Two. Sexually Ambiguous Revolutions

The transition from the colonial period to the Revolutionary era, during which a daring political experiment took root, led to the emergence of a new nation. Fundamental to this new nation was the reshaping of ideas about gender and sexual behavior as they related to the political concept of the citizen.

The period from the Pilgrims' landing to the early eighteenth century was a time of enormous population growth. In 1700 the Anglo-European population in the Northeast was 250,000. By 1720 that number had almost doubled to 475,000. This surge in population was accompanied by the rapid growth of cities—by 1725 the population of Boston was over 12,000, nearly doubled from 6,700 in 1700; Philadelphia was home to 10,000 people. New York, although growing rapidly, had just 7,000 residents (by 1800 it would have 60,000). In 1760, colonists numbered 1.5 million—six times the population at the turn of the century.

This expansion of colonies and people meant that the influence of Puritanism was waning. Many of the newer colonies were founded on non-Puritan beliefs.

In 1682 Charles II granted wealthy English Quaker William Penn a large tract of land west of what is now New Jersey. Penn named it Sylvania for its densely wooded terrain, and then renamed it Pennsylvania after his father. (Like many of the colonies, Pennsylvania was a commercial venture that was intended to turn a profit for its investors, in this case through the trading of furs and lumber.) Penn's charter for the new colony reflected his progressive Quaker views. There was freedom of religion for all who believed in God, and a

constitution that called for two "houses" of government and that allowed, in the spirit of a Quaker meeting, "open discourse." Most important, Penn treated the native peoples of the area—primarily the Lenni Lenape, called the Delaware tribe by the Anglo settlers—with respect, buying land from them rather than attacking and taking it. Pennsylvania grew quickly as Quakers from all over Europe settled there, joined by Catholics, Amish, Mennonites, and Jews. Penn designed Philadelphia—the city of brotherly love, denoting many faiths—between 1682 and 1684. Within fifty years it was the second largest urban area in the colonies. Progressive Quaker views on religious freedom and abolition—and later, sexual freedom—would be a strong influence on American political thought.

This rapid growth and diversity meant that the social and religious cohesiveness of the early colonies was lost; the Puritans' strict social demands on the individual were waning and being questioned. The infamous Salem witch trials of 1692 and 1693, in which twenty people were executed and five more died in prison, were a grim manifestation of the excesses of the Puritan imagination. However, the Massachusetts General Court issued a public apology for the trials five years later and eventually granted monetary compensation to the families of those executed. The 1682 Pennsylvania sodomy law did away with the death penalty for sodomy and replaced it with a whipping, six months of hard labor, and the forfeiture of a third of the accused's estate. (Thirty-two years later Pennsylvania made sodomy a capital crime again, reflecting changing demographics and belief systems.)

The growing assemblage of people, social structures, and political entities fostered a sense of pluralism unique to the colonies. But this pluralism did not reconcile the tension between the freedom of the individual and the need for a strong state formally embodied by the personal moral rectitude of the Puritans.

Slaves and Citizens

Despite the progressive inclination of some colonies, the persecuting society persisted. Colonists continued their sexualized treatment of native people, sodomy laws proliferated, and the legal, economic, and cultural institution of slavery was introduced into the colonies. It is impossible to understand American history—including the position of LGBT people—without acknowledging the overwhelming, debilitating effect that slavery has had on this country. From the mid-seventeenth century, organized, profit-driven slavery influenced all aspects of American life. Slavery struck at the heart of the ideals of individualism, personal liberty, and equality that were present, in sophisticated and rudimentary forms, at the birth of the colonies. Slavery was integral to how the colonies, and later the Republic, continued to reconceptualize individual freedom, race, property, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, over 650,000 Africans were brought to North America as slaves. However, this is a relatively small number compared to the twelve million Africans who were transported and sold, mostly in the Caribbean and South America, in the mid-Atlantic slave trade, also referred to as the first Middle Passage.

Slavery arose in the colonies hand in hand with both European and African indentured servitude, which was commonplace. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries more than half of all white European (mostly British) immigrants to the colonies were indentured servants. These were often rural people who, dispossessed of their land and unemployed, were living in poverty in English cities. Their indenture, a contractual agreement with the person or firm who brought them to the colonies, lasted five years, after which they were free.

In the mid to late seventeenth century, laws in the colonies began to change. In 1654 a Virginia court declared that John Casor, an African servant, was legally a slave for life. Gradually, African indentured servants became legally treated as slaves, with no possibility of ending their servitude. This shift occurred for a number of complex reasons, the most pertinent of which is that Africans, in contrast to indentured whites, had no outside social and cultural support systems of other Africans in the country and thus were more easily enslaved.

Contemporary European societies had not promoted or regulated persecution on this large a scale. By 1860, the slave population in the United States had grown to four million, a third of the population in the fifteen (out of thirty-three) states that sanctioned slavery. In some states slaves were in the majority. In 1720, just under 70 percent of South Carolina's population was enslaved.

Slavery was also tied to religious belief. Virginia ruled in 1682 that

> all servants . . . which shall be imported into this country either by sea or by land, whether Negroes, Moors, mulattoes or Indians who and whose parentage and native countries are not Christian at the time of their first purchase by some Christian . . . and all Indians, which shall be sold by our neighboring Indians, or any other trafficking with us for slaves, are hereby adjudged, deemed and taken to be slaves to all intents and purposes any law, usage, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.[1]

Lawmakers in the colonies were constructing a separate class of nonwhite, non-Christian people to be an economic bulwark of free labor. They had several reasons: a growing landowning class that did not want the competition of a new class of freed indentured servants; a shift, mostly in southern states, to agricultural products such as tobacco and cotton that were labor intensive; and a massive westward expansion of colonies that needed labor.

Except for Quakers, most colonists did not consider slavery contradictory to Christian theology. Its proponents justified the practice by citing verses in the Hebrew Bible and the Gospels, including Genesis 9:25–27, in which Noah's grandson Canaan is condemned to slavery: "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers." The biblical justifications for slavery, not unlike the biblical justifications for the condemnation of same-sex sexual activity, were used to both enforce draconian laws and justify extraordinarily harsh punishments.

Because slaves were deemed to be "property," slaveholders had unlimited legal power over them, including the right to sell them for

profit and separate them from their loved ones. Thus slaves were denied the basic right of maintaining relationships with their biological and chosen families. Slave owning was not simply a matter of personal property, but was woven into the social fabric of the Republic. For example, laws held slave owners accountable for not punishing runaway slaves, since such behavior was seen as a threat to public safety.

It would be inaccurate and unwise to make strict parallel claims for the oppression of slaves and gay people. But the extensive legal and social effects of slavery have shaped the social and political context of America today. The acceptance of slavery as a philosophical concept and political reality laid the groundwork for the justification of "othering"—designating a group of people as "different," placing them outside of the legal, social, and moral framework granting full citizenship. As was the case for both native people and religious dissenters, othering is the enactment of Moore's persecuting society and Douglas's sequestering of the impure from the pure. The template of othering in slavery has two main effects that apply to LGBT people and other minorities.

First, slavery constructed a legal system that mandated noncitizenship for slaves (which, after slavery was abolished, evolved into second-class citizenship for African Americans). This denial of citizenship, however, did not release slaves from the obligation of obeying the law, which was often enforced more harshly on them than on full citizens. While racialized slavery—abolished by the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1865—is clearly the extreme example of noncitizenship, its hierarchical legacies are applied to other marginalized groups throughout U.S. history.

Second, the widespread acceptance of legalized slavery reinforced and normalized mainstream society's ideas about moral and sexual inferiority. Just as early Spanish settlers accused native peoples of a natural inferiority and intrinsic sexual immorality, white colonists, even if they were not slaveholders, presumed that Africans were less than human and incapable of moral Christian behavior. To the Europeans, native people and Africans who looked and behaved differently from them were dangerous to the accepted morality of the dominant culture,

and therefore they were treated with varying degrees of moral and social scorn.

Accusations of sexual immorality often took two forms. The first was the charge of dangerous hypersexuality. In the second—and counterintuitive—form, the sexual outcast becomes the object of repressed sexual fantasies of the mainstream culture. This was certainly the case in America, in which dominant culture's sexual fantasies were projected onto the sexuality of the enslaved Africans. These myths included prodigious sexual desire in African women and men and, in the post–Civil War years, the idea that all African men were capable of sexual violence and rape. These projections were used by the dominant group as reasons to maintain their position of physical and social power. A primary reason, for instance, why slave owners depicted enslaved women as hypersexual was to justify their right to rape these women. This presumed hypersexuality was the excuse for white men to be sexual with enslaved women and the reason they needed to be controlled.

The articulation of these sexual fantasies raised enormous anxiety in the dominant culture, thus making the minority group the target of more physical violence. Under slavery, this violence manifested itself in a pervasive culture of sexual humiliation, sexual harassment, and rape, all used to control and subjugate Africans. Projected sexual fantasies tell us nothing about the Africans or their descendants, but a great deal about the women and men who held them. By othering, European colonists began constructing a new national identity and citizenship premised on a massive displacement of their own sexual and gender anxieties onto marginalized groups.

This mixture of erotic fascination and anxiety is embedded in the numerous Indian captivity narratives, such as the best-selling 1682 memoir *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, that were hugely popular from the late seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. These works—usually about European women captured by, then forced to live with (and often marry) native people—excited and titillated European readers, as the "innocence" of "white women" was threatened by the ravenous and dangerous sexuality of nonwhite men. (William Bradford saw a similar

threat at Merrymount with the intermarriage of white men and Native American women.)

This othering of Native Americans was a major way that colonists conceptualized sexuality and same-sex relationships. In a complex mixture of displaced sexual idealization and fear, Native American characters appear as eroticized demons and ghosts in European American literature from the mid-seventeenth century on. In the popular colonial and European American imagination, these Native American characters embodied the overt sexuality and "natural" desire that the Europeans lacked or repressed. These fantasies of native people were, in essence, a critique of what was considered by majority culture to be normative sexual desire and behavior. This idea of nonwhite people possessing a "natural" or uninhibited sexuality—recalling, in a more positive way, how the early Spanish conquistadors saw native people—is inherently racist. Nevertheless, by the mid-nineteenth century it had evolved to become foundational to how America culture was to conceptualize male-male relationships.[2]

Ideas about the "natural" and the "civilized" are often at the heart of how a culture classifies people, groups, and actions. Sexual activity between people of the same sex is often described as "unnatural" in religious and legal discourse—it is contrary to what "nature" or "natural law" intended. This is why sodomy statutes often refer to "unnatural acts." European and colonial society considered itself "civilized" when contrasted with nonwhite peoples. Yet the othering of a behavior or identity as dangerous may, under certain ambiguous conditions, make it more desired. In this way, the "unnatural" became "natural" only when enacted by an already "civilized" white person. This is an example of purity and danger congealing around sexuality and gender.

From Puritanism to Enlightenment Thought

We now refer to the extraordinarily radical political, cultural, and scientific ideas of the eighteenth century, collectively referred to—using a phase coined in the mid-nineteenth century—as the Enlightenment. In

Europe, the Enlightenment drastically transformed intellectual life, majority consciousness, and social structures. Its effect on the colonies was profound, since it led directly to the American Revolution and the establishment of the Republic with the writing of the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Declaration of Rights in 1776.

At heart, the Enlightenment was a rejection of the age of faith—belief and acceptance of ideas and concepts without evidence. The Enlightenment grew out of the new scientific methods of thinkers such as Isaac Newton, who "proved" the existence of gravity in his 1684 *On the Motion of Bodies in an Orbit,* and René Descartes, who in his 1637 *Discourse on the Method* helped invent rationalism, a philosophical system that prioritized logic to arrive at its conclusions. One of the most important claims of the Enlightenment was the insistence that every human being had equal worth, dignity, and personal integrity. However, many of the Enlightenment thinkers who formulated these radical ideas did not apply them to everyone, harboring prejudice against nonwhites, Jews, and women even as they argued for equality. Some even constructed "scientific" evidence to rationally prove a biological inequality.

Some colonialists embraced one of the most radical ideals of the Enlightenment: John Locke's concept of the separation of church and state. For millennia, religious and political structures had been inextricably bound together. The Papacy forced kings and emperors to enact Catholic policy; monarchies were predicated on the divine right of kings; civil legal systems were based largely on canon law. That is why sodomy—in Catholic and Protestant theology, a sin—was written into civil law. The First Amendment's religion clauses—"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"—marked a critical and significant turning point in how the United States would be governed. Certainly the thinking of colonialists such as Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams was enormously influenced by Enlightenment philosophers such as John Locke, Voltaire, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Almost all of the men who wrote the foundational documents of the new American political system were deists—they believed in a supreme being but not necessarily in organized religion,

and they rejected the belief that the scriptures were divinely inspired. They envisioned the laws of United States to be, in true Enlightenment tradition, based on reason and equality.

There was one aspect of continental thought that had no impact on how the founders viewed sexuality. By the mid-1780s many European countries were enacting penal reform to recodify confusing and repetitive statutes and bring laws more in line with contemporary thinking. Sodomy laws were in direct conflict with principles of the Enlightenment that called for personal sexual autonomy. But despite a clearly articulated separation of church and state, the colonies never abolished their sodomy laws.

This was not true in France, which abolished its sodomy law using Enlightenment precepts. In 1789—more than a decade after the American Declaration of Independence—the French National Assembly produced the Declaration of the Rights of Man, boldly stating that true civil liberty included the right "to do anything that does not injure others."[3] By 1791 this progressive thinking reached its logical conclusion when the Constituent Assembly abolished punishments for crimes "created by superstition, feudalism, the tax system, and despotism." These included blasphemy, heresy, witchcraft, and sodomy, all crimes that were distinctly related to the persecuting society throughout European history. The only crimes connected with sex punished under the new French legal code were rape, child prostitution, and the selling of obscene pictures. This extraordinary legal reform had wide-ranging effects when, in 1810, it was incorporated into the Napoleonic Code. As a result, it was implemented in all French colonies and wherever Napoleon established governments in Europe and the Americas.

In the context of the European Enlightenment, such a reform makes sense. Writers such as Denis Diderot, Jean-Paul Marat, Montesquieu, and Voltaire had written about the need to decriminalize personal sexual behavior (which they saw as an ethical decision, not a criminal one), even if they personally thought sodomy was wrong or unnatural. (Voltaire's famous quip about his own forays into male-male sexual activity displays Enlightenment ambivalence: "Once, a scientist; twice, a sodomite.")

Why did the American revolutionaries not follow France's example? Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson attended dinner parties in Paris with some of these philosophers. The notion of sexual autonomy even rearticulated, for Enlightenment thinkers, the Puritan concept of individuality and care of the self and body. Yet not only did the thirteen original colonies keep their sodomy laws, they maintained, elaborated on, and enforced them for the next 212 years. Was it that the United States, composed of colonies rooted in many conflicting religious and civil polities, would be unable to agree on a nonambivalent way to conceptualize sexual behavior? Or was it that a country premised on dissent from England had to continue to assert its identity as such?

A crucial response to this question—which is central to thinking about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people—is that during the Revolutionary era, American culture was undergoing significant and complicated transformations regarding gender. Gender was understood by the majority of Americans as a stable system that had its roots in Genesis 5:2: "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam." Gender is a primary organizational focus in any culture. In the newly formed United States—predicated on revolutionary ideas, yet deeply flawed in the execution of them—concepts of gender would undergo major changes that evidenced this ambivalence. The presentation of a firm, masculine authority as the face of the new American citizen exposed the tension of wanting to be free and needing to assert control.

Inventing the American Man

One of the most important changes of the Revolutionary era was the invention of a new form of American masculinity. As the colonies claimed their political independence from Great Britain, it was clear they would have to establish a new, distinct culture that would reflect their own political ideology. One of the ways they did this was to consciously invent a new "American man" who represented all of the new virtues of the Republic and had little connection to the traditional

Englishman. This new American man was bold, rugged, aggressive, unafraid of fighting, and comfortable asserting himself. This model was in complete contrast to the Englishman, who was stereotyped as refined, overly polite, ineffectual, and often effeminate. The new American man was personified in popular myth-making by rural colonists such as Ethan Allen, who fought the British in Vermont and New York State, and John Paul Jones, the Scottish-born naval mastermind who famously said in battle, "I have not yet begun to fight."

This new action-oriented American man already existed in some form, due to the conditions of survival on the frontier. The Revolution was well fought by the colonists because they were an armed society and "just about every white man had a gun and could shoot."[4] The new American man, a mythic prototype defined by his heroic actions in the colonial militia, was also a prototype of the citizen. Not only were slaves unable to join a militia, but so were friendly native Americans, free Africans, white servants, and white men without homes. These restrictions ensured that the prototypical American man was of a certain class, ethnicity, property, and citizenship status.

A prime example of this fabrication of American manhood is Royall Tyler's 1787 *The Contrast,* the first American-written play produced in the United States. A traditional comedy of manners, the play pitted the foolish, duplicitous, American-born but British-identified Mr. Billy Dimple—a "flippant, pallid, polite beau, who devotes the morning to his toilet . . . and then minces out"—against the play's hero, the very American Colonel Manly, who is all that his names implies. *The Contrast* is insistently didactic and aimed at creating a new American citizen-based culture. The play's prologue states its political purpose: "Exult, each patriot heart!—this night is shewn / A piece, which we may fairly call our own; / Where the proud titles of 'My Lord! Your Grace!' / To humble Mr. and plain Sir give place."

At the play's end, as he is called a coward for refusing to fight with Dimple, Manly explains:

> Yes, Sir. This sword was presented to me by that brave Gallic hero, the Marquis De la Fayette. I have drawn it in the service of my

> country, and in private life, on the only occasion where a man is justified in drawing his sword, in defence of a lady's honour. I have fought too many battles in the service of my country to dread the imputation of cowardice. Death from a man of honour would be a glory you do not merit; you shall live to bear the insult of man and the contempt of that sex whose general smiles afforded you all your happiness.[5]

In one grand speech, Tyler connects the colonial revolution to American manhood, national pride, personal honor, and different-sex desire.

This is, in part, why the United States did not abolish its sodomy laws. Highly gendered societies reinforce traditional ideas about gender through regulating sexual behavior. In the fervor of those revolutionary years and the promotion of a national masculinity, the idea that sodomy laws might be abolished might have been understood, even by Enlightenment men, as counterproductive.

But the creation of a prototype American man presented a host of broader questions and problems. If there was a new American man, did there also have to be a new American woman? Would she be as bold and adventurous as her male counterpart? There is no question that colonial and Revolution-era women worked hard and exhibited enormous physical and psychological strengths; they often ran homes and businesses when men were off fighting. Life was filled with everyday hardships as the country grew and the Revolutionary War continued for eight years. Yet in the traditional Puritan equation of different-sex relationships in a family, a man's strength was defined, enhanced, and complemented by a compliant woman. At this point the myth of the new American man—and the nation's new gender roles—become less coherent. Like all strictly delineated systems of gender, the new American models could not represent the diverse lives of actual people.

The evolving American culture was filled with enormous anxiety over the meaning of gender roles. First, many of the men who conceptualized this new country were not good examples of the new American man. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison,

John Adams, and Alexander Hamilton, with their fine manners, powdered wigs, large estates, and voluminous libraries, were far closer to the image of the wealthy, aristocratic, educated Englishman from which the country was distancing itself. Second, the women in this circle were also well educated and frequently spoke their minds, contrary to the subordinate role women were thought to hold in society. During the 1776 Continental Congress, Adams and his wife, Abigail, wrote one another frequently, and she was direct in her concerns:

> I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. . . . If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.
>
> That your sex are naturally tyrannical is a truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute; but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of master for the more tender and endearing one of friend.[6]

John Adams dismisses her concerns with a joke: "We dare not exert our power in its full latitude. We are obliged to go fair and softly, and, in practice, you know we are the subjects. We have only the name of masters, and rather than give up this, which would completely subject us to the despotism of the petticoat . . ." But it is clear that the new American nation and the new American man valued free white men above women and all other men.[7]

Abigail Adams was not the only woman with these ideas. Over the next decade, women lobbied for suffrage, only to be consistently denied the right to have a voice in their government. While some states allowed female suffrage for a short while, this quickly changed. Women were denied suffrage in New York in 1777, in Massachusetts in 1780, and in New Hampshire in 1784. In 1787 a constitutional convention allowed the states to decide on suffrage; all states but New Jersey denied women

the right to vote. New Jersey revoked female suffrage in 1807. In 1867 the Fourteenth Amendment stipulated specifically that suffrage is the right of male citizens alone.

Just Friends

In societies in which gender and power are inexplicably intertwined, often little respect is given to people who desire their own sex or who do not conform to accepted gender expectations. Same-sex relationships and desires, however, manifest themselves in various, often more socially acceptable, ways. This is especially true in the complicated interplay between companionship, community, and eroticism in people's lives. The clearly defined separate social spheres for women and men—both the public and the private for men, and most often the domestic for women—give rise to clearly defined same-sex cultures, usually referred to as "homosocial." This term does not necessarily imply an erotic or sexual component—although those could, and often do, exist—but rather describes a social construct that emerged in specific ways during the eighteenth century.

Homosocial space at this time gave birth to distinct same-sex relationships that were referred to in popular and literary culture as romantic or intimate friendships. These friendships were important to the women and men who engaged in them—often as important and long-lasting as traditional heterosexual marriages—and were an accepted, praised, and significant social institution. Alan Bray argues that these friendships were largely a product of the Enlightenment—that the ideas of egalitarianism, brotherhood, and rational love (as opposed to uncontrolled, passionate love) helped contribute to a new concept of deeply committed, emotionally passionate friendship between members of the same sex.[8] It is possible that some of these friendships embodied similarities to our contemporary ideas of romantic and sexual relationships. In many ways they were understood as a beneficial and complementary alternative to marriage. A major function of heterosexual marriage was to regulate sexual activity that would lead to

reproduction, but this new idea of friendship, for men as well as women, often provided a more enlightening, expressive outlet.

We can easily find evidence of "romantic friendships" in the lives of both famous and common people. Feminist historians have uncovered extensive, complex networks of female friendships in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and examined what they meant, not only to the individual women but to the society in which they lived.

Personal allegiance could be political allegiance, but not necessarily national allegiance. Women involved in these friendships understood the social significance and resonance, which sometimes challenged social norms, of their deep and intense connections. Sarah M. Grimke, the abolitionist and feminist, signed her letters to her beloved Mary Parker "thine in the bonds of womanhood." Grimke—understanding the implications of "bonds" in slavery—used the phase to signify the deep connection between herself and Parker and how they were bound together as women, as well as oppressed together as women.

The writers' language also situates them in the realm of the erotic. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Eunice Callender of Boston wrote to her cousin and intimate friend Sarah Ripley (whose letters, she wrote, "breathe forth the sentiments of my soul"): "Oh could you see with what rapture . . . all your epistles are open'd by me . . . then would you acknowledge that *my* Friendship at least equals your own, and yours I believe is as true as pure a flame as ever warmed the breast of any human Creature."[9]

This language was common within male romantic friendships as well. Daniel Webster wrote to James Hervey Bingham in an 1804 letter: "Yes, James, I must come; we will yoke together again; your little bed is just wide enough; we will practice at the same bar, and be as friendly a pair of single fellows as ever cracked a nut."[10] Such intensity and devotion were emblematic of how these relationships reflected the newly professed equality and fraternity of society and the nation. The Marquis de Lafayette wrote affectionately to George Washington on June 12, 1799, during the height of the Revolution:

> My Dear General . . . There never was a friend, my dear general, so much, so tenderly beloved, as I love and respect you: happy in our union, in the pleasure of living near to you, in the pleasing satisfaction of partaking every sentiment of your heart, every event of your life, I have taken such a habit of being inseparable from you, that I cannot now accustom myself to your absence, and I am more and more afflicted at that enormous distance which keeps me so far from my dearest friend.[11]

Because of their intensity, intimate friendships could be as complicated as any sexual relationship, and not always smooth, as we see in this letter from LaFayette to Washington, written a few months after the previous one:

> My dear general—From those happy ties of friendship by which you were pleased to unite yourself with me, from the promises you so tenderly made me when we parted at Fishkill, gave me such expectations of hearing often from you, that complaints ought to be permitted to my affectionate heart. Not a line from you, my dear general, has yet arrived into my hands, and though several ships from America, several despatches from congress or the French minister, are safely brought to France, my ardent hopes of getting at length a letter from General Washington have ever been unhappily disappointed: I cannot in any way account for that bad luck, and when I remember that in those little separations where I was but some days from you, the most friendly letters, the most minute account of your circumstances, were kindly written to me, I am convinced you have not neglected and almost forgotten me for so long a time. I have, therefore, to complain of fortune, of some mistake or neglect in acquainting you that there was an opportunity, of anything; indeed, but what could injure the sense I have of your affection for me. Let me beseech you, my dear general, by that mutual, tender, and experienced friendship in which, I have put an immense portion of my happiness, to be very exact in inquiring for

> occasions, and never to miss those which may convey to me letters that I shall be so much pleased to receive.[12]

Lafayette's second letter to Washington can be read a communication from a hurt, angry lover. We have no conclusive evidence that George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette were sexually involved as lovers—nor, as historian Charley Shively points out, do we have any evidence that they were not—but what we do know is that the two men had an intensely emotional, companionate friendship with erotic overtones. Their relationship can only be understood in the context of a national fight for freedom from political oppression and the ideals of the Enlightenment. Passionate same-sex friendships were often public and acknowledged by the culture in which they thrived. As public relationships, they influenced and were influenced by the political culture of the time.[13]

Revolutionary Gender

In 1778 an anonymous contributor to the *Worcester Spy* wrote that the newly formed American people had "broken the line that divided the sexes."[14] At the end of the eighteenth century, three very different people—two real and one fictional, all of them born women—captured the pubic imagination for breaking that divide.

The first was Jemima Wilkinson, a charismatic evangelist who was born a Quaker in 1752. In 1775, during a series of debilitating illnesses and fevers, she believed that Christ entered her body and that she was now neither female nor male, but was commanded to bring her ministry to the new country. She renamed herself "Publick Universal Friend," refused to use the pronouns "she" or "he," and dressed in gender-neutral clerical garments that made her sex unreadable (although contemporary accounts state that many in her audience saw her as male). Wilkinson's gender presentation, as well as her theological message—she preached complete sexual abstinence, strict adherence to a narrowly defined interpretation of the Ten Commandments, unqualified universal

friendship, and the apocalyptic vision of the harshest Hebrew Bible prophets—made her a sensation throughout Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. In the mid-1780s the popular press and pamphlet culture covered her sermons in detail and placed particular emphasis on her sexually ambiguous persona. She had a huge following that verged on a cult and eventually started her own religious settlement in central New York State.

Deborah Sampson Gannett's public career was as noted as Wilkinson's. She was born in 1760 outside Plymouth, Massachusetts. In May 1782, dressed as a man, she enrolled in the Continental Army under the name Robert Shurtliff. She fought in several battles until she was discovered, after being wounded in 1783, to be a woman. She received an honorable discharge and in 1785 married Robert Gannett. In a few years' time they had three children. Sampson Gannett was relatively unknown until 1797 when, in conjunction with the writer Herman Mann, she published a semifictional narrative of her time as a cross-dressed Revolutionary soldier. It was titled *The Female Review: or, Memoirs of an American Young Lady, Whose Life and Character Are Peculiarly Distinguished—Being a Continental Soldier, for Nearly Three Years, in the Late American War.* The work was a straightforward tale that touched on the author's possible homosexuality through descriptions of titillating, affectionate interactions with women. Sampson Gannett's intention in publishing the narrative was to gain public attention for her attempt to be awarded a military pension.

In 1802 Sampson Gannett commenced a series of public lectures about her life. She spent much of her time on stage—after stating that she could not explain why she chose to cross-dress and join the Continental army—extolling traditional gender roles for women. Near the end of the presentation, she left the stage, returned dressed in her army uniform, and executed complicated and physically taxing military drills. Her presentation was extremely popular in Boston, and she repeated it in other New England cities. In 1816, after years of petitioning and with help from Paul Revere, Sampson Gannett was finally awarded the full pensions she deserved by both the state of Massachusetts and Congress.

The Female Review and Sampson Gannett's public performance were popular because her dual public image as a brave soldier and a traditional woman tantalized the post-Revolutionary audience. By consciously refusing to be cast firmly in either gender role, Sampson Gannett insisted that she would be both and neither at the same time.

This transgressive approach to gender identity was also present in an 1815 work of fiction titled *The Female Marine, or the Adventures of Miss Lucy Brewer*. Most probably written by Nathaniel Hill Wright, an obscure Boston literary figure, it is a breathless, first-person narrative that frequently references Sampson Gannett's life. *The Female Marine* tells the story of a young woman who is seduced, impregnated, loses her child, and then is forced to work in a Boston brothel. She escapes and, dressed as a man, spends three years on the USS *Constitution* as a sailor. After many adventures, including potential romantic entanglements with women, she marries well.[15]

The Female Marine was so popular that it brought forth five sequels, testifying to the enormous reader interest in cross-dressing literature. These sequels included a self-defense from the madam of the brothel in which Lucy had been sequestered and a new story of male impersonation by a character named Almira Paul.

The public interest in the topic of female transvestism was not isolated to stories about these three strikingly different women. Late eighteenth-century American literary and popular culture was obsessed with this new notion of the cross-dressed female warrior.[16] Novels such as Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond, or The Secret Witness*; the memoir of famous cross-dressing British sailor Hannah Snell, a popular version of which was published in *Thomas's New-England Almanack*; several plays based on the life of Joan of Arc; numerous broadsides of popular ballads detailing the exploits of cross-dressing female soldiers and sailors—all were extraordinarily popular with audiences.

These sermons, books, lectures, pamphlets, novels, plays, and ballads struck a chord with the new American audience. Female and male readers saw themselves at the center of a whirligig, a quickly evolving culture that was breaking from the old world but not yet settled in the new. Howard Zinn points out that "between the American Revolution and the Civil War, so many elements of American society

were changing—the growth of population, the movement westward, the development of the factory system, expansion of political rights for white men, education growth to match the economic need—that changes were bound to take place in the situation of women."[17] Certainly the examples of Wilkinson, Sampson Gannett, and the fictional Lucy Brewer all point to new, if not explicitly articulated, freedoms that were opening for women in a country that was expanding on an almost daily basis. But they also are an indication of new ways of looking at gender.

In highly public ways, these three women opened a liminal space in which new ideas and constructs of gender and sexual behavior could be discussed. In news reports and public presentations, both Wilkinson and Sampson Gannett were mythologized—even fictionalized as much as Lucy Brewer. Historian Susan Juster claims that Wilkinson is best understood as a "spiritual transvestite."[18] She makes the point that Wilkinson took seriously Paul's claim in Galatians 3:28 that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In this sense, Wilkinson's "transvestism" is indeed spiritual. But it is also gendered. It can easily be understood as a purely American phenomenon that blurs the line between male and female while at the same time creating the perfect U.S. citizen—literally the Publick Universal Friend—who is both religious and secular. This image supports and yet contradicts the Revolution's new gender roles, as well as the concept of separation of church and state central to the Constitution. To be neither male nor female, to experiment with coded representations of lesbianism, to banish—as Wilkinson did—traditional pronouns was a radical embrace of new articulations of public sexuality and understanding of gender.

Can we call Jemima Wilkinson, Deborah Sampson Gannett, or Lucy Brewer transgender or transvestite? Not by the standards and the vocabulary of their time. These women, however, helped set the groundwork for a national culture that was open to experimentation in gender and sexual identity. The connecting line moves backward as well as forward. It applies to the Enlightenment-influenced passionate friendships and the nationalized gender roles for women and men of the

Revolution. Some of these new manifestations of gender behavior offered alternatives to social expectations, but they can also be seen as the building blocks to a more concise dichotomy between the public and private as a form of gender regulation.

The reality of the persecuting society never completely vanishes from U.S. history. It becomes increasingly refined. In the colonies, social and political persecution of certain groups was relatively indiscriminate, making few distinctions among individuals within a minority group. Gradually, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, we see a growing cultural schism occurring between the private and the public, which was largely the reason people were able to explore nontraditional gender roles. It was permissible for women and men to have passionate private friendships, which may have included an erotic or sexual component, as long as they conformed to accepted gender norms in public. It was acceptable for women such as Sampson Gannett to transgress gender norms in public as long as they adhered to traditional norms in their personal relationships.

This increasing split in public spheres and private spheres was a major shift in how sexual behavior and gender—and also citizenship—were conceptualized. Full citizenship was, and to a large degree still is, predicated on keeping unacceptable behavior private. This complicated relationship between the public and private is at the heart of LGBT history and life today.

Three. Imagining a Queer America

Through the Revolution, Americans developed a firmer sense of themselves as a nation. As the century moved forward, the process was complicated by the abolition of slavery, a huge increase in Asian and European immigration, and debates about the enfranchisement of women. By the 1870s many minority groups in America had cohesive collective identities, and individuals within those groups saw themselves as Americans. These collective and individual identities, sometimes race- or immigrant-based, were frequently rejected by those who were here earlier and saw themselves as the "real Americans." The challenge of how diverse peoples could form a single American identity resulted in tremendous institutional and individual violence against people whose identities or actions were viewed as threatening to mainstream culture.

At the center of this violence is the Civil War, fought between 1861 and 1865. As terrible as this war was, America was already familiar with violence. In the War of 1812, the Republic fought the British for almost three years. The fighting was brutal. Fatalities for both sides mounted to 24,181 from combat and rampant disease, with 8,184 combatants wounded.

Three decades later, in the midst of U.S. westward expansion, Mexico declared war on the United States in response to the U.S. annexation of Texas. Fought between 1846 and 1848, the Mexican War claimed the lives of 6,863 soldiers and 14,126 civilians. In addition, along with the endless, and sometimes deadly, violence perpetrated on African slaves, extraordinary violence was used to put down numerous slave rebellions. As the country expanded to the west and the south,

hundreds of thousands of native peoples were forcibly evacuated from their homelands and relocated in the West. Thousands of these native peoples died during the relocation, and thousands more died resisting.

Violence was intrinsic to the expansion of the United States, in a process known by the self-aggrandizing euphemism "manifest destiny." As the Federal government rapidly acquired land—the Louisiana Purchase occurred in 1803, the Mexican Cession in 1848, and the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867—the size of the United States more than tripled in just over forty years. For the growing white population of the United States, the early years of the nineteenth century were still heady from the excitement of the Revolution. There were ongoing crises, but also a sense of fresh possibilities and new ideals of personal and national freedom. The Revolution had been conceptualized and run by colonial men of wealth—it was essentially a transfer of power from the European imperial elite to the local elite—but its radical ideals took root in society. This new spirit is best exemplified in the rise of soldier, and later president, Andrew Jackson in the 1820s. Jacksonian democracy, an early populism, extended the vote to all white men, not just property-owning white men. Jackson's championing of the common man—a rejection of both the "civilized" behavior of the Englishman and the eastern "city man"—extended and expanded the revolutionary masculinity of the War of Independence.

Expansion: The West

Jackson stood in bold contrast to the founding fathers. He, along with Daniel Boone, Jim Bowie, and Davy Crockett, represented the new American hero and was mythologized in popular culture for his masculine adventures. These iconic men who refused to follow society's rules were emblematic of the era's westward expansion. America was not only the land of the free, but the land of fewer rules.

Certainly the women and men who migrated westward in the nineteenth century lived under far fewer rules, including those governing gender and sexual behavior. Because of harsh living

conditions, the absence of strict legal policing, and relaxed demands of accepted propriety, gender norms in the West were markedly different from those in the East. For men, this meant being able to embody the image of the American man who was bold, adventurous, and often uninhibited in his behaviors, including sexual behavior. Not all men in the West adhered to this image; there were tradesmen, preachers, and schoolteachers as well as men who worked the mines and the plains. Still, the early and mid-nineteenth century West promulgated the image of an independent man who did not need civilization, women, or even overt heterosexuality to define his manhood.

For women, westward expansion often meant a release from the enforced gender restrictions they faced in the East. Wives and mothers in the western territories often did not conform to urban gender expectations, since they were running farms or ranches. Many women took on jobs traditionally held by men. Martha Jane Cannary Burke, known as Calamity Jane, was an innkeeper and an army scout. "Stagecoach Mary" Fields, a former slave, gained fame as a stagecoach driver, the first African American driver for the U.S. Post Office. There is extensive documentation of women who dressed and passed as men. Charlotte Darkey Parkhurst, known as One-Eyed Charley or Six-Horse Charley, was an expert stagecoach driver who turned to ranching and lumbering when her job was eliminated by the railroad. San Francisco's Jeanne Bonnet was repeatedly arrested for cross-dressing and petty theft; at the end of her short life, she organized prostitutes to leave their work and make a living shoplifting.

Life on the western frontier was frequently sex-segregated, creating homosocial communities and relationships. Brothels, for instance, which thrived in towns such as Deadwood and Rapid City as well as cities such as San Francisco, resulted in complicated female-centered social groups as the women who worked in them offered one another comfort and safety. Little concrete evidence can be found of sexual relationships among men or women within these communities. Such relationships, even if tacitly acceptable, would have been illegal and thus unacceptable or dangerous to record.

There is, however, strong evidence in fiction and poetry of the frequency of intense male-male relationships. (Less evidence exists for

women's same-sex relationships in the West, perhaps because women had less access to publishing.) Jonathan Ned Katz documents the implicit eroticism in these relationships in Western poet Badger Clark's "The Lost Pardner":

> We loved each other in the way men do
> And never spoke about it, Al and me,
> But we both knowed, and knowin' it so true
> Was more than any woman's kiss could be.
>
> We knowed—and if the way was smooth or rough,
> The weather shine or pour,
> While I had him the rest seemed good enough
> But he ain't here no more!
>
> What is there out beyond the last divide?
> Seems like that country must be cold and dim.
> He'd miss this sunny range he used to ride,
> And he'd miss me, the same as I do him.
>
> It's no use thinkin'—all I'd think or say
> Could never make it clear.
> Out that dim trail that only leads one way
> He's gone—and left me here!
>
> The range is empty and the trails are blind,
> And I don't seem but half myself today.
> I wait to hear him ridin' up behind
> And feel his knee rub mine the good old way.[1]

These verses, written in the early twentieth century, offer a glimpse of what a romanticized, homosocial world of the American West meant in American culture. Nineteenth-century American western culture produced the mythic cowboy whose iconic image resonates today as the prototypical American male.

This is a central paradox of U.S. masculinity. Masculinity has been increasingly defined by active heterosexual desire and relationships, yet is also defined by participation in an all-male homosocial world that has the potential for sexual interaction. This paradox is predicated on the idea that men are more free outside of the "civilizing" presence of women, who demand they behave in accord with artificial social standards. "Civilization," often signified by home and family, is contrasted with "the wilderness," which becomes a male refuge. As cultural critic Chris Packard notes, "The cowboy is queer; he is odd; he doesn't fit in; he resists community."[2] The myth of the American West often locates civilizing forces in the teeming, conformist, urban East—the antithesis of the natural wilderness. The mythic, lone cowboy, sometimes coupled with a "pardner," is emblematic of the revolt against not only social dictates and conformity, but also institutional heterosexuality.

The cowboy is culturally positioned as a man outside of the law. Clark's poem "The Outlaw" argues that the cowboy and the outlaw are the same. The internal struggle it conveys—metaphorically, a cowboy breaking a horse—is between the natural man, "the beast," and the civilized man.

When the devil at rest underneath my vest
Gets up and begins to paw
And my hot tongue strains at its bridle reins,
Then I tackle the real outlaw.
When I get plumb riled and my sense goes wild
And my temper is fractious growed,
If he'll hump his neck just a triflin' speck,
Then it's dollars to dimes I'm throwed.

For a man is a man, but he's partly a beast.
He kin brag till he makes you deaf,
But the one lone brute, from the west to the east,
That he kain't quite break is himse'f.[3]

“The Outlaw” is an example of the internal conflict between control and liberation, a struggle that also reflects the ambivalence of society at large. The relationship between the cowboy and his “pardner” is distinct from the idealized romantic friendship seen in the letters of Daniel Webster or Lafayette. The cowboy is an isolated man, and his intimate friendships have more to do with being away from civilization, as this excerpt from Owen Wister’s 1891 short story “Hank’s Woman” demonstrates. Here two intimate friends call off their futile attempts at fishing to go swimming:

> “Have yu’ studied much about marriage?” he now inquired. His serious eyes met mine as he lay stretched along the ground.
>
> “Not much,” I said; “not very much.”
>
> “Let’s swim,” he said. “They have changed their minds.”
>
> Forthwith we shook off our boots and dropped our few clothes, and heedless of what fish we might now drive away, we went into the cool, slow, deep breadth of backwater which the bend makes just there. As he came up near me, shaking his head of black hair, the cow-puncher was smiling a little.
>
> “Not that any number of baths,” he remarked, “would conceal a man’s objectionableness from an antelope—not even a she-one.” . . .
>
> We dried before the fire, without haste. To need no clothes is better than purple and fine linen. Then he tossed the flap-jacks, and I served the trout, and after this we lay on our backs upon a buffalo-hide to smoke and watch the Tetons grow more solemn, as the large stars opened out over the sky.
>
> “I don’t care if I never go home,” said I.[4]

This domestic scene, complete with making dinner, is “home”—literally “home on the range”—for the narrator, but a home removed from civilization and women. These men are outside of society’s control, but feeling at home with themselves.

These sentiments in nineteenth-century American western literature increase in the later decades of the century, when the West was becoming more “civilized.” They offered imaginative alternative

models to heterosexuality and some forms of same-sex friendship. Clark's and Wister's writings, published just after the time when the Old West was the frontier between nature and civilization, exemplify how the associations between same-sex desire and frontier life became all the more powerful as reverberations in memory. Whatever the sexual and affectional lives of the cowboys, the decidedly nonheterosexual myths that grew about them became deeply entrenched in mainstream culture. The actual conditions that bred these myths, however, were much more systemic than two "pardners" alone on the range.

The Beginnings of Community

From its earliest days, San Francisco was known as a wide-open town: an urban space with few social restrictions and a high tolerance for illegal behavior, including same-sex sexual activity and deviation from gender norms. The roots of this reputation can be found in the mostly all-male culture of the gold rush. Saloons, dance halls, rowdy theaters, and brothels were plentiful and, except for a small number of female workers, were patronized only by men.

In 1846 the population of San Francisco—then called Yerba Buena—was just over five hundred. In 1948 gold was discovered at nearby Sutter's Mill in Coloma. The next year nearly 90,000 people journeyed to Northern California, only half of them from the United States. By 1855 the area's population had swelled by another 300,000. San Francisco's population grew correspondingly. In 1850 it had jumped to 25,000, a decade later it was 56,800, and by 1870 it had nearly tripled to 149,500. Housing consisted mainly of rooming houses and cheap hotels, augmented by all-male public baths. In 1849 there were only three hundred women, two-thirds of them prostitutes, in a population of 25,000.

In 1850 organized same-sex dancing was perfectly acceptable, as was entertainment featuring cross-dressing. The public social life in San Francisco was so vibrantly nonconformist that British adventurer Frank

Marryat, in his 1855 memoir *Mountains and Molehills, or Recollections of a Burnt Journal,* dubbed it "Sodom by the Sea."

The racial and ethnic diversity of this nearly all-male population contributed to a culture of uneasy and frequently disrupted tolerance unique to the area and the time. Many men who migrated to California and San Francisco were from South America, China, and Europe. In 1870, when San Francisco was the eighth largest city in America, close to 60 percent of its citizens were of foreign birth. There was also a large influx of fugitive slaves and free Africans during this time; in 1867 African Americans could use public transportation, and by 1869 they could vote. Six years later, San Francisco schools were desegregated for blacks. Hispanic and Chinese communities were central to creating San Francisco's economic infrastructure and shaping its sensibilities in food, architecture, and popular culture.

But as the presence of immigrants grew, so did strong anti-immigrant sentiment. In the 1850s there was organized mob violence against people from Latin America. Anti-Chinese sentiment led to the passage of the federal Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which was enforced until 1943. Miscegenation laws were frequently enforced. Institutionalized racism against some groups was integral to social interactions, but was constantly being negotiated. In San Francisco, individual freedom was both enhanced and hampered by community structures. Its hospitality toward nonnormative sexual and gender expression had much to do with its constantly changing social structures.

A second reason that nonnormative sexuality and gender was relatively acceptable in San Francisco after 1849 was its thriving economy. The presence of large businesses such as Wells Fargo and the city's position as a major seaport made San Francisco a center of commerce, a status enhanced in 1869 by the completion of the transcontinental railroad. John D'Emilio argues that historically, LGBT communities benefit in societies predicated on free labor—that is, a non-family-unit-based economy in which unmarried women and men are able to sustain economic independence.[5] The boom economy of San Francisco in the second half of the nineteenth century is a prime example.

A closely connected idea is historian George Chauncey's argument that gay and lesbian communities found their earliest manifestations in poor and working-class cultures, because wealthier classes could maintain a greater degree of personal privacy.[6] For LGBT people, the luxury of privacy was antithetical to forming communities, which are, by their nature, public in bringing similar people together.

Even as it prospered economically, late-nineteenth-century San Francisco insisted on maintaining its identity as an outlaw culture. But not all San Franciscans embraced the idea of a wide-open town. In response to rising crime in 1851 and 1856, vigilante committees were formed to combat vice. These groups wielded, often by violence, enormous social and political power in efforts to curb what they saw as social anarchy and excessive sexuality. This tension between social and sexual freedom and the demands of mainstream society to control and contain these actions—essentially demanding that they remain private, often by use of violence—contributed to the shifting terms in the national debate about sexual behavior and gender. San Francisco provided, for the first time in U.S. culture, an idea of how a community of "outlaws" can form and what can happen when concepts of private and public become more integrated.

Writing a New National Culture: The East

Paradoxically, as westward expansion made the country geographically larger, new technologies—the invention of the telegraph in the late 1830s, the growth of a national railway system, and the telephone in the 1870s—facilitated travel and communications, making the country smaller and more cohesive. In these conditions we see the eventual flourishing of a distinctly American intellectual and literary culture. Washington Irving's 1820 short story "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" promotes the ideal of robust, decidedly heterosexual masculinity, as embodied by "Brom Bones" Van Brunt, over that of the lanky, effeminized schoolteacher Ichabod Crane. Both men are courting young Katrina Van Tassel until Brom Bones frightens Crane out of town.

Irving's gender and sexual message is clear. Crane's first name means "inglorious" in Hebrew, which Bible-literate contemporary readers would know. And as literary critic Caleb Crain points out, much of the action of the story takes place by "Major André's tree." This is a reference to Major John André, the British officer—generally thought to be a lover of men—who collaborated with Benedict Arnold and was hanged by George Washington as a spy in 1780.[7] For Irving, nearly four decades after the Revolution, the new, clearly heterosexual American man was an imperative.

In contrast to Irving, also in 1820, nineteen-year-old Harvard student Ralph Waldo Emerson was writing entries in his journal about Martin Gay, a fellow student three years younger to whom he was attracted. Two years earlier, when he had first seen Gay, Emerson wrote:

> I begin to believe in the Indian doctrine of eye-fascination. The cold blue eye of [Emerson deleted the name here] has so intimately connected him to my thoughts & visions that a dozen times a day & as often . . . by night I have found myself wholly wrapped up in conjectures of his character and inclinations. . . . We have had already two or three profound stares at one another. Be it wise or weak or superstitious I must know him.[8]

Crain notes that Emerson's attraction to Gay was a form of the nineteenth-century ideal of "sympathy." In this context, sympathy—a form of empathy that, as Crain writes, "allows us to feel emotions that are not ours"—is an expansive form of romantic friendship. The deeply felt connective emotion of sympathy allows one to not only value a friend for his or her emotional sincerity, but to take imaginative leaps toward understanding and sharing the emotions of another. This new understanding of the possibilities of shared emotion was likely inflected by the new America of wide-open western spaces, natural landscape, and the outlaw.

In 1837 Emerson published "Nature," an essay fundamental in defining transcendentalism: the distinctly American philosophy promoting individual spiritual transcendence through experiencing the

material world, especially nature, rather than through organized religion. The next year, in his "American Scholar" speech, he urged his audience to rethink the idea of the American man (by which he meant humans) and to create an independent, original, and free national literature. Animated by the ideal of an expansive sympathy influenced by the "naturalness" of America, Emerson argued for an egalitarian society that values all of its members' individual contributions to a whole: the doctrine "that there is One Man,—present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man. Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier."[9]

Emerson's vision of American equality, the basis for his strong antislavery and pro–women's suffrage beliefs, has roots in the Enlightenment and in his radical, nature-based vision of Christianity. But it is especially rooted in his ability to admit and emotionally explore his attraction to—his sympathy with—other men. Same-sex affection was integral to understanding the mutually beneficent dynamics of the individual in society. This egalitarian same-sex affection placed the rugged individualism of the Revolutionary man into a new context, not of conquering an American landscape but of emerging from it and being at one with it. This was the cornerstone of a new way of understanding gender, desire, and personal and social liberty.

The feelings Emerson had for Martin Gay (his journals indicate "sympathy" for other young men as well) did not stop him from marrying twice and fathering four children. Emerson did not easily embrace all aspects of this sympathy. In 1824 he wrote in his journal, "He that loosely forgets himself here & lets his friend be privy to his words & acts which base desires extort from him has forfeited like a fool the love he prized."[10] This is an example of an internal tension that reflected a larger tension between sympathy and overt sexuality: that is, moving from a private emotion to publicly expressing that emotion.

Emerson was not the only person dealing with this conflation of desires, emotions, and political ideas. A wealth of homoerotic sentiments are present in the poems and journals of Henry David Thoreau. Meditations on friendship run throughout his journal, and by

the 1840s they became increasingly erotic: "Feb. 18 [1840]. All romance is grounded on friendship. What is this rural, this pastoral, this poetical life but its invention? Does not the moon shine for Endymion? Smooth pastures and mild airs are for some Corydon and Phyllis. Paradise belongs to Adam and Eve. Plato's republic is governed by Platonic love."[11] Thoreau's invoking of Endymion, Corydon, and Plato strongly suggests a homosexual subtext; the two mythological figures were iconic representations for same-sex male desire in Renaissance art, and the *Republic* was, in part, an analysis of male friendship and love. Thoreau is using friendship as a metaphor here. However, his attraction to the eroticized male body appears throughout his journals without mythological trappings, but rather with a decidedly transcendentalist bent:

> [June 12, 1852.] Boys are bathing in Hubbard's Bend, playing with a boat (I at the willows). The color of their bodies in the sun at a distance is pleasing, the not often seen flesh-color. I hear the sound of their sport borne over the water. As yet we have not man in nature. What a singular fact for an angel visitant to this earth to carry back in his note-book, that men were forbidden to expose their bodies under the severest penalties! A pale pink, which the sun would soon tan. White men! There are no white men to contrast with the red and the black; they are of such colors as the weaver gives them. I wonder that the dog knows his master where he goes in to bathe and does not stay by his clothes.[12]

Thoreau's message is that civilization, with its "severest penalties," is most unnatural. He is arguing that nature not only allows for "exposure" but is a space for racial equality, one wherein even the idea of "whiteness" is exposed as a lie. Alluding to classical literature and the European culture it inspired was a common method for nineteenth-century American intellectuals to discuss sexuality and sexual behaviors. Used consciously to reinforce ideas about American citizenship and democratic structures, the older culture safely places the sexuality at a distance.

Margaret Fuller, a leading figure in the transcendentalist movement and author of *Women of the Nineteenth Century,* the first major feminist publication in the United States, was also connecting to same-sex erotic intimacy and a new American ideal. In 1843, several years after viewing Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen's *Ganymede* at a Boston exhibition, Fuller wrote "Ganymede to His Eagle," a poem about the beautiful boy abducted by Zeus, in the form of an eagle, to be his lover and cupbearer. Here the cupbearer speaks to the eagle:

> Before I saw thee, I was like the May,
> Longing for summer that must mar its bloom,
> Or like the morning star that calls the day,
> Whose glories to its promise are the tomb;
> And as the eager fountain rises higher
> To throw itself more strongly back to earth,
> Still, as more sweet and full rose my desire,
> More fondly it reverted to its birth,
> For, what the rosebud seeks tells not the rose,
> The meaning foretold by the boy the man cannot disclose.[13]

Caleb Crain notes that Fuller is referring not only to the implicit homoeroticism of the original myth but, more important, to the eagle as "the emblem of sovereignty of the United States." Thus she consciously conflates mythological same-sex desire with the democratic progress of the nation. Fuller is indicating that the longing for freedom implicit in same-sex desire and sympathy cannot be fully expressed—the rosebud cannot tell the rose what it feels—because its power, at root political, emanates from being unspoken. In much of this literature is an underlying assumption that unspoken feelings are stronger than articulated ones. In 1839, at the age of twenty-nine, Fuller wrote to a woman friend of long standing:

> With regard to yourself, I was to you all that I wished to be. I knew that I reigned in your thoughts in my own way. And I also lived with you more truly and freely than with any other person. We were truly

> friends, but it was not friends as men are friends to one another, or as brother and sister. There was, also, that pleasure, which may, perhaps, be termed conjugal, of finding oneself in an alien nature. Is there any tinge of love in this? Possibly![14]

Emily Dickinson, who wrote explicitly about intimacy between women in the mid-nineteenth century, showed her large body of work to a handful of people and published fewer than a dozen poems. A member of a well-to-do Amherst, Massachusetts, family, she was unmarried, lived a reclusive life, and was passionately devoted to her friend Sue Gilbert (who later married Dickinson's brother Austin). The homoerotic content in Dickinson's poetry is notable for its time. The language breaks from that of romantic friendships and reflects the transcendentalist idea that desire is more powerful and true in its imaginative parameters:

> Her sweet Weight on my Heart a Night
> Had scarcely deigned to lie—
> When, stirring, for Belief's Delight,
> My Bride had slipped away—
>
> If 'twas a Dream—made solid—just
> The Heaven to confirm—
> Or if Myself were dreamed of Her—
> The power to presume—
>
> With Him remain—who unto Me—
> Gave—even as to All—
> A Fiction superseding Faith—
> By so much—as 'twas real—[15]

Dickinson's directness, like Fuller's letter, is remarkable; she clearly has complete access to erotic desires for other women. This is also true in her letters to Gilbert, of which over three hundred survive. She wrote

the following just as Austin Dickinson was beginning his courtship of Sue Gilbert:

> June 11, 1852
>
> Susie, forgive me Darling, for every word I say—my heart is full of you, none other than you is in my thoughts, yet when I seek to say to you something not for the world, words fail me. If you were here—and Oh that you were, my Susie, we need not talk at all, our eyes would whisper for us, and your hand fast in mine, we would not ask for language—I try to bring you nearer, I chase the weeks away till they are quite departed, and fancy you have come, and I am on my way through the green lane to meet you, and my heart goes scampering so, that I have much ado to bring it back again, and learn it to be patient, till that dear Susie comes.[16]

What does it mean that Dickinson wrote poems, some explicit in their eroticism, that she never shared? Were they intended for a larger audience? Or did she simply write them for herself? There is no concrete answer. But Dickinson's quiet, domestic life was the reality for many women, and her poetic dictum "tell the truth but tell it slant" (Poem 1129) recognized that writing outside of prescribed codes was dangerous, especially for a woman.

For men, the social and political atmosphere of mid-century allowed for public expressions of same-sex desire when it was intertwined with democratic ideals of community and nation. Herman Melville's 1850 review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse* in *The Literary World* is written in the voice of a man reading Hawthorne's book in an empty barn:

> A man of deep and noble nature had seized me in this seclusion. . . . The soft ravishments of the man spun me round about in a web of dreams. . . . But already I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul. He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him; and further and further shoots his strong New England roots into the hot soil of my Southern soul.[17]

Melville's articulation of erotic attraction for Hawthorne is extraordinary, even if coded. In a culture in which same-sex desire was not discussed openly, Melville's erotic words are completely absorbed into the American nation, from the North to the South. This vision, at once private, public, national, and emotional, is emblematic of how same-sex desire had become American.

The same-sex desires presented in literature were idealistic. In reality, same-sex sexual behavior was not always easily understood. The highly public marriage and highly private lives of Julia Ward Howe and Samuel Gridley Howe demonstrate how nineteenth-century domestic culture was shaped by the emotional and sexual complications of people's lives. Born in 1801 to a prominent Boston family, Samuel Howe was inspired by Byron to fight in Greece's 1820 revolution. Returning to Boston, he dedicated himself to abolition and the education of the blind, a radical idea at the time. He also formed a passionate friendship with Charles Sumner, later one of the most vocal antislavery voices in the Senate, that was central to his life. In 1843 Howe married Julia Ward, later a prominent writer, social reformer, and author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." While on his honeymoon, Samuel Howe wrote to Sumner:

> You complain of your lonely lot, & seem to think your friends will lose their sympathy with you as they form new ties of love, but dearest Sumner it is not so with me and in the days of my loneliness & sadness I never longed more for your society than I do now in my joy & in the whirl of London life: hardly a day passes but [I] think of you & long to have you by my side.[18]

For most of the marriage, Julia was emotionally estranged from her husband because of his attachment to Sumner. In the third year of wedlock, while raising two children, she wrote to her sister: "Where shall I go to beg some scraps and remnants of affection to feed my hungry heart? It will die if it not be fed."[19]

During this time Julia Ward Howe began writing *The Hermaphrodite,* an uncompleted novel that details the life and loves of

Laurence, who is both woman and man. Laurence has "bearded lip and earnest brow . . . falling shoulders, slender neck, and rounded bosom" and tells Emma, a woman who falls in love with him/her, "I am as God made me." Howe uses the noted Greek sculpture known as the Sleeping Hermaphrodite as a central image in the work and, as Fuller did with classical allusion, uses it to convey a multiplicity of meanings. The bi-gendered Laurence is often confused about her/his life, but feels filled with enormous emotional and sexual potential that is, like the sculpture, sleeping. Although Emma calls Laurence a "monster," Howe's attitude to the character is kindly ambivalent. Later in the book, when Laurence has a passionate, unconsummated affair with sixteen-year-old Ronald, Howe is overtly sympathetic.

Scholar Gary Williams argues that *The Hermaphrodite,* which was not finished or published in Howe's lifetime, was her way of attempting to understand her husband's relationship with Sumner. Not having a specific language for a love between men that can coexist with a love between a man and a woman, Howe imagines a man-woman, in the classical mode, who is capable of both. Julia Ward Howe knew how to directly express what was wrong with her life. In 1854 she published *Passion-Flowers,* a book of poems that openly spoke of her isolation as a woman and mother in a difficult marriage. But *The Hermaphrodite* is not simply coded fiction about a personal problem. It is a manifestation of a culture in which gender role limitations and nontraditional sexual relationships were actively, albeit in a coded way, discussed as political issues. Howe's involvement with a wide range of social change movements—helping to organize the American Woman Suffrage Association, convening the first national meeting of women ministers, and, as editor of *The Woman's Journal,* advocating a feminist argument for peace—informs how she thought her views about gender and sexuality were a vital component of full citizenship.

Same-Sex Desire and the Democratization of Race

The influence of the transcendentalists and their bold philosophical and social views promoted a public discussion that treated issues such as race, science, reproduction, gender, and sexual activity outside the realm of religion. For many of the transcendentalists, science replaced theology as they embraced the new work in the natural sciences, including the theories of Charles Darwin. One of the transcendentalists' greatest political legacies—articulated by Thoreau, but embraced in various forms by most of his circle—was the concept of civil disobedience: an individual's legitimate resistance to legal authority when her or his standard of personal morality is compromised.

Throughout the century, the subject of race and racial difference was central to discussions of personal liberty and how the promised ideal of freedom could be manifest in a country that, amid institutionalized slavery, was becoming more diverse. These discussions happened in myriad venues: pamphlets, broadsides, sermons, lectures, novels, and theatrical dramatizations such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Discussions of race did not focus solely on abolition. Leslie Fiedler's 1948 essay "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" elucidates how American literature has a history of connecting same-sex male eroticism and interracial friendships between white males and men of either Native American or African descent. Such relationships appear in novels by James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain, among others. The association between male homoeroticism and race was not accidental and was easily integrated into American culture. Fiedler claims that these relationships are not just about race, but are reflective of a desired male flight from the "civilization" of women and the family into the freedom of natural wilderness.[20]

Sexuality and race are about bodies. In the nineteenth century, when both of these categories were hotly debated, they were inextricably bound with one another.[21] Firm categories of race were disrupted by the shifting lines between indentured servant and slave and between slave and freeman, and by the children of interracial couples. Intense same-sex friendships blurred the line between the romantic, the platonic, and the erotic. The categories of same-sex and opposite-sex relationships were consistently being redefined in relation to the categorization of race. Film historian Richard Dyer notes that same-race heterosexual

relationships reproduce racial similarity.[22] Different-race relationships do not. Fear of mixed-race offspring led to a variety of legal statutes designed to control individuals' behavior connected to race, especially sexual behavior. These statutes included miscegenation laws that prohibited marriage between people of different races; the first American miscegenation law was passed in 1664 in the colony of Maryland. They also included a wide range of Jim Crow laws, passed mostly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that mandated segregation.

The joint construction of the categories of race and sexuality had implications for people who desired those of the same sex. Because same-sex couples could not have children, their relationships, while illegal under sodomy laws, were less scrutinized under race laws than heterosexual relationships and could often go unnoticed if the parties involved were discreet (as was always mandated by the sodomy laws). Because it was not reproductive—and thus, ironically, was safer—same-sex interracial coupling was often the subject of certain genres of fiction or travel literature. These works set a cultural standard in gay male writing and iconography in which interracial erotic relationships were a central theme. As an embodiment of the "sympathy" of social equality, as well as erotic desire, that is evident in Emerson and Thoreau, this literature became a place in which ideas about citizenship, especially in relationship to sexuality, gender, and race, could be publicly articulated and discussed.

Many of these homoerotic novels are considered canonical to American literature (even as the same-sex eroticism is rarely discussed). Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), as well as *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846) and *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (1847), are discussed in high school and college English classes. Charles Warren Stoddard's books, such as *South-Sea Idyls* (1873), *A Trip to Hawaii* (1885), and *Island of Tranquil Delights* (1904), popular when published but infrequently read today, also contain explicit homoerotic content. These same themes, to a lesser degree, can be found in works such as James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* (1826), Richard Henry Dana Jr.'s *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

(1884). The prominence of these titles indicates that homoerotic themes continue to be part of a vital discussion in American culture.

Melville's novels, partially based on his South Pacific whaling ship expeditions, contain passages describing erotic feelings between sailors and island men. In *Omoo,* Melville writes:

> In the annals of the island are examples of extravagant friendships, unsurpassed by the story of Damon and Pythias: in truth, much more wonderful; for, notwithstanding the devotion—even of life in some cases—to which they led, they were frequently entertained at first sight for some stranger from another island.[23]

In the next chapter, the narrator describes how he became the object of one native's affections:

> Among others, Kooloo was a candidate for my friendship; and being a comely youth, quite a buck in his way, I accepted his overtures. By this, I escaped the importunities of the rest; for be it known that, though little inclined to jealousy in love matters, the Tahitian will hear of no rivals in his friendship.[24]

The relationship dynamic gets more complicated in *Moby-Dick,* when Ishmael, the narrator, half-willingly shares a bed at the inn with the South Pacific harpooner, Queequeg:

> Upon waking next morning about daylight, I found Queequeg's arm thrown over me in the most loving and affectionate manner. You had almost thought I had been his wife. The counterpane was of patchwork, full of odd little parti-coloured squares and triangles; and this arm of his tattooed all over with an interminable Cretan labyrinth of a figure, no two parts of which were of one precise shade—owing I suppose to his keeping his arm at sea unmethodically in sun and shade, his shirt sleeves irregularly rolled up at various times—this same arm of his, I say, looked for all the world like a strip of that same patchwork quilt. Indeed, partly lying on it as the arm did when I

> first awoke, I could hardly tell it from the quilt, they so blended their hues together; and it was only by the sense of weight and pressure that I could tell that Queequeg was hugging me.[25]

In this passage, implicit homoeroticism is juxtaposed with the domesticity of the classic New England quilt. Melville has titled this chapter "The Counterpane," so there is no question that he intends for us to compare Queequeg's multicolored tattoos with the designs of the quilt: they are one and the same, inseparable. The homoeroticism is not expressed as an exclusive identity, but rather as a marker of democracy and American civilization, which is neatly folded into the "uncivilized" Queequeg. Melville's use of the metaphors of weddings and marriage throughout the book reinforces his vision of a republic resonant of interracial, same-sex relationships that blend nature with civilization to the point of creating a "natural" democracy.

Stoddard's work, two decades later, is laced with similar scenes, often more overtly erotic in tone and description. Here the narrator first meets Kána-aná:

> So Kána-aná brought up his horse, got me on to it in some way or other, and mounted behind me to pilot the animal and sustain me in my first bare-back act. Over the sand we went, and through the river to his hut, where I was taken in, fed, and petted in every possible way, and finally put to bed, where Kána-aná monopolized me, growling in true savage fashion if any one came near me. I didn't sleep much, after all. I think I must have been excited.[26]

After the narrator returns to the United States, he misses his chum and muses on what it would mean to bring him to "civilization": "I could teach him to dress, you know; to say a very good thing to your face, and a very bad one at your back; to sleep well in church, and rejoice duly when the preacher got at last to the 'Amen.'"[27] Stoddard presents a complicated relationship between the sexual freedom that Kána-aná represents and the narrator's desire to bring his friend to "civilization," even as he admits that civilization is riddled with repression and

hypocrisies. Like Melville, Stoddard is concerned with finding a way to merge what he idealizes as sexual freedom and lack of social constraint with the conventions of U.S. life. His attempt remains all the more powerful as a radical ideal, not a reality.

Aside from fiction, few records document same-sex behaviors during this time. In his mid-century diaries, Philip C. Van Buskirk, an American marine, details mutual sexual interactions among sailors. They include mutual masturbation (called "going chaw for chaw") and anal intercourse, as well as sexual and romantic relationships between older sailors, often officers, and cabin boys as young as thirteen. In 1853 his diary records an older sailor's opinion about sex between men. While the sailor would punish men who had sex with men on land, he had no desire to do so at sea: "What can a feller do?—three years at sea—and hardly any chance to have a woman. I tell you . . . a feller must do so. Biles and pimples and corruption will come out all over his body if he don't."[28] The open sea, like the open range, by offering escape from social condemnation, allowed for the articulation of same-sex desire and made same-sex sexual behavior natural and even utopian. Leslie Fiedler rejects the idea that male-male sex occurred because men were isolated from women in homosocial places; he suggests instead that this all-male isolation was "sought consciously as an occasion for male encounters."[29]

Yet few of these same-sex erotic relationships among men at sea were interracial, furthering highlighting that when authors used the theme of same-sex, different-race eroticism, they did so to discuss the place of race in American society. Clearly, this theme resonated with readers. Melville's *Omoo* and *Typee* had a wide readership (*Moby-Dick* was not appreciated until the twentieth century), as did Stoddard's *South-Sea Idyls*. While romantic friendship, "sympathy," racial mixing, and the desire to flee civilization were literary conventions of the time, in Melville's and Stoddard's novels these themes becomes explicitly indicative of same-sex desire. In this context, Melville's allusions in *Omoo* to Damon and Pythias (common in nineteenth-century writing on male friendship) become clearly sexualized. In the early chapters of *Moby-Dick,* Melville mentions Sodom and Gomorrah as a clue to his subtext.

In the United States at this time, there was a strong, growing culture of women writers, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote about race relations; none of them touch on same-sex, interracial erotic relationships. Perhaps social prohibitions against women writing sexually tinged material, or reader's expectations that subject matter concern the domestic rather than exulting the natural wilderness, prevented them from doing so.

Although depictions such as *Moby-Dick* and *South-Sea Idyls* modeled a progressive view of sex and race relationships, they also carried mixed messages. They were implicitly racist in "othering" men of color, routinely described as savages and barbarians. But they also value and praise these men for being "natural," untainted by the social and sexual repression that was embedded in American culture. Melville and Stoddard, because they were writing about same-sex couples, actively blurred these boundaries. Kooloo is both a "primitive" and a churchgoer; Queequeg's "savage" tattooed arm becomes the New England quilt; Kána-aná must be "civilized," but civilization is hypocritical, not natural. The same-sex-desiring American man feels the pull of freedom and persecution most keenly and is a ripe figure for exploring and understanding that dynamic. Whatever problems Melville and Stoddard betray in how they treat race, their work is clearly more complicated and nuanced than most of the contemporary political, public discussions about race in a country split by the fight over slavery.