant carries his or her bags, causing him or her to make two right hand turns to determine muscular coordination, and stamping cards to observe how the immigrant looked at it, signaling any kind of defective vision (247-49). Once again, eugenicist logic operates here as the logic that determines the acceptability of bodies within the context of American nationalism. Indeed, Dolmage calls Ellis Island “the key laboratory and operating theater for American eugenics, the scientific racism that can be seen to define a unique era of Western era of Western history, the effects of which can still be felt today” (27). These effects highlight the fears of difference and aberration, yet the existence of this threat is precisely what maintained the idealized image of the desired American citizen.

The existence of terms to guide and determine the recognition of aberrance or deviance existed only because of the standard of normalcy attributed to those closest to the ideal citizen. Those deemed unworthy or unable to achieve citizenship or social participation were cast aside, but done so in a way to exhibit what the “acceptable” citizens *were not*. This is not unlike the logics of a freak show, wherein those deemed different or undesirable were put on display for purposes of maintaining ideas of normalcy. Eli Clare writes that “the freak show tells the story of an elaborate and calculated social construction that utilized performance and fabrication as well as deeply held cultural beliefs” (86). Indeed, as evidenced by Safford’s description of the medical examination, the bodies of immigrants were subject to a gaze that reduced them to a social construction that represented cultural beliefs about the future of the country. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault writes, “the gaze is passively linked to the primary passivity that dedicates it to the endless task of absorbing experience in its entirety, and of mastering it... The gaze is no longer reductive, it is, rather, that which establishes the individual in his irreducible quality. And thus it becomes possible to organize a rational language around it” (xiv). The gaze of the doctor onto the bodies of immigrant peoples rendered them undesirable and unwanted. Once designated undesirable, the language of deviance was written onto their bodies, and once named, this medical model of deviance provided the rationale for the eugenicist acts initiated by eugenicist logic.

The Ugly Laws

One such act is the implementation of the ugly laws. From the late nineteenth century until the early twentieth century, laws were created in the United States that

barred people with “unsightly or disgusting” disabilities from public spaces on the grounds that their appearance was offensive and a legal liability.⁵ These laws were intended to prevent street begging, but also served to emphasize the desire for mutual identification among “productive” members of society. As Tobin Siebers writes, “the need for mutual identification (or desire for) between form and instance of the body politic accounts for the existence of the ugly laws” (264). In other words, the need to maintain the idea of the imagined America and American citizen meant that those elements that were not conducive to the improvement and strength of the nation were removed. In the case of the ugly laws, laws were created so as to enforce this eugenicist logic, namely, remove all offenders from sight.

The motivation behind the creation of the ugly laws cannot be understood as purely limited to the desire for any kind of public aesthetic. Susan M. Schweik argues that “one of the most important foundations of the ugly law involves a specifically American socioeconomic determinant: the broad cultural emphasis on individualism, which enabled the law’s supporters to position disability and begging as individual problems rather than relating them to broader social inequalities” (5). This emphasis on individualism is indicative of the relationship between the body of the nation and the bodies that constitute the citizenry of that nation. The body of the American citizen represented the body of the nation. As Siebers writes, “the appearance of disabled bodies in public provokes fears that the community is itself under attack or coming apart (264).

⁵ Most states’ ugly laws were not repealed until the mid-1970s. (Chicago was the last to repeal in 1974.)

Maintaining the strength and the appeal of the nation means maintaining the bodies that are a part of that nation.

One particular motivation behind the creation and implementation of the ugly laws was the desire to recognize and remove those who were not deemed productive citizens in the interest of making the nation more productive. One way to achieve this end was to implement modes of disablement onto undesired bodies. Eric Foner writes, “it was an axiom of eighteenth –century political thought that dependents lacked a will of their own, and thus did not deserve a role in public affairs (xii). In this way, the ugly laws were a product of the sociological context that associated accessibility to independence and labor with productivity and citizenship, effectually stripping citizen rights from those without that access. In this way, disablement occurs within eugenicist logic as a way to control and monitor those bodies that were unwanted by limiting and removing access to public life and resources.

Consequently, the people who were barred from this access were blamed for their own disablement. Indeed, part of what motivates these eugenicist systems is the ability for those in positions of power to mask the level of their involvement through “charity.” The first ugly law on record is an 1867 law passed by the city of San Francisco, titled “Order No. 783. To Prohibit Street Begging, and to Restrain Certain Persons from Appearing in Streets and Public Places.” The law opens up with the express restriction against any kind of practice of or related to begging in public places. Section 2 of the law continues this restriction, further describing what might constitute “mendicancy or begging”: “if it shall appear that such person is without means of support, and infirm and

physically unable to earn a support or livelihood, or is, for any cause, a proper person to be maintained at the Almshouse, the fine and imprisonment provided for in the preceding section may be omitted, and such person may be committed to the Almshouse.” In this context, *appearing* to not have means of support is just as illegal as being physically unable to work or support oneself. If, however, one is considered a “proper person to be maintained at the Almshouse,” then appropriate action would be taken, that is, the offender would be committed to an Almshouse. Snyder and Mitchell argue that charity organizations, such as Almshouses, existed to ensure that the needs of those who would benefit from these organizations “could be met with stern disapproval, moral disapprobation, and patronizing religious instruction,” while simultaneously providing “a public benefit in recognizing individual contribution as a sign of beneficence, generosity, and commitment to capitalist values of self-reliance” (41). In other words, these charity organizations that bound offenders of this law operated under the same eugenicist logic that the law reflected. Once removed from public viewing, charity functioned as a “rehabilitative” service, designed not to rehabilitate, but to reinforce people’s position as the threat to the healthy functioning of society. In this way, eugenicist logic – such as the law – determines who is a threat, and freak show logic holds these bodies up to provide satisfaction to those attempting to rehabilitate. In other words, within this ritual, “‘disability’ itself becomes a matter of performative interdependency as disabled bodies are made to appear unduly dependent and donors further solidify their own social value as able benefactors” (41). Those who are a benefit

to society attain this designation by making themselves distinct from those who are considered a risk.

The law continues, outlining in detail just what kind of person constitutes a risk. It reads, “any person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object, or an improper person to be allowed in or on the streets, highways, thoroughfares or public places in the City or County of San Francisco, shall not therein or thereon expose himself or herself to public view.” It is important to understand that these terms – *diseased, maimed, mutilated, deformed, disgusting* – were highly subjective and indicative of the desired outcome of these laws.

Each adjective used to describe the unwanted beggar on the street are words written onto the bodies those deemed undesirable. Yet each word also holds multiple meanings. *Diseased* is a particularly interesting word choice, given that the conditions these laws attempted to prevent were often understood in terms of the body, rendering these undesirable bodies as the disease of the nation, not simply a symptom or consequence of a larger “disease,” namely the harmful conditions crafted by the systems of power against aberrant bodies.⁶ *Maimed* is also an interesting choice of word, given

⁶ It is interesting to note that Aimé Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* refers to nations that colonize bodies, or nations that justify colonization (and by extension, force), “is already a sick civilization, a civilization which is morally diseased, which irresistibly, progressing from one consequence to another, one denial to another, calls for its Hitler, I mean its punishment” (39). Colonizers are barbaric for their treatment of those in the colonies, defining the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized as one based on “forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses” (42). While claiming to civilize the colonies and its peoples, colonization produces the opposite effect. I do not mean to suggest that the experiences of victims of colonization are tantamount to the experiences of those with disabilities during this time period of the ugly laws; rather, that the ways in which attempts to control bodies in the name of “civilization” are constructed in similar ways, ways that attempt to disable bodies through the use of constructions of able-bodiedness (labor), and the ways those constructions are forced

the fact that “maimed” is used to refer to the deprivation of the use of a part of the body; in other words, “maimed” is used to invoke impairment, disability, and more significantly, disablement. The example of the wounded veteran proves that the usefulness of the body was subjective, as a veteran’s body is always esteemed because it was risked in the name of nationalism and patriotism, yet any other body designated as “useless” consequently becomes maimed by systems of disablement. *Mutilated* also invokes a similar use, making imperfect by damaging parts of the body. *Deformed* threatens to alter a form, specifically with regard to aesthetics, and *disgusting* refers to the offense of moral sense or good taste. Putting these words together achieved a constructed context that did not define the unwanted body, but rather created it. The body that must be removed from public view and participation is the body that is abnormal and harmful, deprived of usefulness, damaged, aesthetically abnormal, and repulsive. Significantly, these words and concepts can also be understood as manifestations of the fears of the nation, that is, becoming abnormal, useless, diseased, etc. But by putting this language onto bodies, language – such as the law – can control them. In this way, language is creating the “freak” within the context of freak show logics, that is, creating the standard upon which normality is held against. This standard is deliberately vague because it is dependent on multiple meanings, rendering it as always in flux and existing to serve the imaginary ideas of normalcy. Within this context

onto the body (intimidation, pressure, police, taxation, arrogance, degradation). It is also interesting to note Césaire’s reference to Hitler, suggesting that the violence condoned under Nazi policies was violence that was previously enacted through colonial procedures onto the bodies of non-white populations (36). The implication in the context of my argument is that colonization and disablement are of the same eugenicist logic, enacted similarly, but justified through the same means, that is, through the rhetoric of progress, health, and charity.

of abnormal, harmful, useless, and repulsive, the able body emerges – one that is normal, safe, useful, and appealing. Once a body is designated as anything but able, they become disabled by systems of power and are often unable to exist outside of these labels written onto bodies.⁷

The logic behind the ugly laws is influenced by eugenicist logic and the logic of freakdom. It posits that by constantly shifting the norm and the levels of acceptability, bodies become subjected to higher standards, and those bodies that cannot “keep up” are subjected to processes of removal and restriction, so as not to reveal the constructedness of “normalcy.” It is also this logic that the United States eugenicist movement shared with the same movement in Nazi Germany. Stefan Kühl argues that American immigration laws were of particular interest to Nazi policy makers, specifically the ways in which laws designated and restricted participation of unwanted peoples (38). American sterilization laws were also of particular interest, as eugenicists in the United States and Germany supported calls for sterilization by relying on scientific evidence

⁷ It is important to remember that the existence of the ugly laws is not one that can be or should be restricted to disability history. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson suggests that the ugly laws maintained control over not only the “unsightly” citizens, but also controlled the etiquette that characterized “civilized” society. In other words, the laws attempted to create a space where this etiquette would not be threatened. She writes, “while these laws try to limit the nuisance of beggars, a stronger concern seems to be rid public places of people who will incite staring...[it is] less about the act of begging than the act of viewing, [as] the law does not forbid giving them money; it forbids looking at them [...] like anti-prostitution laws, ugly laws are intended to save us from ourselves” (72-3). The laws were created as a way to control those members of society that did not perform either the aesthetic or physical performances that were required for a “civilized” nation. It was a way to control group behavior of the underclass. Schweik argues that “what the ordinance embodied was disability oppression deployed and embedded, ideologically and structurally, in classed, capitalist (and also gendered and racialized) social relations. Here ‘disability history’ and ‘poor people’s history’ profoundly intertwine” (16). It is in this way that disability and class became virtually synonymous with one another: the ugly laws constructed disability as an indicator of class by making disease, deformity, and other forms of “unsightliness” as inherent characteristics of the poor person.

that discouraged and intended to halt the reproduction of “degenerates.” The United States was the first country to rigorously implement compulsory sterilization programs in the name of eugenics, targeting a variety of people, including people with intellectual, physical, and psychological disabilities.⁸ California’s sterilization program, for example, was responsible for over a third of all sterilization operations, and served as a guide for the conception of large-scale compulsory sterilization programs in Nazi Germany.

One of the many ways language was used in the ugly laws was to determine what was wanted by laying out what was feared: the fears of what the nation might become were turned into metaphors that relied on the metaphor of the nation as a body. Eugenicist logic created unwanted bodies that became “diseases” that threatened the health of the nation, and this same logic created the laws that served as “medicine” that would cure society of what ailed it. The interaction between all of these metaphors created the able body, that is, the body that *is* welcome and wanted, and thus able to participate in society. From this interaction emerged a new way of understanding and recognizing difference in the name of solidifying sameness. The context of the ugly law is driven by the eugenicist logic of language, which guides the multiplicity of meanings by discouraging the production of those meanings that would be deemed undesirable: The nation is only understood as under threat, and bodies that are unwanted are only understood as the cause for that threat. For example, disabled veterans were not affected by ugly laws the same way others were. According to Schweik, penmanship contests

⁸ Again, these were by no means the only victims of forced sterilization. Many people of color, including Native Americans and African Americans, were sterilized against their will.

were held in San Francisco, giving wounded veterans the opportunity to demonstrate that they were still productive and fit for social participation. Schweik continues: “a hierarchy of disabled street masculinity developed. Proven veterans, maimed soldiers and sailors, got the frayed red carpet in the form of free license to eke out subsistence in the street culture. Men whose impairments prevented or did not result from military service got treated like dirt” (150). Just like in the language of the law, determining the veteran exemption depended on the manipulation of the multiplicity of meanings within the given context. Language is used to create the context upon which the multiplicity of meanings are limited: *diseased, maimed, mutilated, deformed, disgusting* bodies cannot ever be healthy, beautiful, appealing, or useful. The example of the disabled veteran proves this: it was only *outside* of these laws and this language that disabled veterans were able to participate in society, but this participation was dependent on the ability to prove that one was, in fact a veteran, and by extension, a vital part of the nation’s health.

In many ways, Nazi legislation mirrored that of American legislation. Both had similar goals – to disable bodies through restriction and limited participation, and to remove those bodies from view. Both the ugly laws and Nazi legislation depended on the multiplicity of meaning within language; for example, there is no written evidence that legalized the extermination of peoples under Nazi rule. What differs in them is that the ugly laws practiced eugenicist reasoning through language: the use of metaphor created a specific context that limited unwanted meanings – such as the idea that the fact that a “disgusting” body could simultaneously be an able body. Nazi legislation, alternatively, relied on this reasoning in order to enact eugenicist practices. The ugly laws produced

unwanted bodies through language formed from eugenicist logic, and Nazi legislation used that language and logic to rationalize the extermination of unwanted bodies.

The Rhetorical Performance of Nazi Eugenics

To demonstrate this relationship, I will draw on the English translation of Dr. Viktor Brack's affidavit during the Doctors' trial of the Nuremberg Military Tribunals in 1946, where he describes the basic process of the Nazi euthanasia program, Aktion T4. Furthermore, I will also draw on Suzanne E. Evans' rendering of the form letters sent to the families of the victims, constructed from the testimonies during the same trial.

The T4 program, organized by Brack and developed out of the Nazi party policy of "racial hygiene," responded to the belief that certain groups of individuals were "racially unsound," and needed to be "cleansed" from the nation. The T4 program was designed to euthanize people who were incurably ill, emotionally distraught, elderly, or who had a physical or mental disability. While the program was officially discontinued in 1941, killings covertly continued until the military defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945. The program targeted institutionalized people with disabilities, children and adults alike. IBM's English translation of Brack's testimony is one of the first accounts of eugenicist practices in Nazi Germany that the American public were confronted with, and as a result, largely shaped American understandings of how eugenics was implemented during the Nazi regime (Black, 421)⁹. As such, Brack's testimony is crucial to

⁹ For more information about IBM's involvement, see Edwin Black's *IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance Between Nazi Germany and America's Most Powerful Corporation*.

understanding America's relationship to eugenicist practices in Nazi Europe and elsewhere.

Brack outlines the structure of the program, beginning with its initiation in the summer of 1939. The directors of all insane asylums under the Reich were required to complete questionnaires regarding the health of the patients in the asylums. These questionnaires would be sent to a group of 10 to 15 "expert" doctors who commented whether or not they believed the patient was capable of recovery or rehabilitation. The comments were sent on to a senior expert, who ultimately decided if the patient could remain at the asylum – and thus have a chance at recovery – or if the patient was "incurable" and should be sent to an "observation institution." Once at the observation institution, patients were observed by doctors to confirm the opinion of the senior expert. Upon confirmation, patients were transferred to one of six Euthanasia Institutions, where they would be gassed.

Brack states that the overall reason for the Euthanasia program in Germany was, according to Hitler, to determine who and what was best for the Reich and remove those who were deemed useless. People confined to insane asylums and similar institutions "were considered useless objects, and Hitler felt that by exterminating these so-called useless eaters, it would be possible to relieve more doctors, male and female nurses, and other personnel, hospital beds and other facilities for the armed forces" (844). In this context, bodies that were able to perform ability – that is, as soldiers or workers – were bodies that were best for the development of the Reich. Bodies that were "useless

objects” were only a distraction, and limited the care of injured soldiers that would presumably gain a full recovery.

Indeed, Brack’s testimony shows a distinction between those who were of no use to the Reich and those who were confined to insane asylums and similar institutions: not all “useless” citizens were in asylums, and not patients in asylums were considered a lost cause. This distinction points to the process of disablement that was placed onto unwanted bodies. In this case, bodies that were unable to perform ability and therefore unhelpful to the cause of the Reich were dis/abled from the public. Because those who were considered to be “incurable” would be removed, the asylum became a place of diagnosis, resulting in either recovery or death. Regarding asylums in the United States, Snyder and Mitchell argue that institutions as a whole accomplish three objectives: erasing disabled citizens from public view under the protection of the government, reifying stigmatizing beliefs about disability by preventing the public from becoming familiar with differences that might mitigate the construction of disability as alien, and lastly, they pose as “safe, humane places for the ‘treatment’ of disabilities while operating essentially as research warehouses” (91). In this way, the process of deciding which patients would remain and recover in the asylum and which patients would be removed largely depended on the status of the patient against Snyder and Mitchell’s three objectives of the asylum: if the patient was “incurable” and therefore useless to the German public, then s/he needed to be erased from public view under the rationale of a “safe,” “humane” treatment of disability, called a “mercy killing.”

“Mercy killings” were only given to non-Jewish German citizens, thereby positioning each act of euthanasia and each practice of eugenics as matter of national philanthropic regard. Brack states that “the blessing of euthanasia should be granted only to Germans...the government did not want to grant this philanthropic act to the Jews” (880). By positioning the patients as victims of their disabilities, the line between the rhetoric of care and the rhetoric of eugenics becomes blurred, allowing eugenicist acts against a “useless” citizen to be viewed as a “blessing.” This blessing is constructed not only as a blessing for the victim and his or her family, but also a blessing for the nation. By removing the unwanted body from public view – and the public altogether – Nazi eugenics created the image of the body that would be useful to German military efforts: a dying body, willing to be erased in the name of Nazi success.

Nazi practices of eugenics used murder to determine what was useful by removing what was “useless.” The rationale to murder was the fear of what the nation would become with the “useless eaters” using the resources needed for the useful citizens, such as the military. In Nazi practices of eugenics, eugenicist logic created determiners for bodies that would be useless in the quest for German “superiority.” Both the ugly laws and Nazi eugenics determined what was wanted by clearly identifying what was feared with regard to the future of the nation and its citizens. These fears then became metaphors: for the ugly laws, unwanted bodies were “diseases” upon the “body” of the nation, and for Nazi eugenics, unwanted bodies became objects upon which “blessings” would be disseminated. In both cases, the logic that created these metaphors also created the answer to these metaphors through law and legislation –either the

removal of unwanted bodies from public view or the literal removal of bodies through euthanasia – serving as the “cure” for what prevented the nation from a “complete” recovery and identity. Furthermore, these laws are also tied to rhetorics of cure and medicine: in both cases, the asylum serves as the place of “cure,” either the cure for the public view, or the cure for the victim’s disability.

Another example of using the rhetoric of cure as a rationale to murder is the condolence letters sent to the families of peoples with disabilities that were euthanized under the Aktion T4 program. Hugh Henry Gallagher writes,

The original regulations envisioned a “conservative” program with careful review procedures. In operation the program became a matter of killing in wholesale lots. The psychological reasons why physicians were willing to participate in these killings are no doubt complex. There is, however, an aspect of the program’s structure which made it easier: there was no single point of responsibility – no place in the procedure at which it was possible to say, *Here* is where the patient receives his death warrant; no point where it could be said, *This* physician is responsible for this patient’s death. (103)

In this way, according to Gallagher, “responsibility was diluted” (104). One way in which the origin of responsibility was avoided was through the creation and use of form letters, purposefully vague enough to be used for all instances of death, whether from natural causes or from euthanasia.

Once a patient had been murdered, Nazi physicians sent form letters to the family. Suzanne E. Evans outlines the basic structure of the condolence letters:

As you have certainly already been informed your daughter, --- was transferred to our establishment by ministerial order. It is our painful duty to inform you that your daughter died here on --- of influenza, with an abscess on the lung. Unfortunately all efforts made by the medical staff to keep the patient alive proved in vain. We wish to express our sincere condolences at your loss. You will find consolation in the thought that the death of your daughter relieved her from terrible and incurable suffering.

As the outline indicates, these letters gave no indication of the relationship between the patient's death and the Nazi ideology that led the doctors to euthanize the patient. The opening phrase, "as you have certainly already been informed," suggests an immediate shift in responsibility from the medical establishment or institution from where the patient was registered to the family of the murdered patient. Yet, as Evans reminds us, "informed consent was in fact rarely obtained" (28). By immediately shifting focus and responsibility to the family, the institution that sent the letter puts the family in a vulnerable position. Evans writes that "when parents received official letters informing them of their children's death, many of them accused the hospitals of deliberately causing their child's death" (28). With such accusations, the rhetorical move to implicate the family in the child's death shifts the focus away from the suspicious circumstances presented in the letter. Furthermore, there is also the suggestion that the family is implicated by suggesting a lack of involvement in the child's life would discourage the

family from calling attention to the child's death and their limited participation in the child's life.

Distancing from any involvement in the child's death also occurs when the child's transfer is referred to as an action by "ministerial order." Again, the institution is distancing itself from any involvement or responsibility of the child's presence at the institution. In doing so, the institution is also involving the state and nationalistic ideologies. By using the word "ministerial," Evan's outline suggests that the institution implies that the child's transfer was, in the opinion of the state, the best thing for the child. Furthermore, the parental distance is also implicit here: if the ministry is making decisions for the child, then the implication is that the child is a ward of the state, and any decisions made for the child – including those that the parents believe are behind the child's death – are for the best. This is the only political mention in this letter, but it is a significant one: the subtext of this involvement is that the state knows what is best for the child's welfare, and by extension, the state's. The child's death is seen as a consequence of what was done in the interest of the child; however, knowing the truth, the child's death is a consequence of what was done that was best for the state.

This same line of subtext appears throughout the rest of the letter. The institution writes "it is our painful duty to inform you that your daughter died here on --- of influenza, with an abscess on the lung. Unfortunately all efforts made by the medical staff to keep the patient alive proved in vain." Despite writing that this news is "painful," the language that follows this news is unfeeling and contradictory: influenza and lung abscesses can be treated, yet the medical staff is portrayed as unable to treat the illness.

Furthermore, the naming of the child shifts from “your daughter” to “the patient.” This shift from an intimate choice of words – “your daughter” – to a medicalized wording – “the patient” – creates distance from the intimacy that was established in the opening of the letter.

The implications of this message may not be obvious at first look, but consideration of the real situation around the child – euthanasia – reveals the implications of the state’s benefits in this section of the outline. “You will find consolation in the thought that the death of your daughter relieved her from her terrible and incurable suffering” (28). The state – or the institution that was ultimately responsible for the child’s death – is telling the parents that the child’s death was a good thing because their daughter was a victim of “terrible and incurable suffering.” Yet, as noted above, the child’s ailment was indeed treatable. In light of the fact that the child was deemed undesirable, the “terrible and incurable suffering” is not the child’s, but in fact the state’s. Clause 2 of the German Ministry of Justice Commission on the Reform of the Criminal Code reads that “the life of a person who because of incurable mental illness requires permanent institutionalization and is not able to sustain an independent existence, will be prematurely terminated by medical measures in a painless and covert manner.” The similarities in language reveal the regard which they treated the child, that is, as *incurable*. As such, she was unable to “sustain an *independent* existence.” This lack of independence is at the root of ableism, wherein only productive and independent lives are worth living. The suffering that the institution writes about is the suffering of a life that the state deems is unworthy of living. Because the child’s disability or

impairment is not able to be cured, the child's suffering in a world that does not want her is incurable in the eyes of Nazi Germany.

Evans' outline of the basic condolence letter used in the euthanasia program uncovers the unique reliance on people with disabilities by ableist societies and systems, demonstrating that particular values are placed on the bodies of people with disabilities that distinguish them from the bodies of those who have been disabled by systems – in the Holocaust, Jews, Gypsies, and other peoples who were murdered in the name of “racial cleansing” in Germany. The consequence of these letters led many to protest the murder of people with disabilities, protests that existed in ways that the murder of other peoples were not, signaling the varying relationships that culture and eugenics have with the bodies affected. These letters demonstrate the “value” of persons with disabilities within ableist systems, and how they are based on the rhetorics of cure, constructed as disabled so as to make ableist systems – and the nondisabled people within that system – operate and function. As such, Nazi policies attempted to disable Jews, but because Jews were not ever positioned as valuable to the functioning of an ableist system, they were eliminated. The tradition of caring and curing people with disabilities was compromised, making small public protests possible; anti-Semitism in Germany, alternatively, had become a tradition in itself, and the will to protest was vastly diminished.

Sameness becomes solidified through the eugenicist logic of language and practice, wherein “difference” is only acceptable insofar as it contributes to the construction of “acceptable” and “useful.” Language and practice are used to create the

context upon which the multiplicity of meanings are limited: diseased, maimed, mutilated, deformed, disgusting bodies cannot ever be healthy, beautiful, appealing, or useful. The logic behind the ugly laws and Nazi eugenics are influenced by eugenicist logic and the logic of freakdom, positing that by constantly shifting the norm and the levels of acceptability, bodies become subjected to higher standards. Those bodies that cannot “keep up” are subjected to processes of removal and restriction, so as not to reveal the constructedness of “normalcy.”

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the process of enfreakment – identifying what is not wanted in order to recognize and affirm what *is* wanted – is an integral part of eugenics and eugenicist logic in both linguistic form and in practice. The use of language to construct context emerges as one way that control over bodies is achieved. Such policing perpetuated systems that depended on freak show logics—or enfreakment – in order to perform eugenicist acts. To determine who was the “correct” and “acceptable” citizen, people with disabilities – including, among others, Indigenous, eastern European, southern European, African, and Jewish peoples – were set aside and removed from the rhetorical spaces that created “normalcy.”

I have demonstrated that origins are just as dependent on eugenicist thought, most visibly in contexts that are attempting to be controlled, as in the case of Francis Galton. By displacing the responsibility from Greek and other European thinkers, the emphasis on Francis Galton as the originator of eugenics suggests that eugenics was never harmful until the Nazis, and that Galton’s version of eugenics – the correct

version, and the version that was soiled by eugenicist movements such as Nazism – only sought to help humanity progress in the best way possible. Yet, as I have argued, this was not the case, as this eugenicist logic led to official genocidal policies, and played an essential role in the acts of “racial hygiene” in the United States and under Nazi rule. I do not intend to suggest that the logics of enfreakment or eugenics were the only motivators behind acts against “unwanted” bodies; rather, as my analysis has shown, recognizing one of the relationships between eugenics, language, and enfreakment, can open up new ways of thinking about we understand “normalcy” and our own relationship to it. In the chapter that follows, I will examine this idea of “normalcy” and eugenics further, specifically the ways that eugenicist contexts create and rely on concepts of “abnormality” and disablement in order to sustain ideas of “normal.”

CHAPTER III
THE RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND RECONSTRUCTIONS OF ANNE
FRANK

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated one type of eugenicist logic that was used in the United States and picked up by German lawmakers in the early stages of Nazi power. Considering eugenicist logic in this way suggests that similar ways language used in the United States and Nazi power structures allowed for and led to eugenics in practice under Nazi legislation. The reliance on the concepts of disability and disablement also emerged as integral to this eugenicist logic. This chapter will expand on such reliance through an examination of the disablement and the function of disability with regard to representations of the Holocaust in the United States, specifically those representations of Anne Frank.

Drawing on various representations of Anne Frank in multimedia(ted) forms in the United States as an example, this chapter will interrogate what happens after the eugenicist logics used to eliminate begins to remove the rhetorics that initially served to create and perpetuate them. Eugenicist systems continually rebuild through the process of enfreakment, creating a new definition of “freak” through the revised determination of “abnormal” or “undesirable.” This chapter will argue that the process from enfreakment to eugenics is often reversed in order to sustain itself, refiguring elements – specifically the body – into a “freak,” a required element in the process of enfreakment and eugenics.

Ableist systems rely on the disabling of bodies – either through the medical industry or societal norms – in order to establish what ability and normality are *not*. Nazi policies disabled the bodies of who was not wanted. Such disabling occurred first in the visible marking of those bodies – the yellow star – and continued until bodies were physically unable to engage in certain spaces, from the segregated areas of communities to concentration camps. Anne Frank was disabled by those systems that forced her to go into hiding, and the images of her that continues to thrive are compromised by those same systems. Anne Frank has come to serve as a symbol of the horror that eugenicist logics produce. To construct Frank in this way, however, requires a manipulation of context dependent on eugenicist logic. Frank’s image is deployed as a representation of the effects of eugenics – victimhood – but it is also used to suggest that the end result of this eugenicist logic is positive: she may have died, but her death functions as a way for people who are unaffected by her fate to “get something” from it. Thus to ensure the survival of eugenics and eugenicist logic as positive, this chapter argues that Frank is consistently disabled in representation, that is, represented using the same logics of representing disability, as laid out by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson: the wondrous, sentimental, exotic, and realistic (58). This disabled representation of Frank serves the “repaired” system of eugenicist logic by encouraging audiences to expect something positive from Frank, such as inspiration, sentimentality, fear, or a lesson about strength and humanity. To achieve this positivity, Frank’s agency as a rhetorician and writer who was intentionally using her diary as an act of resistance, and who consciously revised her writing imagining that it would be published, is minimized and

erased. She becomes constructed to serve a different version of the eugenicist logics that first forced her to go into hiding, and her diary becomes “authentic” insofar as its status as the diary of a “young girl,” despite the fact that she was a young woman at the time of its writing. The idea that eugenics yields consistently positive results, despite the real deaths that occur to reach those results, allows eugenics to evolve into different versions and appearances so they may function and have a consistent presence in the way we consider bodies, disability, and “health” of society.

Eugenics in Post-War America

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, the relationship between eugenics in the United States closely resembled the eugenics movements in Germany under Nazi power. The United States was considered a leader in the international arena of eugenics, having established several centers dedicated to the research of genealogical material. The Heredity Commission was established in 1906 by Willet M. Hayes, the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and president and founder of the American Breeders’ Association. Charles Davenport and Harry Laughlin, significant contributors to the field of eugenics in the United States, founded the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) in 1910.¹⁰ Additionally, sterilization laws were thriving in the United States. These laws all shared the aim to improve “the race,” some through compulsory sterilization and others through

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that the ERO was primarily funded by the Rockefeller family and later the Carnegie Institution. Additionally, when the ERO closed in 1944, the records were transferred to the Charles Fremont Dight Institute for the Promotion of Human Genetics at the University of Minnesota. The Dight Institute closed in 1991, and the genealogical material was filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah and given to the Center for Human Genetics. The remaining material was given to the American Philosophical Society Library.

limited marriage rights for those categorized as socially inadequate (Bruinius). Furthermore, many international committees were created under the direction of the ERO, including the Committee on Inheritance of Mental Traits, the Committee on Heredity of Deafmutism (led by Alexander Graham Bell), the Committee on Sterilization, and the Committee on the Heredity of the Feeble Minded. What emerges here is a distinct relationship between eugenics, ableism, and disablement, three concepts that are, in actuality, not entirely distinct from one another. What makes them distinct in this context is the ways in which these concepts interact with one another within specific situations. In most cases within the United States, eugenics offers a way of progressing towards a desired outcome by way of identifying what is undesirable, ableism deems useless elements as unworthy, and disablement offers the process of eliminating those elements. Nazi eugenics, similarly, provides the rationale for ableism (prejudice against “socially unacceptable” persons), and disablement is the process that provides the grounds for the extermination of those bodies.

This is not to suggest that eugenicist movements in the United States and in Germany were entirely distinct from one another. On the contrary, both movements were vital to the creation and sustainability of one another. Indeed, the relationship between American eugenicists and German eugenicists thrived under the international eugenics movement, fostered by three International Eugenics Congresses between 1912 and 1932. Eugenicists – including scientists, politicians, and social leaders – met to address the application of programs that would assist in the improvement of human heredity. The American exhibit in the First International Eugenics Congress in 1912, sponsored by the

American Breeders' Association, featured a demonstration that included incidence reports of hereditary defects, American sterilization laws, and ultimately argued that compulsory sterilization was the practical application of the principle of evolution. United States presence dominated the second Congress in 1921 – Bruinius notes that 41 of 53 scientific papers were affiliated with the United States, with Henry Fairfield Osborn presiding and Alexander Graham Bell as the honorary president. Even the United States Department of State was responsible for sending invitations around the world. Here, Charles Darwin's son, Leonard Darwin, advocated eugenic measures that would lead to the "elimination of the unfit," and the discouragement of "ill-endowed" families (252). In 1927, Charles Davenport founded the International Federation of Eugenics Organizations (IFEEO), with Eugen Fischer, director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics in Germany, and was appointed by Davenport as chairman of the Commission on Bastardization and Miscegenation in the IFEEO. Thus by the third and final Congress in 1932, American and German eugenicist ideas – along with other forms of eugenicist ideas from around the world – shared similar elements, and represented a progression of ideas that would lead to another form of eugenics, that of extermination. Sheila Faith Weiss found that in correspondence between Davenport and German eugenicist Fritz Lenz, Davenport wrote, "there is no country which has higher ideals [in respect to eugenics] than Germany and we assume that she will assume a leading position at the next congress" (in Weiss, 45). After Hitler's rise to power in Germany, the Nazi government implemented eugenic acts and measures according to the recommendations made by American eugenicists

Davenport and Laughlin in the three prior Congresses, which would later be modified by Ernst Rüdin.¹¹ Indeed, in its propaganda, the Nazi government pointed to related steps and acts to the leadership that had been provided by the United States.

Yet after the war, American eugenicists publically distanced themselves from any involvement or similarities with Nazi policies of racial hygiene. Stefan Kühl writes, “after 1945 American eugenicists tried to portray their relationship to Nazi Germany as distant and critical. The leadership of the American Eugenics Society falsely asserted that the Society had opposed Nazi race policies” (xiv). Furthermore, many authors, including Christian Pross and Robert Proctor, highlight the argument that the mass killings of people with disabilities and the medical experiments in concentration camps as wholly distinct from “genuine eugenics.”¹² It is this imaginary binary of “harmless eugenics” versus Nazi eugenics that informs the American response to the Holocaust this project is most concerned with. William J. Bosch writes,

If the American public thought that few of the enemy should be punished severely as war criminals, they were united in what they thought the

¹¹ Davenport maintained his relationships with various Nazi institutions and publications, including editorial positions at two German journals (Bruinius 23). He did not approve of the Nazi government, however, citing that Joseph Goebbels’ leadership was dangerous on account of his disability: “Why not look up history to see how dangerous is the ambitious, mentally well-endowed, physical cripple, whether the crippling was congenital or acquired? From Tamerlane (Timur the lame) to Goebbels (the clubfooted), physical cripples, genial, gentlehearted, charitable men...have led revolutions and aspired to dictatorships while burdening their country with heavy taxes and reducing its finances to chaos. The physically defective man tends to compensate for his defect by doing great and striking (even though appallingly dangerous) nonphysical things that lead to full satisfaction of his, in other directions thwarted, ambition” (Davenport, Charles. Letter. *Life Magazine*. June, 1938: 3. Print.)

¹² See Robert Proctor’s *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis* and Christian Pross’ “Nazi Doctors, German Medicine, and Historical Truth” in *The Nazi Doctors and the Nuremberg Code*.

penalty for these few should be: “Kill them!” No judicial frills were desired – no legal process or possibility of escape or commutation. Exiling the German warlords as was done with Napoleon or Kaiser Wilhelm was a policy to be avoided rather than repeated. (90)

For the majority of Americans after the war, punishment for eugenicist acts would follow a similar logic: remove the unwanted elements in order to attain a more acceptable society. While I do not mean to suggest that punishment for Nazi war criminals is inherently eugenicist, I do wish to acknowledge the eugenicist strains that lingered within responses to the Holocaust. Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* argues that punishment is ceremonial, intended to emphasize the place of authority and power. By drawing on observation and the gaze as instruments of power, Foucault demonstrates how processes of punishment based on observation and the gaze create and maintain ideas of normalcy (3). The overwhelming response of Americans to kill the Nazi perpetrators that Bosch points to is particularly interesting, given that offered alternatives – imprisonment, in particular – aims to deprive the individual of freedom with the goal of reforming the prisoner and to marginalize and control popular behavior. Thinking about this from a Disability Studies perspective, Foucault’s argument can be understood, in part, as an argument that disablement and punishment have a particular relationship, wherein disablement occurs so that punishment can be enacted, or that punishment is a form of disablement. This relationship between disablement and punishment is especially noteworthy in the context of American attitudes with regard to punishment for Nazi crimes that were based on logics first developed in the United

States. As I have demonstrated, American eugenicists actively distanced themselves from Nazi eugenicists, but the attitude of the American public is more telling because the logics of eugenics were so embedded into the cultural understandings regarding bodily difference and deviance that instead of rejecting logics of eugenics, those logics were refigured into representations of the Holocaust.

The Uses and Misuses of Anne Frank

Alan Mintz suggests that the most significant aspect of understanding American responses to the Holocaust is “understanding how . . . cultural projects reflect and provoke American thinking and American attitudes” (149). Within the context of this project, I am most interested in the ways that ableism, disablement, and the logics and rhetorics of enfreakment and eugenics surface in American representations of the Holocaust. One of the first, and undoubtedly, most significant representations of the Holocaust in America was the adaptation of Anne Frank’s diary to stage and screen by Albert Hackett and Frances Goodrich in the early 1950s. Both the play and the movie (in 1955 and 1959, respectively), largely follows the text of the first published edition of the diary and was hailed by many for the universalization of Frank’s character and outlook. Indeed, a typical review described the play “like the diary itself . . . a moving document about the durability of the young in spirit” (*Newsweek* 53). The universal approach taken in these adaptations was a significant part of the success of the diary, the play, and the movie, but was harshly critiqued by those concerned with the removal of many Jewish elements regarding these representations of Frank, most notably from novelist Meyer Levin. This

was not Levin's initial response, however. In his 1952 *New York Times* book review of the *Diary*, Levin wrote,

It is so wondrously alive, so near, that one feels overwhelmingly the universalities of human nature. These people might be living next door; their...emotions, their tensions and satisfactions are those of human character and growth, anywhere... This wise and wonderful young girl brings back a poignant delight in the infinite human spirit.

Yet when Levin's stage adaptation of the *Diary* was rejected in favor of Hackett and Goodrich's rendering, he accused the accepted adaptation of presenting a "de-Judiazed" version of Frank's diary.¹³ Peter Novick reasons that this argument "can be sustained only be a very selective reading of both the original diary and the play," given the fact that Frank does not emphasize a Jewish identity in her diary, and consequently, in the stage and screen adaptations (119). As a result, it is argued by many, including James E. Young, that the adaptations of Frank's diary were never universalized, as the *Diary* itself is already constructed as universal: "Even though she felt the sufferings of millions, in the context of her assimilated world view, it seems to have been as an extremely sensitive and intelligent member of the human community, and not as one who identified herself as part of a collective Jewish tragedy" (27-28). This distance between Frank and

¹³ Anne's father, Otto Frank, was ultimately in charge of which adaptation would be accepted. Once Levin's was rejected, he wrote Frank saying that he was "disgusted and enraged at the thought that a non-Jew had been selected to write the play....To have it produced by a Gentile...is scandalous beyond measure. I will not stand for this. I will write about it whenever I can" (Meyer Levin to Otto Frank, 25 December 1952, quoted in Lawrence Graver, *An Obsession with Anne Frank: Meyer Levin and the Diary* (89)).

her Jewish identity is part of the process that enfreaks Frank within the context of American Holocaust representation.

Because ableist systems rely on normalization, and by extension, abnormality, once the ableist systems that contributed to the disablement of peoples during the Holocaust were challenged, a new “normal” was established. Novick argues that “every generation frames the Holocaust, represents the Holocaust, in ways that suit its mood” (120). Anne Frank’s image serves as a rhetoric of the “new normal,” demonstrating the continual constructedness of “normal” and “abnormal” in an effort to represent the “mood” of the systems of power that manipulate these images. One way we can understand how Frank’s image serves as the “face of the Holocaust” is to consider her distance from her identity as a Jewish person, a distance that is emphasized and manipulated back into the ableist systems that rely on logics of enfreakment . Ableist systems require the presence of “normal” and “abnormal” elements; when these designations are unclear or no longer hold up, the system fails. To “repair” the ableist system, then, requires the re-designation of what is “normal” and “abnormal.” In this context, logics of enfreakment originally put Frank into the position of “abnormal” to serve as an example of what desired peoples were *not*. After her death, she is put back into the position of “abnormal” to demonstrate what the audience *is* and what she is *not*: safe from the racial persecution against “unwanted” bodies. As a result, she becomes “universalized” so that her image can be manipulated to fit into various contexts in order to achieve the desired message related to the Holocaust.

Judith E. Doneson argues that the attempt to universalize and Americanize the Holocaust resulted in the positioning of the Holocaust as “a basis for comparison for all persecution and tragedy. The Holocaust as a verbal symbol for suffering was entering into the popular imagination, becoming part of the vernacular of tragedy” (125). As such, representations of the Holocaust, including representations of Anne Frank, function as a way to serve one of the American “lessons” of the Holocaust, namely what Minz describes as “a lesson about man’s inhumanity to man that should instruct us about hatred and intolerance in all walks of life and in relations among all groups” (35). Indeed, Otto Frank’s mission statement of the Anne Frank Foundation reads, “through her diary, Anne Frank has become a worldwide symbol representing all victims of racism, anti-Semitism and fascism. The foremost message contained in her diary sets out to combat all forms of racism and intolerance” (Anne Frank Foundation). This insistence on the universalization of Anne Frank reveals the constructedness of who fits into this category of “universal,” namely, as Francine Prose argues, “*universal* is not just an adjective, but in the world of commerce, a projected number, which is why *universal* would be employed, more and more frequently, as the antonym of *Jewish*” (184). Thus, in the 1950s, the primary way to confront the Holocaust via Anne Frank was to make it “universal” – or, as Prose suggests, *not* Jewish. Ultimately the lesson that becomes associated with Frank’s diary becomes less about hatred and intolerance, but rather the constructions of those very lessons on hatred and intolerance. In this way, Frank was accessible to most American audiences because she’s recognizable enough that the audience may identify with her, but different enough that the audience does not

apparently risk the same fate. She is only different enough to emphasize that despite what the audience has in common with her, they are *not* her. As a result, Bruno Bettelheim writes, “while [the image of Frank] confronts us with the fact that Auschwitz existed, it encourages us at the same time to ignore any of its implications. If all men are good at heart [as Anne famously wrote], there never really was an Auschwitz; nor is there any possibility that it may recur” (189). Frank’s body is constructed in such a way that her lived material realities are overlooked in favor of an idealized image that can be manipulated to serve whatever message is needed in any given context. In the process, the material realities of those she is used to represent and inspire are also overlooked in the name of a “universal” approach to human relationships. Consequently, Frank comes to serve as a rhetorical symbol of “normal” within another ableist system, a system refigured in response to the eugenicist logic that threatened to destroy it. Frank becomes a symbol designed to define humanity, transgressions against humanity, and the response to these transgressions within eugenicist terms, namely, those terms that define “humanity” and the “transgressions” against humanity.

Anne Frank, the Inspirer

As with all versions of “normal,” new versions of “abnormal” are created in the name of supporting and perpetuating the new norm. Writing about representations of disability in photography, Rosemarie Garland Thomson argues that images of disabled bodies are used to create arguments in favor of the superiority of “able” bodies. She writes, “visualizations of disabled people act as powerful rhetorical figures that elicit responses or persuade viewers to think or act in certain ways” (58). Images and

representations of Frank have been used similarly, deployed rhetorically to elicit desired responses within their respective contexts, specifically the ways in which these images have been manipulated to serve versions of “normal.” For this project, I am interested in representations of Frank as a victim of disablement, and the ways that disability functions within these representations of the Holocaust in the United States.

Turning to Garland-Thomson’s evaluation of disability in photographs demonstrates the ways in which representations of Frank have been affected by and are products of disablement. Garland-Thomson identifies four primary visual rhetorics of disability, arguing that “none of these rhetorical modes operates in the service of actual disabled people,” she argues. “Indeed, almost all of them appropriate the disabled body for the purposes of constructing, instructing, or assuring some aspect of a putatively nondisabled viewer” (59). Representations of people with disabilities thus romanticize disability and the bodies of those that the producers of these images do not have: they are produced by nondisabled people for nondisabled people. Looking at more popular representations of Anne Frank, many of these representations fall into these categories, demonstrating how the process of disablement works in the service of ableist ideas, identifying and displaying what is undesirable or unwanted, then refiguring it to achieve the desired response. Similar to representations of disability, representations of Anne Frank are constructed by people who have no relationship or similarity to the modes of disablement that were put on her body.

Garland-Thomson calls the wondrous “the oldest mode of representing disability” (59). The purpose of the wondrous representation is to provoke admiration

and inspiration, based on the interpretation of disability or difference as marks of distinction, either positively or negatively. It is this mode of representation from which the concept of the supercrip emerges, one who inspires the viewer by “overcoming” his or her disability through the performance of tasks that the nondisabled audience cannot imagine performing themselves. Anne Frank’s image as one that evokes admiration and inspiration is perhaps the most recognizable, and largely emerges from the attempt to universalize her. In 2011, a graffiti artist on the Yale campus painted a giant stencil of Anne Frank on the side of a cafe with the words “Believe in People” above it. A former student of Yale was quoted as saying, “some people are going to see [the Anne Frank mural] and at a very basic level just look at the image and think it’s cool. But maybe they’ll keep the thought of Anne Frank in their head all day and just think about believing in people” (Rosenfeld).

Indeed, Frank’s most famous words – “I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart” – are repeatedly deployed to represent her as “overcoming” her situation (including her disablement), in an effort to amaze and to inspire audiences with hope. In the English translation of the critical edition, Frank’s entry with this particular quote reads,

So if you’re wondering whether it’s harder for the adults here than for the children, the answer is no, it’s certainly not. Older people have an opinion about everything and are sure of themselves and their actions. It’s twice as hard for us young people to hold on to our opinions at a time when ideals are being shattered and destroyed, when the worst side of human

nature predominates, when everyone has come to doubt truth, justice and God. (...)

We're much too young to deal with these problems, but they keep thrusting themselves on us until finally, we're forced to think up a solution, though most of the time our solutions crumble when faced with the facts. It's difficult in times like these: ideals, dreams and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. It's a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I keep them, because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart.

It's utterly impossible for me to build up my life on a foundation of chaos, suffering and death. I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness, I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too, I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too will end, that peace and tranquility will return once more.

In the meantime, I must hold on to my ideals. (July 15, 1944.)

Frank is wondering if it is worth it – and if she is able – to uphold her beliefs and world view that she had before she was forced to go into hiding. She calls on this subject multiple times throughout the *Diary*, speculating what it means to be a survivor in a world that is attempting to eradicate her. For the adults, she reasons, it is easier to hold on to deeply held beliefs and ideals, mostly because they have had a lifetime to develop

them and test them out in the world. For the young people in the annex, however, she argues that it is much more difficult to maintain any kind of belief system or world views because, as she observes, she is trapped in a system that is designed to, and exists through, the eradication of unwanted beliefs and ideals. Frank recognizes that she is marked as the unwanted and unhealthy element that is preventing the nation from progressing into something stronger and healthier. Because she resists this, her developing world view is consistently challenged by what she sees in the world, namely, “the worst side of human nature.” The “grim reality” that she faces every day tells her that she should succumb to the position she’s been relegated to, a reality that she takes very seriously: she writes that she feels the suffering of millions, and counts herself among those that will be destroyed by the “approaching thunder” that is turning the world into a wasteland.

Thus, when Frank writes that she holds onto her ideals because she believes that people are truly good at heart, she is relying on the belief in the goodness of humanity as a means to maintain her sense of self. By clinging to these ideals while simultaneously critiquing the world from which they emerged, Frank is acknowledging the constructedness of the *systems* that are attempting to destroy her, not the *people*. This is one of the beliefs that Frank feels she must cling to so she may survive: remembering the difference between systems and the people who work within those systems. This is not to suggest that Frank had any particular regard for people working within the systems, but it is to highlight Frank’s sophisticated understanding of what was happening outside the annex. Thus this famous line is not, despite the continued use of it, originally

intended to suggest anything about *overcoming* the hatred of the Nazi systems that threatened her, but how to *survive* that hatred without compromising herself or her beliefs. The distinction I aim to make here is that if we understand this moment as Frank overcoming her situation, we risk understanding Frank as adjusting the situation to fit her body. To explain, Garland-Thomson writes of the wondrous representation as inflected with sentimentality,

producing the convention of the courageous overcomer, contemporary America's favorite figure of disability. Even though armless calligraphers are no longer an acceptable form of middle-class entertainment, photos of disabled people who have adapted tasks to fit their bodies still ask the viewers to feel a sense of wonder. (...) By making disabled subjects masters of ordinary activities such as climbing rocks, drinking tea, or using hammers, these photos create a visual context that elicits adulation for their accomplishing what the normalized viewer takes to be a superhuman feat. (62-63)

Constructing disabled subjects as wondrous relies on the focus of tasks adapted to accommodate different bodies in such a way that audiences are expected to respond with wonder. One example Garland-Thomson provides is a photograph of a Habitat for Humanity volunteer that centers on his fingerless hands holding the hammer. The task here is the use of the hammer – he adapts it to fit his body so that instead of gripping the hammer with his fingers (as it is designed), he's gripping it with his palms. Inspired by witnessing an extraordinary body doing an ordinary task, the viewer is moved to

consider the disabled subject as superhuman, alienating the viewer from viewed, thereby diminishing the similarity between the two that equality requires (61). Thus the wondrous representation aims to focus the adaptation of tasks and ways those tasks are accomplished to accommodate bodies.

In the original context of Frank's famous words, she is musing about how to hold on to herself and her humanity within the systems of power that attempt to dehumanize her. She concludes that she must believe that people are good at heart – in other words, to hold on to her humanity, she must believe and hold on to the humanity of everyone else. Yet in the service of the wondrous or inspirational representation of her and her words, the original context of this line is removed and reconstructed in order to achieve the desired outcome. This is most clearly seen in the way that Frank's musings turn into a task that can be achieved or "overcome": trying to retain her ideals and her humanity becomes an inspirational task for those removed from a context with any resemblance to her. If Frank's "task" is to retain her humanity via the maintenance of her ideals that remind her to always acknowledge the humanity of others, then her adaptation of that task to fit her body is to compromise herself and her ideals to continue to survive; she accepts, unwaveringly, that all men are good at heart, without the original context of her complicating that particular ideal. To return to Bruno Bettelheim's observation, "if all men are good at heart, there never really was an Auschwitz; nor is there any possibility that it may recur." Ultimately, the rendering of Frank's words as inspirational necessarily alters her ideals into beliefs that allow her to appear inspirational. The foundation of chaos, suffering and death that Frank knew she had to avoid becomes a

reality in these representations, making her appear inspirational because she “overcame” the foundation she was forced to build upon.

The Hackett and Goodrich script for both the play and the film have Frank speaking the line twice, once to Peter and again as voiceover after her father tells the other characters what happened to Frank. Speaking to Peter, the young man in hiding with her, she says,

ANNE. I know it's terrible, trying to have any faith...when people are doing such horrible...(*Gently lifting his face.*) but you know what I sometimes think? I think the world may be going through a phase, the way I was with Mother. It'll pass, maybe not for hundreds of years, but some day....I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are really good at heart.

The most obvious change to this context is the addition of the character of Peter. Peter is constructed in the Goodrich and Hackett dramatizations as an intermediary between Frank and the audience, supplying the scenes with the exposition necessary to construct Frank's words not as just a narration of the scenes, but rather as the element that propels the scene. Because Frank's diary entries were written as reflections, told after the action of the scene occurred, Peter's role as “listener” offers a way for the audience to “experience” Frank's experiences simultaneous to her.

This change to the audience necessarily changes the context in which Frank's original words appeared. Where Frank's original entry was written for herself, these dramatizations reposition Frank as a speaker to the audience, conflicting her self-

presentation. Because the context and audience were altered, this passage moves from being an example of Frank's private moment of musing to a complex mode of her self-presentation. The self-presentation offered in these dramatizations, service the wondrous representation by emphasizing her commitment of adjusting her task to fit her body. If her task is to hold onto herself and her ideals, then this dramatization relies on Frank resisting her ideals to change, preferring them to remain uncomplicated. The removal of the original context erases her reality and by extension, her body, so that she may serve as an ideal example of "overcoming." Speaking to Peter in the above example, Frank does not complicate the situation that they are in. In this version, Frank can only understand what she originally referred to as an impending darkness as a "phase," one that is tantamount to her tenuous relationship with her mother. She also accepts the fact that this "phase" the world is in may not pass for another hundred years; despite this, she continues to believe that people are good at heart without holding them accountable for this phase. Simply put, in these representations, Frank "overcomes" the hatred of the Nazis and systems of power that have imprisoned her by removing the responsibility of people's actions, arguing that it is best not to challenge or complicate what has been done to her in the hopes that the good in people will surface. Implied here is the idea that this Frank will overcome and maintain her ideals to the very end; indeed, a large part of what makes this mode possible is the fact that the audience knows the ending to her story, but is never shown it.

This tendency to equate the end of Frank's diary with the end of Frank's story is possible through, among other things, the wondrous representation of Frank. The end of

the production serves as an epilogue, telling the audience what they already know but do not see:

MR. FRANK. That's how I found out about my wife's death...of Margot, the Van Daans, Peter...Dussel. But Anne...I still hoped. *(He picks up the diary.)* Yesterday I went to Rotterdam. I'd heard of a woman there. She'd been in Belsen with Anne....I know now. *(He opens the diary and turns the pages back to find a certain passage. As he finds it, we hear Anne's Voice. His eye falls on a sentence.)*

ANNE'S VOICE. In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.

MR. FRANK. She puts me to shame. *(Dim med. Slow. Curtain. Work light on. The lights begin to fade. Mr. Frank slowly closes the diary. The lights are out.)*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

The fact that Mr. Frank still had hope for Frank specifically signals to the audience that there is something remarkable about Frank that would make one assume she had a better chance of survival than the others. The use of Frank's words after having been informed of her death emphasizes this remarkableness, implying that even though she died, she should be commended for her bravery – “bravery” in this context as meant to refer to her belief in the goodness of people in the face of the hatred she was confronted with.

Indeed, Mr. Frank's reaction to Frank's words is that “she puts me to shame.” Humbled in the face of his daughter's strength of character, Mr. Frank – and the audience as well –

are invited to reflect on Frank's "unwavering" beliefs and how, despite her eventual fate, the tyranny of the Nazi's only emphasized her morals and her character. Indeed, even in the 1997 adaptation of the Goodrich and Hackett script by Wendy Kesselman, Frank's voice is heard saying this line as the audience watches the inhabitants of the annex arrested. Ultimately, as the lights dim and Mr. Frank closes the diary, the audience is meant to consider what Frank's strength means to them and how they can apply Frank's same attitude to the struggles in their own lives. Bettelheim suggests that

the fictitious ending...explains the enormous success of this play and movie. At the conclusion, we hear Anne's voice from beyond, saying, "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart."

This improbable sentiment is supposedly from a girl who had been starved to death, had watched her sister meet the same fate before she did, knew that her mother had been murdered, and had watched untold thousands of adults and children being killed. This statement is not justified by anything Anne actually told her diary. (188)

In the process, the reality of Frank's fate is erased in the interest of those least affected by a similar fate. In this way, Frank comes to serve as a "poster child" for how to deal with the fate of the millions who died in the Holocaust: if Frank can keep a positive attitude and maintain her ideals, then anyone can.

This construction of Frank, as noted above, is the most prevalent representation, and often serves the idea of "overcoming" outside the context of representing her story. The 2003 movie, *Anne B. Real*, directed by Lisa France and written by Luis Moro, tells

the story of a young female rapper who finds her inspiration by reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*. The tagline of the movie, “Anne Frank in the Hood,” aptly describes the attempts to combine Frank’s story with a modern-day coming of age story. In fact, the writer and director even refer to it as “two movies in one,” citing the fact that the lead character’s best friend is named Kitty, and that the movie is set in Amsterdam Avenue in upper Manhattan, New York, a reference to Amsterdam, Holland, where Frank lived for most of her life. While the existence of these links as evidence for “two movies in one” is tenuous at best – especially given the fact that the writer incorrectly cites the fact that Kitty was a longtime friend of Frank’s, inspiring him to write the lead character’s best friend as “Kitty” as well¹⁴ – what is clear is the role the writer and director wished to put Frank in. The writer, Moro, says,

If you’ve never read the book, you will stand up and cheer for the lead character [as] she uses Anne Frank[‘s] words for inspiration. Now, if you read the book and see the movie, you will be moved, touched, and inspired by who Anne Frank is, that her spirit is alive and well in all who perceive [her] under any circumstances...I would like to take credit for the diverse [multicultural] back ground the director, Lisa France and I have. But as much as we’re both responsible for bringing this universal multi-cultural story to the big screen, I know we were both really

¹⁴ The “Kitty” that Anne wrote to was actually a character from one of Cissy van Marxveldt’s *Joop ter Heul* novels. These books tell the story of a group of female friends through school, marriage, and motherhood. In Anne’s earliest entries, she addresses other members of the group – Conny, Marianne, Phien, Emmy, Jettje, and Poppie – but it was Kitty Francken to whom Anne decided to address all of her entries relatively early. Thus, in her revisions, she revised the various recipients to simply be “Kitty.”

honoring Anne Frank. There was never a moment when Lisa and I did not know all we have to do is stay true to the spirit of Anne Frank. We believe we had Anne Frank next to us [throughout] the entire rewrite process, the casting, the production, the editing, everything... Anne Frank was the one really getting the awards. (“Anne Frank in the Hood.”)

For Moro and France, the “spirit of Anne Frank” that they needed to stay true to was the inspirational version of Frank, the one that may inspire their lead character and the audience to stay true to themselves while “overcoming” life’s obstacles. What makes this possible, according to Moro, is the universalized message that Inspirational Frank offers, one that lends itself to multicultural stories that are best told when they are universalized and inspirational. Indeed, Anne Frank’s words are “for inspiration,” reducing the reality of the context in which she wrote in service of the “inspiration” that people seek from her.

The risk here is that the wondrous representation allows for audiences to believe that despite what was happening to her, there was always room for forgiveness in Frank’s heart. While this may be the kind of sentiment that Frank strove for, she makes it very clear in her entry that this is nearly impossible when faced with reality. Attaching this sentiment to Frank thus erases the context and reality in which she first wrote these words, erasing the bodies of the people who suffered a similar fate as Anne’s and turning it into something “useful” for people in power, people who would never know Frank’s fate.

Sentimental Anne Frank

Garland-Thomson situates the sentimental representation of disability opposite the wondrous, arguing that the wondrous elevates and the sentimental diminishes (63). Yet the relationship between the two is not entirely contrasting. Garland-Thomson argues that the sentimental mode emerged from Victorian bourgeoisie belief of the capability of capitalizing the world, and by extension, fostering the belief in an imaginary responsibility for the world. This, in turn, “launched humanitarian and reform movements to which today’s telethons are heir. This discourse of middle-class noblesse oblige operates on a model of paternalism, often trafficking in children and alluding to the cute, the plucky, the long-suffering, and the courageous” (63). Specifically, “the sentimental produces the sympathetic victim or helpless sufferer needing protection or succor and invoking pity, inspiration, and frequent contributions” (63). Sentimental representations of Frank are primarily linked to this idea of calling on “the cute, the plucky, the long-suffering, and the courageous.”

What makes Frank so appealing, in part, is her youth: it is no coincidence that the original cover of the English translation of *The Diary of a Young Girl* shows a nine-year-old Frank, despite the fact that Frank began her diary at the age of thirteen. This picture is one that Frank included in her diary with the caption, “This is a photograph of me as I wish I looked all the time. Then I might still have a chance of getting to Holywood [sic]. But at present, I’m afraid, I usually look quite different” (10 October, 1942, Critical Edition). One could argue that the picture was chosen because of the American connection – Hollywood – and that it is a photograph that Frank liked. However,

regarding the photograph as a part of the cover of the *Diary* and not just the photograph itself, that the attempt to render Frank as childlike in order to provoke pity was the impetus behind this choice of picture. The picture is large, taking up most of the front cover, and aligned slightly to the left of the center. It is also slightly cropped from the original photograph, emphasizing her face and childlike features. Her eyes are focused upwards, a pose that, on a nine-year-old, would be appropriate for a school photograph, but in this context, is recognizable as a cliché pose primarily used to invoke inspiration and indicate “overcoming” and strength of character. Below the picture is her name in capital letters, followed by “The Diary of a Young Girl” beneath. Significant about the title is the split between Frank’s name and her diary: it is *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, not *Anne Frank’s Diary* or *The Diary of Anne Frank* (the title later used in productions of the diary). What this suggests is that the reader should be focused on *Anne Frank* and not the diary itself. The reader is encouraged to seek out and find the inspirational and sentimental parts of Frank that are found in the diary, not the information found in the diary. Indeed, below the title are the words “An Extraordinary Document of Adolescence,” suggesting that an *extraordinary* writer documented adolescence – not that this particular story of adolescence is extraordinary or even out of the ordinary. What this signals to the reader is that the diary itself is just a document of adolescence – its *writer* makes it extraordinary. Nowhere on the cover is there any indication of the context in which this document was written – in fact, the photograph does not suggest anything about Frank being anything other than a typical American

teenager, one that readers could surely relate to¹⁵. The cover of the *Diary* then becomes a way to instruct the reader to find and construct an image of Frank that fits the picture: inspirational Anne Frank, an image that, through the process of becoming inspirational, actually operates as a sentimental figure. Thus, the sentimental and the wondrous are not entirely distinct from one another, and recognizing this relationship is vital to understanding how representations of disablement operate.

Sentimental representations of disability invite the audience to attempt to rescue the subject from the stigma of being disabled. This is accomplished by domesticating the figure, making it familiar and comforting (63). In order to become inspirational, Frank must be recognizable. But to be recognizable, Frank must also be able to be sentimental. As noted earlier, the attempts to make Frank familiar and accessible to American audiences have been noted by many Anne Frank scholars as a systematic “de-Judaizing” of Frank. Judith Doneson argues that

The universalization of the Holocaust through the diary, that is, the adapting and adjusting of images so that a broad consensus of the population can identify with the event, diminishes its Jewish particularity. As the Holocaust becomes a universal symbol of suffering, it also becomes possible for Americans to find significance in an event that they have no experienced... In addition, the question arises as to whether the Americanization and ultimate universalization of the Holocaust through

¹⁵ The introduction by Eleanor Roosevelt, noted on the cover, also supports this construction of an American relationship to Anne and the “universalization” of her story.

the diary mirrored America's attitude toward its Jews and other minorities – the growing phenomenon of ‘sameness’ – rather than a blatant desire to alter the Jewish meaning of the Holocaust? (124)

One way in which Frank is situated as a sentimental figure is through the rhetorical refashioning of her self-presentation in the various productions of her diary. With regard to self-presentation – the process by which one attempts to influence a perception of one's own image – I am most interested in the ways that language and narrative are used to create this image. I am therefore interested in the ways that language is used to create the sentimental image of Anne Frank.

In most productions of the *Diary*, Frank's actual words are used to describe the events that are shown to the audience. But, by virtue of being a representation or production, the context is shifted in order to achieve a particular end with regard to the narrative. The context of Frank's story and words are often shifted so as to emphasize the message of the narrative that Frank records: Frank's experiences are constructed so as to invoke pity, which in turn can be used as a catalyst to invoke inspiration. People are made to feel sorry for Frank, but inspired by her because she “overcomes” her disablement.

A common way self-presentation occurs is through language and narrative. James Gee writes that perspective stems from one's social identity and from the resources one's social group makes available to them, which, by extension, encourages “marked” behavior or characteristics (23). The manipulation of Frank's self-presentation attempts to attenuate the links between Frank's perception of her social identity and the

resources she was aware were available to her, effectively removing the elements that mark her as Jewish, and by extension, alien. Thus what makes Frank's image effective as a symbol that evokes pity in varying contexts is the degree to which her difference is marked. Furthermore, Rom Harré argues that people will seek to present themselves through their actions as beings of value, whose worth is defined with regard to a specific moral order (11). Frank's words are offered to represent desired values for specific moral orders. Frank becomes universalized so that she can invoke empathy in situations that are deemed relevant to all. She can only inspire those she resembles: to be relevant to the audience, apparently, is to not be Jewish.

Central to representing Frank as a sentimental figure is the construction of her narrative discourse. Michael Bamberg writes that linguistic factors influence the conceptual organization of narrative, and that the choice of form that the speaker chooses to use (lexical or grammatical) not only represents the relationship between the speaker and the event, but also how one wants to be understood. (91) .For example, referring to events in time reveals a perspective that perceives the events to be related. A speaker's choice of form signals *what* we talk about and *how* we talk about it. Thus, the choice of a linguistic form indicates the perspective: it informs the audience how events and references to events are understood with regard to each other and a unifying theme Doneson reminds us that in both the play and the 1959 film version of the *Diary*,

the structure...forces the issue of authenticity. The voiceover of Anne reading from her diary, fading into dramatic sequences, stresses the fact that these scenes are based on Anne's writing; that it is always her diary

“speaking” throughout. If any elements of the diary are falsified, then Anne’s history is distorted. How then is Anne’s history reflected in the adaptation of her diary? (133)

Thus, refiguring Frank’s words necessarily alters the relationship between Frank and the context or event that she describes. This alteration is always in the interest of representing Frank as a sentimental figure.

A useful example of this alteration is found in the stage and film production of the *Diary*, based on the Hackett and Goodrich script. Telling the story of her family, Frank writes in her diary,

No one will grasp what I’m talking about if I begin my letters to Kitty just out of the blue so I’ll start by sketching in brief the story of my life, much as I don’t like to. My father, the dearest darling of a father I have ever seen, was thirty-six when he married my mother who was then twenty-five. My sister Margot, was born in 1926 in Frankfurt-on-main in Germany. I followed on June 12, 1929 and, as we are Jewish we emigrated to Holland in 1933, where my father was appointed Managing Director of the Netherlands Opekta Co., which manufactures jam. The rest of our family who were left in Germany felt the full impact of Hitler’s anti-Jewish laws, so life was filled with anxiety. In 1938 after the pogroms, my two uncles (my mother’s brothers) escaped to North America, my old grandmother came to us, she was then seventy-three. After May 1940 good times rapidly fled, first the war, then the

capitulation, followed by the German invasion which is when the sufferings of us Jews really began. Anti-Jewish decrees followed each other in quick succession and our freedom was strictly limited. Yet things were still bearable, despite the star, separate schools, curfew, etc. etc.

(June 16, 1942)

Frank tells the parts of the story that only affects her. For example, her parents' marriage is discussed, but not their lives before they were married. Her sister Margot's birth is reported to establish a timeline and a setting for Frank's birth: instead of Frank aligning herself with Margot – thereby suggesting they share the same story – Frank uses Margot's story as a frame for her own. As Frank's story progresses, she broadens the framework from her family's story - Margot's in particular – to historical context, thus allowing the historical context drive her story. Upon recording her birth, she writes because she and her family are Jewish, they emigrated to Holland in 1933. This is the first time in this passage that Frank identifies herself and her family as Jewish. She gives no reason why being Jewish would matter where she lives, apparently operating under the assumption that her reader would understand. The entry continues from an objective standpoint: although she does not identify the rest of her family as being Jewish, the fact that they “felt the full impact of Hitler's anti-Jewish laws” indicates that she is identifying her family as Jewish, and by extension, herself. Indeed, Frank writes that life was filled with anxiety for her and her family. Frank continues to describe her family in terms that would mark them as Jewish without naming them as such. She refers to the 1938 pogroms as if she is again speaking to someone who would immediately know

what this implies, which is especially evident in the use of the word escape when she refers to her uncles' reaction to these pogroms. The dangerous environment that was emerging during this time is also evident in what follows, when Frank describes that "the good times rapidly fled, first the war, then the capitulation, followed by the German invasion which is when the suffering of us Jews really began." Earlier, Frank refers to her place as a Jew when she writes "we could not do this and we were forbidden to do that." Frank's phrase the suffering of us Jews really began is the second time she explicitly aligns herself with "the suffering...Jews." She continues to align herself, writing that "our freedom was strictly limited and that things were still bearable."

The scene in the play and 1959 film version of the *Diary*, uses this passage as the introduction to Frank's story in hiding. The story begins with Mr. Frank reading out of Frank's diary, eventually giving way to Frank's voice alone:

MR. FRANK AND ANNE. "My father started a business, importing spice and herbs. Things went well for us until 1940. Then the war came and the Dutch...*(He turns the page.)* defeat, followed by the arrival of the Germans. Then things got very bad for the Jews." (...)

ANNE'S VOICE. You could not do this and you could not do that. They forced Father out of his business. We had to wear yellow stars. I had to turn in my bike. I couldn't go to a Dutch school any more. I couldn't go to the movies, or ride in an automobile, or even on a streetcar, and a million other things. But somehow we children still managed to have fun.

(1.1)

The fact that Mr. Frank shares Frank's words in this scene is significant, given the fact that it was Otto Frank who did the first heavy revision of Frank's diary before publication. Thus, this representation of Frank's words can serve as a signal to the audience that their relationship with Frank is both mediated and constructed. Frank's backstory is not given here, as the only pertinent information for the production is the information directly related to her time in hiding: the business her father started served as the hiding place, she recounts the process of her disablement after the German occupation, and, more significantly, the impact it has on her life as a *child*. She does not identify herself or her family as Jewish, only noting that "things got very bad for the Jews." Even as she describes the measures against Jewish people in Holland, she changes tenses from first person to second person, a rhetorical move to distance herself from the Jewish people she describes. When she does attach herself, it is to emphasize the fact she is a child: she had to turn in her bike, she couldn't go to a Dutch school, she couldn't ride in an automobile, or even go see a movie. The Frank that is constructed here is *wholly* child and only marginally Jewish, thus the audience should understand her story as threat to her right to her childhood, and not a threat to a right of her life.

This construction of Frank's story to render her sentimental is thus in the service of the audience, and not Frank or her story. Garland-Thomson writes, "sentimentality makes of disabled people occasions for the viewers' own narratives of progress, improvement, or heroic deliverance and contains disability's threat in the sympathetic, helpless child for whom the viewer is empowered to act" (63). Because Anne Frank's story was one the first and most accessible accounts to emerge after the war, the success

of her story largely depended on it remaining – and becoming even more – accessible. To do this, Frank was rendered sentimental, serving as a “poster child” for the lessons that should be learned from the Holocaust. Introducing the Holocaust to American audiences, Frank’s story contained Americanized views of progress, improvement and deliverance, positioning the audience to act on her behalf. For many audiences, this “act” required only the will to “never forget” what they believed what the “lesson” of the Holocaust was, and to carry the same kind of hope and inspiration that Frank demonstrated in the rhetorical refashionings of her and her story. Alan Mintz suggests that the lesson taught by the Holocaust “is a lesson about man’s inhumanity to man that should instruct us about hatred and intolerance in all walks of life and in relations among all groups” (35). Thus, sentimental representations of Anne Frank are deployed to demonstrate narratives of progress or improvement with regard to “man’s inhumanity to man,” signaling a distance from the atrocities that Frank faced from the people or institutions using her image. Frank’s image is used to represent this “improvement” in the way people treat one another, yet because her image only works this way once she is sentimentalized, this idealized “improvement” can also be read as an enhancement in empowering idealized images of ability, normalcy, power, and what it means to be an Other of the same.

Exotic Anne Frank

The third visual rhetoric that Garland-Thomson defines is the exotic. The exotic is marked explicitly by difference, presenting disability as foreign, exaggerated,

eroticized, or entertaining. Describing the exotic, Garland-Thomson cites a photograph of “a tattooed biker figure brandishing a hockey stick.” She writes,

The image alludes at once to the strong men and tattoo kings of the sideshows and then inflects it with a hyperphallic sexuality, completely rewriting the cultural script of the emasculated invalid and the male who becomes feminized by disability...The exaggeration characteristic of eroticization here marshals ironic hyperbole to mount a brazen, sensational parody, proactively challenging the viewer by lewdly commanding, “Lick this!” Such representations preclude even a trace of the sentimental or the wondrous, insisting instead on the empowerment of the transgressive, even at the expense of distancing the spectator from the spectacle. (66)

The exotic relies on distance between the viewer and the viewed so that the “cultural script” of disability is exaggerated to the point where those scripts are rewritten. Yet this rewriting is for the audience only: as demonstrated by Garland-Thomson’s example, the signifiers typically attached to disability become hyperbolic, so that disability becomes something to be feared. Furthermore, whereas the wondrous and the sentimental elicit emotion or action that elevates the person represented, the exotic only serves to perpetuate distance between the subject and the audience. It does this by exaggerating the transgressive, empowering it to the degree that it becomes frightening.

I wish to extend Garland-Thomson's definition of the exotic to include that of monstrosity, that is, the representations of bodies that are, in Foucault's terms, monstrous. In *Abnormal*, Foucault writes,

The frame of reference of the human monster is, of course, law. The notion of the monster is essentially a legal notion, in a broad sense, of course, since what defines the monster is the fact that its existence and form is not only a violation of the laws of society but also a violation of the laws of nature. Its very existence is a breach of the law at both levels... The monster is the limit, both the point at which the law is overturned and the exception that is found only in extreme cases. The monster combines the impossible and the forbidden. (55-56)

Combining the impossible and the forbidden is a trope most common to representations of Anne Frank that I argue fall under the category of monstrous. While images and uses of Anne Frank do not tend to resemble the photograph described by Garland-Thomson, some uses render Frank as a violation of the laws of society and of nature. More specifically, monstrous or exotic representations of Frank usually represent Frank as a survivor, thereby disrupting the laws of society – her position as the world's most famous Holocaust victim – and of nature – her supposed death.

Perhaps the most monstrous representation of Anne Frank can be found in Shalom Auslander's *Hope: A Tragedy*. In the novel, the main character, Kugel, finds Anne Frank in the attic of his new home. He describes her as

hideous, horribly disfigured, and terribly old...the white of her right eye yellowed with age, the left eye clouded with cataracts, dead, unseeing.

Her skin, sallow and gray, was thin, almost transparent... a massive hump on her back forced her skull forward so that she faced the ground, head bowed, even when looking straight ahead. (25)

When she moves, she scurries; when she speaks, she growls (25, 26). He notes that her body “devolved...into a shape most suitable for attic life” (54), and when he sees her, he thinks back to his childhood, when “he would cry from fright at the sight of the mentally handicapped, certain he was going to catch whatever it was they had” (53). It is interesting to note that he recalls his fear of the *mentally* handicapped when faced with her physically disabled body. For Kugel – and for most exotic and monstrous representations of Anne Frank – the disablement that she experienced in life as a Jew in Nazi-occupied Holland is primarily situated within her mind: limiting her body allows her mind and intellect to develop, a development seen in her diary. What saves Frank from becoming grotesque or frightening is her death: we are not confronted with the consequences of her fate on her body because all that is available is her diary. Images of Anne Frank as a survivor, then, exaggerate the limitations put on her body and stifle her mental development, as if her talent peaked with her diary. Anne Frank as a diarist is marked by her mind; Anne Frank as a survivor is marked by her body. Accordingly, because Anne Frank is situated as the most famous victim of the Holocaust, her surviving body becomes monstrous because of the contradiction of her existence.

This representation of survivor Anne Frank stems from Phillip Roth's *The Ghost Writer*, one of the first representations of Anne Frank as a survivor. Roth's protagonist, Nathan Zuckerman, is a young writer who spends a night in the home of established author E.I. Lonoff. Amy Bellette, a student of Lonoff's who holds a strong resemblance to Anne Frank, is also staying in the house. Because of this resemblance and her vague past, Zuckerman begins to suspect that she actually is Anne Frank, living anonymously in the United States having survived the Holocaust. The story then breaks off into a description of Frank's journey to the United States after the war and how she came to choose to remain anonymous. Although Zuckerman concedes at the end of this section that it is entirely fictitious, a distinct portrait of survivor-Anne Frank emerges, rendering her wholly exotic and, in Foucault's terms, monstrous.

The exotic representation of disability, as noted above, is concerned with rendering the body as foreign, exaggerated, eroticized, and entertaining. Amy is immediately represented as all of these things almost at once:

Admittedly, the rich calm of those eyes would have been enough to make me wilt with shyness, but that I couldn't return her gaze directly had also to do with this unharmonious relation between body and skull, and its implication, to me, of some early misfortune, of something vital lost or beaten down, and, by way of compensation, something vastly overdone. I thought of a trapped chick that could not get more than its beaked skull out of the encircling shell. I thought of those macro-cephalic boulders the Easter Island heads. I thought of febrile patients on the verandas of Swiss

sanatoria imbibing the magic-mountain air. But let me not exaggerate the pathos and originality of my impressions, especially as they were subsumed soon enough in my unoriginal and irrepressible preoccupation: mostly I thought of the triumph it would be to kiss that face, and the excitement of her kissing me back...[and] as if she hadn't charm enough, Miss Bellette's speech was made melodious by a faint foreign accent.(24-25)

For Zuckerman, the “unharmonious relation between body and skull” implies that Amy has a history of loss and misfortune, which, for Zuckerman, provides impetus for him to write a history for her. In this way, then, the ambiguity of Amy's past provides entertainment for him that is wholly dependent on her distance from him. Furthermore, Zuckerman's note of the split between Amy's body and skull implies two things: Amy's body physically looks incongruous, leading him to believe that such an incongruity can only exist because of something outside her body, that is, the incongruity acts as a result of having lost something vital, or as a “punishment” for a misfortune in her past.

Secondly, the split between Amy's body and skull implies a mind/body split, wherein the image of Anne Frank fostered by her talent as a writer and her eventual fate collides with the image of Amy Bellette, a survivor. More importantly, this implication calls on images of disability in describing Frank as a survivor. In his fiction of Amy as Frank, Amy says,

I felt as though the skin had been peeled away from half my body. Half my face had been peeled away, and everybody would stare in horror for

the rest of my life. Or they would stare at the other half, at the half still intact; I could see them smiling, pretending that the flayed half wasn't there, and talking to the half that was. And I could hear myself screaming at them, I could see myself thrusting my hideous side right into their unmarred faces to make them properly horrified. 'I was pretty! I was whole! I was a sunny, lively little girl! Look, look at what they did to me!' But whatever side they looked at, I would always be screaming, 'Look at the other! Why don't you look at the other!' That's what I thought about in the hospital at night. However they look at me, however they try to comfort me, I will always be this half-flayed thing. I will never be young, I will never be kind or at peace or in love, and I will hate them all my life. (152-153).

Amy is describing the need to be seen and recognized as *whole*, something Zuckerman did not see in his first meeting with her. For Zuckerman, then, the idea of Anne Frank as a survivor is simultaneously horrifying and appealing. This is what makes Amy so desirable to him: her exoticness – that is, the representation of her disablement – is only visible to the extent that he is able to avoid confronting the implications of how he views Anne Frank, the victim. He relies on the existence of the disfigured side of Amy/Anne to create and foster the intact side, the only side he wishes to see. Zuckerman wants a version of Anne Frank he can have, but because Anne Frank is only known in terms of her disablement and eventual death as a young woman, he can only understand Amy as split and not entirely “whole.” She is simultaneously dead and alive, appealing and

horrifying, Anne Frank and *not* Anne Frank. One side is dependent on the existence of the other, and both are exaggerated to the point of being transgressive of the other. Amy's beauty and mere existence overshadows the flayed half, yet the "flayed" and "hideous" half of Anne Frank is terrifying enough to keep Zuckerman at a distance. Zuckerman thus takes the parts of Anne Frank's image that are desirable to him as a young Jewish writer – the idea that Frank had survived, in some form, and would be romantically interested in him – and discards the undesirable consequences of Anne Frank's survival.

The split between Frank's image and Frank's body is also explored in Bill Murdon's webcomic, "Anne Frank Conquers the Moon Nazis." Here, Frank is represented as a cyborg, built by Nazi scientists stationed on the moon. The story begins in 1955 with the Nazi project of resurrecting the dead and turning them into battle cyborgs. When Anne Frank's skeleton is recovered from the ruins of a Nazi concentration camp, scientist Dr. Pretorius begins rebuilding her. The project is halted, however, and does not resume until generous military research grants are allotted by the Reagan administration to continue the project. Max Fleischer, a young janitor working in Dr. Pretorius' lab discovers the project, and becomes smitten with the completed Anne Frank cyborg, now indestructible and ready for battle.

Representing Frank as a cyborg calls attention to Foucault's definition of the monster, a transgression of natural and social laws. He argues, "the monster is the fundamental figure around which bodies of power and domains of knowledge are disturbed and reorganized" (62). The power that brings Frank back into being is both

Nazi and American, in a combined effort to conquer the world. Although the comic is currently on hiatus, it takes measures to lay the groundwork of who and what this Anne Frank cyborg will become. In a moment of reflection, Dr. Pretorius says to the skeleton of Frank,

you, Anne...you'll be different, I swear it. Not just a run-of-ze mill clone constructed to be a Nazi propaganda mouthpiece...but a biomechanical terror, capable of leveling mountains and laying waste to entire armies! The army that vill carry Anne Frank before it vill be INVINCIBLE!! I can see it now! I'll clone your brain and fuse it into an indestructible robot body!! You vill breathe fire and shit lightning!! And you vill appreciate fine literature und German potato salad! Und then I'll send you to speak before ze United Nations in ze name of vold peace! Once there, you vill unleash your POSITRONIC DEATH RAY und slaughter zem all!!!

Frank is reconstructed to serve as a “Nazi propaganda mouthpiece” that is also a “biomechanical terror.” To do this, her brain must be cloned and then fused into a robot body. Her body is deemed unneeded or unworthy for this project, and is replaced with a body that is more suited to the purposes of the Nazi project. Eugenicist logic once again drives this line of thinking, not unlike what Frank experienced while she was alive. Nazi procedures took measures against bodies that were thought to be useless or not useful enough for the health and strength of the nation, and were consequently removed. In this fictional scenario, Frank’s body is replaced with a machine so that her mind and her

image can be retained. For this project, then, it is Frank's image that is needed, but specifically, the image that is constructed by her mind.

To explain, Donna Haraway argues that the cyborg is “a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction” (149). In constructing Frank as a cyborg, she retains her mind so as to retain the “lived social relations,” or, in Frank's case, the relationship the audience developed with Frank's image. Her body, then, becomes hyper-able to the point of being feared. So, as Dr. Pretorius suggests, retaining Frank's mind and removing her body is the only way to integrate her into German culture, that is, to appreciate fine literature and German potato salad, and by extension, the Nazi propaganda that she is slated to represent.

In this way, Frank is situated as the fundamental figure around which the Nazi and American power and domains of knowledge are disturbed and reorganized. Her existence as a cyborg disturbs the inspirational and sentimental image that ableist and eugenicist systems created, thereby reorganizing what Frank's image represents by challenging the constitution of the good versus evil binary. Drawing on an image of “good,” this project literally remakes her body so that she can exist in multiple realms – the living and the dead, human and machine, victim and perpetrator – in order to resurrect Hitler and his Nazi forces stationed on the moon. Although Frank is constructed to do just this, the title of the webcomic – *Anne Frank Conquers the Moon Nazis* – suggests that cyborg Anne Frank does not follow through with the evil plan laid out for her.

Rewriting Frank as a survivor, she is simultaneously exotic and frightening. For this representation of Frank to exist, she must be distanced from the audience as far as possible. Unlike the sentimental and inspirational representations, the exotic version of Anne Frank must frighten the audience because of its transgressiveness. Ultimately, what this kind of representation suggests is that Frank must only survive through her words, and not her body. As such, the eugenicist systems that disabled her in life retain power over her image in death. Although the idea of Anne Frank as a survivor is appealing in certain contexts, rendering her as such always services the logics that determined her death as essential part to achieving particular ideas about normality, health, and progress.

Realistic Anne Frank

The final representation that Garland-Thomson identifies is the realistic. The realistic representation of disability minimizes difference in an effort to “arouse identification, often normalizing and sometimes minimizing the visual mark of disability” (69). Garland-Thomson argues that “realist disability photography is the rhetoric of equality, most often turned utilitarian. The use of realism can be commercial or journalistic, and it can also urge the viewer to political or social action” (69). Ultimately, the realistic aims to represent a version of reality for commercial, journalistic, political, or social purposes (69). These representations do not intend to represent disability more realistically, rather, this type of representation intends to represent disability in more realistic contexts. Whereas the inspirational situates disability in harrowing contexts that must be overcome, the sentimental in contexts that

espouse sadness, and the exotic in contexts that are hyperbolic, the realistic attempts to domesticate disability by situating it in familiar and comfortable contexts.

John Blair's 1995 *Anne Frank Remembered* attempts to represent Frank as realistically as possible, relying on newsreels, photographs, and a rare home movie that contains the only known moving footage of Anne Frank. The opening lines, narrated by Kenneth Branagh, situate Frank as the symbol of the millions of victims of the Holocaust, particularly the children, alongside the mention of her "miserable and lonely death" in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The strength of this documentary, as the New York Times movie review notes, are the film's "harrowing eyewitness accounts" revealing "what befell Anne, and it is agonizing." Yet, as the opening lines of the documentary continue, she is best remembered for her faith in humanity. "This is the story," the sequence continues, "of the life and legacy of Anne Frank." The context that the documentary immediately attempts to represent is the life that contributed to the legacy: the events that might have impacted her faith in humanity, and the events that put that faith to the test. Most realistic representations of Frank are framed as such, and are thus laced with traces of the inspirational and sentimental renderings that are usually relied on to represent Frank.

Robert Dorhelm's 2001 miniseries, *Anne Frank: The Whole Story*, based on Melissa Müller's 1998 biography, aimed to present Frank's life outside of the context of Frank's diary as realistically as possible. Screenwriter Kirk Ellis has said of the project that

Otto Frank himself said after the war, when he finally read the diary, that it was a revelation to him because his daughter never spoke this way...I took that really as a watchword because I wanted to try to find a way in which we could distill a lot of thought that had come down to us in a way that was realistic to her age and the situation she was in at the time. (qtd. In Byrne)

For Ellis, then, omitting Frank's famous words, "in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart," was the right thing to do: "In the end I decided not to use that line at all, because in doing the research and going through the odyssey I just came to the conclusion that the association of the line with the life of Anne Frank is such a misrepresentation of what happened to her" (qtd. in Amarillo Times). Ellis aimed to represent a version of Frank that is not tied to the idea of Frank as inspirational or sentimental, but rather as one victim of the "Final Solution."

Yet avoiding using Frank's famous words – or any of her words, for that matter – invited controversy from those most invested in protecting Anne Frank's legacy and image. Because of issues around copyright infringement, Ellis chose not to quote Frank from *The Diary of a Young Girl*, or anything else from her writings, including *Anne Frank's Tales from the Secret Annex*¹⁶. This created a conflict with Bernd "Buddy" Elias, Anne Frank's only living relative and chairman of the Anne Frank-Fonds in

¹⁶ *Anne Frank's Tales from the Secret Annex* is a collection of Anne's miscellaneous writing while she was in hiding, including short stories, essays, personal recollections, and the first five chapters of a novel. Anne intended for this collection to be separate from her diary; even dedicating a separate journal for them, called "Stories and Sketches from the Backhouse described by Anne Frank."

Switzerland, the foundation established by Frank's father Otto Frank. The Fonds holds copyrights to the diary, and consequently serves to protect Frank's legacy. According to the Los Angeles times, Elias argued that representing Frank and her story without her words "is ignoring Anne Frank, in a way. The film can be good, but Anne speaks through her diary, through her words. [ABC] might be legally right but morally wrong, in my opinion." (LA Times) ¹⁷The belief that Anne "speaks through her diary" alone suggests that the image of Frank that is fostered and protected is the image of Frank as inspirational and sentimental.

As noted above, however, Ellis aimed to present Frank not as a beacon of hope or inspiration, but rather as one victim among many. Removing the words that made her extraordinary in the eyes of the public risked making her an ordinary girl – the very goal of this project. Indeed, the series opens up with a birds-eye view of a playground, eventually focusing in on Frank's face. The implication is that any one of these children could have or did share a fate similar to Frank's. In this way, this production attempts to represent Frank as ordinary and not particularly remarkable; for Ellis, it is her story that is remarkable, and it is the way Frank tells her own story that contributes to the idea of remarkableness that surrounds her. Removing exact words from Frank's diary meant that Frank would no longer tell her own story in this production, instead relying on the stories of others to construct Frank's "whole story." As such, the miniseries urges

¹⁷ Steven Spielberg, originally slated to direct the miniseries, stepped down because of Elias' objections.

viewers to understand the remarkableness of Frank's story not through her words, but through the *way* her story is told.

Thus Ellis and Dornhelm portray Frank realistically by removing the context of her subjectivity. The Los Angeles times reports that by not relying on Frank's diary, Ellis "was able to give life and depth and nuance to the other characters in Anne's life... who have long been known largely only through Anne's highly selective eyes" (qtd. In Jensen). Susan Lyne, ABC's executive vice president of movies for television, argues that using accounts of Frank's life – particularly her life in the concentration camps – allows the audience to become more engaged with her: "You've followed this girl from just before her 10th birthday; her spirit, her conversation, her mind are enormously engaging. And then you watch as she becomes almost a feral creature before her death" (qtd. in Jensen). Removing Frank's perspective – and thus her "selective eyes" – allows the audience to experience Frank's story as both an engaging experience and an opportunity to relate to her as an outsider. In other words, whereas the inspirational and sentimental representations of Frank encourage the audience to identify with Frank, the realistic encourages the audience to make a connection to the context: perpetuated by the typical invitations to identify with her, Frank becomes someone you care about in this production, whose fate could have been your own had you lived in her historical context. Frank is no longer someone "just like you," she is a victim of a horrifying context, one that is familiar enough for audiences to identify with, but distant enough for the audience to feel safe. Asking audiences to identify with the context and not the individual is what differentiates the realistic from the inspirational and sentimental. In inspirational and

sentimental representations of Anne Frank, the audience is encouraged to identify with her so as to draw on her experiences for their own purposes, either to become inspired or to feel sorry for her. For realistic depictions of Frank, the audience is meant to align their own experiences with hers, understanding how certain contexts were created, but not believing that the context can be recreated.

Ellis' intention for the miniseries follows this line of reasoning, maintaining that notions of inspiration and sentimentality needed to be removed. Furthermore, the tropes used to create and nurture those notions also needed to be removed, such as Frank's reflections about her life. Yet while avoiding those tropes, Ellis, in many ways reproduced them to achieve the desired effect. Avoiding recognizable and cliché tropes of sentimentality – Frank never appears any more brave or courageous than those around her, for example – Ellis instead relies on tropes of sentimentality that affect other characters. When Frank is reunited with her childhood friend, Hannah, they stand between a straw fence in Bergen-Belsen, months before Frank's death. Because Hannah is in the exchange camp of Bergen-Belsen,¹⁸ she appears healthier than Frank, who was

¹⁸ Bergen-Belsen was comprised of eight camps. Three main components divided these camps up: the prisoner of war camp, the residence camp, and the prisoner's camp. Hannah and her family were in a part of the residence camp, called the "Star Camp." Here, several thousand Jewish prisoners (primarily from the Netherlands) were held under the pretext that they would be exchanged for German nationals held by the Western Allies (few were ever actually exchanged). The prisoners in the Star camp were protected by a power outside of Germany's, and were thus on one of the "ban lists": the "Palestine list," the "South America List," or the "dual citizenship list." Hannah's family – her father and her little sister, Gabi – were on the "Palestine list," as they had Palestinian passports. Prisoners wore a yellow Star of David on their own clothes (hence the name), and were forced to work in labor detachments. According to Ben Shephard, more than a third of those who survived Bergen-Belsen were inmates of the Star Camp.

Anne, alternatively, was in a camp within the prisoner camp, called the tent camp. First established as an undesignated concentration camp, this camp was originally intended to serve as a transit camp for non-Jewish women from Poland. The prisoner camp, a collection camp for sick and injured prisoners, was soon referred to as the "recuperation camp," which very quickly became overcrowded. The

a prisoner, and even wears her own clothing (as opposed to the striped uniform Frank was forced to wear). This scene operates as one of the few moments where the narrative of the story is, albeit briefly, perpetuated by Frank herself. Meeting Hannah, Frank recounts her experience:

ANNE. I have no family, only Margot.

HANNAH. Your father? Your mother?

ANNE. My father's dead. They sent him to the gas chambers.

HANNAH. But your mother?

ANNE. Selected. The chimney was smoking so black.

HANNAH. It's too horrible. I can't believe it.

ANNE. They've taken everything, Hannah. Everything. It's so cold here.

The lice are crawling over my clothes and there's no food. Everything I find I give to Margot because she is so weak.

Ellis calls this scene “the most affecting scene,” suggesting that this scene is not only the most emotionally-driven scene, but also one of the most realistic scenes of the miniseries (qtd. in Byrne). Because this scene is constructed solely through Hannah Goslar's personal recollection, the viewer is presented with a version of Frank as seen through the eyes of someone very close to her – that is, in the same position as the representation of Frank would have the audience feel. Simply put, because Hannah appears much healthier, and in many ways, much safer than Frank, the audience is made to identify

female prisoners were moved to another part of the prisoner camp, called the “tent camp” because prisoners were housed in tents, and later came to hold approximately 8,000 women from Auschwitz-Birkenau, including Anne and her sister Margot (Rees, 32).

with Hannah, experiencing Frank's suffering and her story, but distanced as well. Indeed, every shot of Frank in this scene is shown from Hannah's perspective, that is, through a hole in the straw fence, showing Frank's face constantly surrounded by straw and barbed wire.

Similarly, other scenes that were poised to show Frank as realistically as possible are contextualized through another's recollection. Frank's childhood is constructed through a series of stories largely from memories of her schoolmates who survived her. While the diary provides the basis of her time in hiding, almost all of the scenes dramatized focus on Frank, but only to demonstrate her living conditions at the time. The scenes that do recount moments that Frank described in her diary – her relationship with her sister, or the romantic relationship with Peter van Pels – represent Frank as someone reacting to her environment, rather than someone whose strength and courage actively changes the environment. Accordingly, Frank's life after hiding is not particularly specific to her experience, with the exception of the existing accounts of those who knew her in the camps. Frank is represented in this last half of the miniseries as just another prisoner. In many ways, these scenes capture Frank as realistically as possible: Frank is shown arriving at Auschwitz in early September, herded off the cattle car to stand in line, get her arm tattooed, relinquish all of her clothing and valuables, and have her head shaved. Because there are no survivors that recall Frank's experience in those moments, she is treated as the project intends, as another victim. Yet despite Ellis' reluctance to represent Frank as sentimental or extraordinary, his reliance on other people's experiences to shape Frank's comes across as representing her as just that: in a

context where her body is literally refigured in an effort to make her disappear – her uniform and shaved head, for example – Ellis’ representation of Frank suggests that Frank’s story was extraordinary enough to stand out among the 6 million stories that Frank’s has come to represent. Thus, while Frank is represented as another victim, her experience made unique by this representation counters the attempt to make her blend in.

Perhaps Ellis’ greatest achievement in the miniseries is his decision to not dramatize Frank’s death. Frank’s death is insinuated directly after a dramatized scene where the audience sees Frank as she discovers that her sister is dead. The scene ends and cuts to Otto Frank arriving in Amsterdam after the liberation, searching for information about his daughters. Ellis chose not to dramatize Frank’s death because there is no information about it (other than the fact that she died shortly after Margot), instead allowing the audience to hear the confirmation of her death when her father does. Once again, the audience is not expected to identify with Frank, but rather to invest in her story from a safe distance.

Conclusion

This investment in Frank’s story from a distance is a trope in all representations of Anne Frank. Yet the logics that propel the need for a representation in the first place rely on logics designed to do just that: distance her body from any real investment, with the purpose of eliminating her body outright. Initially disabled by the very systems that were borrowed from and developed in the United States, the American relationship to Anne Frank is defined by her position as, according to the book jacket description of *The Definitive Edition* of the diary, a symbol of the “testament to the indestructible nature of

the human spirit.” Through representation , Frank’s once “aberrant” body operates as a symbol of what “we” are, and what “we” are not, that is, neither a Jewish victim nor a Nazi perpetrator.

This chapter has argued that American representations of Anne Frank have been manipulated to emphasize her role as a victim, rhetorically rendering her the ultimate freak in the Holocaust freak show, a freak show that I have demonstrated, is only possible after the ableist system attempted by the Nazis failed. Her body is held up in such a way that she becomes a representation of what happens when systems dependent on freak show logics diverge from the rhetorics that made those systems possible. As such, a new version of Anne Frank emerges, a version that is wholly rhetorical, and serves only to provide something to the audience: inspiration, sentimentality, fear, or a satisfaction that the audience knows her “whole” story. Frank is represented as a figure poised to inspire, her words manipulated to make the audience accept her fate as part of a lesson about humanity. She is represented as sentimental, encouraging the audience to feel sorry for her, and in opposition to the inspirational mode of representation, not acknowledge her strength. In this way, the audience can push aside the implications of any relationship to the systems that murdered her, and feel as if reading her words does a service to her spirit and memory. The sentimental wish of Frank’s survival becomes realized in exotic representations of her, representations that often make her surviving body monstrous. This image of Frank as a survivor is often monstrous, as her body is a contradiction between the living and the dead. As such, these representations imply and serve the desire for Frank’s body to remain static, while her image is encouraged to

continue developing as time goes on. Finally, Frank is represented as realistic in an attempt to make her story “whole” and “complete.” In doing so, however, her subjectivity is compromised, as Frank’s own account of her experiences complicate the way that her story is understood. Representing Frank with the same logics used to represent disability, my analyses have demonstrated how ableist systems relied on, and refigured, eugenicist logic to disable, murder, and eventually enfreak her body. By turning Frank back into a “freak” to serve a different purpose within the same logics, the system attempts to “repair” itself so that the position of “freak” is always occupied, allowing for eugenicist logic to continue to eradicate what is not wanted or needed. In this way, disability is always implied in any understanding of eugenics, just as eugenics is always implied in any understanding of disability. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, ableist systems rely on the logics of eugenics to continually improve and develop, but more importantly, the existence of ableist systems is only possible when eugenicist logics remove what compromises their functioning. Yet, as my next chapter will argue, the contexts of disability and tropes of freakdom are not always refigured in the service of ableist and eugenicist systems and logics, as I have demonstrated with the image of Anne Frank in this chapter. As my following analyses will show, one way to begin breaking down these logics is to encourage the breakdown of the system – as with the consequences of the “Final Solution” – and instead of relying on disabling logics to repair the system, as with the image of Anne Frank, begin interrogating the relationship of eugenics to the tropes of disability and freakdom.

CHAPTER IV

GAGABILITY: LADY GAGA AND REPRESENTATIONS OF DISABILITY, FREAKDOM, AND EUGENICS

The last chapter outlined the ways in which ableist systems rely on the elements dis/abled within them, specifically through enfreakment, positioning them as a constant standard of “abnormal.” In this chapter, I will interrogate the references to eugenics and freakdom in the work of Lady Gaga. By pushing the eugenicist logics to the point where “normal” becomes mythologized, Gaga’s performances and self-positioning as a freak who has been disabled by societal norms challenge the reliance on “normalcy,” and by extension, “freakdom.” By privileging the body and confronting the implications eugenics, freakdom, and disability has on bodies, Gaga’s challenge shows the limits of systems of meaning-making based on elimination.

This constant shifting of “abnormal” is largely due to the constant shifting of contexts; in the case of Anne Frank, removing her from her historical context made it possible to shift her role from rhetorician to representative, thereby divesting her of her rhetorical agency as a diarist. That Frank’s role can shift at all in a structure designed to limit meaning (and by extension, make that meaning static) reveals a flaw in the structure, since meaning cannot ever be static because it is determined by the *movement* between oppositions. To recognize the flaw in the structure opens up the opportunity to confront the contradictions of the structure, as well as explore the spaces created in those contradictions, what Derrida refers to as bricolage. This chapter uses the work of Lady

Gaga to demonstrate the ways in which ableist systems are challenged through bricolage, diminishing the effects and necessity of eugenicist logic. Self-identified as a person with mental illness and chronic pain associated with lupus, Gaga not only privileges the body deemed unwanted, but she uses the logics that determine these bodies to demonstrate the constructedness of ableist systems.

Gaga uses the process of enfreakment to identify unwanted elements not to remove them, but to privilege them. In doing so, she demonstrates that it is possible to manipulate a system believed to be static – either to enforce new standards of normalcy, or to deconstruct those standards – but also that any act of elimination is simultaneously an act of preservation. By enticing the audience to stare at her, she is able to use the tools of ableist systems against itself, specifically her use of symbols, props, and performances of “abnormality” to call attention to the role and the history of the rejected elements’ role in an ableist system. Ultimately, by working against the moment of “repair” that the last chapter outlined, Gaga’s work shows the value of a fragmented system that is sustained not by eugenicist logic, but by a perpetual state of “becoming.”

Because she relies heavily on the image of the disabled body to challenge systems of oppression that create ideas of normality, she is arguing that not only must the body must always be remembered and respected, but this respect can only occur with a recognition of the disabled body. Challenging the ableist conceptualizations of the body in myriad forms of meaning-making, Gaga is arguing that the disabled body is the element of meaning-making within ableist systems that makes all meaning possible. By considering the disabled body as a way to create and refigure meaning, Gaga privileges

disability in order to confront the oppressing structures that assign values to bodies. In the process, Gaga demonstrates how ableism is entwined with other forms of oppressing structures, dependent on the illusions of “normal” and “acceptable.”

Bricolage and Derrida

In “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” Derrida analyzes Levi-Strauss’ theorization on the opposition between nature and culture to demonstrate how Levi-Strauss experienced the necessity of using the language of the form in order to deconstruct it. In Levi-Strauss’ *Elementary Structures*, nature is defined as something universal and spontaneous, and not dependent upon any system of norms. Culture, alternatively, is the inverse, where anything that is wholly dependent upon a system of norms is attributed to culture. As Derrida’s analysis shows, it impossible to accept the oppositions as existing independently of one another because there are elements that belong to both nature and culture. This inconsistency reveals a flaw in the structure, wherein Derrida argues that the structure must submit to one of two options: the structure in its entirety can be discarded, and flawless structure can be attempted, or the recognizably flawed structure can continue to be used. In continuing to use the structure, the center is understood as a construct around which other ideas are built upon. The center is thus used as a tool that can be replaced if other elements or “instruments” prove more useful.

This method, according to Derrida, is called “bricolage,” and the person using this method is the “bricoleur.” The method of bricolage encourages the use of what is available – including elements outside of the structure – regardless of the purity or

stability of the system being used. The terms and ideas of a system are utilized only when useful, and the coherence of these terms and ideas is of little importance. Derrida uses the example of an engineer, who, in creating a stable system, becomes the center of a unique discourse, using a language that only she or he would understand. This example highlights the most important part of bricolage: bricolage produces new languages to talk and think about systems without the risk of creating a new system out of an old one. In effect, it provides a way to talk about structures without creating a new center.

Gaga's status as a bricoleur has been challenged through charges against her as someone who is not a bricoluer, but rather as an expert assembler of past cultural references, not making anything "new" in the process. Rebecca M. Lush argues that "Lady Gaga's borrowings often function to blur their antecedents, not in the deceptive sense of plagiarism, but in the sense of community identities, they allow her to appear 'original' despite her reliance on the pop cultural past" (179). That Gaga's work only holds the *appearance* of something new because of its familiar elements is, in Derrida's terms, the way in which Gaga positions her body as a Derridan trace, the mark of what *was* and now *is*, erasing the difference between what came before it and what will come after it:

It is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called 'present' element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this

trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present. (13)

Furthermore, if, as Derrida argues, the trace operates as the origin, and there is no origin, the trace becomes an effect. In this way, Gaga is an effect of the fear of the deconstruction of binaries, serving as a reminder of the constructedness of oppositions or the difference between binaries. Gaga is the absence of a presence, resisting the meaning assignments that are consistently deployed in an attempt to define “what” or “who” she is. As Gaga argues in “Born This Way,” she is always in a state of becoming: “‘Born This Way’ in so many ways is about the way that we see the future. Right now we’re in a state of drifting, we’re not so sure where we are supposed to go or what we’re supposed to understand or replicate or imitate, so we’re drifting, we’re drifting in space towards the light, and ‘Born This Way’ tells us that the light is within us and to follow yourself” (qtd. in Will). Put another way, she says, “in the video, we use Rico, who is tattooed head to toe [including a skull on his face]. He was born that way. Although he wasn't born with tattoos, it was his ultimate destiny to become the man he is today” (qtd. in Blasberg, 158). Gaga, in many ways, is describing the space created out of difference, drifting between past elements and moving towards the light of future elements. She is born to always be moving towards her future signification.

But even more than drifting past the elements that came before her, Gaga hopes to use those familiar themes and tools to show the constructedness of what is normal or

expected of a female performer (“original” but also not too different). Feminist cultural critic Camille Paglia (“America’s foremost cultural critic”) argues that for Gaga, this is impossible because Gaga is not sexy, therefore she does not have access to the tools that female performers (like Madonna) have: “despite showing acres of pallid flesh in the fetish-bondage garb of urban prostitution, Gaga isn’t sexy at all – she’s like a gangly marionette or plasticised android. How could a figure so calculated and artificial, so clinical and strangely antiseptic, so stripped of genuine eroticism have become the icon of her generation?” For Paglia, Gaga serves as the symbol of the “death of sex,” demonstrated by her “limited range of facial expressions. Her videos repeatedly thrust that blank, lugubrious face at the camera and us; it’s creepy and coercive...Gaga, for all her writhing and posturing, is asexual.” Paglia attempts to remove Gaga’s rhetorical agency – and attacks her identity as a female in the process – because of her “inability” to perform femininity, that is, because her body moves like “gangly marionette” that is “stripped of genuine eroticism,” rendering her “creepy and coercive.” This refusal to perform “normalcy” makes Gaga’s audience uncomfortable, but ultimately does exactly what she wants it to do: Paglia’s critique of Gaga demonstrates how constructed the performances of femininity, sexuality, and ability are, and in the process, shows the reliance on and the fear of deviating from the “norm.”

While there is much to be said about Gaga’s feminism, the argument that I wish to make interrogates not just what is expected of Gaga as a woman, but as a supposedly able-bodied performer who rejects what makes a performer “normal,” “original,” or “beautiful.” Gaga’s bricolage extends beyond elements related to her status as a

performer, defining what it means to be “normal” or “able” through the very tools of the ableist systems that attempt to expel her: eugenics, freakdom, and disability. Paglia’s refusal to take Gaga seriously demonstrates how entrenched these concepts are, refusing admittance to “normal,” holding her up as an example of what femininity is *not* (finding entertainment and profit in the act of listing her “abnormalities”), and preventing Gaga’s participation in a system of “normal.” While ableist systems center and privilege an imaginary and unachievable “normal” body, Gaga privileges the material, “abnormal” body, and by privileging the dis/abled body in an able-bodied centered system, she is able to force a recognition of the relationship between able and dis/abled, normal and abnormal. In doing so, she deconstructs the center that consistently rejects a relationship between these elements, bringing the necessity and value of dis/abled in an ableist system to the fore.

Central to this deconstruction is her use of staring, a critical element to diagnosis of “abnormal,” as a tool to both identify and privilege that which has been deemed “abnormal.” In doing so, Gaga is able to call on the histories of “abnormality” associated with staring, disability and freakdom in particular. Indeed, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues in the essay, “The Politics of Staring: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography,” that the history of disability is “in part, the history of being on display” (57). Such an argument suggests that the history of disability – like many other histories – is established through interrogative means that create an explanation or story as a way to understand and explain its (inferior) existence in relation to larger power structures. The history of disability thus emerges as a story created by and for ableist systems,

largely constituted through the interrogative means of staring. Garland-Thomson writes in her study of staring, *Staring: How We Look*, that “stares are urgent efforts to make the unknown known, to render legible something that seems at first glance incomprehensible” (15). Thus the visual diagnosis of difference occurs first through looking and staring, and in an attempt to render the unknown known, histories and representations of disability emerge, representations often linked to being on display for nondisabled people.

Rejection

Because representations of disability are often used in the service of the nondisabled viewer in a number of ways, understanding the impetus behind the development of freak shows and their impact will bring to light the ways that disability is represented and used in the service of ableist systems, particularly Gaga’s use of those representations. Drawing from the concept of staring, and consequently, the histories and structures of the freak show, Gaga’s performative and visual rhetorics demonstrates an acknowledgement of such histories and structures¹⁹ by embracing that which is rejected, and in doing so, challenges concepts of normality.

A large part of the work done in disability studies is the theorization of the rejection of people with disabilities, both physically and culturally. Because freaks push and exceed the boundaries of “normal,” the initial reaction by mainstream society – or

¹⁹ Although this analysis is focused on the ableist motivations of freak shows, I use *histories* and *structures* in plural to emphasize the myriad experiences and perspectives of, and affected by, freak shows, including (but not limited to) the racist and colonial lines of thought that led to the display and exoticization of people of color.

the people who consider themselves “normal” – is to hide what they consider deviant or unhealthy to the “normal” system under which they operate. Snyder and Mitchell argue that the “cultural locations” of disability, including hospitals and institutions, both structure and perpetuate the relationship between disability and subhumanity, encouraging ideas of what is allowed to be seen; in this context, only “humans” have a right to be seen. Garland-Thomson argues that “we prefer to stare for our own reasons and on our own terms rather than be forced into a stare by something or someone stareable” (19). In other words, what is allowed to be visible is limited to what is desired to be seen. Who is hidden thus becomes someone who is not wanted, and who is not wanted is reduced to the status of subhuman.

Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* examines this relationship between disability and subhumanity, specifically with its link to power. He writes, “in order to see perfect disciplines functioning, rulers dreamt of the state of plague. Underlying disciplinary projects the image of the plague stands for all forms of confusion and disorder; just as the image of the leper, cut off from all human contact, underlies projects of exclusion” (199). To determine a “perfect” form of discipline meant to develop such a discipline in response to a state of chaos and confusion, that is, the state of disease. Thus disease and deviation merge in such a way that deviation is found and “cured” in the body. Aberration must be excluded from human contact so as not to limit the spread of chaos. The treatment of the leper and the plague victim are projects of discipline and exclusion, projects that he argues are different but not discordant. He continues,

On the one hand, the lepers are treated as plague victims; the tactic of individualizing disciplines are imposed on the excluded; and, on the other hand, the universality of disciplinary controls makes it possible to brand the 'leper' and to bring into play against him the dualistic mechanisms of exclusion...All the mechanisms of power which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him, are composed of those two forms from which they distantly derive. (199)

Lepers – or those with “diseased” or aberrant bodies – are treated as indications of a state of chaos, indicators that serve as a representation of the effectiveness of discipline. In this way, discipline is developed and determined through individual cases, relying only on culturally agreed upon symbols of deviance to identify individuals; these individuals are consequently excluded and moved out of the public view. Alternatively, understanding discipline as universal, that is, an agreed upon method of discipline enforced on all types of deviance, makes the identification of deviance easier. This, according to Foucault, is made possible through the binaries that such universality produces: mad/sane, dangerous/harmless, abnormal/normal (199). In other words, deviance becomes easily identifiable when exclusion is possible: whatever is considered undesirable – whatever one wants to be excluded – becomes labeled as deviant. This labeling can only be determined and enforced by systems of power, power that exists only because of both forms of discipline – individual and universal – perpetuate it. Universal disciplinary controls enforce measures against deviance as determined by individual cases.

Thus the body emerges from history as a site upon which social regulation is enacted – a determiner for “normal” behavior and actions – as well as a site of what Snyder and Mitchell call “excesses and insufficiencies – what is referred to as ‘too much or too little of a body’” (32). As a result, common cultural beliefs about disability are intimately tied to Western concepts of human deviation, thereby perpetuating cultural fantasies about difference and variation. Foucault’s examination of discipline on these bodies point to what another binary created through such discipline: curable/incurable. When bodies cannot be “fixed” by removing what makes them undesirable, they are literally removed from the public eye and put in institutions, asylums, and prisons. Susan Schweik draws on Foucault and through an examination of the histories of the “ugly laws” as discussed in chapter II, points to the legal attempts to exclude “undesirable” bodies from the public view. These laws not only reinforced the eugenicist culture that created such laws, but made full access to social participation illegal for people with disabilities. As the primary target under the “ugly laws,” people with disabilities were removed from the mainstream based on the level to which their bodies conformed to bodily norms and aesthetics. Schweik writes,

Ugly ordinances command the self-policing of a populace, checking always to ensure that it is not ‘unsightly’ or ‘disgusting.’ To the question of the Omaha judge in 1974 – ‘Does the law mean that every time my neighbor’s funny looking kids ask for something I should have them arrested?’ – postmodern biopower has an unspoken answer. What one does about the neighbor’s funny-looking kids is what one does about

oneself: shop at the local drugstore with its aisles of health and beauty products, contemplate the question of plastic surgery, respond to the pharmaceutical ads on television. What the neighbor's funny-looking kids ask for is what we all ask of ourselves, making sure, daily, that we are 'well cared for' – and not careless of our appearance. (65)

Schweik's example of the Omaha judge calls attention to the ways that social constructions of deviance are always already informing and informed by medical models of deviance: to "cure" the deviant, go to "the local drugstore with its aisles of health and beauty products, contemplate the question of plastic surgery, respond to the pharmaceutical ads on television" to ensure a healthy and "normal" appearance. Thus one of the longstanding cultural conceptions of disability that develops over time is the rhetoric of cure, rehabilitation, and choice: it is up to the person with disabilities to choose treatment, whether it is medical or social, in order to fit into mainstream society.

Representations of disability often draw on this medical model, portraying disability as an individual problem. Amit Kama notes that images that are derived from this model are from the perspective of a non-disabled person: "Disabled people are but objects of gaze, whose stories are often narratives of overcoming and curing their 'defect'. Individual actions seem to provide the sole solution to the ontological hardships for those who are seen as isolated agents and who are supposed to singlehandedly overcome various obstacles." (448). Through such representation, Kama continues, people with disabilities are effectively removed from any and all social context, despite the fact that social norms and decorum create the environment that disables (448). In this

way, the experience of persons with disabilities functions as a reiteration of the cultural fantasy surrounding disability, one that displaces responsibility off of society and onto the individual.

As a result, disability in the media and in pop culture becomes construed as a representation of what is feared by the nondisabled viewer. Garland-Thomson argues that the rhetorics surrounding the individual with disabilities – cure, rehabilitation, and choice – are not only derived from, but also

constitute part of the context into which all representations of disabled people enter. Not only do these representational modes configure public perception of disability, but all images of disabled people either inadvertently or deliberately summon these visual rhetorics and their accompanying cultural narratives. None of these rhetorical modes operates in the service of actual disabled people, however. Indeed almost all of them appropriate the disabled body for the purposes of constructing, instructing, or assuring some aspect of a putatively nondisabled viewer.

(58-59)

People with disabilities thus become a representation of the aberrant, a source of pity, fear, or adoration for the nondisabled viewer. Consequently, these representations render the person with disabilities as a body that exists outside social expectations of what it means to be human, and therefore valuable. Indeed, Clare notes that nondisabled people “came [to freak shows] to be educated and entertained, titillated and repulsed. They came to have their ideas of normal and abnormal, superior and inferior, their sense of

self, confirmed and strengthened” (86). Thus, many representations of disability operate as affirmations of the fears, beliefs, and fantasies of nondisabled people towards people with disabilities.

It is this attitude of nondisabled people that created and sustained the image of the freak or the monster, which in turn gave rise to the development of the American freak show, such as those by PT Barnum. The freak show represented the intersection of nineteenth-century preoccupation with display and the capitalization of pathological difference. Garland-Thomson argues in *Extraordinary Bodies* that “by highlighting ostensible human anomaly of every sort and combination, [the freak show] challenged audiences not only to classify and explain what they saw, but to relate the performance to themselves, to American individual and collective identity” (58). In this way, the freak show created and demonstrated emerging definitions of monstrosity and freakdom by, as Clare writes, “carefully constructing an exaggerated divide between ‘normal’ and Other, sustained in turn by the rubes willing to pay good money to stare” (87). The freak show provided a place for nondisabled people to pay to stare at what they were not and what they did not want to become; ultimately the freak show served to make the divide between “normal” and “abnormal” more rigid and distinct. By doing so, representations of people with disabilities came to be largely defined by what it does for the experience for nondisabled people.

Gagability

The relationship of the disabled body and disability to ableist systems occurs through Gaga’s theorization of the freak and the monster. Garland-Thomson writes that a

freak “bore evidence of ‘nature’s sport,’ God’s infinite capacity for mysterious surprise, or simply inspired delight” (164). Monsters, similarly, are beings “whose bodies are simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary” (163). Likewise, for Gaga, the freak or the monster is the person who has been rejected based on the expectations of society and what it means to be “normal.” Calling her fans “Little Monsters,” Gaga embraces that which deems them abnormal in society and encourages them to resist such rejection. During her Monster Ball tour, Gaga says to her audience, “I want you to forget all of your insecurities. I want you to reject anyone or anything that’s ever made you feel like you don’t belong. Or don’t fit in. Or made you feel like you’re not good enough, or pretty enough, or thin enough...” Under this definition of “freak” or “monster,” Gaga is including anyone who has ever felt like they do not belong because their behavior or their bodies do not conform to societal standards of what it means to be “normal.” By adopting such a broad definition, Gaga is pointing to the ways that “freak” and “monster” are constructed, given the fact that the definitions never remain static, as they change with the context. The audience may be freaks outside the doors of the arena, but as Gaga proclaims at the start of the show, “all the freaks are outside and I locked the fucking doors. It don't matter who you are, where you come from, or how much money you got in your pocket, because tonight and every other after night you could be whoever is that you want to be.” Thus, not only does the definition of “freak” always change, Gaga points to how those who occupy the position of “freak” are only relegated as such because of those on the other side of the locked door. Freakdom, for Gaga, is only a matter of perspective.

Gaga's position of what it means to be a freak or monster aligns with more traditional definitions of disability within the field of Disability Studies. Clare identifies "disability" as "an adjective to name what this ableist world does to us crips and gimps" (83). Additionally, with regard to the word "freak" in relation to disability, Clare urges for an awareness of the multiple histories of the word and its relationship to understandings of disability, which, I argue, is a relationship that Gaga enacts (85). Thus, when Gaga talks of the freak or the monster, she is necessarily invoking the image and a history of the disabled body, making her contribution to conversations surrounding freakdom essential to understanding how disability and normality is understood and represented in contemporary culture.

The presence of disability in Gaga's performances is largely meant to convey a critique of the ways in which "abnormal" is diagnosed and consequently dealt with. A 2009 promotional photoshoot by photographer David LaChapelle features her lying next to a wheelchair and standing with a pair of crutches, similar to those used in the 2009 video for "Paparazzi," where she is also shown rising from a wheelchair. The criticism leveled against this performance has largely argued that in portraying disability as something that can be "overcome," Gaga is using disability as a metaphor something negative about the character or her situation that she must "overcome." Furthermore, feminist writer Annaham has argued that Gaga's hidden, temporary disability in the video is the crux of what makes the representation of disability so offensive. She cites Susan Wendell, who argues that "[t]he public world is the world of strength, the positive (valued) body, performance and production, the able-bodied and youth," while "illness,

rest and recovery, pain, death and the negative (de-valued) body are private, generally hidden, and often neglected” (115). In this way, Annaham reasons, Gaga’s representation of disability reinforces this practice and idea, representing disability as something that needs to be hidden until it can be “overcome,” whereupon starlet Gaga can once again have her picture taken. According to Gaga, the video “explores ideas about sort of hyperbolic situations that people will go to in order to be famous” (Patch). Putting this in context with Annaham’s argument, the use of disability can indeed be read as something that is represented as hidden and capable of “overcoming,” but its presence also serves as a critique of that mindset. If the video is about the relationship celebrities have to their bodies – specifically in the context of being looked at – keeping a temporary disability hidden is, according to Gaga, one of those hyperbolic situations that people will go to in order to be famous, that is, to be ashamed of a body that is less than perfect. Yet the way in which Gaga deploys this critique is troubling: in highlighting the ways in which celebrity or fame reject material experiences in favor of more “plastic” experiences²⁰, Gaga is rejecting the material, lived experiences of bodies. Consequently, the use of disability becomes a device or tool in this video, reiterating the attitude that disability need only be acknowledged in the service of nondisabled people and experiences, thus erasing bodies of people with disabilities and their experiences from this representation in the process.

Yet as Gaga’s career and aesthetic has developed, her own lived experiences have informed more nuanced understandings and acknowledgments of disability in her

²⁰ Hence the line of the song, “We’re plastic, but we still have fun.” (“Paparazzi.”)

performances and personal life. Her 2009 video for “Bad Romance” features a variety of symbols associated with psychiatric hospitals, as well as images and themes of the freak show, demonstrating how the freak show continues not only in medical practices, but through popular representations of “abnormal” bodies (“Lady Gaga - Bad Romance”). Assistive devices have had a prevalent theme throughout most of her videos and performances, including her 2010 video for “Yoü And I,” featuring a variety of disabled Gagas in the quest to medically “fix” their bodies, and live performances of the song have frequently featured the use of a wheelchair while she is dressed as Yuyi the Mermaid, also featured in the video (“Lady Gaga - Yoü And I”). This use of the wheelchair in live performances sparked outrage, accusing Gaga of glamorizing disability²¹. Yet Gaga’s use of the wheelchair was simply to be able to move around while dressed as Yuyi, the mermaid whose body is mutilated in the attempt to make her more “normal.” A similar backlash occurred following her February 2013 hip surgery, where she was seen being transported in a 24 karat wheelchair, opening her up to accusations of once again glamorizing disability, even going so far as to claim that Gaga’s need for a wheelchair was a publicity stunt (Dasilva). This backlash against Gaga’s use of a wheelchair – not in a performance, but in a medical situation where she literally could not walk – denies her subjectivity and rhetorical agency as a person with a disability, temporary or not. Thus central to understanding her use of disability is her

²¹ Ironically, a large part of what became known as “mermaidgate” is the response from Bette Midler, accusing Gaga of stealing her concept of Delores DeLago, a beached mermaid in an electric wheelchair. Midler’s use of the wheelchair made disability the punch line of the joke, a fact overlooked in the critique of Gaga’s use of the wheelchair.

personal relationship to disability, particularly her status as a performer with a disability. She has been very open about her mental health, and her struggles with bulimia and anorexia. She is also deeply connected to her aunt Joanne, who died of lupus before Gaga was born. In an interview with *Vanity Fair*, Gaga says, "I was born, it's almost as if [I was Joanne's] unfinished business... And one of [my guides] told me he can feel I have two hearts in my chest, and I believe that about myself." (qtd. in Robinson, 139). Thus Joanne's struggle and early death has had a great influence on Gaga and how she understands herself and her body. In Caitlin Moran's 2010 *Times Interview* Gaga speaks about living with that connection and the potential for developing the same disease:

"What's the nearest you've ever come to death?" I ask her. "Do you have any recurring illnesses?"

She goes oddly still for a moment, and then says, "I have heart palpitations and... things."

"Recently?"

"Yes, but it's OK. It's just from fatigue and other things," she shrugs, before saying, with great care, "I'm very connected to my aunt, Joanne, who died of lupus. It's a very personal thing. I don't want my fans to be worried about me."

Her eyes are very wide.

"Lupus. That's genetic, isn't it?" I ask.

"Yes."

"And have you been tested?"

Again, the eyes are very wide and steady. “Yes.” Pause. “But I don’t want anyone to be worried.”

“When was the last time you called the emergency services?” I ask.

“The other day,” Gaga says, still talking very carefully. “In Tokyo. I was having trouble breathing. I had a little oxygen, then I went on stage. I was OK. But like I say, I don’t want anyone to worry.”

It’s a very odd moment. Gaga is staring at me calmly but intently.

Lupus is a connective tissue disease, where the immune system attacks the body. It can be fatal – although, as medicine advances, fatalities are becoming rarer. What it more commonly does is cause heart palpitations, shortness of breath, joint pain and anaemia, before spasmodically but recurrently driving a truck through your energy levels, so that you are often too fatigued to accomplish even the simplest of tasks.

Suddenly, all the “Gaga cracking up” stories revolve 180 degrees, and turn into something completely different. After all, the woman before me seems about as far removed from someone on the verge of a fame-induced nervous breakdown as possible to imagine... Of course, she hasn’t said, outright, “I have lupus.” But the suggestion throws the whole previous year – being delayed on stage, cancelling gigs, having to call the emergency services – into sharp relief.

Just a month after this interview was published, she told Larry King that she tested “borderline positive” for lupus, and in February 2013, she canceled her tour due to the chronic pain of synovitis, a condition typically considered a symptom of lupus (Sepkowitz). Thus the awareness of disability and the implications of developing the same disease her aunt died from have always been in Gaga’s conscious; it is no surprise then, that Gaga would confront some of the constructions of disability, the disabled body, and what it means to live with a disability.

As someone who has tested “borderline positive” for lupus, Gaga’s use of disability in her performances and self-presentations can also signal the ways in which she is working through her identification as someone living with a disability. Her infamous “disco stick” – a favorite prop made from a chrome pole with crushed acrylic plastic at the top – bears a stark resemblance to the large walking stick called the “staff of madness” that appears in medieval and Renaissance art, used to identify a person with a disability (particularly one with a psychological disability) (Gilman 7). The music video for “Marry the Night,” the fifth single from *Born This Way*, offers Gaga’s first explicit admittance of a psychological disability, or in Moran’s terms, she uses this video as a way to say outright, “I was/am crazy.” The video chronicles Gaga’s nervous breakdown and the process by which she came to accept and identify herself as “crazy.” The video opens with the image of Gaga being wheeled into a clinic on a gurney, accompanied by a voice over:

When I look back on my life, it’s not that I don’t want to see things exactly as they happened, it’s just that I prefer to remember them in an

artistic way. And truthfully, the lie of it all is much more honest, because I invented it. Clinical psychology tells us, arguably, that trauma is the ultimate killer. Memories are not recycled like atoms and particles in quantum physics. They can be lost forever. It's sort of like my past is an unfinished painting, and as the artist of that painting, I must fill in all the ugly holes and make it beautiful again. It's not that I've been dishonest, it's just that I loathe reality. For example, those nurses? They're wearing next-season Calvin Klein, and so am I. And the shoes? Custom Giuseppe Zanotti. I tipped their gauze caps to the side like Parisian berets because I think it's romantic, and I also believe that mint will be very big in fashion next spring... The truth is, back at the clinic, they only wore those funny hats to keep the blood out of their hair.

Pointing to clinical psychology brings disability directly into Gaga's argument. Calling on institutions that determine the state of normality with regard to a person's mind, Gaga is challenging the use of the term "trauma" and its implications on the perception of reality. If trauma is a psychological injury, Gaga is giving a body to thought and perception, confronting the notion that experiences injure the mind and are in turn represented in the body. Indeed, the music video opens up with Gaga's entrance into a psychological rehabilitation clinic as a result of the psychotic breakdown she experiences (viewed later in the video). This breakdown is represented as a loss of control over her body: she is seen throwing things, screaming, and crying, that is, using her body to express something that is considered "abnormal" by her peers and her

environment. Alternatively, the “rehab” part of the video is represented as a controlled version of her body, lying in a hospital bed, medicated, and sedate. Interestingly enough, the elements that lead up to her psychotic break are scenes that represent her body as acting “abnormally,” demonstrating the link between what is considered “abnormal” and the ways that such abnormality is and must always be treated.

This invention extends to her representation of the clinic itself. As demonstrated though her work up to this point, Gaga understands fashion as a representation of the ways that the body too often becomes a text upon which designations are placed, but also a place where those designations can be refigured to represent the opposite, that the body is that which is always writing. Indeed, Gaga is often criticized for wearing clothing that is “inappropriate” for the body – such as the flank steak that constituted the “Meat Dress” at the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards – which calls attention to the ways that there are expectations about how the body must always be presented, and when those expectations are not met, designations of “abnormal” are placed onto it.²² Indeed, there are around 123,000,000 hits produced from a Google search of “Lady Gaga crazy.” The argument for the link between physical behavior and appearance with mental “stability” is not new (as demonstrated with examples such as the “ugly laws”), but it is, however, a construction of the cultural fantasy of what it means to be “normal.” By refiguring the way that we (literally) view rehabilitation, Gaga is emphasizing the

²² Incidentally, the “Meat Dress” is a critique of Don’t Ask Don’t tell, an interpretation of the need to stand up for human rights because, as Gaga argued, bodies are not just “pieces of meat.”

construction around the ways that ideas of disability and cure are understood under the fantasy of “normality.”

In construing reality as art, Gaga is pointing to the different ways that reality is represented, dependent on perspective. For Gaga, reality is not necessarily “things exactly as they happened,” it is the way she chooses to remember and interpret her experiences. Thus what may be construed as abnormal by society can be altered and accepted as beautiful by the individual: every person – the artist of their own painting – has the capacity to fill in the holes to make it beautiful. It is up to the artist, however, to decide what the holes are that need to be filled in. Ultimately what Gaga is arguing with this metaphor is that if we think of reality as art – as something constructed, something that is an expression of the aesthetic values of what is considered beautiful – then the “reality” of abnormality – and normality or beauty, by extension – can always be altered. This alteration, the filling in of holes, becomes more honest because it is not bound to the social designations of abnormality, rather, it reflects bodies and people better precisely because it is without the “reality” of “normal” or “abnormal.” Thus Gaga uses the term “invented” to demonstrate how even what is considered “real” is always just an invention of the person looking. Furthermore, the expectation of one to “fill in the holes” signals the resistance to fragmentation, much like the resistance to the fragmented, disabled body. “Filling in the holes” in this context can also signify performing able-bodiedness, trying to rehabilitate or cure the “holes” so as to be seen as appealing and “normal.”

Alejandro

Ultimately, what makes these post-“Paparazzi” uses of disability work within her critiques is her attention and response to the ways in which disability is theorized as monstrous, fragmented, and vulnerable to expulsion, but most importantly, the ways in which these theorizations affect the body. Gaga’s consistent use of elements considered “abnormal” challenges the logics of freakdom that identify and restrict unwanted bodies, and the eugenicist logics that attempted to remove those bodies from view and participation. Because Gaga deploys this critique through the body, she necessarily invokes the histories of eugenicist practices against bodies, particularly through her references to the Holocaust, most notably in the music video for her 2010 single, “Alejandro,” directed by Steven Klein. Gaga told Larry King that the video is a “celebration of my love and appreciation for the gay community, my admiration of their bravery, their love for one another and their courage in their relationships,” and in an interview with *The Times*, that “in the video I’m pining for the love of my gay friends—but they just don’t want me to be with them.” To portray this, Gaga frames the video as a response to and resistance of eugenicist and normalizing practices that dis/able “abnormal” bodies. In this way, thinking about disability in this video is essential to understanding her critique of normalization because it is deployed through bodily performances of “normal.” As Robert McRuer argues, “it is with this repetition that we can...locate both the ways in which able-bodiedness and heterosexuality are interwoven and the ways in which they might be contested....Moreover, as with heterosexuality, this repetition [of able-bodiedness] is bound to fail, as the ideal able-bodied identity can

never, once and for all, be achieved” (9). Positioning heterosexuality and the performance of able-bodiedness associated with heterosexuality as “normal,” Gaga demonstrates how anything that deviates from this “norm” is susceptible to removal.

Consistent with many of her performances and storylines, Gaga appears as three characters – who I am calling queen Gaga, religious Gaga, and activist Gaga – that represent how systems of normalization and eugenicist logic move through the body. Queen Gaga is responsible for overlooking and enforcing standards of normalcy over her subjects (her male dancers, wearing skin-tight boxing briefs and matching bowl haircuts) via her Nazi-clad soldiers. When a female subject (religious Gaga) is incited by activist Gaga to challenge these restrictive standards of “normal,” she joins the male subjects in an attempt to become part of their group. Ultimately, she is rejected from the group— primarily due to the fact that she is a female – and is forced to rejoin the religious order from where she came. Yet she continues to be unable to meet the restrictions and expectations put on her body, and she dies. Her funeral procession is led by queen Gaga.

Each character shows the extent to which structures of oppression seek to normalize bodies by the threat of exclusion and expulsion, but also the possibilities of thinking outside systems of normalization that require such exclusion and expulsion. She first presents herself as a queen or political figurehead, representing the “rules” or “norms” that govern a system. Thinking about this in terms of ableism and ableist structures, we can understand queen Gaga as representing the cultural norms regarding normality, and by extension, disability, including what disability “looks” like, its proximity to “normal,” and the unchallenged assumptions about the abilities of a

disabled or “abnormal” body. This character is limited to seeing things through a terministic screen²³, and despite efforts to see outside of it, is never fully removed from it. Religious Gaga is the second character the audience sees, and is represented the most throughout the video. She is primarily depicted as a woman who attempts to embody “normal,” and in her failure, returns to her place as a nun. In this case, the oldest model of disability or the designation of “abnormal” is represented here, that is, the religious/moral model. While extreme and less prevalent today, this model equates disability and “abnormality” with something negative or “lacking,” serving as a “warning” or “lesson” to nondisabled, or “normal” people. Furthermore, this model posits that people with disabilities or “abnormalities” are morally responsible for their disabilities, leading to the rationale to conceal and exclude them. The last character Gaga represents, activist Gaga, is closest to her own persona, representing the confrontation of, and resistance to, the reiteration of norms that establish ideas of “normal” and “abnormal.” Gaga’s goal throughout this video is to show the ways in which these oppressive structures function and overlap with one another, thus it is important to note that the characters overlap and are not meant to be static, that is, the characters are never “wholly good” nor “wholly bad” at any time. Ultimately, the characters and storyline that Gaga develops shows the interaction between the logics of eugenics, freakdom, and disability: characters literally perform normality, those who cannot are dis/abled from participation, some are given assistive devices to help them maintain a position of

²³ A terministic screen is a concept developed by Kenneth Burke to consider the reasons why interpretations of signs vary among humans, based on the construction of symbols, meanings, and reality (“Terministic Screens,” 45).

“normal” (including binoculars and strings attached to the body), and those for whom rehabilitation or similar efforts towards “normal” fail are later removed. Despite the fact that the video is not told chronologically, the analysis that follows will focus on the chronological story of the three characters, one at a time. In this way, the characters’ constructions, motives, and ultimate roles in the video can be analyzed in more detail, ultimately demonstrating many (but not all) of the ways in which the characters and stories overlap.

Queen Gaga

The first time the audience sees Gaga in the video, she is representing herself as a political figurehead, surrounded by military men who are wearing the red band on the arm of a uniform that distinctly resembles a Nazi uniform. As Nazi structures of power are among the most recognizable structures that explicitly rely on eugenicist practices in order to achieve “normality,” this presence serves as a reminder of the extents to which “abnormal” is simultaneously needed and resisted. Indeed, the video itself can be understood as the process by which “abnormal” is determined and how it is immediately dealt with. Queen Gaga is most frequently shown sitting in front of an open window with two soldiers, wearing a metal headpiece that resembles a crown. Sounds of a large crowd can be heard as the video begins. In these scenes, queen Gaga is shown holding a smoking pipe as she looks down onto a group of men below who look and act almost identical to one another. The men’s sexuality is controlled and challenged into aggressive military posturing, simultaneously violent and erotic. They perform this control in front of a screen, showing images on a loop. The screen alternates between

two scenes, one of a storefront on fire and the other of groups of people running through the smoke caused from the fire. Both scenes are at night, and shot in black and white. Although unconfirmed, it is generally agreed upon by fans as most likely meant to portray images of Kristallnacht, a series of coordinated attacks against Jewish-owned stores, buildings, and synagogues in Nazi Germany and parts of Austria in late 1938. This reference to Kristallnacht – or images that are most often associated with Kristallnacht – is significant in this scene because of its place in history: regarded to be the beginning of the “Final Solution,” Kristallnacht was the attempt to eliminate unwanted bodies by attempting to eliminate the elements associated with and valuable to those unwanted bodies. By removing a context for the victims of Kristallnacht, Nazi Germany attempted to rewrite a new context that would restrict and prevent the movement of certain bodies in this “new society.” In this video, the men who are dancing in front of this screen represent the attempt to remove and rewrite contexts that limit unwanted bodies by performing uniformity, thus creating a context for what it means to be “normal.” Furthermore, this reference establishes the power dynamic between the rule-governing queen Gaga and her subjects: not only does queen Gaga have the power to institute violence against unwanted elements and bodies, she also has the power to look on to this violence without intervening.

As queen Gaga looks down on the men dancing in front of her, there is a soldier sitting in the room wearing a stylized helmet with strings attached to his body. His absence from the group of men below combined with the strings attached to his body suggests that the man is unable to perform the able-bodiedness demonstrated below and

thus requires the use of these strings – which can be understood here as an assistive device – to help him achieve this bodily performance of normality. Furthermore, he is also the only male in the video shown with a tattoo and any kind of body hair, further suggesting his deviance from the “norm.” Although subjected to the same rules of “normality” that religious Gaga is, he is able to remain alive because of his privilege of being a male in a male-dominated system that successfully employs assistive devices that help him perform able-bodiedness. He does, however, remain hidden from view in this room for the entirety of the video, fulfilling his “duty” as an “abnormal” body in a system that needs, but does not want to view, “abnormality.” Furthermore, the first time queen Gaga is shown looking directly into the camera, the scene bleeds into an image of this man looking away from the camera. This move signals two significant things about understanding the character of queen Gaga and the man: she finds herself trapped and restricted by her “duty” to enforcing norms, just as this man is literally trapped by his own “duty” to these same norms – that is, to remain hidden. Secondly, this move signals the power that queen Gaga has, namely that she has the privilege and ability to confront the rules of “normality” (i.e. she can look directly into the camera), but this man’s body is limited to the point where he cannot. In this way, queen Gaga and the man reflect each other: they both are restricted by the norms they enforce and perpetuate – she because she is a governing head, and he because he is enfreaked as an example of “abnormal.”

Just as the “rules” that govern normality often require “props” to designate abnormality, the characters in the queen Gaga segments are no different. While the man’s position is determined by the strings on his body, queen Gaga’s props include the

crown, the binoculars, and the veil. Each of these “props” not only rely on typical usages of the symbols – the crown as power, for example – but also uses them to challenge the reliance on the static meaning of the props. For example, the use of eyewear to represent a way of seeing things – or through a terministic screen – is a popular trope throughout Gaga’s performances. The lenses of the binoculars are covered with black lace, the same black lace used as a veil in the religious Gaga’s funeral procession scene . Not only does the black lace serve as an identifier for queen Gaga, it also serves to represent the ways in which this rule-governing Gaga views those bodies that surround her. Most often used to symbolize death, the black lace in the lenses of her binoculars represents systems that require removal,²⁴ the complex patterns of the lace making it nearly impossible to obtain an unobstructed view. Interestingly, however, a close up of the lace that covers the lens of the binoculars shows the small holes that would allow her access and unobstructed view, and since they cover lenses of binoculars, she is capable of seeing such a view when she wishes. Furthermore, Gaga is able to remove the lenses of the binoculars away from her face, either one at a time – complicating the depth perception of what she views, thereby only seeing something without its fully defined relationship to what is around it – or both at the same time; additionally, she is also able to remove the veil

²⁴ This is not unlike Foucault’s concept of biopower, where bodies are controlled and managed in an effort to nurture the life and health of the population: “By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the 18th century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is what I have called biopower” (*Security, Territory, Population*, 1). It is important to note that biopower has a function apart from discipline in that “discipline is the technology deployed to make individuals behave, to be efficient and productive workers, biopolitics is deployed to manage population; for example, to ensure a healthy workforce.” (*Society Must Be Defended*, 239). In this context, Queen Gaga can be understood as not disciplining “abnormal” bodies, but rather removing and hiding “abnormal” bodies so as to ensure the rest of her subjects continue to be “normal.”

made of the same lace. This signals one of the most important tenants of Gaga's work: nothing exists independent of its opposite, therefore nothing is wholly "good" or wholly "bad." In this context, despite positioning the political Gaga as bad, she is demonstrating the capability for this Gaga to move outside of the designation of "bad:" she is able to see outside a system that requires removal, but also the "rules" of ableist systems. Understanding this Gaga as a representation of the "rules" that govern ableist systems, the crown, binoculars, and lace demonstrate the constructedness of these rules and how they are deployed, but more significantly, the possibility of working outside of those rules.

Religious Gaga

The majority of the video chronicles religious Gaga's attempt, and ultimate failure, to work outside of these rules. Like queen Gaga, religious Gaga is restricted to moving within ableist systems of normalization; unlike queen Gaga, religious Gaga is depicted as resisting this model and punished by it. In other words, religious Gaga's actions should not be understood as representing the moral/religious model of designating abnormality, rather her actions should be understood as a resistance to this model and the nature of the consequences of this resistance. Chronologically, religious Gaga first appears in a white latex nun's habit. The white habit is accented with red on the outline of her hood, and upside down crosses cover the back of her head, her torso, and her forearms; the gown opens up and reveals a red cross on her underwear, appearing to protrude from between her legs. She stands with the male dancers that queen Gaga looked down upon, the screen showing scenes of a fire in color. The men lie

in a circle around her, eventually standing to lift her body and repeatedly throw her up in the air. Her body is then carried in the same fashion the casket is carried in the funeral procession scenes. She is brought back to the ground, violently pushed among the men, and eventually disrobed.

Religious Gaga is attempting to challenge the “moral” rules of an ableist and normalizing system by stepping outside the designation placed on her body. Working within a system bound by moral or religious rules that threatens to punish “abnormal” bodies on the basis of their “abnormalities,” religious Gaga denies the expectations put on her body and attempts to embody a different version of “normal.” The audience first sees her join the men in what can be assumed as in her typical role – both Gaga and the men move in sync and with purpose, as if the audience is witnessing a customary ritual. Here, Gaga is playing her assigned role. Once she allows the men to hold her up and carry her as if she were dead, she is symbolically and literally being carried to her death: the ritualistic Gaga is being removed, but as a consequence of this removal, her body is literally removed in death. She is then thrown up into the air by the men, symbolic of the men joining Gaga in rejecting the religious system that imposes the standard of “normal” they were compelled to live by. This rejection culminates in the act of disrobing Gaga of the religious imagery imposed on her body, leaving her nearly nude and resembling the uniformed look of the men.

Gaga begins performing the ritualistic acts of normalcy along with the men, including a choreographed dance²⁵ and a series of simulated sex acts. Here, the men are in a room with a number of beds, resembling those that would be found in military barracks or in insane asylums. While not restricted to the beds, the men never leave them, instead holding on to leather whips that are tied to the bed. Religious Gaga is also shown holding on to the leather whips, but moving from bed to bed, even holding on to two whips from two beds at the same time. Within this framework that critiques eugenicist practices against bodies, this scene can be understood as a critique of the ways in which sex and expressions of (heterosexual) sexuality become normalized for the purposes of reproduction. In Foucaudian terms, Gaga is creating a space for a discourse on sexuality that frees her and all those with her from the repressive structures that deem non-reproductive sex as a violation of natural practice (*History of Sexuality Volume 1*, 7). Because sex is largely understood as an object of scientific investigation, subjects are expected to confess, whereupon those confessions would be codified into a scientific form (12). Religious Gaga presents herself as Catholic²⁶, and in Catholic teaching, confession (called the “Sacrament of Penance”) serves as the only way to receive God’s forgiveness for mortal sins. Thus religious Gaga uses this space to confess both her “unnatural” desires and the rehearsal of these desires, but also as a space to resist the scientific approach to her confession.

²⁵ A lot of religious Gaga’s choreography is an attempt to mimic activist Gaga, discussed more below. The most notable moment is when religious Gaga mimes a gun coming from her body, resembling the literal gun barrel’s coming from activist Gaga’s bra.

²⁶ Gaga also identifies as Catholic.

One way Gaga accomplishes this resistance is consistently demonstrating what sex is outside of these scientific, normalized practices: men move provocatively and simulate sex alone on beds, Gaga simulates sex with a phallus in a variety of positions, and men simulate violent sex with Gaga. These actions are considered counter to the goals of reproduction – men cannot reproduce on their own, women do not have penises, and violence signals restriction and removal, the antithesis to reproduction – but even more so, they represent what a variety of moral-governing systems of power (including many organized religions) consider “abnormal” or “unnatural” expressions of sexuality. In this way, Gaga is demonstrating the resistance to what Foucault calls “power over life,” power that is primarily enforced in the interests of creating and preserving life (209). Sex is acceptable as long as it produces something positive, therefore sex between men is unacceptable because nothing is produced, and sex between a straight woman and a gay man is not acceptable, for fear of reproducing the “abnormality” of homosexuality. Thus, by performing “abnormal” in this context, Gaga is demonstrating the constructedness of morality and how that morality is normalized and expressed through the body.

Ultimately, however, religious Gaga cannot fully engage in these practices. As mentioned above, central to the men’s performances of normality is largely centered on acts of channeling their sexuality through other means. Because religious Gaga is not a gay man, she cannot ever fully inhabit this space or these practices, and she is rejected. She is consequently confined to the room where the audience first encountered the soldier with the strings attached to his body. She is shown lying on a bed, also with

strings attached to her body. Her white latex habit has been replaced with a red habit, also latex. This replacement is highly significant, given the ways in which the colors have been inverted: whereas religious Gaga began with an all-white habit with red accents, she is now seen with an all-red habit with a white hood. The red on the habits can be understood as markers of where power and control have the most effect. Wearing the white habit, the red appears around her face (the way she looks), on the back of her head (the way she thinks), her arms (the way she acts), down the middle of her torso (the way she moves) and between her legs (the way she expresses her sexuality). Wearing the red habit, however, her body is under complete control of the systems of normalization she is navigating. Having experienced the possibilities of existing outside these systems, she is aware of the control being pushed onto her body and resists it, hence the all-white hood. This resistance ultimately costs her, however, as it is understood as an incapability of performing the able-bodiedness expected of her, and she dies. Ultimately, religious Gaga's fate is due to her inability to "fit in" with the men, determined by her "lacking," that is, lacking the body of a male and the ability to perform normalcy in the male-centric space; furthermore, her choice to try and "fit in" with the men – consequently highlighting her "abnormalities" as both a woman among the male subjects, and as a woman who resists her designated role – renders her as responsible for this fate, her confinement and death serving as the punishment for her choices.

Activist Gaga

The character that motivates the plot is activist Gaga, who creates a space for religious Gaga to rebel and who is presented as in stark opposition to queen Gaga²⁷. Activist Gaga is shown primarily in black and white and separate from the settings of Gaga's other characters. The significance of her scenes in the video are twofold: by demonstrating a resistance to the system of normalization placed onto bodies, she identifies exactly what that system looks like, but also what a successful resistance to it looks like as well. The audience is introduced to activist Gaga in the opening frames of the video, largely a reference to the Broadway musical *Cabaret*²⁸. Although not seen directly, as the camera pans across a dark cabaret filled with sleeping Nazi soldiers, her legs are visible as she stands on the stage. Most of the soldiers are in full uniform, however the shot of the cabaret begins by focusing out and moving away from one soldier in particular, who is passed out wearing fishnet stockings and heels. Only one soldier is awake, staring into the distance, and is shown just before the scene fades into a dark warehouse. This placement of activist Gaga among the Nazi soldiers in the opening of the video frame the oppressive structures through which the three Gagas will

²⁷ Because of this insistence on "opposition," i.e. activist Gaga is "good" and queen Gaga is "bad," as the video plays out, it becomes clear that queen Gaga and activist Gaga are, in fact, representatives of different parts of each other – their existence depends on one another. In this way, the video opens with queen Gaga and activist Gaga as binaries, and the story of religious Gaga then deconstructs this binary.

²⁸ Much of the video can be interpreted as an homage to the musical, including a dance number dedicated to choreographer Bob Fosse, the director of the film version of *Cabaret*, as well as Gaga's black-and-white sequence where she is seen in a blonde bob and an outfit similar to one of Liza Minnelli's performance costumes. Indeed, the story of *Cabaret* is set in 1931 Berlin, just as the Nazis are rising to power. Though the actions and progress of the Nazis are only mentioned occasionally, the characters' own changing actions and attitudes are meant to reflect the changing attitudes of the nation; indeed, in the film version of the show, the cabaret's audience at the end of the film is dominated by Nazi party members.

simultaneously perpetuate and navigate throughout the video. These opening scenes suggest that despite the uniformity of this oppressive structure, the lines between normal and abnormal are blurred: in this scene, “normal” is solidified through repetition, that is, to be “normal” is to be asleep, since that is what the majority of the soldiers are doing. The soldier in the fishnet stockings and the lone soldier who is awake are not normal in this context, one because he does not look “normal” (not in uniform) despite performing normality (sleeping), and the other because he is not performing normality (he is awake) despite looking “normal” (he is in uniform). Thus these men – or versions of these men – appear throughout the video as examples of what are not wanted: they become enfreaked, standing in as the ultimate examples of “abnormal,” and thus vulnerable to expulsion. Indeed, the video can be understood as the story of the expulsion of “abnormal.”

Although Gaga is not shown in the scenes that immediately follow this opening sequence, activist Gaga’s relationship to the men that are shown is crucial in understanding the movement of the plot. These men – her dancers, wearing high-waisted shorts and matching bowl haircuts – are the subjects of the system that queen Gaga looks over and controls. The men march forward in sharp military fashion holding large, metal pieces of religious imagery, most notably the Star of David. Because this scene immediately follows the soldiers sleeping in the cabaret, this scene can be understood as another performance of performing normalcy among those who are not officially required to enforce it, as the soldiers are. Then men look similar – some wearing hats, some covering their face – and they are moving their bodies to the same rhythm in the

same direction. Again, “normal” becomes established through the actions of the majority: although they may look different individually, they are moving as one, giving the illusion of sameness. Just as in the cabaret scene, there are varying versions of what it means to be considered “normal” in this context: although then men perform “normal” in varying ways, they are all moving towards the same direction, or the same goal. The Star of David represents the enfreakment of what is “abnormal,” literally holding up the symbol of what is “abnormal” and unwanted within a context of Nazi Germany, but also allowing themselves to be led by this reminder of the “abnormality” that they must eradicate. These men are also shown performing in front of queen Gaga and will later attempt to help religious Gaga escape her designation as a religious figure. For activist Gaga, these men are key to enacting a resistance to the norms put on their body, thereby serving as a representative of the bodies that are caught between systems of normalization and the resistance that has the potential to free them of those systems.

The first time the audience fully sees activist Gaga, she is dancing alone in a black and white sequence. Wearing black pants and a vest reminiscent of Liza Minelli’s in *Cabaret*, one of the most significant things about this scene among audiences and fans of Lady Gaga’s is the fact that this is the first time Gaga is shown wearing pants in a performance. Although seemingly trivial, this move is significant, given her reason as to why she does not wear pants: “I feel freer in underwear, and I hate fucking pants. Plus, it's easier to dance,” she says in a 2009 interview with *Rolling Stone*. She continues: “But really, my grandmother is basically blind, but she can make out the lighter parts, like my skin and hair. She says, ‘I can see you, because you have no pants on.’ So I’ll

continue to wear no pants, even on television, so that my grandma can see me” (qtd. in Scaggs, 39). For Gaga, then, not wearing pants helps her feel free and less constricted when moving her body, but more significantly, it makes her visible to her grandmother with low-vision. In this way, not wearing pants becomes a rhetorical move: making herself literally more visible also makes her more accessible to audiences that would typically not have that access to her. Not wearing pants elicits stares and attention, and while Gaga has that attention, she forces her audiences to confront what she is saying about normalization and the impact it has on the body. For those in her audience who feel marginalized and dis/abled from social participation, these confrontations and conversations open up new avenues of accessibility for them to begin their own conversations about what systems of normalization do to their own bodies.

Wearing pants in the activist Gaga sequence, then, signals the level of visibility that activist Gaga has and wants.²⁹ Not only is this scene in black and white, but Gaga is standing in front of a black screen, wearing black pants and a black vest. She is dancing alone at first, and is quickly joined by uniformed soldiers with the same bowl haircut as the men featured in the opening of the video and dance alongside her. The scene cuts to color, where she is shown in a similar outfit – the same black pants but instead of a vest, she is wearing a bra with gun rifles attached. Here the uniformed men surround her in a circle as they dance, her skin and hair the only light hue in the otherwise dim scene.

²⁹ This also opens up a space for Gaga’s critique of activist Gaga, namely that the attempt to remain invisible or to “blend in” within a system limits the accessibility and far-reaching potential to a select group of (privileged) people, in this case, the high-ranking men who work for queen Gaga. Indeed, religious Gaga’s attempt fails because activist Gaga’s call assumes privilege that religious Gaga does not have.

Activist Gaga does not want to be highly visible, instead choosing to “blend in” amongst the subjects and soldiers who heed her call for revolution. The more men that surround her, the more visible she becomes. Thus we can understand these two scenes as activist Gaga first gathering the men interested in working alongside her, and the following scene as an enactment of this work together. Gaga’s position in the middle of the men and not in front of them suggests that the revolution she called for requires a new system, built from elements (soldiers) from another system (queen Gaga’s system of enforcement) with her at the center (capable and willing to change). In other words, activist Gaga is demonstrating the need for bricolage. The movement that occurs within this system thus does not always require a lineage back to a fixed center (i.e. the men do not have to look like Gaga in order to be in the system, and some of her choreography is slightly different from the men’s’); rather, it is the variation of movement away from the idea of a fixed center that makes this system work (the “revolution” activist Gaga wants to initiate is one that resists normalization and uniformity).

This scene is expanded at the end of the video. Activist Gaga is shown on stage in the dark cabaret, holding a microphone and standing in front of a cross, representative of one of the oppressive structures she is working within. Intercut are scenes of religious Gaga heeding activist Gaga’s call. Activist Gaga is wearing sunglasses and a leather jacket, singing as the soldiers sleep. She opens her jacket to make herself visible, then takes off her sunglasses to see which soldiers remain asleep, that is, which soldiers are receptive to her message. Only one soldier is awake, the same one shown at the opening of the video. The audience sees the soldier watching the men dance in front of queen

Gaga, his image superimposed on a video of a riot. He takes his hat off, demonstrating his desire to remove the oppressive structures that are placed on his body, similar to the way that religious Gaga is disrobed. Activist Gaga's role within this system is to be "invisible" and work from within; she disguises her radical performance in the cabaret (the uninterested soldiers "sleep" and are oblivious to her call), and then works with the soldiers who are closest to the enforcement of norms to deconstruct those systems. Yet her incapability of working outside of her privilege, namely her relationship with queen Gaga's soldiers, limits her message, and proves detrimental to those outside that privileged system, including religious Gaga.

We can thus read Gaga's three characters as representing three different bodies moving through these deployments of eugenicist power, each susceptible to the dis/abling of unwanted bodies and practices that occur in these deployments. Queen Gaga is responsible for enforcing the norms, but her body resists the terministic screen required to enforce this power. Thus she must rely on technologies that literally put the screen in front of her, dis/abling her from the ability to see outside of these screens. Religious Gaga's body is similarly unwilling to perform the "norm" that is required of her as a woman, and attempts to step outside this norm and join the male subjects. But religious Gaga is attempting to trade in one norm for another; in this way, her response to activist Gaga's call is inadequate, as activist Gaga seeks to build a new system entirely, and not reinforce another oppressive system. Because religious Gaga does not have the ability to perform the "norm" in either system, she is hidden away and strings are attached to her body to assist her in performing normalcy, or ability. Her body resists

this designation put on her – largely as a “lesson” to those trying to step outside their designated performances – and becomes consumed by the expectations put on her, and dies. Lastly, activist Gaga is actively trying to resist these systems, attempting to play the bricoleur in constructing new systems that resist normalcy. Whereas religious Gaga attempted to “front” a new system, activist Gaga centers herself in the new system, resisting norms put on her body (she even puts phallic gun barrels over her breasts). This system works for her and the soldiers she is working with, but is limited because of her unwillingness to make herself more visible and thus more accessible.

Conclusion

Gaga’s video for “Alejandro” thus presents a complex look at some of the ways in which eugenicist logic is central to systems of power, and how that logic manifests through the body. Using Nazi systems of power to represent the presence of eugenics in the quest for normalization, Gaga is not only calling attention to the potential severity of eugenicist logic, but the ways in which Nazi eugenics becomes understood as something separate from other forms of eugenics. Indeed, the presence of Nazi systems of power in the video are entangled with politics, religion, and social practices; each is clearly connected to the Nazi presence in the video, but can also exist outside this presence. Thus Gaga is not using a Nazi framework to comment on Nazi eugenics, but rather to contextualize the ways in which even Nazi eugenics were perpetuated by other systems seemingly separate from Nazi politics. In this way, religion and social practices are just as culpable in perpetuating eugenicist logic as the Nazis are; the difference is the fact that they manifest in different forms, and in the process, they take on different names.

Garland-Thomson argues “modern culture strictly prescribes our behavior, appearance, and our relations with one another, even while we celebrate freedom and choice. Stareable sights break the rules we live by, which is what makes them unusual. We may want to see the unusual but perhaps not be the unusual. Novelty, in this context, is both what we seek and avoid” (*Staring* 32). Gaga, presenting herself as a visible, stareable sight, breaks the rules of normality that society depends on, and wholly accepts her position as “unusual.” Eliciting stares wherever she goes, her audience finds novelty in her unusualness and comfort in their “normalness,” that is, the element that distinguishes themselves from her. Yet as Garland-Thomson reminds and Gaga demonstrates, “staring...makes things happen between people” (33). For every version of Gaga to be stared at, there is something of her that her audience can find a bit of themselves in.

This chapter has argued that Lady Gaga's work relies heavily on the image of disability and the disabled body to challenge systems of oppression that sustain ideas of normality. For Gaga, not only must the body must always be remembered and respected, but this respect can only occur with a recognition of the disabled body. Challenging the ableist conceptualizations of the body in myriad forms of meaning-making, Gaga's adoption of disability symbols and representations centers the disabled body as the element of meaning-making that makes all meaning possible. Most importantly, Gaga brings disability to the fore in order to confront the oppressing structures that assign values to bodies, demonstrating in the process how ableism is entwined with other forms of oppressing structures, most of which are dependent on eugenicist logic that seeks to

eliminate unwanted bodies. Gaga's adoption of elements associated with eugenics, disability and the freak show – including the contemporary freak show, the medical one – allows her the space to argue that the labels of “freak,” “monster,” or “abnormal” are constructions, and that everyone should embrace the very thing that sets them apart – in other words, she seeks to be a bricoleur of an ever-changing system that is sustained by difference. She posits her work and performances as a place to begin identifying what is assumed to be “natural” or “static” through the use of images of “abnormality” that surround us. Thus by subverting the visual tropes of disability through her performances, she challenges her critics to consider their own level of culpability in the quest to expel “abnormal.” She makes people look, and by inviting people to stare at her, she is inviting them to consider what it is about her that makes them uncomfortable. She posits her work and performances as a place to begin identifying these images of “abnormality” that surround us, and asks us to consider what it means to be “normal,” “abnormal,” or just “born this way.”

My final chapter will consider the challenge to another kind of normalizing system: the academy. Drawing on analyses of previous chapters, I will examine some of the disciplinary and pedagogical implications of the presence of eugenics in dominant forms of meaning-making. In doing so, I will demonstrate the enfreakment of language as an essential component in understanding the relationship between the body and meaning making, and offer a challenge to think about the ways in which the enfreakment of language can open up new avenues of accessibility in disciplinary and pedagogical practices.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION: TOWARDS AN ANTI-EUGENICIST PEDAGOGY AND
DISCIPLINE

Throughout this dissertation I have confronted the ableist assumptions that are fundamental to dominant, Western Euro-American approaches to meaning-making. I have focused on one aspect of this ableism, namely the reliance on the concepts of “wholeness” and “completeness” to establish and maintain validity in acts of meaning-making. This “validity” is determined by norms that establish what is “normal” and what is “abnormal.” At play are two distinctly ableist logics, the logic of enfreakment, and the logic of eugenics, respectively identifying and removing all that is considered “abnormal.” What this dissertation demonstrates is that eugenics continues to have a presence in our everyday organizational principles, informing the ableist worldview that continues to disregard the reality of human variation, a worldview that permeates dominant approaches to meaning-making and organizational principles.

Central to the practice of positioning and determining “abnormality” are the linguistic, discursive, and cultural processes of enfreakment and eugenics. Identifying this logic and how it works at the level of language is essential, given the fact that the erasure of bodies can and often does begin at the level of language. Thus the move from language to practice is not a significant shift in practices, but rather a different version of the same practice. Western, EuroAmerican modes of communication thus provides the model for accomplishing eugenicist practices: those practices are rehearsed in order to

control bodies – that is, through the designation of languaged terms such as *normal* or *abnormal*. Attacking language is attacking the body; removing language is the beginning of the removal of bodies. Ignoring the implications of a system of meaning-making governed by this removal is to not only reject the relationship between language and the body but is also a step towards rejecting unwanted bodies. Thus, this dissertation has shown two things: that meaning-making and the body cannot be disconnected from one another, and that eugenics is a tool deployed to maintain systems of power by attempting to detach meaning-making from the body. In the context of this project, ableist systems of power depend on eugenicist logic to accomplish this detachment.

Eugenicist logic reproduces what is determined as “normal,” and removes that which is “abnormal.” Because the degree to which “normal” can be reached is highly dependent on the ability to perform normality, these criteria for “normal” are found *outside* of the body, despite the veneer of “natural” that comes with the designation of “normal.” As I have outlined in Chapter 1, ableism operates as a system wherein the nondisabled body serves as the consistently “present” center. Because a version of the nondisabled body is always central to this system, it is assumed to be unchanging and thus a natural part of the system. Yet, as this dissertation has demonstrated, this assumed static and “natural” center is constantly in flux in order to maintain desired versions of “normal,” or in this case, nondisabled. In order to respond to the changes in the system, eugenicist logic is deployed so as to maintain the version of “normal” required of elements within that system. What is “normal” is reproduced, and what is “abnormal” is pushed to the periphery, seemingly removed.

The fact that these unwanted elements are not removed entirely lies at the heart of this project. First, given the fact that, as I demonstrated in Chapter 1, meaning assignment occurs through the process of designating what an element is *not*, these discarded elements are essential to the process of meaning assignment. Ableist systems are sustained through the identification of elements that are either useful or not, and this identification can only occur through the process of enfreakment – an example of what is not useful must always be present in order to maintain what is useful. In this way, “abnormality” is only regarded as valuable insofar as it can provide something to the “useful” or “normal” elements to the system. Disability becomes the limit of ability, serving as the example of what “ability” is not. Because of this positioning, meaning-making becomes something that can only be obtained outside of the body; ability, then, serves as the degree to which this obtainment is possible. Indeed, the practice of enfreaking undesirable bodies for the profit – both literally and figuratively – of nondisabled people reflects the desire to maintain the illusion of “normal” through displacement and distance from whatever the viewer is not. The repeated practices of moving what is not considered “normal” to the periphery establishes a pattern that sustains an ableist system: those bodies that cannot “keep up” are not worthy of being a part of that system, and are therefore removed from view. Yet the presence of those bodies are required for the system to work: without them, the system of differences that maintain ideas of “normal” collapses.

This is not to say that every language user is a eugenicist, or that every act of meaning-making is a eugenicist act. Rather, this project aims to show that despite the

consistent attempts to remove or hide unwanted bodies, these bodies never fully disappear, and will not disappear as long as heruistics such as the enfreakment of language allows us to uncover the underlying attempts at erasure. For every absence there is a presence; for every removal there is an addition. Eugenicist logic posits the removal of unneeded or unwanted elements as an integral part of development. Yet this idea of always moving towards something larger, that something can in fact be fully achieved or completed, runs counter to the ways in which Western, EuroAmerican forms of communication understand how meaning is made. If we continue to allow eugenicist logic to thrive at the foundations of understandings of communication and meaning-making, we risk further displacing materiality in favor of the illusion of the impossible goal of “completeness.” Bodies will continue to become effaced and forgotten, allowing language and communication based on eugenicist logic to construct our ideas about difference, human variation, and disability.

Indeed, as Chapter II demonstrated, the reliance on text-based language and communication that is dependent on eugenicist logic creates spaces in which eugenicist practices not only thrive, but are essential to the functioning of the structure posited by ableist systems. Eugenicist practices become reflections of the communication practices used to sequester and hide unwanted bodies. Yet, as Chapter III shows, even when trying to avoid or confront eugenics or eugenicist logic, this very reliance on eugenicist logic in language is inevitably reflected in practices. Chapter IV demonstrates one way to confront this reliance and work towards working within systems sustained by eugenicist logic and practices through bricolage.

This final chapter asks how an understanding of meaning-making tied to processes of enfreakment and eugenics affects pedagogical and disciplinary practices, and how the concept of bricolage is useful in working towards an anti-ableist and anti-eugenicist pedagogy. An anti-ableist and anti-eugenicist understanding of accessibility in relation to composition, pedagogy, and the discipline of rhetoric itself helps us to recognize its reliance on the illusion of completeness and acknowledge the spaces created out of the implications of eugenics disguised as something other than eugenics. Ultimately, ableism emerges as a preventative measure against flawed bodies making flawed rhetoric.

Furthermore, this chapter will interrogate ableist and eugenicist logic as it exists in the systems and structures in higher education. I will first examine the attempts to make higher education more accessible to students with disabilities, demonstrating how these attempts are consistently deployed in an ableist framework. I will then consider the implications of this framework in the writing classroom, ultimately asking what an anti-ableist and anti-eugenicist understanding of pedagogy looks like. Lastly, I will consider how the field of rhetoric can become refigured to accept those histories and bodies that have been erased. Through such growth, bodies emerge as the essential component to all forms of meaning-making, allowing for continued challenges to the tradition while simultaneously challenging what it means to have a “tradition” in the first place. In doing so, I hope to challenge the reliance on the illusion of “completeness” so as to acknowledge the spaces created out of the implications of eugenics disguised as something other than eugenics.

The Field and Discipline of Rhetoric as a System

Just as I have argued throughout this project that the desire for wholeness is indicative of the desire for control, the similar desire for what the field of rhetoric “is” and “means” is indicative of the desire to maintain control over what is meant when rhetoric (as a discipline) is invoked. Casie C. Cobos notes that “rhetoric’s deep commitment to a single lineage certainly assumes a commitment to colonized ideologies that situate themselves deep in a Euro-American understanding of who produces knowledge and how” (5). Moreover, Malea Powell calls attention to the ways that

rhetoric as a discipline has been and continues to be complicit with the imperial project of scholarship in the United States. I believe that rhetoric as a discipline does not see the foundation of blood and bodies upon which it constitutes itself. . . I believe that scholarship in America can never be stake forth on neutral ground. I believe that even as the marginalized and radical ‘anti-disciplinary’ and/or ‘cross-disciplinary’ discipline, rhetoric takes for granted its originary relation to Greece and Europe – its fundamental relationship to imperialism – and gives little critical thought at all to the geographical space in which it now exists.

(11)

To acknowledge the field of rhetoric’s complicity and relationship to imperialism and colonialism requires a simultaneous acknowledgement of the ways in which eugenics has, and continues, to motivate and accomplish the goals of imperialism and colonialism in the field. This complicity reflects the level of control that continues to be asserted

over not only who produces knowledge and how, but also who is *allowed* and *able* to produce knowledge. In her examination of the role of Bizell and Herzberg's rhetorical history anthology, *The Rhetorical Tradition*, Cobos argues that "working as many anthologies do, this text assumes a central position of all-encompassing canon from which other texts and practices can support, stem, and stray" (6). In this way, Bizell and Herzberg's anthology serves as a reminder of the ways in which as a discipline, rhetoric is regarded as a system with a static center, and its commitment to imperialism and colonialism reveal the very nature of what this so-called "center" of rhetoric is. Quite literally, Greek and European understandings of making meaning serve as the static center of this system, serving as what Bizzell calls "buttresses for what we might call the 'traditional tradition'" (110). Bizzell argues that this is largely due to the fact that the preferential treatment of Greek and European texts reflect, among other things, cultural factors related to gender, race, and social class (110). I wish to extend this list and include ability; indeed, Walter Ong explains that the early teachings of rhetoric in the United States was understood to be for men only, who were subjected to a series of agonistic competitions and indoctrinated via corporal punishment (135). Thus this supposed "center" of the "rhetorical tradition" – or in Bizzell's words, the "traditional tradition" – is marked by rhetoric's relationship to the body, as both a subject to be studied and a practice to perform.

Yet the relationship between rhetoric and the body is nothing new. The authors listed under "Classical Rhetoric" in Bizzell's and Herzberg's *The Rhetorical Tradition*

overwhelmingly situate and define rhetoric in relation to the body. For example, Gorgias argues that

the effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so also in the case of speeches, some distress, others delight, some cause fear, others make the hearers bold, and drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion. (46)

Furthermore, for Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero in particular, rhetoric can only be performed by privileged bodies – that is, those bodies who are “born well” and/or those who can imitate those “born well,” as well as those who have access to the education that will provide the skill and study needed to become a highly regarded orator. Implicit in each of these approaches to defining what rhetoric is – either by way of who can “do” rhetoric or what rhetoric “does” – is the need to construct these definitions around the bodies of those determined as unwanted or ineligible for participation. As discussed in Chapter II, Plato³⁰ used overt eugenicist theories to define who can “do” rhetoric; his definitions of what rhetoric “does” similarly calls on eugenicist theories by invoking the body. J.M. Edie provides a brief catalogue of Plato’s use of reproductive metaphors:

³⁰ Scholars such as Schiappa and Wilcox have argued that Plato himself coined the term “rhetoric,” thus solidifying his place as a central figure in “pillars” of the “rhetorical tradition.” This bears a similarity to the way that eugenics is understood to have begun with Galton, who termed it, and who remains the face and father of “good” eugenics.

This is no exhaustive list of the passages in which this metaphor occurs, but in the event that the reader may feel I am exaggerating Plato's reliance on the image of physical intercourse, or has been misled by Victorian translations from the Greek, an examination of the terminology of these passages should be sufficient. In the *Republic*...Plato applies the metaphor to the knowledge of reality: the soul is moved by "passion" [*erôs*] for being; it "approaches and marries"... through this union it "begets"...knowledge and is finally freed from the pains of travail"....In the *Symposium* all men are declared to be "pregnant" (...206c), overflowing with desire "to beget and bring forth" (...206d); they approach "the beautiful one" in order "to engender and beget in the beautiful" (...206e). The soul is "set on fire" (...209c) and "consorts"...with the fair one in order to "conceive"... "bear"...and "give birth"... (209c). Such words as "...to encounter," "...to come together," and "intercourse" also occur frequently in this sense. Thus there is a "pregnancy of the soul" (...209a) which results from the marriage of the soul with truth (beauty, goodness) and whose fruit is virtue and knowledge (212a). (555-56 fn 26; see also *Symposium* 206c-207b; 208e-209c; 212a) (qtd in Ballif 13-14).

Ballif further contextualizes Edie's catalogue: "Thus the male logos gives birth, reproduces, by ejaculating the logos of the sperm. Yet as Plato is quick to warn us, the generative seeds should be planted in 'suitable ground' (Phaedrus 276b) because, of

course, the quality of the offspring, indeed the legitimacy of it, will depend on the ploughing of legitimate fields” (14). This insistence on positive eugenics – reproducing the “good” kinds of bodies – is intimately tied with Plato’s understanding of the function of rhetoric. In *Gorgias*, Plato contextualizes rhetoric by naming its subject, that is, “the greatest of human affairs, and the best” (90). The rhetorician is powerful because he has access to Truth, and can lead those he deems worthy to the Truth: “the endeavor, that is, to make the citizens’ souls as good as possible, and the persistent effort to say what is best, whether it prove more or less pleasant to one’s hearers” (123). Because Plato relies on metaphors of reproduction to build an understanding of how to arrive at Truth (and how to determine those who are worthy of arriving at Truth), eugenics is understood (for Plato) as an essential tool in producing any kind of “legitimate” meaning-making: it constitutes the continual surveillance of how rhetoric is produced so as to make the distinction between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” rhetoric. In this way, Plato understands rhetoric as a eugenicist program designed to eliminate undesirable bodies making undesirable meaning.

Rhetoric and Semiotics

What does it mean that one of the pillars of the rhetorical tradition that scholars of rhetoric are expected to know and refer their own work back to functions as a eugenicist program? One implication is the positioning of rhetoric in relation to the body, specifically the assumption (among many assumptions) of the able-bodiedness – and thus “worthiness” – of the rhetor. One way to recognize the reliance on eugenics is to acknowledge of the role the body plays in language and meaning-making. When

rhetoric is developed in response to the metaphorical body – either the “acceptable” body who can produce rhetoric or the “unacceptable” body that can only be “fixed” by rhetoric – eugenics and eugenicist logic is invoked. For example, Burke argues that rhetoric is “rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (43). Rhetoric is grounded in language, that is, a Saussurean model of language that relies on symbols operating within a system. More significantly, rhetoric is only accessible to a particular kind of intelligence: intelligence is determined by the extent to which an individual interacts with symbols. Rhetoric, then, is the process or interaction of intelligence with symbols, specifically in a way that will elicit responses from other individuals. In other words, the function of rhetoric for Burke is to name situations in such a way that the audience can and will respond appropriately, combining the properties of a situation and the meaning that the rhetor attaches to it. In this way, the audience will agree with the rhetor’s understanding and respond in the way the rhetor intends.

Like Derrida, Burke argues that the function of language is continuously redefined – “born anew” – but unlike Derrida, Burke believes that any redefinition of language is always within a strict understanding of language as the means through which cooperation and identification can emerge. Through consubstantiation, agreement is reached through the process of a mutual recognition of respective places in symbolic systems. Intelligence is the means through which identification occurs, and this identification is essential to bridge the inherent alienation that exists between people.

Part of what defines intelligence for Burke is the ability for an individual to have an understanding of his or her place in relation to the place of others within a system of symbols. Burke's conception of identification and consubstantiality assumes a kind of intelligence that cannot always be inhabited by all peoples of varying levels of cognitive ability and accessibility to language. This implies that those without such accessibility have little to no ability to perform acts of rhetoric, but more significantly, that those people will always be in a state of alienation.

Furthermore, Burke's conception of identity through language also opens spaces for systems of oppression to enforce contextual and cultural requirements for participation within that system. Power emerges through language, whereupon the language tied to those systems of power are regarded as a uniform truth. Foucault's argument regarding the relationship between language and power becomes extremely relevant here, with particular regard to the ways in which normalization enforces what is acceptable and unacceptable in systems: "In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality" (1461). For Foucault, language is the means through which power is deployed. This power serves to create an ordered, teleological, and constant history, one that renders and insists upon a whole, centered notion of the human subject. As such, history is always tied to this idea of a wholeness of humanity, rendering histories of subjugated peoples as unimportant and irrelevant to the ordered, "correct" history. In short, it ignores the different perceptions

that come together to create that “correct” history. Recognizing the subjective nature of history, then, takes into account what has been absented from linear accounts of history, rendering history as much a construct as nature itself.

We can extend this discussion of history to include the history of rhetoric and the ways in which classical rhetoric serves as the reference point for all things considered to be “rhetoric.” The ordered, “correct” history and understanding of rhetoric always demonstrates a clear lineage back to privileged names such as Plato and although not considered classical rhetoric, Burke as well, implying an inherent commonality that unites what is believed to be “rhetoric.” Yet the commonality that emerges is bound by eugenicist logic: the foundational texts that serve to control what happens within the field (system) of rhetoric largely promote a eugenicist program that serves to eliminate those texts and practices that cannot be accepted as “rhetoric.” Those whose bodies are determined as not having or capable of producing rhetorical value become effaced in the process. Furthermore, this eugenicist system requires the field to be continuously deployed within a eugenicist framework, positing the practice, study, and production of rhetoric as something that is inaccessible to those unwilling or unable to work within the designated system of “rhetoric.”

Ableist Discourses

Similar logics are deployed in the spaces where the system of “rhetoric” is taught and learned. Central to understanding the presence of enfreakment and eugenicist logic in our disciplinary and pedagogical practices is the recognition of the ways in which ableist discourses function in these practices. More significantly, this requires an active

recognition of the ways in which the enfreakment of language affect bodies – particularly disabled bodies – in an effort to maintain “standard” disciplinary and pedagogical practices.

To work towards this recognition, I will begin by considering the space of higher education in the context of Malea Powell’s urge to recognize the relationship between the narrative of the Academy and the narrative that constructs “America” and “American-ness”:

A central component of this “American tale” is the settlers’ vision of the frontier, a frontier that is “wilderness,” empty of all “civilized” life. The settler is a brave individual who sets forth to pit *his*...skills of “civilization” against this vast wilderness; *he* tames the wilderness, domesticates it, and installs in it the icons of civilization...The un-seeing of Indian peoples, nations, and civilizations is obvious here. For the colonizers, it is a necessary un-seeing; material Indian “bodies” are simply not seen so that the mutilations, rapes, and murders that characterized this first-wave genocide also simply are not seen. “Un-seeing” Indians gave (and still give) Euro-Americans a critical distance from materiality and responsibility, a displacement that is culturally varied and marked as “objectivity.” (3)

The settler’s male, European body becomes the representative (and thus standard) of what the “civilized” – and by extension, normal – body looks like. Furthermore, this “American tale” situates the settler’s body as very *able*, embodying “civility” through

performances of ability and rehabilitation of the “uncivilized” land and peoples. In order to bring “civility” to this “wilderness,” unwanted and “abnormal” bodies – that is, those bodies that do not or cannot resemble the body and practices of the European settler – are removed from sight, or as Powell says, “un-seen.” This un-seeing is accomplished through eugenicist means: the murder of Indian bodies, and the reproduction and settling of “civilized” bodies in an effort to disregard the material Indian bodies and practices that disrupt the Euro-American establishment of a “norm.” What Powell is signaling to is the critical distance from materiality and responsibility that has not only informed “the ideological state and collective national culture” of how “America” came into being, but is also fundamental to the foundation of the Academy in the United States as we know it:

The “rules” of scholarly discourse – the legitimizing discourse of the discipline of rhetoric and composition – require us to write ourselves into this frontier story... We are trained to identify our object of study in terms of its boundaries, its difference from other objects of study, and then to do everything within our power to bring that object into the realm of other “known” objects. In effect, we “civilize” unruly topics. And it is our distance from these topics, the fact of our displacement from the materiality of these areas of study, that lends legitimacy to our efforts. (3)

Powell is signaling the ways in which colonial and imperial policies are mirrored in the discipline of rhetoric and composition, and continue to maintain a presence in the discipline through eugenicist and ableist logic. In this way, the Academy requires the (successful) scholar to inhabit the role of the Euro-American settler, treating the object

of study as the uncivilized wilderness in need of civilization. Furthermore, as Powell argues, we are trained to identify our object of study in terms of its boundaries, that is, its limitations and difference from what is currently accepted as “legitimate” academic work. These limitations contextualize our objects of study as what they are *not* – that is, not yet “legitimate” – requiring the scholar to normalize these topics by consistently demonstrating our topics’ relationship to the central figures that constitute “legitimacy.”

“Legitimacy” becomes synonymous with “normal” within the context of the frontier story that Powell lays out, but even more, it calls on the presence of ableism and the avoidance of unwanted elements through processes of dis/abling. In Chapter II, I contextualized disability as a tool of imperialist and colonial systems of power, calling on the eugenicist practices associated with colonial conquest. Indeed, implicit in Powell’s assertion is the assumed *ability* of the settler figure, capable of diagnosing the land and its peoples as unfit and thus in need of “fixing.” Given the relationship between imperialism and the Academy as Powell emphasizes, higher education functions as a space subject to similar normalizing practices in the pursuit of standardization: just as colonial power seeks to control and normalize bodies and spaces through removal, the removal of unwanted traditions and practices largely constitute the realm of “legitimate” scholarship. Furthermore, unwanted traditions and practices are dis/abled, only existing at the periphery of “legitimate” scholarship, never fully a part of the “canon.” This not only creates a distance from the materiality of subjects and practices within the system, but the system becomes sustained by that distance. In this way, unwanted subjects

become enfreaked, and the eugenicist systems within which they exist are sustained by the detachment of meaning-making from the body.

Accessible Spaces of the University

This practice of detachment is reflected within the spaces of the university, despite the attempts to make these spaces more accessible – or, understood in this context, despite the attempts to work against the limiting spaces created out of eugenicist logic. One form that these spaces take is the “accessible” university, that is, the spaces of higher education that are sustained by removal (students must maintain a presence and a demonstrable aptitude in order to remain in the university) but carry the veneer of a system sustained by including all who wish to participate. In the context of this project, I am most concerned with the ways in which universities have worked towards becoming accessible to students with disabilities, with regard to their experiences both inside and outside the classroom. With the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, physical spaces are required to become accessible, primarily to those with mobility impairments, and accommodations are guaranteed to those students who require further assistance to navigate through their university experience. Accommodations that are granted largely do not disrupt or threaten the structures already in place, thereby leaving the structure of the institution unthreatened. It is telling, as Richard K. Scotch notes, that universities and colleges tend to have a particularly difficult time meeting the basic requirements of accommodation and reasonable accommodation required under the ADA, observing that “universities in particular, with their traditionally designed campuses and limited discretionary funds,

were to complain bitterly about the costs of opening even a portion of their facilities to disabled students” (74).

Most interesting about accommodations and guidelines for these accommodations is the fact that they are based upon “adult dimensions and anthropometrics.” Thus, even while attempting to retrofit and redesign existing or future structures, they are still based on the specifications of the normalized body, described here as “adult dimensions.” Furthermore, it is also based on anthropometrics, research methods used to map human variation through measurement of the body. Many eugenicists theories, including those of Francis Galton, rely on anthropometry. Many anthropometric practices were used to determine intellectual and moral capacity in the early 1900s, serving to diagnose difference, and often by extension, disability. In this way, the redesign of structures to accommodate persons with disabilities is not in service of accommodation for all, but rather in service of a different version of an able body. As noted above, these guidelines want to keep certain bodies out and a certain kind of body *in*. They also construct and promote a disabled body solely in relation to the nondisabled body. Essentially, in creating guidelines to be met under the ADA, ableism is reiterated in the construction of environments and the ideologies behind those constructions. The university expects disability to come in a specific form, one that will give the veneer of inclusion, but does not threaten the structure of the institution.

Thus this logic designed to increase accessibility simultaneously excludes certain bodies. In many ways, these efforts by the ADA to make spaces more accessible contribute to the mapping of human variation, designed, as all maps are, in terms of

exclusionary potential. Jay Dolmage explores this perspective of mapping by applying it to the university, arguing that we must begin to map out the university to see the potential not for exclusion, but for “constructing alternative modes of access” (16). He argues that “the university erects *steep steps* to keep certain bodies and minds out ... The university is the place for the very *able*...[and] when the standards cannot be used to keep certain bodies out, they might be used to shape those bodies and minds that get up the stairs” (15-17). The metaphor of steep steps suggests the upward movement associated with a university education that is accessible to only a few. For those unable to make the climb up the stairs on their own, a student must obtain accommodation. For students with disabilities, they are responsible for identifying their disability, providing documentation, and requesting specific assistance to the university. In many ways, this requirement of self-identifying maintains the institutional structure of the university by demanding that students identify that they are incapable of climbing the steep steps as they are designed, but will allow them to attempt the climb when the student identifies an alternate way up the steps. Thus the eugenicist logics behind these policies continue to affect students whose mere presence challenges the institution of academia, including those with disabilities. As long as the students can reach the entrance at the top of the steps – an alternate entrance that does not disturb the existence of the steps – s/he is allowed in. Ultimately, students with disabilities are expected to be able to climb the steps without help or alternative routes; accommodation exists only to help the student “keep up” with the pace of his or her nondisabled peers in the academy, what Dolmage calls the “primary enforcer of cultural norms” (18).

One way in which these norms are enforced and created in the academy is through what Margaret Price calls “kairotic spaces.” Price builds off of Cynthia Miecznikowski Sheard’s definition of *kairos*, a rhetorical term that typically refers to “an opportune moment.” Sheard’s definition incorporates multiple elements of context that cannot be separated, including time, physical space, and altitudes, asking us to consider *kairos* as “grounded in the traditions and institutions of culture, making communicative exchange possible and productive” (60, 306). If the meaning of *kairos* is multiple and infinite, the kairotic spaces that students work in must also be understood as infinite as well. Furthermore, if as Sheard argues, these spaces are comprised of the “traditions and institutions of culture,” it is important to acknowledge which traditions and whose cultures are privileged. Doing so can determine the nature of the communicative exchange and the degree to which this exchange is possible and productive and for whom. Price expands this definition, extending it to encompass

the less formal, often unnoticed, areas of academe where knowledge is produced and power is exchanged. A classroom discussion is a kairotic space, as in an individual conference with one’s professor... peer-response workshops, study groups, interviews for on-campus jobs, or departmental parties or gatherings to which they are invited...*kairos* carries ethical and contextual as well as temporal implications. (60)

Price’s discussion of kairotic spaces is useful in considering the eugenicist and ableist structures in which students are expected to perform. For Price, a kairotic space is one constructed by expectations of ability and demonstration of that ability. The relationship

with demonstrable ability and spaces “where knowledge is produced and power is exchanged” suggests the very nature of those spaces: knowledge can only be produced in these spaces once the expectations of ability are met and demonstrated. Furthermore, the power that is exchanged is also ability-based, implying that power resides with the one who can demonstrate ability that is closest to or exceeds expectations. These expectations are in the service of the creation of a norm or a standard, or, in Dolmage’s terms, are the building blocks to the steep steps that the academy creates.

The normalizing discourses that overpower these kairotic spaces that students are expected to move through require the student to perform multiple roles at a single time in order to achieve the illusion of “completeness,” that is, the appropriate performance the spaces require. These spaces simultaneously demand fragmentation and completeness, or understood in another way, it demands a constant state of becoming, a state of “progress.” These spaces thus create the conditions for eugenicist logic to thrive, expecting the student to procedurally determine the correct elements to fit the seemingly static context and remove the elements that do not “fit” the normalized context. These kairotic spaces create pressures for the student to reproduce the elements that interact positively within the given context, and remove the elements that deemed unnecessary or negative.

The Enfreakment of Language in the Classroom

Ableism and able-bodiedness is consistently linked to productivity and performance: ableist thought centers on how well someone can perform “normalcy,” that is, acts that are considered standard and thus normal. If a person cannot perform these

tasks, then they are necessarily abnormal and disabled within that context. As long as the student can “keep up,” he or she will be successful in class. McRuer writes that “composition in the corporate university remains a practice that is focused on a fetishized final product, whether it is the final paper, the final grade, or the student body with measurable skills” (151). Grading to and teaching to a regulatory norm is bound up in ableist ideologies of wholeness and normalcy. It is important, therefore, to have an understanding of the way that eugenicist logic operates in understandings of teachers as “fixers,” that is, as figures of authority whose job is to correct students, repair their mistakes, and recondition their approaches to meaning-making. Indeed, as McRuer argues, the body of the student “is in some ways inevitably queer/disabled” in need of “correction” from the instructor (255). Central to this understanding is the “neutrality” that the teacher attempts to represent. Cobos observes,

too often, as instructors we ignore our bodies and attempt to seem more neutral in order to seem more competent or to help our students learn. However, in doing so, we are also pretending that we do not have cultural centers from which we work, and then we are re-implementing an assumed center of neutrality. Not only are we re-instigating the Cartesian split and ignoring our bodies, we are teaching our students to do the same. (139)

What Cobos is describing is a practice of neutrality based on eugenicist logic.

“Neutrality” here can be read here as synonymous with “normal,” suggesting that the most effective way to reach our students is to perform “normalcy” in the classroom, that

is, the “normal” expected of classroom settings. Not only is there an assumed neutrality expected of the teacher, but there is an assumed neutrality expected of the classroom and the practices that occur within that classroom. Learning is expected to be achieved in standardized settings, for bodies that can accommodate to the structures designed to keep them still and focused. This neutrality of the classroom expects that everyone learns the same and will be responsive to the same practices, thereby carrying the air of “neutrality.” When a student does not respond to these practices, they are immediately marked out as “abnormal” and in need of “fixing.” Conversely, when a student exceeds the expectations of the classroom, they are marked out as examples. What Cobos is highlighting is the ways that the expectations around many pedagogical practices are centered around ideas of normalizing, ideas that are intimately tied to the power and privilege associated with the able body.

Thus the constructedness of the “finished product” emerges as a reflection of the performance of “normal” in the classroom, and always already tied to the ableist systems dependent on wholeness and a functioning that serves a standard. Keeping this in mind, how much of an anti-eugenicist pedagogy would ask students not to “produce” and then remove what is not “presentable” for the “finished” product; but would rather ask students to value all elements and influences around the writing process – obvious or not – and recognize the value in those elements by teaching students to *refigure* and not *rewrite*? McRuer argues for what he terms “critical de-composition,” which results from “re-orienting ourselves away from those compulsory ideals and onto the composing process and the composing bodies – the alternative, and multiple, corporealities – that

continually ensure that things can turn out otherwise” (246). Similarly, Margaret Price argues that privileging disability and Disability Studies in the classroom “brings forward the interplay of writing, ideology, and material life in fundamental and vivid ways” (57). Both McRuer and Price are calling for an active recognition of not only our bodies in the classroom, but the variation of these bodies. In doing so, the classroom becomes a space where disability is privileged and thus responded to.

This is what the enfreakment of language can do to affect our pedagogy and our classrooms. The classroom becomes a space that is sustained by variation and the constant challenge to what is assumed to be “normal” or “typical.” Everyone’s value is acknowledged and valued, where contributions are, as bell hooks argues, resources: “Used constructively they enhance the capacity of any class to create an open learning community” (8). When the classroom is an open learning community, students and instructors are challenged to recognize and acknowledge their privilege, and, as Krista Ratcliffe urges, to listen with intent, and to stand under discourses, that is, “identifying the various discourses embodied in each of us and then listening to hear and imagine how they might affect not only ourselves but others” (206). Ratcliffe continues: “standing under the discourses of others means first acknowledging the existence of these discourses; second, listening for the (un)conscious presences, absences, unknowns; and third, consciously integrating this information into our world-views and decision-making” (206). Understood in the context of the enfreakment of language, this practice of standing under discourses acknowledges the practice of eugenicist systems, including the sequestering and removal of unwanted or undesirable elements. Once acknowledged,

the classroom can be a space that critically engages this practice, continuously seeking out moments where “normal” is identified in relation to “abnormal,” where removal operates as the most viable option, and where “value” is understood in relation to “ability.” Thus to work through the lens of the enfreakment of language in the classroom means to actively interrogate the ableist systems of power that ask our students to identify and remove their experiences and knowledge bases that are deemed “useless” to the larger goals of standardization in the classroom.

Conclusion

I opened this dissertation with an analysis of *Captain America* to demonstrate how prevalent the relationship between eugenics, freakdom, and disability is in our everyday lives, specifically in the places where we least expect this relationship to exist. One way that I have attempted to confront this ableist worldview that creates and sustains the binaries of normal/abnormal and wanted/unwanted is by employing the heuristic of the enfreakment of language. The enfreakment of language has allowed me to uncover one of the links between the language around human variation and the practice of eugenics, the ways in which eugenicist systems rehearse these practices in varying contexts, and the unique challenges to these systems that the practice of bricolage offers. While I do not posit that employing the enfreakment of language as a heuristic will “fix” any of the problems that this dissertation has set out to uncover – indeed, by making such an assumption I would be giving in to the rhetorics of cure, another tool used in ableist and eugenicist systems – this does not, however, make the use of my heuristic any less necessary. As my opening analysis has shown, eugenics,

freakdom, and disability have become so embedded in the functioning of communication and meaning-making that it has largely become unrecognizable. What would it mean to recognize and understand the presence of eugenics in our everyday lives?

My original intention with this conclusion was to list facts and figures to begin to answer my question. My reasoning behind this appeal to logos was to tie my three middle chapters together in that answer: it would mean that over 250,000 people would not have been refused admittance to the United States at Ellis Island after 1920 (Fairchild), 11 million people would not have died in Hitler's pursuit of racial hygiene, Anne Frank would have seen her sixteenth birthday, and Lady Gaga would be out of a job. I also intended to include other related figures, including the fact that recognizing and understanding eugenics in our everyday lives would mean that over 65,000 individuals would not have been sterilized under state compulsory sterilization programs in the United States (Stoddard). Yet before I completed the sentence, I had to include a footnote, noting that this is only a recorded number of sterilizations under a recorded law, and that the true, exponentially larger number of people who have been sterilized without their knowledge or against their will cannot ever be known. And here lies the best evidence for the necessity of the use of the enfreakment of language: I will never be able to list an accurate number of people affected by eugenics, and even if I could, those numbers would only be used in the service of making my point that eugenics is and continues to be practiced in a variety of ways. Just as there is no single definition of the word "eugenics," there is no single form that eugenicist practices take. Employing a lens that allows us to begin seeing the myriad of forms that eugenics takes allows us to begin

seeing the myriad of ways that we rely on, rehearse, and redeploy eugenics and eugenicist logic in our everyday lives, even when we are trying to call it out.

While I have just demonstrated that I cannot fully answer my question as I originally intended, I offer another attempt to end this dissertation: What would it mean to recognize and understand the presence of eugenics in our everyday lives?

It would mean that bodies would not become erased on the basis of their inability or refusal to conform to idealistic, and often unachievable, standards of “normal.”

It would mean that the lives of people who are designated as “useless” would be recognized as vital outside of a system of enfreakment.

It would mean that every part of a person’s body and experience would be regarded as valuable as it truly is.

It would mean that my big sister who was born with disabilities would have had a much different life.

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