Perverse Modernities

A series edited by

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TIME BINDS

Queer Temporalities,

Queer Histories

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For the Frog and the Fly

And for my mother,

who needs more time

one. Junk Inheritances, Bad Timing

Familial Arrhythmia in Three Working-Class Dyke Narratives

We are verses out of rhythm,
Couplets out of rhyme . . .
—Simon and Garfunkel, "The Dangling Conversation"

In *K.I.P.*, the image of queer "ancestors" not only offers an alternative to reprofuturity by way of a blissful past but also gestures toward the history of visual technology's participation in the making of genealogies and intimacies. Even prior to modern nationalism, people have understood themselves as such and as part of a larger historical dynamic—usually an ascent based on rank, wealth, or other status—through imaging sequence and cumulation in familial terms. They have used narrative tools like pedigrees and legends of their forebears, and visual tools like painted portraits and heirlooms, to represent continuities with unseen others across temporal vistas. Ideas like a noble house, a chosen people, or a superior race, then, all connect microsocial forms like marriage and childbirth to grand narratives of continuity and change. In this production of a generational peoplehood, groups make legible not only themselves but also history thought of, in its simplest terms, as the passage of time beyond the span of a single life.

When visual technologies such as photography and film emerged, they certainly made time available to the senses in new ways: as Mary Ann Doane argues, they both participated in the newly rationalized time-sense of the industrial era and offered ways out of rationalized time by privileging the index, the archive, the gap between frames, and other devices that stopped or "lost" time.[1] Yet as these technologies became available to middling folk, they were often harnessed to and furthered the representation of collective longitude. Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, families increasingly "mattered" or both appeared before themselves and came to seem consequential in and of themselves through the visual technologies marketed at ordinary people—daguerreotypes,

snapshots, and eventually home movies.[2] Historically, the photographic media participated in the emergence of a highly heterogendered, middle-class discourse of family. The very earliest mass-marketed photographic technologies, as Shawn Michelle Smith demonstrates, turned away from the public iconicity associated with the painted portrait and toward depicting an elusive psychic interiority, coded as highly feminine. Generally portraying individual subjects and families posed in interior spaces surrounded by household items and furnishings, daguerreotypes celebrated privacy and yet teased the viewer with the voyeuristic pleasure of imagined access to both rooms and souls.[3] They evoked the "timeless" spaces of heart and hearth, the stillness of a domestic life imagined as a haven from rather than a necessary correlate of industrial time.

The technologies that followed may have dimmed the daguerreotype's aura of singularity insofar as they allowed for multiple prints, but their domestic users drew from the conventions of daguerreotypy by privileging homes and family groupings. As Marianne Hirsch writes, after the invention of the Kodak camera "photography quickly became the family's primary instrument of self-knowledge and representation—the means by which family memory would be continued and perpetuated."[4] Smith contends that by the end of the nineteenth century the photograph of the child, in particular, had become a means of visualizing not just time but the future, and not just any future but one congruent with middle-class aspirations illustrated by poses, settings, and props. Candid, infinitely reproducible pictures of live babies and children replaced the daguerreotype era's cult of dead children, figuring a new congruence between technological reproduction and the saving of the Anglo-American "race," now understood in terms of skin color as well as ancestry. In the hands of ordinary fathers and, increasingly, mothers, domestic photographs "trac[ed] the imaginative trajectory" of the family line toward continued racial purity, physical health, and prosperity.[5] In this way, they inserted the family into, and made the family into an image of, the nationalist march of "progress." In other words, domestic photography helped merge the secularized, quasi-sacred time of nature and family with the homogenous, empty time across which national destiny moved: representations of family made simple reproductive sequences look like historical consequence. The spatial conventions that attended domestic uses of the visual media also contributed to this effect. For instance, the family portrait is often recognizable as such because the subjects are usually posed with the elders at the back (and sometimes even portraits of ancestors on the wall behind them), the children in the front, and an adult male-female couple at the center, flanked by their own siblings or eldest children. Individual portraits of different family members or the same person are often shot or displayed in sequences that emphasize physical likenesses across time, as in the living room display of family members organized top-to-bottom and/or oldest-to-youngest, or of the child posed in front of the same tree once a year.

But as I suggested earlier, queer time emerged from within, alongside, and beyond this heterosexually gendered double-time of stasis and progress, intimacy and genealogy. While the antebellum nineteenth century was marked by a dialectic between sacred, static "women's" time and a secularized, progressive, nominally male national-historical time, the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a dialectic between "primitive," slow, recalcitrant time and the time of speedy production, rapid distribution, and constant novelty. This ostensible division of mutually informing and co-constructed categories was not only gendered, as before, but now also explicitly racialized and sexualized. The discourses of racial degeneration in criminologists like Cesar Lombroso, and of neurotic repetition in Freud, made it possible to imagine and represent a certain stalling of any smooth movement from past to present, stillness to action, time to history. These discourses foregrounded compulsive returns, movements backward to reenter prior historical moments rather than inward or outward to circumvent historical time. As film technologies emerged in the late nineteenth century, they seemed to materialize the possibility of return that subtended modernity: as Mary Ann Doane demonstrates, the plots of early fictional films such as *Life of an American Fireman* (1903) contained scenes in which the same action was shown twice, shot from different vantage points, to emphasize spatial continuity. Some "actuality" films depicting real events were shown backward and forward, asking spectators to marvel in buildings that resurrected themselves, or glasses that knit their fragments back up. Some were shown in a continuous loop, encouraging viewers to notice different details in each showing. Some early directors enhanced the credibility of the historical reenactments they portrayed by beginning with establishing shots taken on the day of the historical event, returning spectators to the original time and place before launching a reconstruction of the events that took place there. Thus, though film seemed to highlight the irreversibility and linearity of time through the relentless forward motion of the apparatus, it also enabled a kind of mass repetition-compulsion, enabling spectators to

stop time or see it run backward. Whether explicitly correlated with racial and sexual otherness or not, film's ability to manipulate time or to enable historical return resonated with the late nineteenth century's tendency to align blacks, homosexuals, and other deviants with threats to the forward movement of individual or civilizational development.

Cecilia Dougherty's independent video *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* (1991) queers family by bringing film's work on time to the level of acting and embodiment. At its outset, *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* promises a suture between family and collectivity, representation and reproduction, using the conventions of home video. At one point in this piece, a working-class family sits down to dinner at their home in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the week before an election.[6] Among the family members is the protagonist, Jane Dobson (Leslie Singer), who has announced before the story begins, "My name is Jane Dobson and this is my damned story," and who will make her way up from the family dinner table and out of the closet by the narrative's end. But by invoking both the country singer Loretta Lynn's hit "Coal Miner's Daughter" (1970) and the film of the same name (1980), the title of Dougherty's video suggests Jane's complicated relationship to her family of origin. Ostensibly, it signals that her personal history includes a connection to not only extended family but also a collective form of labor and its representational history. In Popular Front, Depression-era portraits by Walker Evans, James Agee, and Dorothea Lange, for instance, coal miners' families have typically registered the progress or regress of an industry and the culture surrounding it; similarly, the lyrics to Lynn's song suggest that her memories of her home at Butcher Hollow preserve a lost way of life. Viewers of *Coal Miner's Granddaughter*, then, might expect something magisterial, a female "Up from Wage Slavery" that lends gravitas to an individual life by embedding it in a larger collective drama of gender, sexual, and/or class struggle.

But plain and lumpish Jane is a watered-down version of Lynn's earnestly gritty protagonist, half a century removed from the world of collective organizing that many now romanticize (see figure 2). Thus "granddaughter" ironically invokes a certain de-generation, of which homosexuality is only one aspect in the video. Jane's "damned story" involves not the rags-to-riches progress of a star but the movement from *the* Depression to just plain old depression, and the lesbian awakening of an ordinary young woman who ends up in San Francisco's early 1990s pro-sex queer subculture—neither of which, it might be noted, add up to something as grandiose as damnation in the religious sense of the word.

There is no grandparent with whom we might expect Jane to somehow identify, perhaps even as a source informing her lesbian identity. In fact, the actors are of more or less the same age, with only minimal costuming—the mother's obvious wig and dark lipstick, the father's ill-fitting suit—separating the parents from the "children" (see figure 3). The latter, with the exception of the hippie sister Rene (Amanda Hendricks), wear ordinary late 1980s/early 1990s clothing and haircuts. Though the narrative begins when Jane is a child, she is not played by a child actor but by Singer speaking in a childlike voice, and nobody visibly ages within the story's roughly two decades. It is as if this family cannot go anywhere in time; indeed, much of the camerawork consists of disorienting and claustrophobic close-ups shot inside a small interior, rather than of the action shots and exterior scenes that traditionally align the passage of time with motion and changes in setting. There are no coal mines visible either; and though the election results in the father getting a job as the postmaster of Lancaster, he spends much of his time sitting around a kitchen table with his family members.

Leftist Democrats and Catholics, the Dobsons seem vaguely lower middle class, which is mostly indicated by the few props in the kitchen and by the father's job. But they are visibly untouched by any particular community or industry. These absences lend a certain pathos to the title insofar as they mark the kind of vacuum left behind when mining and other heavy industries are outsourced. Indeed, as if to mark the shift from a manufacturing to a temp economy, Francis, the father (Kevin Killian), says, "I'm the only man in town with two jobs." The other job apparently involves work with the Democratic Party on behalf of prisoners, ironically enough, for Francis imprisons his own family in stereotypically heterogendered expectations justified by his hatred of communism. Given the loss of pater familias here, we might expect the family's women, at least, to display enduring patterns of working-class sociability; we might even wish these patterns into resembling queer bonds in Jane's present or the future. But *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* refuses to excavate the kind of past that might situate Jane and her family in a larger narrative encompassing and correlating both working-class and lesbian identity. As a reviewer writes, "Jane as a subject never really comes through. Perhaps this is the point: she is the absent center of her own life."[7] In this video, time stalls in the failure of a granddaughter to be either a grand representative of her class legacy or a proper daughter—or even, perhaps, a subject at all. Unmoored from the representational logic that sutures biological

2–3. Stills from *Coal Miner's Granddaughter*.
Copyright Cecilia Dougherty, 1991. Courtesy of the artist.

reproduction to social history through visual technologies, Jane's biography simply bobs along, inconsequentially.

In short, *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* presents a degenerated working-class solidarity, and this sense of loss and absence extends to the very materiality of the video. Repudiating both earnest documentary and Hollywood biopic, Dougherty shot her piece in PXL 2000, popularly known as PixelVision—an extremely cheap camera that records images onto audiotape, available primarily as a toy sold by Fisher-Price between 1987 and 1989. *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* also emerged within a fleeting moment of the late 1980s and 1990s, dubbed the New Queer Cinema, whose

artists and critics were already self-consciously theorizing its own emergence and ephemerality.[8] The term "New Queer Cinema," apparently coined by the film critic B. Ruby Rich, encompassed films that eschewed gay identity as a point of departure or return and instead represented same-sex relations in terms of acts, situations, aesthetics, and unpredictable historical or social collisions.[9] To describe the New Queer Cinema somewhat overschematically, it generally avoided individual coming-out narratives, realistic depictions of urban gay social milieux, and other "expressive" narrative or filmic conventions that would stabilize or contain homoeroticism, correlate particular bodies to particular desires, or reduce erotic practice to sexual identity.[10] And crucially, the New Queer Cinema engaged in what Rich called "a reworking of history with social constructionism very much in mind . . . a new historiography," about which less has since been written than one might expect.[11] In keeping with the New Queer Cinema's emphasis on the constructed nature of both identity and history, Jane's life is memorialized on the nearly obsolete medium of a cassette tape, the original of which cannot even be played except on a discontinued machine. Portraying a granddaughter who is a bad copy of Lynn's famous daughter, in a medium that is itself considered a bad copy of film, and indeed in a low-quality version of even that medium intended for children, *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* is less about descent or legacy than it is about inferior derivations and the inheritance of qualities with no value to middle-class culture. Even in its physical aspect, the video incarnates the clichés that a lesbian is a bad copy of a man, that a queer life leaves nothing enduring, that a working-class subject has, in Rita Felski's words, "nothing to declare."[12]

Insofar as this video follows the generic conventions of a coming-out story, it certainly participates in an earlier identity politics on the level of content. But what is queer about it surfaces in the formal register: materially, a master tape that is destined to corrupt and fade, and structurally, a saga that fails to be anything but utterly ordinary. These elements clearly resonate with contemporary analyses of queerness as a force that distorts or undermines the logic of sequence—at one point in the film Jane says to her brother Jon (Glen Helfland), "I could just stay here, go to Temple, get married, get some kind of office job till I get pregnant . . . why don't I just blow my head off right now?"[13] But the video also refuses to disrupt narrative sequence per se and align dissident sexuality with a simple ateleological postmodernism: scene follows scene in relatively expected ways as Jane fights with her family, leaves home, arrives in a gay Mecca,

comes back to visit Lancaster now and again. Here, queer does not merely oppose linearity. Dougherty herself has stated that she "wanted to make a narrative instead of an experimental piece . . . I'm really sick of artsy videos . . . It looked like film was going to be the vehicle for narrative and video was slated for documentary or experimental work. I thought video was underutilized."[14]

Dougherty's contribution to a queer politics of time is, then, more complicated than mere postmodernism: like Nguyen, she blocks the transformation of time itself into grand historical narrative, especially as this metamorphosis is effected through the progress of a people depicted visually. But she also blocks the transformation of class consciousness into Marxist History-with-a-capital-H, or the proletariat's eventual triumph. By explicitly referencing Loretta Lynn's *Coal Miner's Daughter*, Dougherty suggests how key the trope of heteronormative, ex-tensive kinship is to these two interlocking grand narratives of collective destiny. But her play with the time of heteronormative family life engages an axis of temporal power that cannot be reduced to the generationalized class saga, even if it functions alongside it: *Coal Miner's Granddaughter*, despite the diachronic overtones of its title, engages most deeply with the synchronic, or the power of *timing* to effect solidarity.

As with all legitimate groups, families depend on timing. Their choreographed displays of simultaneity effect a latitudinal, extensive set of belonging to one another: in popular rhetoric and imagery, for instance, the family that prays together supposedly stays together.[15] As Homi Bhabha points out in his work on nationhood, these performances of synchrony may seem to consolidate collective life, but the coherence they provide is fragile.[16] Dougherty's disruption of heterotemporality, likewise, appears less as a matter of narrative derangement or antiteleology than as a matter of theatrical and theatricalized decoordination, much like that of the bumbling artisans in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In *Coal Miner's Granddaughter*, the players are neither documentary subjects nor professional actors but amateurs from Dougherty's everyday life (Jane, for instance, is played by the video artist Leslie Singer). The production had no script, and Doughterty's players improvised from a minimal plot outline. Dougherty sketched out a set of sequential vignettes that added up to a story, then gave the players broad descriptions of each scene and index cards with key phrases that she wanted them to use as they acted them out in what appear to be single takes.[17] Much of the dialogue in the video is therefore marked by stutters, mismatches between the tone and content of sentences, and non sequiturs, as the untrained, unscripted players fumble their way through stilted conversations. In fact, *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* flaunts consciously off-kilter mimicry at perhaps the most celebrated, the most representationally charged, of what Ernest Renan called the "daily plebiscites" that both enact and renew American family life — the shared evening meal.[18] From the privileged vantage point of the voyeuristic dinner guest, we can see how the Dobsons' prosodic and gestural twitches are at odds with middle-class familial habitus.

In a way, the video *is* realistic, for who hasn't sat through family dinners as boring, awkward, and pointless as the ones *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* portrays? But the actors' verbal clumsiness, flat affect, and misfiring of dialogue and interactions constitute what I think of as this video's "queer accent." I mean this phrase to echo and to revise Voloshinov's theory of "multiaccentuality." Voloshinov argues that members of different classes, though they use the same ideologically loaded terms, inflect them differently, with subjugated classes deploying them toward ends that contradict or compete with dominant ones, or stressing subjugated or archaic meanings.[19] This definition departs from the usual spatiotemporal way of seeing accent as a vestige of location in a particular geographical place, as in a Southern accent, or even a discrete historical moment, as in an Elizabethan one. For it implies the *rhythmic* aspect of the word "accent" — its definition as *stress* or, in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "a prominence given to one syllable in a word . . . over the adjacent syllables."[20] In terms of speech, to share an accent with someone is to have similar patterns of not only tone and phoneme but also meter. And accent, as the work of Bourdieu and Mauss makes clear, extends beyond the spoken rhythm of individual words and sentences to encompass kinetic tempos and the prosodics of interactions between people. Accent is part of habitus, that somatic effect primarily achieved in and through conventions of timing that feel like natural affinities. Those who can synch up their bodily hexes and linguistic patterns, who can inhabit a culture's particular tempos with enough mastery to improvise within them, feel as if they belong to that culture (this is why humor, which often depends on physical and/or verbal timing, is so culturally specific and such a marker of insiders and outsiders). Thus a class accent is not simply a matter of manners, as with television shows of the 1980s like *Married with Children*, which featured a family of perpetually broke, gum-cracking slobs yelling at one another. Instead, it is a matter of shared timing. The Dobsons of *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* seem unlike members of a united working

class—and more jarringly, unlike even a family—because the timing of their interactions with one another is so imperfect. Their inadequate mastery over time and timing registers incompetence with and insufficiency to, or perhaps just refusal of, the forms of working-class solidarity and familial intimacy. If the actors quite literally don't know how to act together, the family gives off the impression of not wanting to act "together," even as the mother, Phyllis (Didi Dunphy), whines over and over again, "We'll always be together. We'll always be happy together."

The video's commitment to bad timing, then, queers what might otherwise be its univocally class-inflected accent: perhaps the Dobsons fail to enact class belonging because they fail in the first place to act as a "normal" family. And conversely, perhaps class complicates what would otherwise be a more recognizably lesbian accent. Singer's acting certainly gets better in the San Francisco scenes, which perhaps inadvertently suggests that queer life fits Jane, and she fits it, a bit better than life with her family of origin. But this too gets complicated by a wholly different subplot: on her arrival in San Francisco, Jane finds not pure bodily liberation but, tellingly, chronic pain in her joints. Her brother Jon has already said that the two of them should "blow this joint" and get out of Lancaster, but Jane finds instead that her own articular surfaces are covered with mysterious cysts. While the soundtrack plays a recurrent riff, "If you wanna move, then move over here," Jane learns from her doctor (Ramon Churruca) that her movement will always be limited. This bodily condition, in turn, metaphorizes her inability to become a fast-paced, sexually blasé urban dyke; for instance, in a later scene, Jane is forced to call her nonmonogamous lover Victoria (Claire Trepanier) for help with food and chores, and Victoria impatiently scolds Jane for messing up her other dating plans by expecting her to come immediately. Later, when Jane's doctor asks after her chronic pain and she replies "I think I'm just getting used to it," he is pleased. "Ahhh . . . that's good progress," he intones. "You have to learn to live like that." Ironically, a commitment to stasis becomes the sign of Jane's progress.

Unbound from traditional working-class history, Jane finds herself equally unjoined to queer modernity. In the video's last scene, in which Jane is house-sitting and a neighbor (Amy Scholder) brings up some misdelivered mail, Singer reverts to the mistimed, babbling stiffness of the early dinner scenes. Several times, Jane offers up the lame joke that the postal carrier must be on drugs: his lunch hour, she says, must be "a burrito and a joint." And that is where the video ends: with a coincidental, promisingly flirtatious encounter facilitated by an inept mailman who seems to be a caricature of Jane's father, and with Jane, who is out of synch with both her working-class background and her newfound "community," and then set adrift into what may or may not be a new plot.

Coal Miner's Granddaughter suggests that familial timing implicates both class and sexual relations. Purportedly the fulcrum between the biological and the social, the cyclical and the historical, family is the form through which time supposedly becomes visible, predominantly as physical likeness extending over generations—but also, Dougherty suggests, as natural likeness in manner, or orchestrated simultaneities occurring in the present. Following these insights, this chapter excavates a model of simultaneously queer and class-accented "bad timing" in two other works of art by lesbians who were, like Dougherty and her protagonist, born to working-class mothers, though my two texts focus on the mother-daughter relationship as a distilled version of family. One of these texts is Diane Bonder's short video *The Physics of Love* (1998), which portrays a daughter so alienated from her housewife mother that she cannot grieve her mother's death and is therefore melancholically fixated on the Hollywood mother-daughter melodramas of the 1940s and 1950s.[21] The other is Bertha Harris's novel *Lover* (1976), which portrays five generations of women who loop back upon one another in time to touch in erotic ways.[22] Unlike Dougherty, for whom the temporality of "family" does not differentiate along gendered lines, Bonder and Harris depict characters who are unable either to comfortably occupy or to fully repudiate their mothers' legacies. These characters are also ambivalently situated vis-à-vis their mothers' modes of keeping time, which turns out to be a matter of both class and (gendered) sexualities.

These two texts emerged roughly twenty years apart and like *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* were the product of low-budget, independent, queerly collaborative scenes. *The Physics of Love* was funded, shot, edited, and distributed by the late Diane Bonder, who was part of the loose network of independent lesbian filmmakers emerging on the East Coast in the early 1990s; like Dougherty's work, Bonder's has had very few public showings, predominantly at festivals and curated shows. *Lover* was originally published by Daughters, Inc., a small feminist press specializing in avant-garde novels, and still has only a cult following and little scholarly attention despite its reissue by New York University Press in 1993. Though Harris's and Bonder's texts are in different media, they share a commitment to interrogating the temporal logic of family

and, correspondingly, the familial logic of their own particular historical moments. For Bonder, that moment is, though only implicitly, a queer "renaissance" that privileged an impossible-to-complete rebellion from the maternal figure, one predominantly available to middle-class lesbians.[23] For Harris, that moment is lesbian-feminism, with its romanticized, middle-class ideal of conflict-free relations between women, emblematized by mother-daughter love. Like *Coal Miner's Granddaughter*, these two works are less about lesbian or queer "history" per se than about the timing of lesbian and queer lives. They are about exploring the ideology of familial intimacy (and its converse, the privileged subject's complete refusal of family) as class-marked temporal phenomena within which less privileged queers stumble, and departing from which they might find new ways of being.

Both *The Physics of Love* and *Lover* are more self-consciously antinarrative than Dougherty's piece, and each features one or more nonsequential storylines as well as various misalignments of what is ordinarily synchronized in its particular medium. *The Physics of Love* (hereafter *Physics*) uses the Newtonian laws of motion as the dominant visual and verbal motif for failed intimacy. *Physics* features an original musical score that is constantly interrupted by nondiegetic snippets of sound—a scratchy recording of Frank Sinatra singing "Something's Gotta Give," a fragment of dialogue from an old western, recitations of plot summaries, beeps, ticks, rattles. Its image track juxtaposes, repeats, and abruptly cuts between several kinds of footage, including snapshots, home movies, stills from motion studies, images on a television set, and title cards. Thematically, the film works by accreting the same few scenes and visual tropes: a wrecking ball hitting a building, water moving over cards imprinted with phrases, twirling three-dimensional miniatures of household appliances, hands performing domestic tasks, laundry blowing in the wind. Harris's novel *Lover* is as formally fragmented as *Physics*. This novel tracks the movement of an interrelated group of women toward the rarified status of "lover." *Lover*'s governing aesthetic principles come from the visual arts rather than from the tradition of the novel: "*Lover*," writes Harris, "should be absorbed as though it were a theatrical performance. Watch it. It is rife with the movie stars and movies of my childhood and adolescence . . . *Lover* has a vaudeville atmosphere."[24] Though the novel may be peppered with allusions to Hollywood and Wagnerian opera, vaudeville is the more apt metaphor for its arrangement: *Lover* features a cast of characters who do not so much develop as simply enter and exit, appear and reappear, telling stories and performing scenes set in different times. It has no overarching plot but instead cuts between several storylines in nonchronological order, stacking them atop one another and weaving in fragments from saints' lives and philosophical musings from various narrators. In both of these works, formal experimentation takes place against an exaggeratedly heteronormative temporalized discipline, figured by the mother-daughter relationship.

Reimagining Family, Reimaging Time

The Physics of Love exploits the recursive properties of film to refuse the logic whereby through the domestic media likeness, sequence, and historical consequence become mutual effects. One of Bonder's first "shots" in a montage that precedes the film's title credit is a snippet of found footage from a home movie, in which a woman walks toward the camera shaking her finger rapidly. Immediately thereafter comes a shot taken from within an automobile, of windshield wipers moving across the front windshield, as if to literalize the filmic "wipe" that classically signals a transition from one time to another. These wipes, though, move back and forth, suggesting a more see-sawing kind of time; even as the car clearly moves forward, they indicate the possibility of wiping and "unwiping" progressive time, filmic motion forward, or even memory. Bonder follows up on this suggestion by rapidly alternating two black-and-white photographs from a turn-of-the-century motion study in which a nude toddler-aged girl approaches a nude woman and hands the woman an object. Their age difference and familiarity suggest that they are mother and daughter. The original motion study presumably figured familial intimacy itself as movement and hence as a temporal phenomenon; the child's steps toward the mother not only indicated the presence of time in the way Doane describes but also figured the "timing" of love. Love, the motion study seems to have implied, is a matter of progress toward the other, of reciprocal gesture, of giving and taking; it elevates the synchronies of shared habitus experienced to the highest degree. But as Bonder's film toggles between these stills, what should be the child's progress toward the woman becomes instead a two-step dance toward and away from her: here, stop trumps motion. By alternating these stills, Bonder figures both the narrator's ambivalence toward her mother and the temporal switchbacks that the video itself will later perform as the narrator struggles to be moved, to feel any emotion whatsoever about her

4. Still from *The Physics of Love*.
Copyright Diane Bonder, 1998. Courtesy of Kathy High, Mona Jimenez, Liss Platt, and Elizabeth Stephens.

mother's death, to enter either the sacred time of grief and epiphany, or the forward-flowing time of going on with her life.

Having turned photography toward film's possibilities for reversing temporal order, Bonder then addresses the relationship between domestic photography and heterosexual reproduction. Toward the end of this set of shots a narrator says, "They were cut from the same mold." Immediately thereafter comes a set of two gold frames, each encasing one of the two stills, as if to arrest both motion and time. The images within the frames rapidly shift to twin images of peas in pods (as the narrator says "like two peas in a pod"), a large fly ("the resemblance was uncanny"), DNA helixes ("she took after her in every way"), chromosomes ("they could have been twins"), and then back to the stills, but this time a viscous liquid spatters on the glass (see figure 4). As this liquid hits, the narrator says, "You could say she was her spitting image." This line, itself doubling possible pronominal referents (who is whose image?) sounds twice in rapid and overlapping succession. So not only does this series of shots eventually repudiate—literally spit upon—the likeness it seems at first to celebrate but the echolalic last line of the segment's soundtrack also disrupts forward movement, doubling the sentence back upon itself. Just as the child's back-and-forth stepping in the early motion-study stills figures a stuttering kind of time rather than progress toward the future, in this set of images genetic reproduction fails to produce enough difference and hence change.

5. Cover of the 1976 Daughters, Inc., edition of *Lover*.
Copyright Loretta Li, 1976.

Bertha Harris's novel *Lover* also introduces domestic photography on the cover of its original edition and on its first page, only to disrupt immediately that medium's hetero- and chrononormative functions. The sole image on the cover of the 1976 edition is a black-and-white photograph, centered in a field of black, of a little girl standing in front of a house and holding a doll (see figure 5). The doll is practically as big as the child, who looks to be about two years old. The little girl has inadvertently hiked up the doll's dress, and the doll's sidelong glance, combined with the circular blush spots on her cheeks and the placement of her cloth hand over her heart, make the doll look embarrassed or scandalized. This cover clearly signals the novel's preoccupation with the erotics between mothers and daughters, and with some feminists' sanitizing reduction of lesbianism to a chaste mother-daughter or sororal relationship. It also visually redoubles the name of the publishing house, Daughters, Inc., as well as intimating the power struggles between Harris and her publishers that she narrates in her preface to the 1993 reissue published by New York University Press.

The cover photo reappears in somewhat different form in the opening paragraphs of *Lover*. After a dizzying couple of very short scenes that

introduce the names of the novel's central characters—about which more below—the reader is presented with "a series of snapshots" depicted only in words.[25] These pictures, we are told, depict a preschool-aged child in the 1940s—Veronica, who will turn out to be the novel's artist and the one with the most multiple and shifting identities. The narrator reports that the photo of Veronica is shot from the back; two others apparently show her standing in a lake, wearing a wool bathing suit that is appliquéd with a duck. The photos initially seem to offer the reader help in situating *Lover*'s large and unwieldy collection of women into a historical moment and into generations of family: perhaps Veronica, described just before the introduction of the photographs as sitting on a swing sucking candy with her childhood "sweetheart" who is also named Veronica, is a descendant of some sort. Yet the name Veronica itself references the first picture of Christ—the vernicle made by the woman who held the Shroud of Turin to Jesus's face, which act signals Christianity's turn from the patriarchal blood family of Judaism to a scheme of proselytizing and conversion (reproduction by other means), and from an anti-imagistic theology to one that privileged the image.[26] Perhaps, then, Veronica the artist is *Lover*'s matriarch, its Mary. But the novel's first sentence about Veronica is that she "came out of nowhere," in contrast to the novel's other main characters, Samaria, Daisy, and Flynn, whom the opening sentences confirm are clearly born to one another in some order or another. Veronica seems completely unreproduced, a photo without a negative.

Veronica's photos reappear at the end of the novel, when Daisy appears and tells Veronica that either she (Daisy) or her mother, Samaria, has murdered a man. "But I say *Samaria* and you say *my mother*," says Veronica, "How do I know which is the mother and which is the daughter? How can I know that for sure?" (211). Daisy tells her to "find something to remind you of something else—perhaps a snapshot of *me* in a little woolen bathing suit, a bathing suit with a duck on it, and I'm standing at the edge of a lake with my feet in the water" (211, my emphasis). As with Bonder's mother-daughter snapshot, here domestic photography unhinges memory and sequence rather than facilitating it: Daisy, born to Samaria, who is Veronica's lover and contemporary, could not possibly be the child in the photo. Veronica retorts, "It could be Samaria in that picture, not you . . . I wonder who the real one is. It might be me. Like everything else, one is real, the other a forgery" (212). Daisy teases, "Which is the mother, which the forgery? My goodness, Veronica" (212). The implication here is that domestic photography produces, or "forges," familial relations rather than representing preexisting ones. *Lover*'s fictional photographs serve to emphasize technological reproduction over biological maternity, the simulated over the natural: mothers are not simply fakers but fake themselves.

More importantly for the project of theorizing family time, *Lover*'s pictures disorder sequence, revealing photography's central role in imaging time as familial by scrambling the logic of family lineage. For the photos make their first appearance just after the novel's aforementioned opening paragraphs, which detail some kind of birth scene or scenes:

> This one was lying strapped to a table. Covered in her juices, Samaria was being pulled through her vulva. This is how Samaria met her.
>
> She was being pulled, yelling already, through the lips of Daisy's vulva. This is how Flynn met Daisy. (5)

As with Bonder's "she was her spitting image," here the referential ambiguity of "this one," "her," and "She" makes it unclear here who is giving birth to whom, which is the mother and which is the daughter in this daisy-chain of women. They coil upon one another, each one's bodily boundaries apparently occupying not only two spaces, inside and outside, but also two distinct moments in time. The image is botanical, like a convolute leaf or flower bud.[27] And indeed, this opening confirms an even earlier, more literally vegetational image of a family unbound from linear time. For the novel opens with a frontispiece, a hand-drawn family tree of sorts: a leafy vine with the names Flynn and Bertha at the center. Rather than situating characters above and below one another to indicate generations, this tree shows six fronds shooting out centrifugally from its center. The names of all the characters in the novel perch on or hang from one frond or another, in no particular order. Furthermore, this genealogical kudzu ensnares *Lover*'s incidental characters, a few Catholic saints, pets mentioned in passing within the novel, and "A British bottle of vinegar" (1).

In a sense, this is an antikinship diagram. The anthropologist Mary Bouquet suggests that anthropology has relied on the conventions of the Euro-American family photograph to define what kinship looks like. In her analysis, the kinship diagram is the abstract version of a family portrait, with the lines of connection and transmission overtly symbolized rather than left implicit in pose and physical likeness. Anthropology "proves" kinship by representing those practices that can be best objectified by this symbol-system of genealogy.[28] Harris's is a kin diagram

turned rhizomatic: collapsing the generational scaffolding, it prefigures the skip-hop movement of the childhood snapshot whose subject, it turns out, could be any one of several women supposedly situated in different historical moments.

The still images of mothers and daughters in *Physics* and *Lover*—photographed, filmed, drawn, and described—affirm two contradictory things. Certainly, they reiterate the fact that kin relations themselves are an important form through which time itself is comprehended as linear: the domestic photograph (along with the conventions of display that accompany it) and the conventionally genealogical kin diagram are two interdependent genres that materialize temporal difference and organize this difference into sequentiality. However, the still "shots" and static diagrams in *Physics* and *Lover* also affirm that lesbianism dangerously muddles generational time, albeit somewhat differently in these two works by queer women of two very different generations. Both Bonder and Harris seem well aware of the exhausted trope of lesbians as mother and daughter, a trope that figures lesbians as immature, asexual, and pathologically interdependent. As Kathryn Bond Stockton writes of Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, "Th[e] figurative mother-child relation . . . dooms [lesbian lovers] to a time that by definition can never arrive: the time when mother and child will inhabit the same generation."[29] Yet Bonder and Harris do not jettison this trope in favor of a more lateral, intragenerational, or peer-centered model in which (as *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* implies) the achievement of a lesbian present tense might necessitate distancing oneself from the past or refusing to age. Instead, their texts work by a filmic principle of temporal oscillation, the same gyroscopic movement I have claimed as queer. In *The Physics of Love* a little girl steps forward and back, a set of windshield wipers performs and then reverses the filmic "wipe," and the video tells its story by returning over and over again to specific still shots, snippets of home movie, segments of new footage, musical motifs, and fragments of monologue. Harris's plot (such as it is) swings back and forth between the stories of its main characters, abruptly abandoning one to take up another without transitional cues or even a shift in tense. *Lover*'s grandmothers, mothers, and daughters appear out of order, grow "down, then up" (7), and occasionally become lovers with one another across generations. In both works, mothers and daughters do collide in time and, in Harris, even inhabit the same generation.

The formal principles of these works, then, invoke different kinds of time than that of kin and generation. Certainly, their reiterative structures traffic in what Kristeva calls a maternalized "cyclical" time.[30] They also dabble in monumental time in the tropes of, respectively, 1950s Hollywood cinema and medieval saints—about which more below. But rather than privileging cyclical or monumental time and thus turning toward essentialist or mystical paradigms, both *Physics* and *Lover* struggle with domestic time, a particular heterogendered and class-inflected chrononormativity, an enforced synchronicity that seems at once to suffocate their female characters and to offer queer possibilities.

Tracking Domestic Time

What does it mean to say that domesticity is a particular tempo, a way of living time rather than merely a relationship to the space of the home? By the time industrial capitalism had decisively transformed the United States, women's work inside the home had also begun to take the form of a rationalized, coordinated, and synchronized labor process.[31] Domestic manuals such as Catharine Beecher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841) stressed the need for order and efficiency in the home, at the same time that women's labor was naturalized into feminine influence through the figure of the angel in the house who magically kept things clean and people fed without seeming to lift a finger. In other words, middle-class femininity became a matter of synchronic attunement to factory rhythms, but with the machinery hidden. Moreover, the clash between task-based agricultural and household temporalities and the abstract and equal units of mechanized time was symbolically resolved in the home, through what the historian John Gillis calls the "ritualization of family life."[32] Gillis details the emergence of rituals associated with the family: by the 1850s, a newly commercialized, domesticated, and secularized Christmas had replaced the harvest ritual, and a decade later families were expected to have nightly dinners together rather than eating in shifts to accommodate farmworkers' hours. The word "weekend" entered the American lexicon in 1880; the early twentieth century saw communal Sabbaths increasingly replaced by nonreligious familial activities such as the Sunday drive.[33] The "family," in short, was no longer comprehensible through the rhythms of its labor and Sabbath-keeping but manifested itself through its own, separate hourly, daily, weekly, and yearly calendar of leisure activities. Once families began to be defined by clocked rituals and schedules, Gillis writes, "one could say that family was put into cultural production, representing itself to itself in a series of daily, weekly, and annual performances

that substituted for the working relationships that had previously constituted the everyday experience of family life."[34] Here we can see how events coded as familial and photographic technologies of memory are practically coterminous. Family life was supposed to be like a moving watchworks, showcasing the precision of its routines and the synchronicity of its motions as evidence of intimacy, even as a kind of household habitus. And domestic photography became an integral part of this shift: as Hirsch writes, it "both chronicles family rituals and constitutes a prime objective of those rituals."[35] Family time, as it emerged, moved a formerly religious ritual time into women's domain, replaced sacred time with the secular rhythms of capital, feminized the temporalities considered to be outside of the linear, serial, end-directed time of history, and demanded and depended on visual technologies that required increasingly less physical effort from their users. While ritual self-representation required enormous amounts of work on the part of a household's women, who prepared holiday dinners, planned and executed family activities, and so on, the technologies for representing family time hid their own workings behind one-touch buttons.

This secularized cyclical time, in turn, offered a new version of monumental time. Within the ideology of normative domesticity, the proper maintenance of cyclical schedules and routines produces the effect of timelessness. But only with its routines seeming to manage themselves could the domestic sphere shelter this form of time: the work of the household took place within a protective casing, a temporal stasis that kept history at bay. By the mid-twentieth century, bourgeois mothers and their behind-the-scenes servants were responsible for what Thomas Elsaesser has described as the aesthetics of the still life, a tranquil household marked by not only visual order but also smooth transitions, recurrent rituals, and safety from accidents and untimely intrusions from the outside world.[36] That is, the middle-class household not only effaced the conditions of its own production (the housewifely and servant labor necessary to produce such order and stasis) but also appeared as pure temporal plenitude—as a surplus of what the late twentieth century would call "quality time." Again, popular visual culture both represented and partook in this temporal mode. Elsassaer claims that the aesthetics of quality time, of the household as still life, reached their apotheosis in the so-called women's films produced by Hollywood studios in the 1940s and 1950s. The careful mises-en-scène of these films, their tendency to linger on household decor and objects, and their dilatory rhythms of repressed emotional excess at once

stop narrative time and hyperbolize the timeless, seamless, ideal middle-class household. Time literally becomes quality; the "woman's film" dissolves action into the elements of texture, color, meticulous placement, telling gesture.

Physics and *Lover* invoke and displace this mystified form of time. As if to hearken back to Beecher's ethos of streamlined domesticity, for instance, *The Physics of Love* both portrays and formally reiterates this pseudomechanical synching of the household. At one point on the video's soundtrack we hear factory noises—sanding, grinding, whirring, metallic whining, against which background a slow tick-tick-tick becomes audible. Over this we see an optically printed shot of a hand on an iron, moving back and forth on an ironing board, the juxtaposition of sound and image suggesting a possible congruence of household and factory time. But as the factory sounds and ticks continue, a narrator reads a series of dates and weights, from "January 14th, 1982: Weight: 164½ pounds," through successively later dates and smaller numbers, to "February 12th, 1982: Weight: 156 pounds." Layered with the previous sounds, we hear another, muffled female voice reading: "linoleum crumbling . . . ceiling cracked . . . window glass cracked," the occasional pauses in the voice-over filled with the ticking of a clock. Clearly, one message here is that housework consumes the female body, as the crumbling house of the working-class mother becomes a metaphor for what we later learn is her declining health. This linear temporality of decrease and bodily diminishment is complicated by the repetition-compulsion that is housework, as the image track flashes forth shots of various domestic routines and of miniature household appliances, and the factory sounds fade into the rattling sounds of a kitchen: the voice-over says, "She has taken thousands of footsteps, back and forth across the same patch of linoleum . . . the same movements, over the same spaces, over the same length of time. Why didn't she go mad? Thousands of others did. Too busy, too poor, too tired to have time to consider it." The soundtrack, a rattling fugue whose parts are clock-time, the slowly ebbing time of the dying body, and the hyper-regulated time of factory and kitchen, highlights the exhausting labor required to maintain a routinized household. Yet insofar as the parts of this segment of *Physics* don't fit, as sound fails to match with image and voice-overs overlap and interrupt, the video here suggests a class-accented form of maternality similar to the Dobsons' familial life. Just as the Dobsons fail to synch up their dialogue, the narrator's mother fails to produce a restorative and soothing symphony of household sounds.

In *Lover*, Harris invokes the synchronic time of domesticity more ironically. We learn from Flynn that as a child she accidentally unfastened her mother's watch and the timepiece was lost. A present from the boy who was Flynn's father, Daisy's lost watch signals *Lover*'s refusal of a heterosexualized chronometrics. Instead, the novel offers a lesbianized—but not domestically feminine—temporal scheme. Halfway through the novel, Veronica and Samaria have become lovers, after having been established as long-lost cousins who were once simultaneously married to a bigamist. Veronica, Samaria, Flynn, and Flynn's twin sisters Rose and Rose-lima all seem to be living together: the narrator reports that "there seems to be more women than usual in the house" (87). As the love affair progresses, Veronica amplifies "the erotic volume between herself and Samaria until the entire household begins involuntarily to twin her every move; to act identically" (86). This action recalls Veronica's job as an artist of sorts: she earns her living as a forger of paintings and so produces sameness as a matter of course. Here, as she becomes lovers with Samaria, eros "forges," that is, copies, as the references to twinning and identicality suggest. But eros also "forges"—welds by a certain heat—concurrent movements rather than images or objects. The members of this household move and act in tandem, rather than being or looking the same. And unlike the households in *Coal Miner's Granddaugher* or *The Physics of Love*, whatever harmony Veronica achieves here comes from her *sexual* desire rather than her status as a mother, her ability to orchestrate an *erotics* rather than a family dinner. Veronica's skill as a choreographer of domestic time may be parodic, but it captures how the novel hyperbolizes and queers the cyclical and synchronous times associated with women, particularly mothers.

Both *The Physics of Love* and *Lover* also lay bare the terms of maternalized, secularized "eternity," the monumental time of the angel in the house. *The Physics of Love* engages directly with the domestic melodrama that Elsaesser calls the bourgeois still life. Among the video's many returns is its obsession with Hollywood tales of overinvested and self-sacrificing mothers. Every so often, a scratchy female voice with a thick New England accent interrupts the layered soundtrack of *Physics*, reciting the plot summary of a Hollywood "weepie." One summary seems to be of *The Bad Seed* (1956), though the speaker's synopsis ends with "she decides the only way to save her daughter is to kill her" and omits the daughter's convenient death by lightning. Another recounts the story of *Mildred Pierce* (1945) and ends with the mother's "final sacrifice as her daughter begs her not to turn her in" for killing the man they both love. In the manner of Nguyen's work with the original tape of *Kip Noll, Superstar*, Bonder also presents a segment of George Cukor's *The Women* (1939) playing across a flickering black-and-white television set, a scene in which Joan Crawford as Crystal Allen and Virginia Weidler as her stepdaughter argue bitterly. With these synopses and snippets Bonder further compresses the already cramped time of the maternal melodrama. Nothing remains even of the films' own historical moment, and the summaries take up so little narrative space that their events seem to happen simultaneously. It is as if these melodramas are playing all at once, intersecting with and departing from the story Bonder's narrator tells in bits and pieces, of her mother dying piecemeal of cancer and her own growing addiction to narcotics. Both of these times—of cancer and of addiction—are indexes of not only the mind-numbing repetition of domestic life, akin to being dead or doped up, but also that most privatized and abbreviated genre, the case history. Yet eventually, as I will go on to argue, they offer up other ways to calibrate time in promisingly ahistorical ways.

Lover too trades on the plot summary to invoke and perform monumental time. Its inscrutable "preface" appears after the family diagram and consists only of a synopsis of Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, later revealed to have been authored by Veronica. Thereafter, the novel is divided into short sections somewhat like chapters, each of which is prefaced by a tale of a female saint's life, printed in italics. The first one appears atop the opening birth scenes and descriptions of photographs I have described and portrays an encounter between two virgin martyrs: *To save herself from marriage, Lucy gouged out her own eyes; but Agatha appeared to her and declared, "Thou art light"* (5). Lucy is one of dozens of female mystics whose lives and grisly deaths *Lover* periodically recounts: we might call them case studies of female resistance, or, more simply, of female intensity. The typical tale of a female saint recounts her refusal to marry, her violent punishment at the hands of angry men, and the miracles that take place at or shortly after the time of her death.[37] Each saint is released from ordinary time into the eternity represented and granted by sainthood. In particular, though, Agatha's pronouncement "Thou art light" effects the apogee of quality time, time as a sensory but here utterly disembodied quality—much like the bourgeois woman's diaphanous household (non)presence.

Moreover, "Thou art light" recalls the importance of photography and film to the production of feminized interiority, generational sequence,

and familial performativity. Yet by contrast to this aesthetic, *Lover* is insistently "vaudeville" and bawdy: referencing a jumbled history of popular performance genres, its characters variously act out scenes from *Hamlet* in drag, build a blow-up sex doll, go down Niagara Falls in a barrel, tightrope walk, flaunt their status as Siamese twins, and perform random vignettes for one another: "Then, a sudden charge of energy through Maryann manifests itself . . . in the appearance of a derby hat on her head and a plastic machine gun in her hand. She disappears; then as suddenly reappears in the doorway to drop two brown eggs on the floor; which is hilarious" (47). The novel commits not only to lesbianism but also to performance traditions—most of them not narrative—in a way that suggests a repudiation of home photographic technologies' heterosexist history.

Taken together, *The Physics of Love* and *Lover* track the ways domestic time—a gendered form of and a contributor to class habitus—is produced. They understand that a displaced form of industrial labor, household work, disappears into timeless and naturalized affect through chrononormative timings of bodies, and through dominant uses of visual media. And they understand failures in this process as both class-inflected and queer. The mother-daughter relationship, in the hands of Bonder and Harris, becomes a problem not of physical differentiation but of intimacy and inheritance, troped as rhythm and sequence: will the lesbian daughters repeat their mothers' gestures ad infinitum, disappearing into the vortex of maternalized timelessness? Equally problematic, will the lesbian daughters leave behind their mothers' heterogendered ways of being and in doing so evacuate their own working-class pasts? The arrhythmia of *Physics* and *Lover*, the ways they shift between past and present, between the stillness of photography and the motion of television, cinema, and live performance, suggest an alternative relation to time. These new temporalities, though, are anchored to the body in ways that both risk and resist essentialism: for Bonder and Harris, "queer" is a differential meeting of eros and time, body and timing.

The Physics of Queer

Thus far, I have argued that domestic time emerged as a disembodied, secularized, and hypervisualized version of Kristevian "women's time": disembodied insofar as the biological rhythms that anchor Kristevian "cyclical" time get subsumed into patterns of household labor and ritual, secularized insofar as the stasis of the eternal gets replaced with the bourgeois mise-en-scène, and hypervisualized insofar as home photography and video secure the status of family as such and make domesticity visible *as* a form of temporality. Kristeva's own essay, interestingly, offers up its own possibility for a dissident, gendered, embodied temporal "otherwise." "Women's Time" ends by privileging the bodily experience of reproduction, arguing that pregnancy is an ethics insofar as it offers the "radical ordeal of the splitting of the subject: redoubling up of the body, separation and coexistence of the self and of an other."[38] In Kristeva's analysis, mother-love has the potential to be a form of postmodern, poststructural *askesis* of the sort celebrated by queer male critics like Bersani and Edelman, wherein the function of queer sex and queer being is to breach the borders of the ego. Kristeva's model, though, celebrates a certain languor: "the slow, difficult and delightful apprenticeship in attentiveness, gentleness, forgetting oneself."[39] Slow time, she suggests, is the time of the other, the time, we might say, of an ongoing breach of selfhood that both resonates with Bersani and Edelman's model of self-shattering sex practice and departs from those critics' privileging of phallic sexuality and modernist short, sharp shocks.

Kristeva, however, jettisons her own suggestions about the transformative possibilities of slow time and turns to space. She presciently relocates the pregnant woman's split embodiment in the project of dissolving "personal and sexual identity itself, so as to make it disintegrate in its very nucleus," a formulation that characterizes much of the anti-identitarian thinking of queer theory thus far.[40] She argues that the truly radical (non)subject must interiorize "*the founding separation of the socio-symbolic contract*," or somehow internalize as a form of consciousness the split between Real and Symbolic that accompanies the entrance into language.[41] This is certainly a more palatable and plausible way to characterize a queer insurgency than her initial metaphor of pregnancy, especially for those who choose not to reproduce or parent or who become parents without reproducing. Yet Kristeva's reformulation not only evacuates the force of the temporal for a spatial model but also recontains the messy and recalcitrant body: the radical possibilities suggested by a corporeal event are relocated to the realm of pure signs. It is as if she is advocating some kind of poststructural, Lacanian pregnancy, though how the space of that "interior" could survive such a split is left unexamined. In *The Physics of Love* and *Lover*, on the other hand, the corporeal event itself returns outside of heteronormative timing: Bonder's and Harris's characters are daughters but in Bonder's case never mothers, and in Harris's never depicted as

pregnant. Yet both texts certainly bank on the body's persistent refusal to cohere with or as a singular identity. Furthermore, like Kristeva they locate that stubbornness in the fact that the body is a temporal rather than a spatial phenomenon. In fact, in these texts the body itself epitomizes the bad timing that can counteract the forms of time on which both a patriarchal generationality and a maternalized middle-class domesticity lean for their meaning.

Initially, *Physics* and *Lover* wrench the body from both visual economies and heteronormative timings by seizing the discourse of blood. For Bonder and Harris alike, blood indicates a body that refuses to disappear and temporalities that are irreducible either to genetics or to postmodern freeplay with chronos and history. In the mother-daughter relationship marked by differences in class and object of desire, it seems, blood neither flows down genealogical lines nor gets displaced into warm fuzzy sentiment but spurts, surges, coagulates, as in a wound. "My mother associated me with blood, discomfort, and sacrifice," says the narrator of *Physics*. She describes her mother dragging her back to the scene of her own birth by displaying a Caesarean scar: "She would show it to me occasionally, as a reminder of my ingratitude for the physical manifestation of her unconditional love. I kept waiting for it to talk, to say something, to tell me who had done this to her. I knew it couldn't have been me. I could remember nothing." The mother is pure, silent body; she possesses nothing of value to pass on to her daughter, nothing to say, nothing that allows closure and continuation—again, nothing to declare.[42] But though the daughter in *Physics* refuses memory, she is transfixed by her mother's wound, attached by the gaze to the scene of her own birth. Later in *Physics*, we see a close-up of a finger, blood bubbling up out of a pinprick, with another finger touching it. We don't know if the finger that touches belongs to the body of the finger that is bleeding or to someone else: here, blood has ceased to figure consanguinity. In fact, in most of *Physics*, blood is pure anatomy, disarticulated from familial destiny. It appears in segments or stills showing a translucent medical mannequin, a stain of platelets seen through a microscope, a snippet of video showing a surging vein, an anatomical slide with labels for the major arteries.

In *Lover*, blood initially marks sacrifice, but the sacrifice is that of personhood rather than of body. Flynn's grandmother compares her first menstruation to men's blood in battle: "They can only die. But we are never the same again, and *that is worse* . . . They said, Now you are a woman. *I* had been exchanged for a *woman*" (102, emphasis in original).

Flynn intends no such sacrifice of her humanity for womanhood: having witnessed her mother, Daisy, bleeding through a dishtowel stuffed into her underwear, Flynn wants to "stop blood" (111) and to encase her brain in a glass case that will keep it alive forever, independent of the body. But the body reappears in bloody scene after scene: the female saints who punctuate the text are variously stabbed, beheaded, garroted, eaten alive, and removed of body parts like eyes and breasts. These woundings signal both the body's necessity as the grounds for transformational sufferings, and its transience, its this-worldiness. They mark the sacrifices of personhood necessary for new forms of embodiment and power.

Queered by these two texts, blood departs from its heterogendered functions and begins to look suspiciously like sexuality. Rather than representing the biologized "before" to a postmodernistically queer "after" of mechanical reproduction, blood instigates alternative, and alternatively binding, temporal flows. On the one hand, like sex practice, blood gets aligned with discipline and stigma in Bonder's Caesarean show-and-tell and Harris's gallery of maimed saints. On the other, blood also eventually correlates with perversion, with proliferating forms of bodily pleasure that exceed the discourses from whence they came. In other words, in these texts blood enters a different bodily economy that is, in turn, a temporal economy binding mothers and daughters (if, in this logic, they can still be called these names) through means *other* than synchronous intimacy or genealogical sequence.

In *Physics*, intravenous drug use—the slow drip of the morphine bag, and the quick rush of the heroin high—is the predominant motif for the mother/daughter tie, rethought as a radically "junk" inheritance. Bonder's narrator alternates between descriptions of her mother's chemotherapy and pain management and descriptions of her own addiction to heroin: "The cure ate away at her body, replacing those fluids we shared with fluids that brought a bitter taste to her mouth. I tasted the bitter flavor of guilt as I watched her shrink, daily," she says, and later, referring to her own drug use, she states that "the cure renewed my body daily, adding those fluids which tasted like mother's milk." This commentary invokes the pre-Oedipal stage of nondifferentiation, but with a twist, for chemo and heroin are processed substances injected into the body, not "natural" secretions developed within it. In an unlikely scenario, the mother and daughter end up hospitalized in the same room, dying and detoxing respectively: "We lie side by side in matching hospital beds,

each with our own IV drip pumping the life back into us. We share the soft glow of a narcotic haze. We feel comforted, and loved, although not by each other. Never by each other . . . It is the first thing we have shared in years."

This opiate fusion of women in an institutional setting looks like not only a repudiation of biological kinship but also a savagely ironic counterpoint to the sacred, monumental time of the pre-Oedipal, and to the film's earlier retellings of melodramatic plots in which a mother merges her identity into that of the daughter. In fact, the scene utterly mocks synchrony. Here, only in the distorted time and space of the drug trip can mother and daughter truly meet one another, the "bad blood" (as the film puts it in an intertitle) that has failed to bind them replaced by human-made liquids that succeed. The narrator goes on to disrupt the pre-Oedipal scene by describing herself and her mother taking photos of one another: "And I am caught, laughing. And guilty, full of her fluids." "Her fluids" are neither milk nor blood; in fact, it is quite possible that the addict daughter has stolen from her mother's stash of morphine. Here too, photos conceal as much as they reveal, index difference and antagonism as much as they foreground likeness and love. Recalling the figure with which *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* ends, that of the drugged-out postman lunching on a "burrito and a joint" who inadvertently creates[38] the conditions under which Jane meets a potential lover, this scene suggests something important about queer affinities, class, and the politics of time. I have argued that when industrialization synched up not only wage-based production but also household labor, it created new bodily hexes cued to the needs of profit but experienced as modes of enjoinment: work "force" and house-bound "family" were social relations borne of historical change that felt like natural and eternal affinities. We might read the kinds of jointures created by drugs, by contrast, as a figure for a class-conscious queer politics: one in which we understand ourselves as embedded in social relations—temporal as well as spatial—that may be generated *by* capital and thus illusory, but that also take on aspects and functions not fully serviceable *for* capital, just as narcotics can bind people to one another as well as to the drug trade.

Lover's ties between women resonate with Bonder's way of thinking about relationality in terms of alternative temporalities, and sexual dissidence in terms of temporal dissonance. Consider, again, the saint's tale that opens the novel: *To save herself from marriage, Lucy gouged out her own eyes; but Agatha appeared to her and declared, "Thou art light."* Earlier, I argued that this scene ended with a disembodied, eternal time. But Agatha also affiliates with Lucy through nonconsanguinous blood, insofar as both women bear gaping wounds: in Catholic iconography, Saint Agatha is usually represented holding her own chopped-off breasts on a platter. Agatha's appearance before a female saint-to-be who has gouged out her own eyes suggests the power of blood to conjoin bodies in ways that go beyond the logic of genetic inheritance so often buttressed by the conventions of family photography, and even the puncturing of the hymen or the gushy fluids of pregnancy and childbirth. Indeed, as the medievalist Karma Lochrie writes, the eroticized mystical transports associated with medieval virgin-saints and holy women included fantasies of being "invite[d] to touch, kiss, suck, and enter the wound of Christ."[43] This trope invokes a feminized and punctured Christ whose wound is open to penetration like a vagina, and the simultaneous possibility of a hymen kept all the more intact by these vulval and oral, nonpenetrative "sealings" between Christ and his female followers. Following Kristeva, we might say that in the passage above and in Lochrie's account blood confounds the boundary between inside and outside to figure a subject split and made holy by *temporal* difference, by encountering the "slow time" of the eternal. And this binding of profane to sacred time is emphatically corporeal.

Lover's traffic in saints offers a model of the wound as a mode of affiliation rather than of poststructuralism's eternally deferred relationality, of transformation rather than of shared victimhood, and of breaching the boundaries of time rather than those of ego or identity. This wounded mode also goes beyond kinship as the dominant model for conceiving cross-temporal binding. It seems akin to Luce Irigaray's call for a rethinking of generativity "without reducing fecundity to the reproduction of bodies and flesh" and without the sacrifice of bodies, or even bodily pleasures. In Irigaray's view, the temporality of the body itself could usher in "a new age of thought, art, poetry, and language: the creation of a new *poetics*."[44] In "Questions to Emmanuel Levinas," she declares—somewhat cryptically—that pleasure itself is time.[45] Perhaps she means that in contrast to a male bodily economy where the sacrifice signaled by orgasmic expenditure produces momentary bliss, pleasure in the female bodily economy engenders more pleasure and thus more time. In this typically French feminist economy, then, pleasure figures multiplication and, crucially, change. Whether or not this bodily metaphor for a new temporality is essentialist, it is surely heteronormative in the way it ignores the poten-

tial of, say, anal eroticism or sadomasochism to multiply pleasure on male and female bodies alike. Yet Irigaray does offer the radical suggestion that bodily pleasure and temporality have something to do with one another (though the copulative "is" seems too simple). In suggesting a relationship between pleasure and time, she implicitly critiques the temporalities associated with heteronormative family: against generational and domestic time, she posits a time of the erotic encounter—but one that is also different from the ephemeral, urban, quickie encounters celebrated by the antisocial thesis and (alas) available so much more often to men than to women.

The Physics of Love has both a visual and a verbal lexicon for encounters between mother and daughter that exceed or eschew the familial forms of time I have described. Its image track figures the relationship between mother and daughter as a plate smashing on the floor, a wrecking ball hitting a building. The narrator speaks of the pair in terms of force and object, action and reaction, hand and striking surface, citing Newton's laws of inertia, acceleration, and reciprocal actions. But the final words of the video, spoken by the narrator, suggest that these encounters do not add up, either to a relationship or to history: "In this story, everyone suffers amnesia." Here she refers back to an earlier synopsis of an apparently made-up film:

> [Voice-over:] In this story a woman gets into an accident and becomes an amnesiac. After wandering like a vagabond for many years, she arrives and gets waitressing work in a small town. As she becomes friendly with the daughter of the restaurateur, she begins to have strange and violent memories. Convinced she has done something terrible to her own family, and has lost her memory to cover it, she attempts suicide. The young girl comes to her rescue and with this act her faith and memory are both restored.

Here, the amnesia trope serves to literalize the time of the maternal melodrama and of domesticity in general, for as several critics have argued, amnesia is popular culture's symptomatic trope for a loss of historical memory.[46] At the same time, though, the synopsis above suggests that amnesia also offers an escape from the burden of family. As the narrator puts it in another summary that seems to refer self-reflexively to *The Physics of Love* itself: "In this story characters bounce off of one another like atoms following independent trajectories. No action has irreparable consequences. No behavior has moral value . . . In this story there is no beginning, middle, or end."

In other words, under the spell of amnesia, all encounters are as contingent as those between brute matter. By the end of Bonder's video, the domain of physics, which is not dependent on memory or time and for the most part not subject to a visual economy, has trumped the logic of genetics and likeness. *The Physics of Love* leaves it at that. There are no rescues, no daughter figures rushing to restore maternal memory, no mothers capable of implanting lasting impressions. And the narrator has also fully replaced both the mother and the temporal regime of family with drugs: "I lived for those moments, those seventy seconds a day I was truly alive . . . Then the seventy seconds shrank down to nanoseconds, and those irreplaceable moments became electrons."

These atomic metaphors invoke the idea of unbound, pure energy, available for physical pleasure, for creative thought, and for self-directed action. In *Physics*, the mother's bodily energy, her capacity for eros and creation, has been expropriated for heterosexual reproduction and for unpaid work in the home. And as the images of whirling miniature appliances that punctuate the film suggest, capitalism has expropriated her bodily energy not only for profit in the workplace but also toward wanting and purchasing the commodities that promise domestic efficiency and order. In the first, more straightforward kind of expropriation, the homogeneous and segmented time necessary for wage work parallels and in some sense determines the mechanized domestic time through which the middle class articulates itself, and allows for the quantification of whatever else the body could do, as expropriable surplus labor or as leisure. In the second, more insidious kind of expropriation, the monumental and pseudo-progressive time of the commodity parallels and in some sense determines the temporal plenitude that depends on the effacement of household labor. This form of "time" actually annuls time, promising on the one hand release from work and death, and on the other a recurrent newness and vigor, both of which are continually deferred into the next product, and the next. Capitalism synchs up these times to direct the paltry amount of bodily energy left over after the extraction of surplus labor toward the consumption of ever more objects that seem to supplement that "lost" bodily energy. This theft of the body's capacities is achieved through a manipulation of time that Bonder's opiate seconds, nanoseconds, and moments refuse: thought literally as time available

neither for work nor for shopping, the vitality signaled by Bonder's microtemporal reappropriations could, at least theoretically, be used for a new physics, for the making of new life-worlds beyond the shared drug trip (though not necessarily excluding it).

Lover takes that project of world making to the nth degree, beyond any recognizable social form: its women float in and out of several houses such that setting is almost impossible to nail down, and their relations exceed the categories not only of family but also of political movement or subculture. Interestingly, Harris traces her astonishing novel back to her mother's differential seizure of perhaps the quintessential commodity-experience marketed to poorer women. "I was a child aesthete . . . a lonely, anxious, skinny child," she writes in her preface to the reissue of *Lover*. "On a daily basis my mother compellingly described to me how worthless I was. I had early on elected to love beauty rather than love or hate my mother" (xvi–xvii). It turns out that this is what mother and daughter have in common. Shortly after Harris is born, her mother moves in with a beautician and becomes a hardcore fan of beauty pageants:

> My mother told me why she'd moved in with the beauty parlor operator: "Because I worship beauty."
>
> Rather than love or hate me, my mother elected to become a confirmed aesthete; I became acquainted at Mother's knee, so to speak, with a way to overwhelm reality that has come to be called the gay sensibility. (xxii)

In an echo of Plato's *Symposium*, Harris's mother rejects heterofamilial love or hate for an infinite potential to attach to objects, people, and ideas in ways that "overwhelm reality," passing on her love of a déclassé aesthetic production as yet another junk inheritance.

But Harris's gay (or at least camp) sensibility, though indebted in part to her mother, involves thinking sex itself in the broadest terms, as the taking back of a corporeal energy otherwise devoted to work and family, as the unsynching of the normative habitus for which "beauty" is a mere placeholder. This is what Harris means when she writes of her characters becoming "lovers," which is something more than, and yet depends on, sex between women. As she writes in the preface, "I am no longer as certain as I used to be about the constituents of attraction and desire; the less certain I become, the more interesting, the more like art-making, the practice of love and lust seems to me" (xxi). Becoming-lover, then, is a way to "overwhelm" the heterosexualized elements or "constituents" of attraction and desire: not only the supposedly natural continuum from female anatomy to feminine self-identification to desire for the opposite sex to pregnancy and childbirth but also the sequential, irreversible, teleological time that orders and gives meaning to this continuum.

Harris's becoming-lover seems akin to what Audre Lorde describes in "The Uses of the Erotic"; it is an eroticized joy in a form of creation that supersedes reproduction but is still anchored in the body.[47] It is also akin to the Deleuzean body-without-organs, whose connections across multiple surfaces catalyze new becomings.[48] For instance, dreaming of herself as "lover," Flynn fantasizes that "all she must do to maintain paradise is to fuck women . . . Flynn gives them all they need; and they do not burst but multiply and Flynn increases" (123). Her "increase" consists of herself, her multiplications engendering more pleasure rather than children, expanding the potential for encounter rather than sealing off the household. The novel also formally enacts the dynamic between encounter and increase on several registers: at the very least I would include the shifting first-person narrative voice that seems to multiply points of view; the untagged dialogue that allows speech to attach to more than one speaker; and the simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal force suggested by the kinship diagram, which seems at once to draw potentially everything into the family circle and to push major characters to its edges. In short, this is a novel based on the idea that accidental encounters — the very same ones figured as random in *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* and as violent in *The Physics of Love* — produce pleasure and affiliation, which then produce more encounters that produce more pleasures, and so on. As it turns out, this has implications for rethinking *class* as well as sexuality in temporal terms that go beyond *Coal Miner's Granddaughter*'s theatricalized arrhythmia, or *The Physics of Love*'s attention to and interventions into the tempo of domesticity. *Lover*'s structure of complex and contingent transgenerational affiliation gives form to a revolutionary theory of time, one that binds class and sexuality.

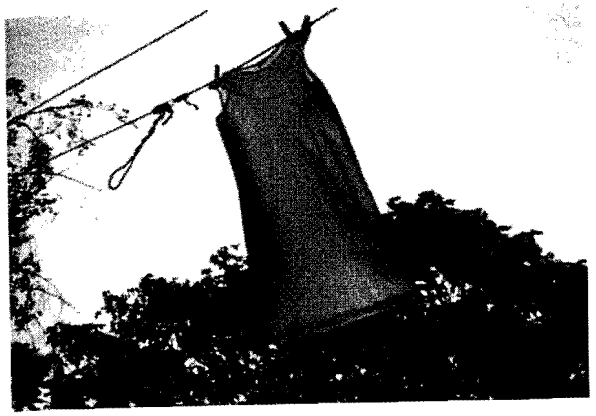
In a complex argument to which I cannot do justice in this space, Cesare Casarino links the enchainment and amplification of noncommodified bodily pleasures to class struggle through just such a theory.[49] Gesturing at something like a physics of love, Casarino cites the long history of Marxist thinkers, beginning with Marx himself, who engage with Lucretius's *clinamen*. This term names the arbitrary and unaccounted-for element of chance that causes an atom to deviate from what would otherwise be a straight fall downward, to touch another atom and thereby to

create new matter. The atomic collision inaugurates a temporality similar to Irigaray's time of *poesis*—and indeed Harold Bloom identified it in his famous *The Anxiety of Influence* as one particular temporal logic that poesis can take: a turning back to literary ancestors that is also, both deliberately and inevitably, a misreading.[50]

For Casarino as for Bloom, the clinamen is a time of creation, of material and semiotic transformation and extension; in Casarino this comes without self-denial or exploitable surplus. Following Negri, Casarino writes that "time *is* the turbulent and intractable becoming of substance, time *is* productivity—and nothing else."[51] As productivity, the time of the clinamen does not defer fulfillment; it is at once means and end (and thus sounds a great deal like Irigaray's conception of pleasure). But tracking the term back to Harold Bloom's appropriation of it, the time of the clinamen also names a form of productivity that allows the atom's original path, which we might call, for our purposes, *history*, to be viewed anew: in the sparks that fly when atoms collide, "it is the continuum, the stationing context, that is reseen."[52] That Bloom Oedipalized the clinamen by figuring the collision as one between anxious poets and their mighty precursors should not blind us to its figurative power. For it heeds the call to make, of the sufferings and pleasures of one's predecessors, something new.

It is this form of temporality—one might call it simply the capacity to effect change in ways informed by but not die-cast by the past—that capitalism both liberates in the form of collectivized labor and then attempts to lock in for itself in the forms of both abstract labor and the commodity, which depend on quantifiable and expropriable segments emptied of historical time. Or, to put it differently, time can be money only when it is turned into space, quantity, and/or measure. Outside of a capitalist and heterosexist economy, though, time can be described as the potential for a domain of nonwork dedicated to the production of new subject-positions and new figurations of personhood, whose "newness" is not without historical insight, though it does not follow in any precipitated way from the past.[53]

In *Physics*, the possibility for new figurations of the sort I have suggested appears only in passing, in the languid sequence of images that ends the film. An old man, played by Bonder's father, slowly twirls a white dress glowing in the sunlight as it hangs from the ceiling of his porch. Shot in close-up black-and-white, a pair of lace curtains flutters. With only her torso showing, a woman wearing a long skirt whirls in circles and the skirt



6. Still from *The Physics of Love*.
Copyright Diane Bonder, 1998. Courtesy of Kathy High, Mona Jimenez, Liss Platt, and Elizabeth Stephens.

dips and sways. Caught in the barbed wire atop a chain-link fence, strips of cloth and pieces of plastic bag flap unevenly in the wind. The narrator utters the film's last line, "In this story, everyone suffers amnesia," over a shot of a clothesline on which hangs a white chemise, lit from behind, waving gently in the breeze (see figure 6). The laundry returns us to the history that hurts, to the drudgery of the domestic sphere, and indeed, on the left-hand side of the screen, a small loop of clothesline hangs down like a noose: both this and the aforementioned barbed wire suggest that the daughter cannot fully escape domesticity. But the motion of fabric in these last few shots suggests a certain openness and play, a temporal multidirectionality, as things move back and forth and around and around. The motif of the fold certainly suggests something about the way memory works—that it is more tactile than visual, more about brief and achronological touches of one moment to another than about the magisterial sequence of generations in history.[54] The undulating fabrics, standins for the earlier atomic encounters, also suggest something about pleasure. Casarino writes: "The fulfilled moment of pleasure would constitute the point at which desire folds back upon itself so as to go on producing other such points, other such moments. Pleasure is the fold of desire: it is the immanent point of *tangency* between our bodies and the force of desire . . . It is only deep from within the folds of such a temporality that one can begin to ask—as Spinoza does ask in the *Ethics*—what the body can do, what a revolutionary and liberated body might be."[55]

Textiles are an apt metaphor for the tactile meeting of body and desire, even for skin itself as the body's most delicate and voluminous surface of tangency. And *Physics* offers up the body as just such an absent presence, or missing possibility, within its folds upon folds: its dresses and skirts and chemises are like skins, empty of bodies, ready for them, yet also material in and of themselves, encountering only themselves as they move.

Lover offers a bit less on the level of imagery, though Harris grants at least a few of her characters the possibility of a bodily time released from both heteronormativity and, somewhat more obliquely, capitalist discipline. Samaria, having fallen in love with her granddaughter Flynn, escapes by boat to an island across from the home the women all share and stumbles across a severed head: "Gazing on a severed head was ease; it was rest. It took on the light of her working concentration: watching, she sighed. Something had happened, then she—like work—had begun to happen to the first thing" (206). Here, Samaria moves from the object of happening ("something had happened [to Samaria]"), to its co-agent, along with work ("she . . . had begun to happen to [the something]"). Work makes the worker "happen" rather than depleting her. The head Samaria gazes on belongs to a shadowy character, the male murderer of a nameless nine-year-old, and Daisy or Samaria have murdered him in revenge. But it also refracts an earlier image of Flynn, who in the novel's beginning had attempted to separate her head from her body, harnessing it to a machine so that she could be all brain and not subject to the vagaries of sexual desire. The return of the severed head represents, oddly enough, a certain restoration of Flynn to herself. For "Flynn," thinks Samaria, "was no longer recognizable except as lover" (206). As lover, Flynn now has some of the artistic capacities Veronica possessed all along; these are made concrete in Flynn's decision to become a rope-dancer: "[Flynn] goes back up, ready, nerveless, her arms her only balancing pole. She puts one foot out, readies the second. Beneath her is lamplight and space; and smells of old wood, turpentine, colors. Before she moves, she breathes. It is as if she breathes the colors—yellow to blue, brown to green to purple. Then she is into the light and gone, nearly across before she has even begun, Veronica wrote, the end" (213–14).

Flynn's synesthetic breathing of colors and movement "into the light" recall Saint Agatha saying to Saint Lucy "Thou art light." Each scene suggests a body both restored and transformed, but Flynn disappears rather than reentering the visual economy of the family photograph with which the novel began. That Flynn can be "nearly across before she has even begun" also points toward a looped rope, a folded temporal order, a convoluted history in which beginnings and endings touch.

As the consummate lover, though, Veronica has the last word, for the final sentence bleeds right into "Veronica wrote, the end," establishing that she has been both a character in and a writer of *Lover*. Throughout the novel, she has been producing new forms of subjectivity and new types of human beings, not only seducing women into lesbianism but also forging the new spatiotemporal representational orders that her "lovers" both emblematize and require. One of these is indeed the by now familiarly postmodern order of the simulacrum: Veronica is a forger of paintings for which there are no originals, and a time-traveler who "at any moment . . . can render herself again into all the creatures she started as" (7). Indeed, the novel is filled with fakes; to give only a few examples, Flynn has "become interchangeable with her fake . . . [and] no-one, not even Flynn, can tell them apart" (9); the novel's only two male characters, Bogart and Boatwright, spend most of their time making a gigantic foam-rubber doll; and of course there is the passage I cited earlier in which Daisy mockingly asks Veronica "Which is the mother, which the forgery?" (212). Thus *Lover* certainly privileges "unnatural" reproduction, at once denaturalizing motherhood, linking it to women's other creative, culture-making activities, and suggesting webs of caretaking and exchange for which the normative kinship diagram and generational logic seem entirely inadequate. And the forgeries can be read as a postmodern reworking of monumental time insofar as they do seem to evacuate history, not into a timeless domestic order but into a kind of cubist space, with times touching one another at odd angles. But what makes the process of "forging" so interesting in this novel is that it is so tightly linked to sexual pleasure. Being "lover" ultimately seems to mean being able to engage erotically, corporeally, with the fake: "When I did become a "lover—" Flynn says, "Veronica stopped painting me—because my face did not seem real anymore" (155). And here, of course, we see yet again Veronica's link to St. Veronica, whose imprint of Christ's "real" face in death—a touch with a textile—helped facilitate a religion based on an economy of imitation, replication, and metamorphosis.

This bodily contact with and enactment of forgery is where, I want to suggest, we can perceive this novel's most counterintuitive class accent, and the meeting or syncopated simultaneity of its queer and class accents. In 1983, Fredric Jameson offered the provocative suggestion that multinational capitalism (the emergence of which he famously dates at 1973)

offers a different sort of pleasure from the Barthesian *jouissance* of the 1960s, a new experience that Jameson calls "the pleasure of the simulacrum."[56] This pleasure is a historically specific version of the Burkean Sublime, or the experience of encountering something so awesome, of such force or magnitude, as to endanger, shrink, or question the very autonomy and sanctity of the individual body and psyche—and perhaps a more collectivized version of the sexualized self-shattering that Bersani and others link to queer epistemology.[57] Jameson contends that the culture of simulation, its routine dissolutions of body and ego, may represent "so many unconscious points of contact with that equally unfigurable and unimaginable thing, the multinational apparatus, the great suprapersonal system of a late capitalist technology."[58] In other words, the copy-without-an-original, the whole matrix of mediation under which we live, is both a product of capitalism's ability to penetrate human consciousness *and also* a means by which we may see "behind" that matrix, if only momentarily. Jameson goes on to admonish his readers that any genuinely political demand for sexual pleasure must be both concrete and abstract: concrete in terms of a demand for pleasure in the here and now, and abstract in the way that a particular pleasure must be read as a figure for (rather than, and here I would concur with him, the means of) transforming society as a whole. Thus *Lover*'s traffic in simulacra, its sexualization of the simulacrum whose power lies in its stubborn claim to bodily sensation, becomes in this analysis a mode of apprehending and figuring the *economic* horizon under which Harris herself, along with her own mother, are just so much exploitable flesh. In other words, it is the simulacrum, the figure itself, and not the real that paradoxically enables and enacts a bodily form of apprehending history—both the past and the collectivized potential for change.

In very different ways in the three texts I have discussed, the temporal orders on which heteronormativity depends for its meanings and power, themselves imbricated with the whole system of production and consumption, can be contested only with an equally forceful commitment to thinking queer pleasures. These works suggest that queer pleasures are at once matters of the body, matters of timing, and tropes for encountering, witnessing, and transforming history, with a capital H and otherwise. It is to these reimaginings of specific queer pleasures as modes of historical apprehension—specifically, drag performance, sexual "bottoming," and sadomasochism—that I turn in the next few chapters.

two. Deep Lez

Temporal Drag and the Specters of Feminism

> Every wave has its undertow.
> —Meryl Altman, "Teaching 70s Feminism"

Thus far, I have argued that photographic media reveal, even as in their dominant uses they also coordinate, the diachronic time of reprogenerationality and, more surprisingly, the synchronic, sychronized time of middle-class domesticity. I have also suggested that in several works by lesbian artists the microtemporalities of the queer female body—figured as a matter of chronic pain, violent wounding, addiction, and even atomic collision—counter these dominant uses. Rethinking such postmodern pieties as the similacrum, the works discussed in the previous chapter imagine eroticized modes of sensory contact that have the potential for apprehending horizons of oppression and change. Yet the time implied by their physiological and atomic metaphors is not necessarily *social*; that is, it does not necessarily correlate with the movements of human beings whose bodies are inscribed with contingent and often limiting meanings, and whose collisions take place not in "pure" space but in scenes of differential privilege and on sites already sedimented with import.

In her ongoing project *In the Near Future*, the New York performance artist Sharon Hayes performs yet another series of collisions between bodies past and present, but this time in spaces ghosted by bygone political moments. The project began when, once a day from November 1 to November 9, 2005, Hayes stood in the street at a different location in which an important activist scene or public speaking event had taken place.[1] Each day, she held a simple black-and-white lettered placard with a slogan, a new one every day: "Actions Speak Louder than Words." "We Are Innocent." "Strike Today." "Who Approved the War in Viet Nam?" "Abolish H.U.A.C." "The American President Might Have to Call in the National Guard to Put This Revolt Down." "Nothing Will Be as Before." "I AM A MAN." "Ratify E.R.A. NOW."

10. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 78.

11. Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination."

12. Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*. On the monument, see also Luciano, *Arranging Grief*, 169–214.

13. Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins*.

14. Berlant, "Slow Death."

15. Kristeva, "Women's Time."

16. Luciano, *Arranging Grief*, 25–68.

17. Bhabha, "DissemiNation."

18. Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life*, 33.

19. Luciano, *Arranging Grief*, 177.

20. See Floyd, "Making History."

21. An early and important consideration of how discourses of racial atavism and decline inflected early sexology is Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*. On lesbians as figures of cybernetic and other futurities, see the essays in Doan, ed., *The Lesbian Postmodern*.

22. For Vivien, see, for instance, Vivien, *The Muse of the Violets*; Robin Vote is a character in Barnes's *Nightwood*; the quoted text is from Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," in *The Waste Land and Other Poems*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Penguin 2003), 2–8, at 6.

23. Laplanche and Pontalis, "Deferred Action." The classic essay on *Nachträglichkeit* is Freud, "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through."

24. Abelove, "Some Speculations." On the narrativization of sex, see Morrison, "End Pleasure."

25. Love, *Feeling Backward*.

26. Queer Marxist critics such as Morton have borrowed this term from Ebert, *Ludic Feminism and After*.

27. See Morton, "Pataphysics of the Closet," as well as other essays in the same volume and other Morton essays published elsewhere; Case, "Towards a Butch-Femme Retro-Future"; Champagne, "A Comment on the Class Politics of Queer Theory"; and Hennessy, "Queer Theory, Left Politics."

28. See, for instance, Floyd, "Making History."

29. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*. For formulations indebted to Derridean spectrality, see Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*; early and important interventions into presentist/presence-ist historiography are collected in Fradenburg and Freccero, eds., *Premodern Sexualities*. For a reading of *différence* as dialectical history see Terdiman, *Present Past*.

30. Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire."

31. Williams, "Structures of Feeling."

32. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 102.

33. Lyotard, *The Differend*.

34. Jameson, "The End of Temporality."

35. Ibid., 712.

36. Ibid., 713.

37. Here the work of Bersani is exemplary. See, especially, "Is the Rectum a Grave?"

38. Freud, "On Narcissism," 64.

39. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 17.

40. Butler, "The Lesbian Phallus," 60.

41. Some of the stars of the original films from which Higgins's compilation was made died of HIV-related infections or AIDS. *K.I.P.* can also be read as homage to Crimp's famous essay "Mourning and Militancy," which argues that the AIDS-era gay community ought to acknowledge its grief as well as its rage, particularly its grief over the loss of a sexual culture.

42. Freeman, "Queer Belongings," 297.

43. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.5.188. All lines hereafter cited in the body of the chapter.

44. Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England*. For a broader discussion of kinship as a means of forming and maintaining the state, see Stevens, *Reproducing the State*.

45. Hunt, "A Thing of Nothing," 30–31.

46. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1.2.65. All lines hereafter cited in the body of the text.

47. Mauss, "Body Techniques," 102.

48. Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage*, 318.

49. Mauss, "Body Techniques," 104, his emphasis.

50. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 260.

one. Junk Inheritances, Bad Timing

1. See Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*.

2. See Hirsch, *Family Frames*.

3. Smith, *American Archives*, 11.

4. Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 6–7.

5. Smith, *American Archives*, 120.

6. *Coal Miner's Granddaughter* (dir. Dougherty).

7. Kotz, "Inside and Out," 3.

8. Another work engaged with the project of theorizing a queer degenerative cinema is *Video Remains* (2004, dir. Alexandra Juhasz). On the New Queer Cinema, see the essays in Aaron, ed., *New Queer Cinema*.

9. Rich, "New Queer Cinema" (1992), rep. in Aaron, *New Queer Cinema*, 15–22. For a useful description of the formal attributes and temporal politics of the New Queer Cinema, see Pendleton, "Out of the Ghetto."

10. It also occasionally, though certainly not always, revealed and troubled the

role of whiteness and Western nationalisms in dominant constructions of homosexuality. On the racial politics of the New Queer Cinema, see Muñoz, "Dead White."

11. Rich, "The New Queer Cinema," 16, 19. This lacuna is currently being filled in cinema studies, particularly in essays on the work of Todd Haynes: see DeAngelis, "The Characteristics of New Queer Filmmaking"; Gorfinkel, "The Future of Anachronism"; Landy, "'The Dream of the Gesture'"; Luciano, "Coming Around Again"; and O'Neill, "Traumatic Postmodern Histories."

12. Felski, "Nothing to Declare."

13. Annamarie Jagose has argued, for example, that the nineteenth-century field of sexology defined sexuality itself as "a sequential effect" (*Inconsequence*, 24). That is, sexologists understood object-choice as the outcome of a series of biological, psychological, and moral aberrations; they posited gender identity as the cause of sexual object-choice; and they consistently figured female and lesbian sexualities as masculine derivatives.

14. Wings, "A Maverick among Mavericks," 82–83.

15. For a discussion of how intimacy is a matter of timing, see Zerubavel, "The Language of Time."

16. Bhabha, "DissemiNation."

17. Wings, "A Maverick among Mavericks," 83.

18. Renan, "What Is a Nation?" 53.

19. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 23.

20. *Oxford English Dictionary* online, 2nd ed., 1989, "accent," *n.* 1.

21. *The Physics of Love* (dir. Diane Bonder).

22. Harris, *Lover*. For page citations from the 1993 preface, I have used the reprinted edition published by New York University Press. For page citations from the novel, I have used the original, unprefaced first edition by Daughters, Inc.

23. On queer dykes' rebellion from the feminist mother, see Creet, "Daughter of the Movement."

24. Harris, "Introduction to Lover," xix. Hereafter cited in text, parenthetically.

25. Harris, *Lover*, 5. Hereafter cited in text, parenthetically.

26. I owe this insight about Christianity to Molly McGarry.

27. Kara Thompson's prospectus for a dissertation titled "A Romance with Many Reservations: American Indian Figurations and the Globalization of Indigeneity" alerted me to the complex structure of the convolute, Benjaminian and otherwise.

28. Bouquet, "Figures of Relations."

29. Stockton, "Growing Sideways, or Versions of the Queer Child," 300.

30. See Kristeva, "Women's Time."

31. Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life*, 32. See also Brown, "Women's Work and Bodies in *The House of the Seven Gables*."

32. Gillis, "Making Time for Family," 8. See also Gillis, "Ritualization of Middle Class Life in Nineteenth Century Britain"; and Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time*.

33. Gillis, "Making Time for Family," 8–9; on the Sunday drive, ibid., 12. On Christmas, see Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas*, esp. 90–175.

34. Gillis, "Making Time for Family," 13.

35. Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 7.

36. Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury," 62. Note that Elsaesser is referring to the mise-en-scène, but it's also clear that mid-twentieth-century women were encouraged to replicate this effect in their own homes. Dana Luciano's "Coming Around Again" alerted me to the importance of this article.

37. I am indebted to Kendra Patterson Smith's seminar paper of 2005, "Queer Relics: Martyrological Time and the Eroto-Aesthetics of Suffering in Bertha Harris' *Lover*" (unpublished), for an illuminating discussion of the role of the female hagiographic genre in *Lover*.

38. Kristeva, "Women's Time," 206.

39. Ibid., 207.

40. Ibid., 209.

41. Ibid., 210.

42. Felski, "Nothing to Declare."

43. Lochrie, "Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies," 190.

44. Irigaray, "Sexual Difference," 5, emphasis hers.

45. Irigaray, "Questions to Emmanuel Levinas," 181.

46. James, "I Forgot to Remember to Forget," 18. See also Halberstam, "Forgetting Family."

47. Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic."

48. See Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*.

49. Casarino, "Time Matters." The essay takes up Giorgio Agamben, Louis Althusser, Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, Karl Marx, and Antonio Negri.

50. Bloom, "Clinamen, or Poetic Misprision."

51. Casarino, "Time Matters," 190.

52. Bloom, "Clinamen, or Poetic Misprision, 42.

53. Negri, *Marx beyond Marx*, 71, cited in Casarino, "Time Matters," 200.

54. On touches across time, see Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*.

55. Casarino, "Time Matters," 202–3, my emphasis.

56. Jameson, "Pleasure," 71.

57. Ibid., 72.

58. Ibid., 73.

two. Deep Lez

1. Hayes has since taken *In the Near Future* to Vienna, Warsaw, and London.

2. I take this phrase of J. L. Austin from the art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson, who uses the term "infelicity" to describe Hayes's textual utterances. See Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, and Bryan-Wilson, "Julia Bryan-Wilson on Sharon Hayes," 279.