

SEXUAL CULTURES

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*Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures,
and Other Latina Longings*
Juana María Rodríguez

Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina
Longings

Juana María Rodríguez



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along, to think against it, whether it is in the detours rather than in the destination that a certain pleasure can be allowed, whether the reader and whether the writer can dispense with the need for explication. This may be the dynamic of friendship” (35). The pages that follow offer critiques and analyses of quotidian and extravagant articulations of sexuality, of kinship, of neoliberal activist practices; of dance and sex; of law, theater, and pornography. But they also try to offer a glimpse of political courage and imagination, queer gestures that push for something beyond the knowable and the rational. This text is itself a queer gesture, charged with doing and undoing, feeling and caring, committed to a sexual politics that emanates from a beating heart, a sexual politics that is also an amorous gift. *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings* is my dedication to you, reader. In the spirit of this dynamic of friendship, I hope you will find it interesting to think along.

1

Who's Your Daddy?

Queer Kinship and Perverse Domesticity

In a text that focuses on sociality, futurity, politics, sex, and gesture, it seems fitting that I start with a consideration of kinship, the imagined site of our most intimate bonds. Our families of origin are repeatedly recounted as the place where the imprint of the disciplinary and expressive forces of sexuality, race, and gender assert their most vigorous intentions. Yet kinship bonds also transform across our life span, making and unmaking social worlds of meaning. While an analysis of kinship serves to highlight corporeal gestures, the intonations of our bodies that are inculcated through our innermost social networks, kinship also becomes a site where we see how the gestures of law and legibility are forcefully activated. Both forms of gesture—individual corporeal gestures and the collective political gestures of the body politic—register how the effects of the social are triggered. It is from our families that we first learn the social rules and significance that govern touch, eye contact, movement through space, and all other manner of seemingly mundane corporeal action. Before we come to spoken language, we learn to read gesture, arms reaching out to hold us or harm us. Through these reading practices we come to define what is familiar and familial and what must be relegated to the space of the strange and foreign, a distinction that becomes the basis of a politics that structures the limits of care. Kinship therefore functions as a switchpoint between the intimate and the social, the literal and the metaphoric articulations

of gesture, the site where practices of recognition and nonrecognition become instantiated.

I begin this chapter on kinship and domesticity—the imagined private space of the familial—with the most public of queer venues, the annual ritual celebrated under many names and in multiple locations near and far: Queer Pride. As this event celebrates an artificial temporal marker for the “beginning” of the U.S. LGBT movement, it also serves as a curious way to register the pulse of the queer community.¹ I admit to being a longtime veteran of these lush, over-the-top spectacles, having marched, danced, chanted, and partied down the main thoroughfares of numerous towns and cities in celebration and protest. The corporeal gestures at Pride are of hedonism and rebellion: baring breasts, raising fists, screaming back, or dancing a raucous samba for the three-mile stretch up San Francisco’s Market Street.² For me, Queer Pride evokes memories of hookups and carnal excess, adventures in drugs, music, politics, and fashion that have evidenced a changing understanding of my queer self for more than three decades. And over the course of those decades, things have indeed changed. At the last Pride events I attended, strollers outnumber motorcycles, and SPF 30 sunscreen rather than condoms seem to be the preferred party favor thrown from the floats, twisting the idea of what “playing safe” at the parade might entail. Now, as part of these events in San Francisco, a large city playground is set aside for the kiddies to congregate away from the partying masses.³ The playground, complete with the trappings of childhood mayhem (drummers and magicians, monkey bars and Dora the Explorer balloons), proves almost as packed as any of the main stages. As the playground teems with children of all sizes and colors, it seems that the only element in short supply are fairy godmothers. And in the queer community’s most celebrated public manifestation of unity and pride, children and their families are given special consideration and protection: a sheltered space, closed off from the public. In fact, admission to this playground is strictly controlled by a border of sorts, where an attendant determines eligibility for entry. The criterion is simple: adults have to be accompanied by children.

Signs such as the one in figure 1.1 have become increasingly common in public playgrounds in San Francisco and elsewhere, intended to safeguard these spaces for appropriate use and deserving publics, intended

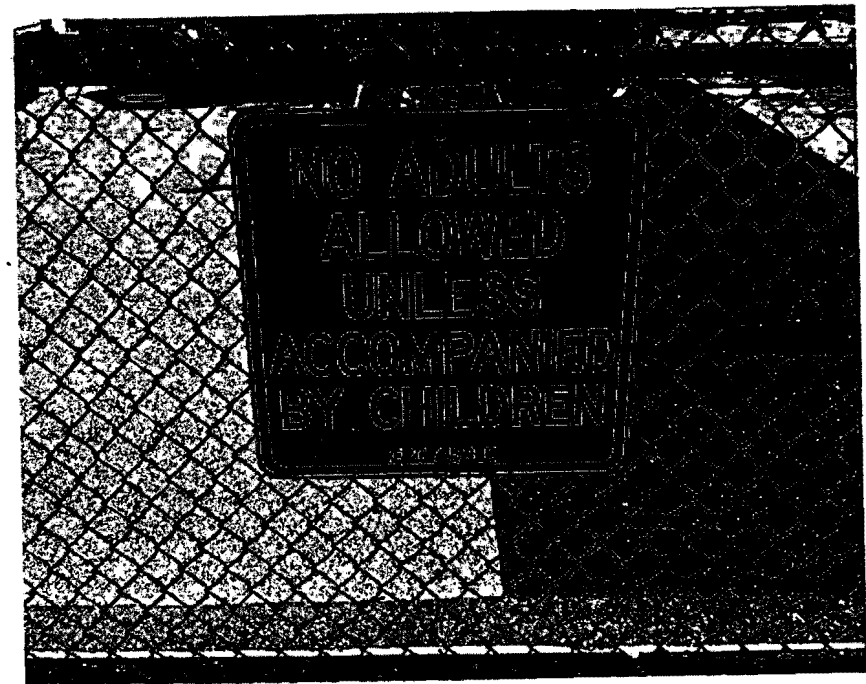


Figure 1.1. Signs restricting adults from public playgrounds have become increasingly common, intended to keep out those marked by racial, classed, and sexual impropriety. Image courtesy of Julia LaChica.

to keep out those marked by racial, classed, and sexual impropriety: people cruising for sex or drugs, gang members, the homeless, and of course pedophiles. In the context of Queer Pride, this border performs a similar disciplinary gesture, demarcating a spatial divide between different kinds of bodies and the corporeal movements they are perceived to perform. On one side, adults covered in glitter and costumes of all sorts shake their bodies in unfettered abandon, and on the other side, children decorated with face paints and festively adorned likewise swing, jump, and run wild, both groups acting unconcerned if their underpants are showing. Despite the good intentions of parade organizers to create a haven for children and their caretakers complete with kid-only port-a-potties, the presence of such a border at Queer Pride also underscores pervasive discourses that continue to equate homosexuality with pedophilia and perversity.⁴ While it seems unlikely that

“inappropriate” sexual touching could take place under the watchful eyes of hundreds of onlookers at this event, nevertheless, such a border policy is based on the assumption that for some people, simply watching children at play, exercising their young bodies in various forms of uncensored abandon, might provoke erotic arousal of the most titillating form. But what exactly are children being protected from? Actual physical abuse or the inappropriate erotic associations children might engender?⁵

This distinction between laws and public policies meant to protect actual children, and those meant to punish those who are sexually aroused by children was made apparent in the 2008 Supreme Court decision *United States v. Williams* (553 U.S. 285 (2008)). That decision upheld provisions of the 2003 PROTECT Act (Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End the Exploitation of Children Today), which criminalizes “the possession and distribution of material pandered as child pornography, regardless of whether it actually was that” (*U.S. v. Williams* 1). In other words, it makes it a crime to offer or solicit sexually explicit images of children, even when those images are computer-generated, consist solely of digitally enhanced photographs of adults, or do not exist at all.⁶ In his dissent, endorsed by Justice Ginsberg, Justice Souter wrote, “If the Act can effectively eliminate the real-child requirement when a proposal relates to extant material, a class of protected speech will disappear” (*U.S. v. Williams* 12). Here the symbol of the child, rather than the presence of any *real* child, functions as the excuse for securitization policies in which some bodies are constructed as always potentially criminal, and others as always potentially victimized, even when they are not present at all. These are the state remedies and tools intended to end the exploitation and harm of children.

Importantly, what is being criminalized through the provisions of the 2003 PROTECT Act is no longer behavior, but fantasy.⁷ In *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973–74*, Foucault makes evident that disciplinary regimes of control operate well beyond the level of practice, or even discourse:

[T]here is a continuous pressure of this disciplinary power, which is not brought to bear on an offense or damage but on potential behavior. One must be able to spot an action even before it has been performed, and

disciplinary power must intervene somehow before the actual manifestation of the behavior, before the body, the action, or the discourse, at the level of what is potential, disposition, will, at the level of the soul. (52)

Foucault focuses on the link between discursive practices of discipline and the imagined gestures that could potentially signal perverse behavior, those minute acts and telltale corporeal movements that might reveal the thought crimes lurking in the body and soul of the offender. The threat of *potential* harm then becomes marshaled to legitimize the state’s increased public surveillance of certain bodies who are depicted as always potentially dangerous. In the context of child protection policies, these increased surveillance measures emerge in a context of ever-shrinking public resources away from the investigation of *actual* exploitation and abuse of real children. Austerity budget policies decrease or eliminate funding for child welfare investigators, day care programs, community-based health clinics, homeless shelters, and social workers in public schools, programs that serve as available points of intervention for real children in crisis. The PROTECT Act’s elimination of the real-child requirement in the legal definition of violence against children dovetails with the elimination of the real-child requirement in efforts to actually protect real children or provide actual remedies for their care. Here the state performs a double gesture, claiming to protect children through heightened surveillance and punishment, while simultaneously inflicting its own abuse on children through the elimination of state support and resources.

So even at Pride, in the midst of the we-are-one carnivalesque revelry, there existed a policed border, complete with gates and guards: on one side, rainbow families creating a safe space for children, on the other side perverts, hedonists, and other pleasure-seeking bodies against whom such proactive security measures are deemed necessary, effective, and reassuring. This opening story highlights two key themes of this chapter: current attempts to assign gay and lesbian families state-recognized respectability in political discourse, and the persistent associations of queerness with perversity and pleasure—in other words, the antithesis of parenting.

Much of the mainstream LGBT press, national organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign and the National Gay and Lesbian Task

Force, and hundreds of local gay and lesbian organizations across the United States and many around the world have declared gay marriage *the* civil rights issue of the moment. In both visual advertisements featuring same-sex couples and their children (in which children of color play a dominant role) and public statements recounting the need for state recognition of same-sex unions, one of the repeated refrains deployed is that state-sanctioned marriage is needed to protect the children of gay and lesbian families. These children are imagined as needing not just legal protection, but protection from the social stigma of illegitimacy, itself a racialized marker of familial impropriety and perversity, a stigma that only state-recognized marriage can erase (Murray). In her essay "Scenes of Misrecognition," Ann Anagnost connects this racialized rhetoric of respectability to the decision to parent, linking both to the very processes by which we become legitimated as worthwhile and productive citizens of the nation:

[T]he position of parent, for white middle-class subjects, has become increasingly marked as a measure of value, self-worth, and citizenship in ways that beg an analysis of its specific formations in the context of late-twentieth-century capitalism, which, not incidentally, fuel the desire for adoption as a necessary "completion" for becoming a fully realized subject in American life. (392)

If parenting has become "a measure of value, self-worth, and citizenship," it is not surprising then that many LGBT organizations have turned to parenting as a means to seek social validation and recognition from a society that has excluded them, framing their arguments for social legitimacy precisely through the language of the sacrosanct rights of parents, the need to protect children, and the state's promotion of family. As these organizations seek legal recognition from the state through a discourse of social respectability, images of gay and lesbian couples with children nestled between them serve as the visual antidote to images of leathermen in chaps pressed together dancing atop floats at Queer Pride.

Color Me a Rainbow

That openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are actively choosing to create, raise, nurture, and cohabit with children has raised

anxieties in both conservative political corners and progressive queer circles. The crisis this has produced in conservative quarters seems more easily articulated: LGBT folks with children in tow are now regularly popping up at pee-wee soccer leagues, PTA meetings, church socials, and school boards, infiltrating the very core of respectable white middle-American society. The anxieties and unease evidenced in progressive queer communities, however, remains more difficult to articulate, with many queers openly objecting to a national LGBT agenda that attempts to make queers palatable to these same middle-American enclaves through a reappropriation of family values discourse and political platforms focused on same-sex marriage and homonormative formulations of family life. Some queers object more privately and in hushed tones to a perceived sense of entitlement performed by newly minted LGBT parents and emerging from a neoliberal discourse that positions parents as more valued and worthy members of civil society because they have taken on the task of the primary care of another. Others see queers who parent as the embodiment of homonormative demands for assimilation, as having succumbed to the hail of reproductive futurity.

In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Lee Edelman articulates how the child, imagined as the future subject of the nation, becomes a symbolic site through which the state harnesses repressive disciplinary power in the name of present sacrifice and future promise. But by ignoring race, Edelman fails to consider how children of color function as the co-constitutive symbolic nightmare of our nation's future. Rather than signifying reproductive futurity, African American male children represent racialized fears of criminality, violence, and sexual danger. Similarly, Latin@ reproduction, projected through the discourse of Mexican "anchor babies," serves as the ever-present threat against which Anglo-American whiteness must assert its disciplinary mechanisms. These children are never the imagined future subjects of the nation, and the forms of disciplinary power these children inspire operate differentially not only at the level of the symbolic, but also at the level of the material and the juridical. Historically, the "American grammar" of slavery in the United States, in which enslaved children belong to neither mothers, fathers, nor the national imaginary, undoes constructions of psychoanalysis predicated on white heteronormative kinship (Spiller).⁸ This

legacy of slavery and colonial dominance, in which black and brown children were traded, mutilated, and murdered with impunity, endures in the racialized differences in the juridical protection of children, and is again often linked to securing avenues of national wealth. Take for example U.S. child labor laws that regulate agriculture: in contrast to other industries, in agriculture children as young as eight can work in the fields legally, and there are no restrictions on the number of hours worked in a day, as long as they are performed outside school hours.⁹ Racialized differences in the legal protections afforded to children in the United State are also glaringly evident in the sentencing practices and incarceration rates for black, Latin@, and Native American youth (Alexander, *New Jim Crow*). These contemporary policies and practices never specifically mention race, yet they disproportionately harm children of color. The child as political symbol, legal subject, or social player in psychoanalytic dramas is therefore always already constituted by race. Today, norms, taboos, conventions, or protections designed to assert a protected status to children and their families, including LGBT families, may appear to be color-blind, but they are never race-neutral.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Sara Ahmed describes the ways that critiques of homonormativity are used to legitimate some forms of queerness over others, and reminds us that “assimilation and transgression are not choices available to individuals, but are effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals” (153). So while queers who parent are called upon by legal and social mandates to renounce gestures that would make us appear childish, irresponsible, and perverse (dancing atop floats or showing off our panties), assimilation into normative middle-class adulthood is not always available. For many queer parents and caregivers, particularly those who are poor, institutionalized, gender-nonconforming, disabled, in alternative domestic relationships, or marginalized by their race or immigration status, assimilation into homonormativity is simply not an available option. In his essay “For ‘the Children’: Dancing the Beloved Community,” Jafari S. Allen makes the racial implications even clearer: “while it is true that for many the price of citizenship is costly and valu[able], since normative family accrues only with tremendous sacrifice, for others the unruliness of excessive Blackness precludes this altogether” (314). Proper reproductive adulthood is already marked by race and

class and works to exclude multigenerational extended families who cohabit because of economic need, cultural conventions, or their own desires; families whose social and sexual networks extend beyond one couple or one household; “unstable” households that are in a state of flux with people entering and exiting as space, money, and need dictate; or families that are denied the ability to live together due to immigration policies, economic need, or practices of institutionalization. These nonnormative, “queer” families fall outside the model of proper adulthood, even as they also fall out of the political agendas of mainstream LGBT activists. In other words, simply being hailed by the assimilationist allure of respectable reproductive futurity is itself an indicator of privilege that is denied to those marked by “the unruly excessiveness” of difference. How these differences are embodied and perceived informs every encounter for those who must maneuver the vexing social positions they are forced to occupy in order to secure basic entitlements of health, housing, and education for children under their care.

Even as some progressive queers, including parents made vulnerable by their own precarious ability to advocate for their children, may see the need for state-sanctioned protection for the complex relations that make up queer kinship, it is also evident that the current attempt to publicly normalize queers through a discourse of familial protection has had troubling consequences. Instead of a radical rethinking of sexuality and queerness and its relationship to domestic relations, or heightened efforts to demand increased social investments in services available to children and their caretakers, under the logic of neoliberalism the mainstream LGBT movement attempts to secure individual rights through the valorization of normative kinship.¹⁰ This strategy has served to further stigmatize those individuals and families that fall outside recognizable structures of care. Rather than merely offering a critique of the existing forms under which queer kinship is organized, Ahmed invites us to “stay open to different ways of doing queer” and, echoing Allen, she affirms that “[q]ueer lives involve issues of power, responsibility, work and inequalities and, importantly, do not and cannot transcend the social relations of global capitalism” (Ahmed, *Cultural* 154, 153). As in all other areas of queer life, racial and class differences abound, and the inequalities they reveal are illuminated through an analysis of family and kinship.

In both political campaigns and popular culture representing gay and lesbian families, race plays a key role. In *The L Word* (2004–2009, Showtime), the principal characters, Bette Porter and Tina Kennard, are a black-white interracial couple who conceive a child through assisted reproduction. They choose an African American donor to inseminate the white woman, Tina, provoking a temporary crisis in which Tina wonders whether she is equipped to raise an African American child. In *Six Feet Under* (2001–2005, HBO), another interracial black-white couple, David Fisher and Keith Charles, vacillate between surrogacy and adoption, finally fostering and then adopting two older African American brothers. In the show, the children's birth home is represented as irreparably dysfunctional, and it is the white Fisher family that extends itself toward these black children. It is the African American Keith who prefers surrogacy, afraid that these young black boys will prove too damaged to assimilate successfully into normative family life. And it is Keith's family that is presented as homophobic and unwelcoming to their new adopted grandchildren.¹¹ In these shows, the black child comes to stand in for the assumed progressive racial politics of (white) queer communities, a politics of racial difference removed from racialized queer communities or class-based realities, a difference that is ultimately overcome through the power of normative familial love.

In contrast, the comic mockumentary show *Modern Family* (2009–present, ABC), presents two white male characters, Mitchell Pritchett and Cameron Tucker, adoptive parents of a Vietnamese girl, and racial difference and gayness are played for laughs. In one episode, Mitchell and Cameron are competing for entry into an exclusive preschool, and their friends assure them that their status as gay men with an Asian daughter will improve their chances.¹² As they wait in the lobby for their admissions interview, a white woman enters, holding a black child. Mitchell comments worriedly, "Single white mother, black child," to which Cameron responds, "So what? Lily is Asian, we're gay. In the school admissions poker game, we're the winning hand." At that point, the door opens again and the white woman introduces her partner to the receptionist as Kavita, a woman in a wheelchair who appears South Asian. In his direct address to the camera, Cameron asserts, "Disabled interracial lesbians with an African kicker! I didn't see that coming." In a last-ditch effort to increase their chances by "playing the race card,"

Cameron enters the interview "playing Indian," speaking in halted English to claim he is one-sixteenth Cherokee and "ready for child to soar like Eagle." Here, "playing Indian" reinforces the idea that anyone can make claims to racial alterity in order to game the system.¹³ In this scenario, being a "diverse" gay family is seen as a social asset, one that increases access to desirable resources. Of course in the show disability, Native American identity, and racial and gendered difference are separated from the classed realities that mark these queer families as more prone to poverty, socially stigmatized as dysfunctional, and less likely to have access to public resources.

These examples signal the disconnect between the social realities of queer families and their representation in popular media (and to a considerable extent in academic literature). Gary J. Gates and Adam P. Romero, legal scholars working on queer families, have used census data in order to more accurately represent the racial and class realities of contemporary LGBT families.¹⁴ Rather than affirm the illusion that it is privileged white gay cosmopolitan couples having and raising children, their data point to the prevalence of queers of color as parents and guardians, and the economic realities of those families:

African American and Latina women in same-sex couples are more than twice as likely as their white counterparts to be raising a child. And African American and Latino men in same-sex couples are four times as likely to be raising children as are their white male counterparts. Fully 40% of individual same-sex couples raising children are nonwhite. By contrast, 24% of all individuals in same-sex couples, with and without children, are nonwhite. (232–33)

Their data emphasize the economic realities faced by queer families of all races: "Across all racial and ethnic groups, same-sex couples raising children, both male and female, have lower median household incomes than married couples raising children" (233). These data also challenge political assumptions that locate queer families in northern urban centers. Instead, Gates and Romero find that Mississippi, where four in ten same-sex couples are raising children, is the state where same-sex couples are most likely to have a child. "Mississippi is followed by South Dakota, Alaska, South Carolina, and Louisiana. In general, same-sex

couples who live in more socially and politically conservative areas are more likely than their counterparts living in more liberal areas to have children" (Gates 234). What their data cannot fully account for, however, is how these children came to coexist with their families in the first place. Drawing inconclusive but provocative inferences based on age and stated relationships, Gates and Romero's research seems to suggest that queer child rearing resulting from previous relationships and as an extension of larger multigenerational networks of care accounts for a far greater percentage of LGBT families than what is generally represented in the media. Most media outlets depict gay and lesbian couples *intentionally* planning and raising children, thus erasing the messy realities of individuals, couples, and groups raising children from previous heterosexual and homosexual relationships; children brought into households through informal adoption within family and social networks; single queer parents; parents, partners, and primary caretakers who have transitioned from one gender to another; and unplanned pregnancies and child rearing through casual (hetero)sexual hookups. And as in much of mainstream LGBT representation, in the discourse surrounding parenting, the complicated lived realities of bisexuals are all but erased.

It bears emphasizing that queers have always raised, loved, and cohabited with children. Yet twenty-five years ago, before kid-only porta-potties at Pride events, the significance of children at queer events signaled something quite different. Before the perceived gay and lesbian baby boom of the 1990s, children were positioned as a "women's issue." Rather than something intentional and desired, children were seen as the unwelcome vestiges of previous heterosexual relationships, as the unplanned evidence of lusty slippages outside the gay and narrow, and as markers of racially classed and gendered realities of caring for the offspring of friends and family members in jail, on drugs, on the streets, or simply unavailable or unsuited for the task of making breakfast for others day after day. Unlike these earlier associations, now the significance of queer parenthood seems to gesture toward something quite different—a badge of normative adulthood and state-sanctioned privileges to which all of us should aspire. The emphasis in both the media and academic literature is on lesbian and gay familial formations brought about through assisted reproduction, surrogacy, and formal adoption. And it is

this right to *form* families, not just to have children, that has become the basis for a national gay and lesbian political agenda.

Adopting Children and Agendas

My aim is to focus not on the merits or perils of queers (or others) making or raising children, but to instead redirect attention to the politicized meanings assigned to various forms of intimacies. A consideration of transnational and transracial adoption offers one avenue for exploring the affective tensions surrounding political projects focused on queer family formation. While assisted reproduction technologies remain an increasingly available avenue for bringing children into queer kinship networks, adoption carries with it a more implicit separation of genetic material that complicates claims to legitimate "ownership" of children, and implies greater direct interventions from the state.¹⁵ Yet, while we illuminate racialized anxieties about family relations, ethnic formulations, and national identity when we interrogate discourses surrounding adoption, very often these analyses leave unchallenged the ways money, labor, and national investments are implicated in all forms of reproduction. Like Kath Weston, whose influential book *Families We Choose* looks to expand the definition of queer kinship beyond nuclear family formations to consider multiple form of affective and biological bonds, my analysis is concerned "in family not so much as an institution, but as a contested concept, implicated in the relations of power that permeate societies" (3). Weston argues that queer kinship is distinctive in that it decenters biology and emphasizes choice and affective ties. Curiously, Weston seems to dismiss the potentially disruptive possibilities of adoption: "adoptive relations—unlike gay families—pose no fundamental challenge to either procreative interpretations of kinship or the culturally standardized image of a family assembled around a core of parent(s) plus children" (38). However, Weston's argument about adoption holds only in cases where markers of race do not disrupt the illusion of procreative familial normativity, and where biological parent(s) and extended family are erased from the social and kinship networks of adoptive homes. I argue that adoption, when it is recognized, has the *potential* to complicate the easy binary of "biological family/families we choose" that Weston sets up in her book (40).

In addition to a torrent of books celebrating the diversity of gay and lesbian families, often in multicultural pictorial form, adoption itself has become the subject of scholarly investigations into the ways that war, capital, and affective economies have rewritten racialized familial and social configurations.¹⁶ David Eng's influential essay "Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas" takes on the political and affective complexities of what it may mean to adopt and thus "own" the racialized body of another. Eng situates the phenomenon of transnational adoption within the contours of globalization and contemporary forms of gay and lesbian visibility and privilege that make the very conditions for gay and lesbian adoption possible. He uses psychoanalytic theory to suggest how loss, melancholy, and trauma name the psychic economies at play in this exchange of racialized bodies. However, Eng's essay never fully grapples with the complex ways adoption itself instills a kind of psychic trauma that must be recognized, confronted, and worked through individually and socially, even in the absence of overt racial or national markers of difference. Furthermore, it leaves uninterrogated the uneven circuits of economic power implicated in other forms of domestic life, including biological heterosexual reproduction.

In her essay "Spare Parts, Family Values, Old Children, Cheap," the African American legal scholar Patricia Williams takes up this challenge when she describes her own sense of unease upon entering "the free baby market" of adoption, realizing the differential fee structure for available babies based on race, gender, health, and age. Reading Richard Posner and Elisabeth Landes's *Economics of the Baby Shortage*, Williams articulates "the degree to which it is a reflection of what goes on in the world of not just adoption but reproduction in general" (152).¹⁷ Haunted by histories of slavery in which human beings were exchanged for money, property, and cattle, Williams finds herself faced with the reality of having to pay for the young black male body she will bring into her home. Furthermore, she is confronted with a fee structure for her newly adopted son that marks him as "special" because he fits into the category of children who are "less requested," in other words, children who are older, black, and/or disabled. She asks, "Will 'ethics' be able to consider this complicated stuff or will we decide the whole topic is too risky, too angri-fying, so that forced neutrality and pretend-we-don't-see-ness will rule the day? How will our children, figured as the tidy 'consumption

preferences' of unsocial actors, be able to value themselves?" (156). Williams's essay points to the multiple sites of anxiety related to adoption, most specifically to the way the economics of adoption lays bare the racialized hierarchies underlying the differential value of human lives.

Blackness is unique in the context of adoption, and its uniqueness serves as irrefutable evidence of the lingering exceptionalism of blackness within a U.S. racial imaginary. In the differentiated fee structures that Williams describes, children are divided into categories of African American and non-African American, rather than categories of white and nonwhite. Adoption agencies perceive (and thus perpetuate the idea) that (non-black) Latino and Asian children are easier to place into white homes, where the fiction of their easy assimilation and cultural narratives of their innate submissiveness make them less of a threat. In these scenarios, Latin@s are not viewed as a single unified racial category. Instead, Latin@s are divided into two groups: those phenotypically marked by African heritage and those who are not.

In less overt ways, prospective parents are also classified into tiers of desirability based on class, gender, race, disability, and sexuality. If older black boys are seen as "second quality" children within this system, households with transgender adults, single households, households with disabled adults, households without women, households with uncoupled adults, and other households marked as queer are seen as "second quality" parents even as they are often deemed preferable to single African American female-headed households that have long been pathologized as outside heteronormative structures of kinship.¹⁸ This trauma of having a "free market" deem the value of both adoptive parents and their children, of not being afforded the status of "real" biological kinship but only approximation bought through the crass gestures of economic exchange, functions in discourses of adoption even in the absence of racial difference. In adoption, money in exchange for a child continues to function as the dominant scenario, and the price of a child becomes a routine aspect of considering the available options.¹⁹ Parents and adoption agencies are generally quick to head off apprehensions about children as commodities by replacing references to money with language about a "priceless gift," in an attempt to make intimate the relation between birth mothers and adoptive parents even in the absence of any contact or mutual recognition between the two parties.²⁰

Unlike with most other forms of assisted reproduction, the psychic stigma of maternal abandonment, the presumed gesture of mothers “giving up” their children, is narratively bound to adoption in unique ways. Here the maternal comes to signify the family, the race, and the nation. This narrative of loss impacts all forms of acknowledged adoption, not only those situations where children are adopted across national or racial borders. However, the stigma of maternal abandonment can function only as a consequence of a gendered mandate demanding that women “mother” those they birth, and mother them in ways that are legible to normative models of care.²¹ Likewise, familial, racial, or national abandonment functions as loss only if we assign a preexisting ownership of bodies and cultural allegiances based on shared genetic material. And while understanding the socially constructed nature of these familial and national belonging narratives might not lessen their affective impact, it is precisely the insidious ways these narratives permeate popular and legal discourse that must be aggressively challenged.

The queer imperative becomes how to talk about parenting, and the circuits of affective and material labor, exchange, and power that underlie its social function, without normalizing or naturalizing heterosexual reproduction. In both adoption and assisted reproduction, prospective parents make choices about race that contain and exceed notions of cultural memory, racialized lineage, communities of belonging, phenotypic similarities, and social attributes. Yet very often, alternative forms of reproduction are constructed as the *only sites* where troubling narratives of reproducing race and nation operate. What happens if we ask how racial belonging, cultural similarities, and social cohesion inform *all forms* of family making? And aside from how families are initially formed, white parents raising their biologically related white offspring are routinely involved in the daily labor of instilling racialized social identities. In biological reproduction, race—whether it be daddy’s blue eyes or mommy’s red hair—becomes part of what is reproduced and fetishized, and it is this racialized sameness, named and recognized through phenotypic similarities, that is most often used to recognize our status as parents, reconfirming the project of racial and national reproduction.

Racial identification is not the only thing that gets reproduced, however—class is also reproduced through kinship, returning us to a

consideration of gesture. In considerations of adoption, the complexities of how class is assigned and read are immediately apparent. Is racialized class something you do, or something you are? Is your class the economic class that you were “born into” or the class you currently occupy? How do children understand their own class privilege in relation to others, and how does this understanding change over time as they are exposed to a wider range of individuals and communities? What we know is that through repeated exposure, instruction, and discipline, children become quite adept at reproducing class through forms of corporeal expression and gesture; learning how to eat, speak, touch themselves, sit, walk, and move in ways that are class-appropriate and always marked by race. In the process, children also learn to read class behavior in others, and assign value to the differences they encounter. The result is that very often children begin to use their perceptions in order to make decisions on who to befriend or who to avoid, in ways that further impact their connection with others whose material lives and experiences are deemed too different from their own.

In her work on race and inheritance in *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed offers “proximities” as a way to think about familial bonds and their connection to these issues (123). Proximity provides a particularly insightful way to account for the economic and even racial privilege that might be assigned to adopted children, including those adopted transnationally or across racial differences. An understanding of proximity works to suggest that part of what is being passed on to children through the space of familial connection and inheritance are the gestures of particular differentiated forms of belonging, a proximity to certain worlds that are defined by national, economic, racial, and sexual modes of behavior. Knowing how to sign or navigate wheelchair ramps, how to comport oneself at a five-star restaurant or take cover during a shootout, how to dance salsa or how to respond to gender ambiguity are acquired skills that come to us through lived exposure to certain people, social conditions, and surroundings. These gestures are assimilated into the social repertoire of children, and they learn to “act” white, Latin@, Jewish, cosmopolitan, street-smart, or queer by performing the gestures they have inherited from their familial constellations.²² Nevertheless, the class associations of race adhere to certain bodies despite context, performative practices, or social access. And children adopted

into homes where their color and phenotype are visibly different from those of the adults around them will often “sense” an inherited proximity to similarly racialized others outside their immediate familial constellations. But the process of racialization and the affective proximities it engenders are not unique to transnational or transracial adoption; they are simply made more apparent. All children, including white children of privilege born into white families, learn to “see” the racialized geography of their surroundings and their location within it. And these racially classed hierarchies that situate children and adults within differentiated understandings of human value are continually ingested as the social norm.

Similarly, money is implicated in all forms of state-recognized parenting, not just adoption and assisted reproduction, including heterosexual reproduction within marriage. Legally, parenting (like marriage) is defined in large part as an economic obligation that instantiates financial rights and responsibilities related to health insurance, child support, social security, veterans’ benefits, and the rights of inheritance. And regardless of biological relations, families continually rely on the labor of others to clean, care, service, and produce the goods that sustain our domestic lives, labor that is likewise implicated and marked in racially gendered circuits of exchange. By positing adoption as the singular site of uneven exchange and trauma, we risk leaving other categories of familial production and reproduction unchallenged. In a world with proliferating bodies and depleting resources, heterosexual biological reproduction—like all other forms of parenting—is deeply implicated in larger circuits of transnational labor and political circuits of material and affective exchange.

Unlike the affective contracts we may enter as friends or lovers, however, the contracts associated with parenting, specifically through state-sanctioned adoption, demand another insidious sort of surveillance on the level of both the material and the moral. Prospective adoptive parents are required to undergo extensive criminal and background checks; social workers perform protracted home inspections; and financial statements are scrutinized. By ensuring the financial solvency and juridical viability of prospective parents, the state makes clear its refusal to “play daddy,” and abdicates its responsibility to provide material support for its future (non)citizens. The state dictates that we provide

economically for our children, and society demands that we love and nurture them. These seemingly benign injunctions are not without their own ideological grounding, however. The U.S. state requires that parents provide economic support to children because of its own refusal to meet the material needs of its citizens, as evidenced by its abandonment of policies providing basic entitlements to food, health care, shelter, education, and other forms of social welfare. Society’s highly gendered demand that the labor of love and nurture belongs primarily, if not exclusively, to those legally entrusted to be parents, works to uphold the very foundation of heteronormativity: the nuclear family. In the process, it demonizes women who refuse this social function, as it erases or marginalizes the multiple bodies, practices, and labor involved in producing and nurturing children.²³ It is the state that steps in to establish the terms of exchange, and in state-sanctioned adoptions the body that births the child must surrender her rights to legal, social, and affective recognition. Potential adoptive parents must conform to normative stipulations of a “proper” family—that is, no more than two adults who cohabit and are able to provide not love and care, but sufficient economic support in order to relieve the state from any additional allocation of resources. Law then serves to uphold this binary division between what it sees as separate and competing interests between biological and adoptive parents.

These injunctions of support and care must instead be understood as part of a larger crusade to uphold the moral integrity of heteronormative domesticity, in ways that mirror how monogamous sexual relations are instituted and enforced through marriage. Kinship, in all its varied forms, is at its core about creating boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, tribe and nation. We must love our husbands, our children, our families, and our nation with singular devotion. Our monogamous attachments to kinship require that we love and value our own families and nation above all others. That love, evidenced through sacrifice of our own desires, serves as the boundary of what is outside our domain of care. It is through this repeated performative gesture of affective ownership, ownership that defines who we care about and who we don’t, that we come to be validated as parents as well as citizens of the nation.

An analysis of these affective gestures offers a productive way to think through the political and affective quagmire of intimate and state

formulations of adoption, as but one of the many ways in which families are constituted. Butler links intelligibility to the processes through which recognition is conferred, and argues that "recognition becomes a site of power by which the human is differentially produced" (2). But if we envision the law as a potential site for this recognition, the feminist legal scholar Drucilla Cornell issues a harsh warning:

We should not expect law to do more than provide us with the space to work through and personalize our complicated life histories. It cannot heal trauma. . . . The protection of the imaginary domain demands that space be open to explore and establish relationships, but cannot provide the moral content of those relationships without delimiting the space that its justification demands be kept open. (111)

Legal recognition alone is never enough to overcome the means through which affective relationships are legitimated or stigmatized. Opening space requires acknowledging multiple, and at times conflicting, investments that cannot be dictated by the rule of law. Instead of juridical cures, remaining open invites all of us implicated in these processes—caretakers, courts, scholars, and activists—to rethink what kinship means. That gesture must serve to appreciate the distinct and diverse ways that birth parents, adoptive parents, co-parents, step-parents, donors, but also friends, teachers, neighbors, lovers, and communities of care contribute to the lives of children through long-term associative ties as well as through casual, temporary moments of contact. In this context, recognition is not just a site of power, it is an intimate, social, and political gesture, a practice of engagement, never complete, always in the moment. If we read recognition as a gesture, an ongoing process of communicating a desire for relationality, recognition becomes available as a political tool that functions beyond the juridical. In our use of this lens, recognition—of race, of transnational economic relationships, of difference, of loss, of love—is precisely that which is erased in most forms of transnational and transracial adoption.

Rather than seeking state recognition and legal remedies, the queer gestures I propose function to herald those political and personal intentions to reduce harm, ameliorate violence, heal trauma, and change the social conditions that create hierarchies of human value. But

recognition must function as more than simply a self-referential move that seeks to appease guilt or assuage criticism; it must work in the service of transforming the conditions that perpetuate material and psychic harm. In describing a political project that refuses to abandon seemingly utopian goals while insisting on engaged social activism, Dean Spade contends that "it is about practice and process rather than a point of arrival, resisting hierarchies of truth and reality and instead naming and refusing state violence" (*Normal* 19–20). For those implicated in the complex dimensions of parenting, including adoption, assisted reproduction, foster care, and shared parenting, the queer gestures that Spade renders intelligible are those that call out the economic, political, social, spiritual, economic, and also deeply personal processes that connect children with the affective spirits that surround them physically and psychically. However, we must also confront the difficult truth that the gestures we might use to respond to harm, always and only partial, always on the brink of failure, might never be enough. The reality that many are denied the economic resources to raise the children they have and desire must coexist with the understanding that those who produce children may reject the social mandate to love and/or care for them. And while these responses never exist as absolutes, simply relying on epic narratives of transnational flows of capital and bodies denies the human agency that responds to these forces. Likewise, psychoanalytic readings that restage these exchanges solely through personal psychic structures fail to grasp the dynamic relationship that exists between larger social forces and our lived experiences, and the interpretations we bring to those experiences.

Thinking about what a theory of queer gesture might offer to an understanding of kinship entails being attuned to the emotional and political consequences of the complex bonds we seek to create, and refusing to turn away from the heartache, stresses, and loss associated with different forms of familial formations. These gestures of recognition require that we expand our definitions of affiliation, if not family, to validate the legal, biological, psychic, and spiritual imprint of birth parents, donors, and surrogates when the state demands the surrender of these rights because they have failed to correspond to normative structures of intentionality, affect, and care. Aside from these affective gestures, we must work toward developing legal gestures that reduce

or ameliorate harm. Kinship registries, open adoption, expanded and more effective foster care systems, and transparent adoption, donor, and surrogacy records can function as strategic legal gestures that respond to the psychic demands of recognition, as they expand juridical formulations of kinship.

Gestures that attempt to work through tender social bonds with biological families and communities can work to expand forms of familial and affective connection. These gestures of recognition include changing how we think and talk about the varied people with whom we form social and familial connections, the kinds of narratives we use or don't use to incorporate them into our lives, and the legal and policy vehicles that we deploy to push against the legal norm in order to change what becomes legible and imaginable as kinship. In the process, these bonds can serve to initiate an ongoing and sustained dialogue on the geopolitical and gendered dynamics that bring about the migration of children from one racialized and class location to another. Acknowledging these connections also teaches children about the interconnectedness of global processes of production and consumption that allow us to be, and make, family with others. In her discussion of race and surrogacy, Deborah Grayson similarly argues that we must "find ways to acknowledge rather than diminish or ignore the participation of all parents in these processes even if the effect is to destabilize previously held notions of the family" (529). This is precisely the point. For queers and others harmed by the disciplinary norms surrounding family life, our collective political gestures surrounding kinship need to destabilize familial norms rather than seek acceptance or legal recognition of those norms. Our collective activist gestures require us to forge meaningful political coalitions with others whose families are likewise impacted by state attempts to punish those whose practices of care fall outside heteronormative formulations of kinship: African Americans, indigenous communities, single parents, polyamorous and plural families, disabled people, undocumented and transnational families, and those ensnared in the criminal justice system. Together we need to press for greater access to education, health care, housing, and legal resources that will ameliorate the effects of poverty, discrimination, and violence, while we work to transform economic and political systems that perpetuate inequity and injustice. We also must undertake the equally challenging

work of imagining what sorts of gestures of love, care, family, and community might emerge if we begin to conceive of these social bonds outside a language of systematic self-sacrifice or possessive ownership.

Rather than affirm claims to our legitimacy as "authentic" parents worthy of state-sanctioned protection, queers and others harmed by these narrow conceptualizations of kinship need to unravel the legal sanctity of nuclear families, emphasizing instead the role of multiple communities of belonging in nurturing inhabitable social bonds and the responsibility of the state in providing basic material resources to support these efforts. By understanding the material and affective labor of child rearing as existing beyond the legally sanctioned space of the domestic, we can recognize how these measures not only "break down" traditional forms of kinship based on monogamy, nuclear formations, and racial reproduction, but expand the forms of cross-racial, cross-generational, cross-national relationships, kinship networks, friendships, and forms of care that sustain us. Through the labor of making and remaking understandings of kinship, we can begin to work through the everyday dramas and traumas of domestic life that form part of our lives as vulnerable subjects. And even when our most earnest efforts at sociality fail, even when we are misrecognized, misinterpreted, and misunderstood, we cannot return to that other order of impossibility in the face of injustice and trauma: stasis and autonomy.

Parental States

Now that we have unpacked the terms under which we make family, let me turn to the equally complex realities of having to live it. Families have long been understood as a site of vulnerability for queers, and psychoanalysis has insisted on tracing the roots of our adult psychic lives to the everyday horrors of childhood. In Foucauldian terms, family life functions as a "switch point, the juncture ensuring passage from one disciplinary system to another, from one apparatus (*dispositif*) to another" (Foucault, *Psychiatric* 81). However, beyond understanding how families of origin have often been implicated in the emotional harms of these disciplinary structures, understanding that parenting can itself function as a source of everyday trauma dictates that we speak the unspeakable—not the joy of children but the loss of social, affective,

and sexual autonomy that is expected of us as parents. As parents, we are now the ones enjoined to dispense discipline in the name of proper socialization, forced to become complicit with the disciplinary regimes that surround us, sacrificing our own desires in the imagined service of the child and the greater social good that was never good to us. Part of the self-sacrifice that is expected of parents, in the service of the child and the nation, is the highly gendered injunction to focus exclusively on the emotional well-being of children. Parents are enjoined to erase themselves in spoken interactions with their children, replacing the "I" with the third-person reference to parental roles—"Daddy loves you." And our desires are redirected through our disciplinary parental function—"Mommy wants you to sit up straight." Central to proper reproductive adulthood is the renunciation of individual aspirations. Assimilation into (homo)normative family life means that queerness can no longer be about pleasure, let alone sexual desire. We must insist that it is love and family (not sex and money) that guide our domestic attachments. As parents, we are repeatedly asked to sacrifice ourselves, stepping aside for our children and the nation's investments in them. Discourses that define children as the future, as the embodied ideal of youth and national promise, simultaneously produce parents as the opposite: as aging, desexualized caretakers.

The impact that children have on our lives means that we no longer remain the people we once were; we are transformed into parents who accept, deny, or negotiate the social fiats imposed on us and the personal losses we suffer when we let another live inside our bodies, our hearts, and our communities. Children, like other forms of affective attachment, make us vulnerable in unforeseen ways. Love and its specter, loss, remind us of our potential to become undone. Yet we suffer many losses in life. With our partners, lovers, friends, and family, as with our national attachments and social investments, we often move on to other spheres of belonging. This is not always bad. The narrative of a singular defining, lifelong committed relationship, be it amorous, familial, or national, enforces an odd formulation of temporality—marking and remarking when a lifetime begins. Heterosexual social norms generally demand that we erase past loves, naming them (at best) developmental phases on the path to true love and communion, or (at worst) mistakes we would rather forget. Whether as children or

as parents, we have relationships to those we might term "family" that are defined by changing definitions of care, dependence, and obligation, not by static formulations of love and unchanging commitment. Likewise, narratives of national belonging demand that we either cling to our geographic sites of origin through nostalgic fantasies of return, or abandon them entirely, exchanging histories for passports in reverence to our newly adopted homes. These investments in lifelong, monogamous attachments foster fictions of linearity and cohesion while denying the simultaneity of lived experience. Queers have a long history of loving and living differently, spinning out social and sexual networks and coextensive bonds with other temporal moments of affection and desire. In reality, our lives are always beginning anew, our lifetime is always the new now. Loving madly and with complete abandon (or with calm, reasoned pragmatism), we can enter "committed" relationships over and over again, committing to the forever, to the now, to fidelity, to openness, to honesty, to caring, to pleasure, not always everything, always something else besides. These are the contracts of love in all its forms, contracts that are rewritten, undone, and renewed in time.

When we refuse to participate in discourses that perpetuate family life and lifelong monogamous commitment as the epitome of emotional maturity and affective value, when we speak of the losses and crises that love and family also entail, we challenge structures of differential value based on heteronormative investments in national reproduction. In the process we acknowledge the many queer forms of love, care, and support that adults can contribute to the lives of children, elders, and others outside recognizable familial structures. These queer gestures can enact polyamorous bonds of attachments and affiliation to other bodies, families, cultures, and communities that are not strictly bound to racialized constructions of nationalist belonging. But social legibility that is based on a discourse of parental rights, racial inheritance, sustained monogamy, and the promotion of linear developmental narratives of familial and national relations demands that queers cross the imaginary border from pleasure-seeking perverts to sanitized sexless adult guardians, committed self-sacrificing partners and parents. For queers who are not white, middle-class, able-bodied, coupled, or normatively gendered, choosing to parent can actually make us appear more, rather than less, perverse. Because we are interpellated as always already sexually

and socially deviant, we fail to function as proper citizens capable of reproducing the investments of the nation; instead we are represented as harmful and dangerous to the children who live in our midst. And as more queer families enter the public sphere by demanding necessary forms of recognition in order to secure civil rights and services offered by the state, there is also a tendency to disavow historical representations that mark us as immature, unstable, and perverse. Because even if it can be said that queers have a long tradition of tending to the mundanely ordinary tasks of changing diapers, packing lunches, and reading stories, it must also be said that queers have produced a rich, complicated, and decidedly extra-ordinary archive about the erotics of domestic life.

Disciplinary Paternalism, or Who's Your Daddy?

Put another way, . . . queers love Daddy. The idea of intimate familial power serving as a source of erotic pleasure has wide rhizomatic reach in queer communities. For example, early dyke film classics like *Dress Up for Daddy* (Fatale Video) play unabashedly with the themes of fantasized incestuous seduction and abuse. Carol Queen's playful text *The Leather Daddy and the Femme* casts the daddy figure as the starring role in her queer sexual fantasy. Other writers like Pat Califia, who is now a dad, return to the bosom of the family home over and over again as a site for narrating forbidden sexual encounters, naming one edited collection *Doing It for Daddy: Short and Sexy Fiction about a Very Forbidden Fantasy*. In fact, there are numerous noteworthy scholarly and subcultural texts that take up queer daddies. Consider, for example, Leo Bersani's essay "Gay Daddy" in *Homos*; Ricardo Bracho's musings on daddies and donors in the collection *Virgins, Guerrillas, and Locas* ("Daddy"); Kathy Acker's hauntingly lyrical essay on loss and queer belonging, "Requiem, Act I: Daddy Missing"; or C. Jacob Hale's first-person ethnographic exploration of the productive possibilities of performatively exploring gendered embodiments in familial role play, "Leatherdyke Boys and Their Daddies: How to Have Sex without Women or Men". In these texts, Daddy as fantasy subject position locates the genesis of a queer erotic in the viscera of heteronormative family life. How might thinking about the ways Daddy operates

as a sexualized nexus of power help us to understand how paternalism functions in a broader social and political context? And what might we learn from sexual practices that are actively engaged in reimagining the terms of that position?

In BDSM relationships organized around daddy play, part of what is being performatively enacted is very often a narrative of ownership and submission, a belonging to and belonging for another. While owning another human being is a practice most often associated with legacies of racialized slavery, it also serves to describe the juridical relationship between parents and children. Owning children through reproduction and parenting and owning human bodies as chattel property are not parallel relationships of power, however. Unlike slavery, parenting begins with the presumption of a shared humanity, and the assumption that one day the child will come to occupy the role of parent, or at least adult.²⁴ The similarity that interests me, however, is that in the worlds outside fantasy and play, neither the child nor the slave consents to their condition. And it is this perverse sociality of a coerced intimacy that creates the narrative possibilities for submission or domination in consensual adult sexual play. In these articulations of a sexualized dynamic of ownership, however, the temporal differences ascribed to conditions of subjugation are decidedly more complex than either "growing up" or "perpetual slavery."²⁵

In the context of BDSM, it is precisely by negotiating and authorizing, rather than naturalizing, the terms of submission that the dynamics of master and slave, adult and child, sadist and masochist are undone in the service of mutual pleasure.²⁶ In her essay "Forces of Consent," the legal scholar Susan Schmeiser contends that

the masochist exploits his own freedom precisely in order to forfeit it in the name of erotic pleasure. The masochistic contract thus represents an equally emphatic exertion of autonomy (I, being free to enter into an agreement with you, my equal) and relinquishment of that same autonomy (hereby subject myself to you as your slave). (25)

The masochist's assertion of consent and desire forcefully negates the very terms under which both slavery and parenthood operate. In practice, the actual relationships involved in BDSM communities, even

those that are defined as Master and slave, or Daddy and boy, are structurally more closely aligned to forms of indentured servitude than perpetual slavery or parenthood, the length and terms of ownership being periodically renewed.²⁷ Nevertheless, it is by performatively enacting the ownership of, and belonging to, another body that we lay bare these power dynamics, including the relationship that is ascribed to parental ownership of children. Owning another is always an unabashed articulation of power that carries with it the threat of violence and annihilation, as well as the possibility of care and nurture. It is this potential for these diametrically opposed, but coexisting, erotic elements that gives these fantasy roles their sexual charge.²⁸

Lynda Hart takes up these fantasies in her essay "Lust for Innocence" through a rereading of psychoanalysis, arguing that what is most threatening to the Law of the Father (where men have the authority to violate the incest taboo, even as they discipline its transgression as a female fantasy) is making these scenes seen.²⁹ In her reading of Califia's short stories, she notes that "the women [*sic*] in Pat Califia's collection *Doing It for Daddy* are not really doing it for Daddy—they are doing it with him" (290). The difference is that rather than unconsciously submitting to the narrative power of the incest taboo, writers like Califia are actively rewriting these scripts through an assertion of their own agency, even as that agency is understood as constituted by previous disciplinary formulations. This Daddy that we are so anxious to "do it for" or "do it with" may or may not have any direct correlation to the embodied figures that may have occupied this role when we were ourselves under the legal and social guardianship of others. And for many who have lived life in the absence of fathers, this creates an opportunity to remake these relationships through imagination and sexual play. While family structures may serve as a pervasive portable dynamic of social power relations, these fantasy figures gain meaning only through the culturally available "meanings" of Daddy, meanings that are laced with the scents, sounds, and eroticized details that have come to define parental masculinity in our sexual imaginations. In fantasy, race, culture, language, and embodiment forcefully return to construct Daddies who are fashioned through cultural lenses brimming with memory and longing.³⁰ In these fantasy sexual scenarios Daddy can be kind, he can offer us sweet treats and fondle us gently, or he can be the harsh disciplinarian who utilizes

his sovereign authority over the family to command (or allow) complete submission. By acting out these scenes, or by imagining familial relationships otherwise, these adult participants refuse the silence that is meant to accompany accounts of both actual incestuous violations and fantasized re-creations of eroticized familial bonds. Along the way, they may also dispense with the incitement to discourse that psychoanalysis requires. Rather than simply narrating their own therapeutic engagement with the complexities of trauma, memory, and fantasy, BDSM participants are invited to perform, through gestures and utterances, scenes of familial punishment or eroticized care.

These depictions of BDSM scenarios might seem to suggest that it is only the consent of the subjugated party that requires arbitration; in practice negotiating the desires and limits of the dominant player also requires care. One must consent to *be* Daddy. And even if this already functions as a meaningful social or sexual role, Daddy must consent to be *your* Daddy, to accept the affective and sexual responsibilities involved in each new relationship. Just as in real-life parental roles, being Daddy is not always an easy pleasure and can invoke states of vulnerability that are rarely acknowledged. While Daddies may possess the power to punish and discipline, or to inspire unwavering love and adoration, they are also often imagined to always be in control, responsible for the care of others, and self-sacrificing in their own desires. As in real life, in sexual play, Daddy's boys and girls can be bratty, uncooperative, demanding, and a lot of work. And just like biological fathers, the Daddies we turn to for a queer redress of familial wounds can simply disappoint. Unlike the theories we may invoke to describe these relations, as in other forms of family life, in BDSM sexual practices things are much messier than they might appear. Negotiated consent may form the precondition for sexual play, but rarely does it occupy the primary focus of conversation, and it never exists outside preexisting hierarchies of power. Instead, the almost unfettered agency that both Hart and Schmeiser attribute to these practices can be understood only as an embodied gesture of reaching for mutual recognition that can attempt to ascribe new meanings to preexisting flows of power, but can never fully erase the ways these sedimented dynamics have been socially coded.

These preexisting flows of power that surround us, however, can provide the narrative backdrop for our own queer erotic iterations.

If playing with Daddy sexually may resonate with, and sometimes be enacted through, scenarios of domination and submission, it is only because these scenes reflect real-world asymmetries of power. It bears emphasizing that most linguistic uses of Daddy in sexual play have very little to do with incest play or BDSM, and function instead as convenient and portable narratives to describe gendered relations of care, attesting to the ways that kinship itself functions as a perverse package of delineated social relations. This resignification becomes an opportunity to account for the domestic sphere as a site where erotic and affective imprints, always already inflected by the textures and gestures of familial culture, are established. The association of sexual intimacy with parental relations is by no means limited to these self-named queer discursive and social practices of eroticized familial play, however. It is in fact quite ubiquitous, evidenced in the pet names we use to describe those we care about, everywhere present in rap and reggaeton lyrics that are all about *mami y papi*. Whether in staged scenes of overt incestuous resignification or in casual flirtatious commentary, boys and girls, Daddies, *mamis*, and babies abound.

If daddy play is about engaging directly with forms of dominance—fucking with power, if you will—Schmeiser's argument helps us extend this beyond the intimate individual confines that a psychoanalytical interpretation might impose. Instead, she posits the way consensual sexual relationships of domination and submission function as symbolic interventions into state power. She proposes that it is to law and the state that we must all offer our willing and unconditional consent, even when that consent will result in violence against our own bodies. Following Schmeiser, it is not only the symbolic Law of the Father that is threatened in these incestuous scenarios; these sexual encounters also work to challenge the authoritarian underpinnings of the social contract. This is the disciplinary paternalism of the state. Whether in matters of violence and punishment or practices of issuing or withholding the material resources of the nation, only the state can be entrusted to play Daddy, a state that demands the subjugation of its citizen-children.

Daddy's dominance and its collusion with state power cannot be understood only through the lens of gendered sexuality, however. Returning to Spiller, a consideration of race transforms the psychoanalytic dynamics of familial erotics and paternalism offered by Hart and

Schmeiser, insisting instead that disciplinary paternalism is always also about racialized dominance. In the context of U.S. slave society, claims to black fatherhood are precisely what are prohibited; the slave child can only ever belong to the white Master, a paternity that is encoded in law through the language of chattel property and simultaneously denied through the negation of the rights of inheritance afforded white children. In *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature*, Beth Piatote introduces the term "disciplinary paternalism" to counter the narrative of "benevolent paternalism" that has characterized U.S.-Native relations. In her reading of Native American law and literature, Piatote articulates how under the logic of "disciplinary paternalism, . . . violence can only be conceptualized as beneficial and carried out in the interests of the ward. That is, it claims that all acts are done for the Indians' own good, rationalizing violence as fatherly discipline" (137). In the metaphoric collapsing of the state as Daddy who is authorized to dispense "fatherly discipline," the power, privilege, and authority of both roles is unmasked as aligned not just with masculinity but also with whiteness. In this sense, because economic and social power is so firmly attached to white masculinity, the very ability to be Daddy becomes racialized, whether that is imagined as a source of material support and benevolence or as a source of corporeal discipline. And Daddy's citizen-children are rewarded and punished in accordance with their proximity to the white masculine ideal of the state. Therefore, when queers of color play Daddy and rewrite the domestic scene as an erotic one, we also participate in a re-marking of racial power. Pushing aside the white disciplinary paternalism of the state, we invest the figure of racialized masculinity (no matter the genitalia) with the authority to provide and punish, a care and discipline that are always already imagined in racialized terms. These kinky queers of color are not just playing with Daddy as Hart proposes; by playing Daddy and claiming the right to violence that the state reserves for itself, or in turn, by consenting to the power invested in this fantasy position, these sexual agents challenge the racial and gendered hierarchies that undergird the disciplinary paternalism of the state.

That some queers have embraced fantasy so forcefully speaks to the erotic potential of naming, enacting, or embodying social roles that we have inherited, and the perverse pleasure of rewriting the racialized

patriarchal terms under which authority is authorized. For those racialized queers who are written out of nation and often out of family itself, there is an urgency in engaging directly with the cultural taboos that have produced us as abject sexual subjects. Reimagining social relations becomes a sexual gesture that redefines the subjection and disciplinary power of both family and the state, using the erotic to retool narratives of shame, humiliation, and domestic violence. Eroticizing the familial enacts a simultaneous insistence on belonging through imagined familial relations, and not belonging through fantasized abuse and rejection of familial (and national) norms of protection and care.

Something else, potentially much more powerful, is also at stake: "S/M's disruptive force lies in its proximity to the very legal structures that maintain power and discipline under the guise of consent and rational deliberation" (Schmeiser 37). Schmeiser makes this point most vehemently when she describes how the current regulation of consensual sadomasochism under U.S. law is based on an ontological paradox: no sane person would consent to have violence inflicted on them, therefore someone who consents to such an act cannot be sane. The sanity she describes as operating in law is revealed as predicated on a universal subject that is routinely and systematically enjoined to *authorize* violence, rather than submit to it. The child, the female subject, the racialized subject, the institutionalized, the colonized subject whose coerced submission to the unending sadistic demands of capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy functions as the very premise for the perpetuation of these systems of control as a condition of her survival, embodies this ontological paradox. She is rendered always already irrational through her implied consent to the terms that authorize her very existence in a field of impossibilities, in the process revealing "the guise of consent and rational deliberation" upon which the social contract is predicated.

Contesting Consent

Turning to Schmeiser's "guise of consent," we can consent to sexual practices or consent to the forces of law, but that consent can only be written within the terms of its own limited possibilities. Because we know so intimately the violence and pain that relationships to the state

and to our families foster, we cannot simply ignore the complexities of consent and abandon the ethical imperatives of our sexual politics. In the 1984 essay "Thinking Sex," Gayle Rubin responded to this imperative with a sexual manifesto that works at the juncture between individual pleasure and what she terms a democratic morality. Rubin tries to write a sexual politics that stands against a charmed circle of respectable sexuality in which sex is private, monogamous, intragenerational, and free from the taint of toys, tricks, and tops. According to Rubin, "a democratic morality should judge sexual acts by the way partners treat one another, the level of mutual consideration, the presence or absence of coercion, and the quantity and quality of the pleasures they provide" (15). The "mutual consideration" that Rubin proposes is not an attempt to inoculate sex from the gritty power plays that engulf it; instead Rubin recognizes that sex implies social negotiation in a field of power. The problem, of course, is that Rubin's democratic morality returns us to the "guise of consent and rational deliberation" that Schmeiser critiques. Coercion, like consent, is rarely absolute—in fact most of the sexual contracts we enter have everything to do with various forms of coercion that are mandated by the social bonds we inhabit. Whether with a partner, date, trick, or wife, sex in all its forms can become a social obligation that is offered in exchange for dinner, domestic harmony, rent, safety, or our own sexual pleasure. Sex, whether in overt commercial exchanges, casual anonymous encounters, or intimate relations structured around love and care, continues to function as a kind of trade. And consent, whether in staged sadomasochistic encounters or the daily interactions of hetero- or homonormative couples, never exists outside a field of power that is already marked by other social forces. Moreover, the futural register of consent—we consent to something that is *about* to happen, something as yet unexperienced and therefore unknown—can truly function only in the negative, in the withdrawal of consent, in the gesture or utterance that says "stop." In practice, rather than allowing something to happen regardless of its impact, affective or otherwise, consent exists as a promise to have the withdrawal of consent respected.

While sadomasochism is popularly scripted as the erotic performance of uneven power relations (even as it might also perform love, care, and friendship), what rarely gets articulated is how the romantic

fantasy of love, marriage, and family likewise depends on uneven power dynamics. Elizabeth Povinelli offers a critique of love that likewise marks the messiness of consent and coercion:

one of the major distinguishing features of modern intimacy is an expectation of a blurring of choice and compulsion in the context of love, of a dynamic among self-risk and self-elaboration, personal transcendence, and the fall back onto the self. Indeed, *love* thematizes and indicates the affective site where choice and compulsion are blurred. (228–29)

We know through our understanding of neoliberal models of “free trade” that there are differentially marked benefits, rewards, and risks in negotiating sexual and affective contracts. And like narratives of transnational adoption, these real and imagined fantasies of domestic bliss are also structured around racially gendered inequities of power—relying upon those unnamed bodies who sew the uniforms, tend the grounds, and pick the healthy fruit snacks for soccer moms and dads everywhere, those who have never consented to their own exploitation. Differential power relationships permeate every aspect of our domestic lives; practitioners of consensual sexual play simply make the negotiation of their sexual (and social) contracts more explicit.

In returning to the tensions between political respectability and sexual expression with which I began this chapter, I want to conclude by asking what happens when queers who play Daddy, or do it for or with Daddy, also occupy the state-sanctioned role of legal guardian or parent? Who is allowed to actively and publicly embrace the potential of fantasy as a psychic space where the many forms of vulnerability and pleasure—both intimate and social—can be encountered and reimagined? For queers who parent or who live in intimate contact with children, particularly those who are at greater risk of state surveillance because of class, immigration status, disability, gender nonconformity, or race, claims to the pleasures of the perverse as sites of necessary queer cultural expression have become particularly treacherous. The result is that we all learn to be vigilant about censoring, policing, or repressing our own deviance. In discussing the temporal logics of disciplinary power, Foucault warns,

[W]e can say that there is no reference to an act, an event, or an original right in the relationship of disciplinary power. Disciplinary power refers instead to a final or optimum state. It looks forward to the future, towards the moment when it will keep going by itself and only a virtual supervision will be required, when discipline, consequently, will have become habit. (*Psychiatric* 47)

If self-censorship for the sake of the children, public acceptance, or political pragmatism becomes a queer habit, the joys of fantasy and unabashed forms of sexual deviance risk becoming another luxury reserved for single, unattached, cosmopolitan queers who can afford to live apart from extended multigenerational communities and sheltered from direct forms of state surveillance. Given the racialized implications, this would confirm that rights to the limited sexual liberties available under a liberal state protect only those who have already been deemed worthy of protection.

If the repeated refrain of the conservative Right has become “But what about the children?” queers need to take up this challenge by posing this same question differently: Where in the mainstream discourse on gay and lesbian family is there a sustained discussion on the rights of children and youth, a discussion that is not predicated on self-sacrifice and repression of parents and caretakers? How can radical queer movements pressure the state to provide more of the necessary basic human resources required to support all of us across the span of our lives? How can we work to ensure that all of us are allowed to develop and sustain our own understanding of affective lives and sexual selves free from coercion, harassment, or reprisals? At one time, these issues, including a rethinking of age of consent laws, were a central feature of most LGBT platforms. The Third World Gay Revolution’s 1972 manifesto “What We Want, What We Believe” stated, “We want full protection of the law and social sanction for all human sexual self-expression and pleasure between consenting persons, including youth” (365). In a 1985 resolution, the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), now known as the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, an international nongovernmental federation of community-based groups, similarly proclaimed that “young people have the right to sexual and social self-determination and that age of consent laws often operate

to oppress and not protect" (quoted in Gamson 183–84). Yet, beginning in the 1980s, prompted by very public uproar involving the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) and in direct response to conservative lesbian-feminist demands, mainstream LGBT discourse began to de-emphasize the sexual rights of queer youth.³¹ Rather than deal with the complexities of desire, consent, power, and law that circulate in all forms of sexual relations, mainstream LGBT movements elected to sacrifice a political platform that included the sexual rights of youth in the name of a certain conservative version of "feminist values" and broader social acceptance (Gamson).

The sexual rights of minors, including their right to engage in inter-generational sex, is now the third rail of LGBT sexual politics, a political issue that cannot be touched even as the line between children and adults becomes increasingly blurry. Age of consent laws have significant implications for the rights of youth to access or refuse a wide range of medical services and interventions, including abortion and other reproductive services, sex-reassignment treatments, psychiatric hospitalization, drug trials, and medication. In all matters involving criminalization and incarceration, people of color regardless of stated sexuality experience the juridical effects of age of consent laws in disproportionately negative ways, whether they encounter the law as perpetrators or as victims of these and other sexually related offenses. While certain underage bodies, particularly those that are female, white, and middle-class, are imagined as only and always sexual victims of the desires of adults, young people of color are rarely imagined to be sexually innocent, and their sexual practices, defined against a white middle-class ideal of heteronormativity, are always already imagined as perverse and not worthy of protection. And provisions that give legal control of underage bodies to either their parents or the state are particularly detrimental to queer youth.

Many of the organizations that eliminated the sexual rights of LGBT youth from their mission statements and political platforms are now the same organizations that have become the strongest proponents for gay marriage and rights to reproduction and adoption services and military participation, and many have succeeded in becoming officially recognized policy partners with the state. Even as these organizations and the state publicly mourn the suicides of queer youth, sustained political

efforts advocating for greater legal control over young people's rights to sexual and gender expression have not fully materialized. Instead the political response of these LGBT organizations has often been to focus instead on the criminalization of "bullies" through hate-crime legislation that does little to educate or protect, and instead invests in a discourse of punishment that only sustains the prison-industrial complex, criminalizing and stigmatizing youth at increasingly younger ages. In *Normal Life*, the legal scholar Dean Spade makes clear the underlying logic of these state "remedies": "Hate-crime laws frame violence in terms of individual wrongdoers. These laws and their advocates portray violence through a lens that oversimplifies its operation and suggests that the criminal-punishment system is the proper way to solve it" (87). Furthermore, he argues, hate-crime legislation does not act as a deterrent but rather serves to legitimate the racial injustices of "the criminal punishment system," presenting the police and the state as the protectors—rather than the primary violators—of the civil rights of trans and queer communities (87–90). Focusing on individual "bullies" erases how law functions as the more pervasive systemic violence against the rights of youth through juridically coded racialized heteronormative formulations of sexuality. Once again, the state's definition of remedies for social harm consists of revalorizing its own authority to punish.

If we understand how age and vulnerability are linked, let me conclude by considering those of us who suffer the pains of aging bodies, bodies that over time return us to states of dependence and the cruel mercy of others. As we age, corporeal markers of the racialized economics of state abandonment begin to show, and our bodies reveal the traces of histories without health care or respite from the psychic wages of poverty.³² These aging bodies are likewise ignored by dominant representations of queer life rather than marshaled to forge connections with disability rights activists to consider how various normative forms of ability are structured into the architecture of our everyday lives. As our bodies age and deviate from normatively imagined embodiments of pleasure, we become increasingly less legible as sexual subjects. Once again fantasy and the richness of psychic life can offer an avenue for experiencing our bodies of desire differently.

In this specific historical moment, when a neoliberal ethos tries to convince us of the progress gays and lesbians have made in securing

legal recognition that allows some privileged gays and lesbians to create state-sanctioned families, it seems particularly urgent to rethink familial erotics, challenge the state's authority to legitimate its own power, and reconsider the complexities of consent. Exposing the limits of these discourses becomes all the more politically imperative, particularly when what is being sacrificed politically are the rights of the most vulnerable, disenfranchised members of the queer community: youth, people of color, transgender people, the poor, people with disabilities, the undocumented, and the elderly. Now as before, addressing these subjects publicly remains politically dangerous, as the conservative Right will use any evidence available to confirm its accusations that homosexuals cannot be trusted with children and are not worthy of state recognition as parents or as citizens entrusted to reproduce the values of the nation.

If this chapter begins at the Pride Parade, perhaps it should end at a site that is decidedly not intended for children, the Folsom Street Fair (FSF).³³ The Folsom Street Fair functions as a kind of kinky sexual commons, a public space where queerly adorned and configured bodies are on display, where sexual fantasies become staged enactments for eager audiences, a place for leather families and their friends, but also a place for curious onlookers to gawk, bondage novices to practice their knots, furies and corseted fashionistas to struck their stuff in sunlight. The Folsom Street Fair is about the multiple, overlapping, and contradictory functions of law, discipline, and regulation: the layering of city ordinances, fair organizers' guidelines, and numerous kinds of minute-to-minute negotiations that transpire. It is also about capitalism. American Airlines and Marriott Hotel are now among the proud corporate sponsors of the Folsom Street Fair, at the ready to capitalize on what is perceived to be the mainstreaming of kink. Therefore, we should all remain cautious of any attempts to align sexual identity, even identity that is decidedly not mainstream, with radical political ideals (Weiss; Marinucci).³⁴

That political investments in sexual freedom, like activist demands for various forms of kinship recognition or increased racial representation, can be co-opted to serve the needs of global capitalism or be reduced to fit neoliberal parameters of individual rights does not reduce their significance as urgent social demands. Instead, it requires

both collective vigilance against forms of erasure and censorship and imaginative activist gestures that continually press, jam, and reorient the engines of political action. Insisting on fantasy, the kinky, and the perverse now as always forms part of our struggle to define our humanity on our own terms in the service of greater collective expression. All of us, including children, youth, and elders, have the right to our erotic lives, even when our right to act on our desires is governed by other structures of recognition and care that likewise respect and validate the rights and desires of others. We cannot step away from the psychic life of fantasy. To deny fantasy, to deny the rich and perverse imaginary of our psychic and sexual lives, is to conform to a normalizing discourse that is determined to destroy our ability to imagine the world differently. Our assimilation and conformity to normative structures of gendered and racialized kinship will not protect us, our children, or the young people in our midst, and it will not serve us as our bodies become increasingly dependent on the care of others. Consent, understood within a field of existing power relations, remains core to any understanding of the social conditions under which human life can flourish. However, consent can never exist as simply a self-referential act that performs what it defines. Instead, it must be understood as another laborious gesture demanding and extending recognition of the interconnected circuits of our shared social and sexual futures.

18. See her blog, *marginadas*, for other examples of her work.
 19. Weiss's important work *Techniques of Pleasure* challenges formulations that would mark BDSM as inherently transgressive by focusing on the material relations of power and consumption in a predominately white and middle-class BDSM community consisting mostly, but not exclusively, of participants who define themselves as heterosexual or pansexual. Weiss takes up questions of race quite centrally in her text, particularly in the last chapter, stressing the ways that real-world social formations inform the racial dynamics of the BDSM communities she studies. Her analysis includes a sustained and very smart discussion of the overwhelming whiteness of these communities. In contrast, I am interested less in how actual BDSM communities reflect material relations of power than in how the sexual practices associated with BDSM inform a much wider range of social and psychic relationships of power, particularly for women of color, including those who have no affiliation to larger public communities of practice. See also emerging ethnographic work on queer dyke BDSM communities by Corie J. Hammers. For theoretical investigations that specifically take up the intersection of feminine gender and dominance and submission, see Lynda Hart's *Between the Body and the Flesh*, and Karmen MacKendrick's *Counterpleasures*. For a more personal and wholly compelling consideration of how sociality functions in these spaces, see Susan Stryker's lyrical piece, "Dungeon Intimacies." Gayle Rubin's piece "The Catacombs" remains a central touchstone on the history of S/M practices in San Francisco.
 20. In one study, the demographer Gary Gates of the Williams Institute at UCLA places the number of people who identify as bisexuals as either equal to or slightly higher than those who identify as lesbian or gay. And for women, the numbers who identify as bisexual are considerably higher than those who identify as lesbian. His study generated considerable controversy: rather than using these statistics to have a more nuanced conversation about the significance of bisexuality, the mainstream media used these data to minimize the number of "gays" by ignoring bisexuals, and the LGBT press followed suit by ignoring the political implications of a previously undercounted, underrecognized, and underserved segment of the LGBT population. See Gates; see also BiNet USA for wide-ranging resources and news pertaining to bisexuality. I am indebted to Faith Cheltenham, vice-president of BiNet, for the many generative discussions on bisexuality she initiated and inspired.
- CHAPTER 1: WHO'S YOUR DADDY?
1. Queer Pride is part of a larger narrative that situates the Stonewall uprising and, by implication, U.S.-based public manifestations of resistance as the origin of global queer activism, refusing to recognize other forms of queer expression and resistance. The most incisive critique of visibility politics remains Manalansan's influential piece "In the Shadows of Stonewall." On visibility in relation to Pride parades outside the United States, see Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire*.
 2. Pride celebrations are also policed, despite popular conceptions of the parades and festivals as universally inclusive. In *Hurley v. Irish-American Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Group of Boston* (515 U.S. 557 (1995)), the Supreme Court decided that unlike marches, parades constitute protected speech and thus parade organizers may determine who can and cannot participate. This ruling allowed the organizers of a Saint Patrick's Day Parade in Boston to bar a gay and lesbian Irish group, and also currently allows organizers of Queer Pride events to bar the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) and other groups they may find objectionable.
 3. This space, the San Francisco Pride Family Garden, was organized by three local community groups: Our Family Coalition, COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere), and the San Francisco LGBT Community Center.
 4. That public toilets are dense with political significance is well documented by queer communities. They function both as notorious sites of public sex and as political battlegrounds for transgendered and disabled bodies. Kid-only porta-potties simultaneously reveal the potential significance of access to public toilets and serve as a symbol intended to protect children from inappropriate bathroom behavior. For a history of and commentary on the politics of public toilets, see Munt, "Orifices in Space."
 5. For recent discussions on intersections of queerness and children, see Kathryn Bond Stockton's book *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* and the anthology edited by Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, entitled *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*.
 6. The court documents state that the defendant had been caught in an online chat room with an undercover agent who offered the defendant pornographic photographs of a child. In fact, those photographs were themselves "doctored photograph[s] of an adult" (*United States v. Williams*, 553 U.S. 285 (2008)).
 7. See specifically the first chapter of Kipnis's book *Bound and Gagged* for her discussion of how law enforcement policies of surveillance and entrapment extend into the realm of fantasy.
 8. In *The Erotic Life of Racism*, Sharon Holland uses Spiller to argue that "claims of social and cultural norms of kinship" cannot be understood without an interrogation of how the transatlantic slave trade transformed how familial bonds are constituted. "Gone is the acknowledged relation among relatives; present is the raw nerve of the incest taboo, set aside for the purposes of securing national wealth and international dominance" (6).
 9. According to the Human Rights Watch report "Fields of Peril," an extensive report on the laws and working conditions that impact thousands of child farmworkers, eleven- and twelve-year-olds are routinely hired to work the fields, and children as young as seven are likewise employed as agricultural workers, legally:
 - Under the law, on small farms with parental permission, outside of school hours, there is no minimum age for workers. Children ages 12 and 13 can

work for any size farm with their parent's consent outside of school hours; children 14 and 15 can work on any size farm without parental consent outside of school hours; there are no restrictions on employing children ages 16 and older, including in hazardous agricultural occupations. (20)

Like all farmworkers in the United States, these children labor under highly dangerous and often toxic working conditions, and are not legally entitled to minimum wage, overtime, or benefits for the backbreaking work they endure (Human Rights Watch). This report includes dozens of first-person interviews with children. Children describe working fourteen-hour days, seven days a week at eleven and twelve years old, working with knives, chainsaws, and other industrial equipment. Most are exposed to pesticides that are tested on the bodies of adult men. Numerous interviewees describe repeated sexual abuse and harassment. Interview after interview recount the pain in their hands, feet, back, and growing bodies. Their stories are heartbreaking.

10. "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: A New Strategic Vision for All of Our Families and Relationships" remains the most progressive and dynamic public document available advocating for certain forms of state protection, while simultaneously critiquing the ways nuclear families—gay, lesbian, or heterosexual—have been privileged in activist discourse. The 2006 document was authored by activists, academics, lawyers, writers, and artists, and released on beyondmarriage.org.
11. This representation of African Americans as being more homophobic than their white counterparts mirrors the way that African Americans were blamed by some members of the mainstream LGBT press for the passage of Proposition 8. Proposition 8 was a 2008 ballot proposition and constitutional amendment eliminating the rights of same-sex couples to marry and overturning the California Supreme Court ruling that had made such marriages legal. That decision was overturned by the Supreme Court in *Hollingsworth v. Perry* (2013).
12. In an episode of *The L Word*, Bette and Tina likewise contemplate how their status as an interracial couple will increase their access to an elite preschool. In neither show does the cost of these elite educational institutions present an obstacle.
13. Philip Deloria argues that "playing Indian" is a quintessentially American pastime that functions as a core practice of producing the U.S. nation-state.
14. Gates and Romero provide a very detailed discussion of the limitations and assumptions of their methodology. While admitting that culling these statistics from census data is limited in several respects, their in-depth discussion of the criteria used in their data collection methods evidences a careful consideration of the many attenuating factors involved in any such statistical analysis.
15. For a specific discussion of lesbian alternative insemination, see Amy Agigian's *Baby Steps: How Lesbian Alternative Insemination Is Changing the World*. Agigian's text does an excellent job articulating the legal and social obstacles facing lesbians who wish to bear children, but it does little to interrogate the racial or national dimensions of biological desires for reproduction or child rearing.
16. In their introduction to *International Adoption: Global Inequities and the Circulation of Children*, Diana Marre and Laura Briggs forcefully remind us that the history of "transnational adoption emerged out of war," marking how violence and conquest haunt exchanges of children across networks of care (1). See also Laura Briggs's *Somebody's Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption*. In this forceful and illuminating text, Briggs examines the history in the United States, looking specifically at the forced removal of Native and African American children. For a lyrical auto-ethnographic account of transracial adoption, see Sandra Patton's *Birthmarks*. The Adoption History Project offers one of the most complete resources for information on the history of adoption in the United States, including a detailed timeline and bibliography. See Ellen Herman, "The Adoption History Project." See also the activist group for adoptees, Bastard Nation.
17. Williams points to a system in which those who are poor, disabled, and of color are discouraged from reproducing in a myriad of ways, from forced sterilization to state inducements for the distribution of birth control, denied what Dorothy Roberts terms "reproductive freedom" (4). Women who are wealthy and white, in contrast, are often provided access to a wide range of technologies and services that promote reproduction, a process of differentiated access that Charis Thompson names "selective pronatalism" (235).
18. See Roderick Ferguson's *Aberrations in Black*; Robin D. G. Kelley's *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!*; and Dorothy Roberts's *Killing the Black Body* for different, but complementary, perspectives on the historical and current treatment of African American reproduction and kinship.
19. Adoption agencies are not required to post their fee structures, but personal experience, anecdotal evidence, and a review of the literature suggest that race-based fee structures are a widespread practice. A 2005 article in the *Illinois Times* titled "Baby Trade" cited the following data:

American Adoptions, based in Overland Park, Kan., with licenses in five other states, has an online application form that requires prospective parents to choose either an "agency-assisted" adoption, for \$12,000 to \$19,000, or a "traditional" adoption, for \$20,000 to \$35,000. The "traditional" program is defined as "all non-African-American healthy newborns and infants," while the cheaper program is for "African-American (or any race combined with African-American heritage) healthy newborns and infants." The Web site of Heaven Sent Adoption Services, based in Fulton, Mich., features Bible verses and pictures of Jesus along with a catalog of birth mothers looking for adoptive families. The fees vary by situation, but most of the African-American babies listed fall into the \$6,500 to \$14,000 range, with white babies listed at \$15,000 to \$27,000. (Rhodes)

This situation is further complicated by the realities of biracial children, wherein the "race" of a child might not be initially disclosed and the racial

- differences of a child might not be immediately apparent to adoption agencies or adoptive parents.
20. In *Making Parents: The Ontological Choreography of Reproductive Technologies*, Charis Thompson recounts how similar erasures function within the realm of assisted reproduction, wherein a linguistic spinning ensues that erases the role that economics and technology play in the creation of children, masking the economic exchange for products and labor (sperm, eggs, drugs, wombs, medical personnel, and technology) that assist in bringing children into the world. In assisted reproduction, these traces of influence are all but erased from any official record by the time the child is born, sealed behind the privacy of medical records. In adoption, attempts to excise the other parties that enable family formation enlist the state in the cover-up process, most directly through the issuance of a revised birth certificate replacing the names on the original certificate with those of the adoptive parents. In gay and lesbian adoption, this means having the names of two same-sex partners occupy the space of mother and father on the birth certificate, officially creating a narrative fiction of queer biological reproduction. And when only one parent is listed on the birth certificate, these documents create an equally revisionist statement of parthenogenetic biological origin.
 21. Increasingly, men are making ownership claims regarding sperm donation and pregnancy, and their political power is evident in the “fathers’ rights movement.” The movement has succeeded in passing several state laws requiring women who choose to abort or relinquish custody rights through adoption to notify the biological father. Unlike the social stigma associated with maternal abandonment, the social stigma attached to unknown fathers or fathers who refuse custody is most often associated with economics rather than affect. The discourse of “deadbeat dads,” biological fathers who refuse or cannot afford to provide child support and thus fail to fulfill their masculine role as providers, requires that the state assume a greater share of material support for children.
 22. Sign language is a particularly obvious example, wherein hearing children who live with deaf parents or caretakers are often perceived to be deaf when they sign in public spaces. In *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, Lennard J. Davis, himself a hearing child of deaf parents, argues persuasively for how social categories of difference are imagined and lived through and against regimes of normality. While his project problematizes the categorization of deafness as a “disability,” he nevertheless situates deafness as part of the political project of disability studies.
 23. Similarly for children born as a result of assisted reproductive technologies, the Revised Uniform Parentage Act (2002) precludes from claiming parental rights those sperm, egg, and embryo donors and surrogates who do not intend to parent within normative frameworks. The act serves to foreclose any possibility of affective relationships that might trouble the fiction of nuclear heterosexual procreation. By establishing the conclusive state-sanctioned parental ownership of infantile bodies, it also legally lays to rest any lingering questions about racial ambiguity or belonging that might arise from the racial politics involved in many forms of surrogacy and assisted reproduction.
 24. I am referring here to slavery as it is broadly understood in an American hemispheric context. While other articulations of slavery have existed around the world, the image of the African American slave remains the most salient in the popular imaginary.
 25. For a consideration of temporality, historiography, and S/M, see Freeman, *Time Binds* (specifically chapter 4, “Turn the Beat Around”).
 26. It is important to note that in BDSM discourse, each of these terms constitutes a distinct sexual and social position. There are no assumed equivalents between top/sadist/dominant/daddy nor any other set of terms. In fact, the meanings ascribed to any one of these names or the host of other terms deployed by different players and groups, and the sexual practices or sexual identities that might accompany them, are wholly dependent on the understandings that emerge in a specific context. Community-inspired naming practices and intimate social dynamics assign very distinct relational terms to a wide variety of sexual practices and identities, the complexity and variety of which exceed the scope of this project. And much of this play may have little or nothing to do with erotic or sexual pleasure, as it is commonly understood. Social network sites such as FetLife.com frequently use an almost exhaustive set of terms to describe sexual roles and practices, but the definition of these is generally left to the individuals who deploy these terms. As in other groups structured around identity categories, definitions and their limits frequently form the basis for conversation as well as heated debate.
 27. See, for example, the description of Master Taíno’s leather family, where he describes in elaborate detail the contours and conditions that structure his leather family, including his many slaves. Those wishing to join his leather family can apply to be 24/7 Houseboys, Live-In Slaves, Non-Live-In Slaves, and Junior Masters. Extended family includes former slaves, trainees, and boys, but also includes other Masters, Daddies, and Sirs. In several passages, he describes the emotional process of entering into, recommitting to, and terminating Master/slave contracts. Despite the reference to the native people of Puerto Rico in his name, Master Taíno describes himself as a “62 year-old, white Puerto Rican of Spanish ancestry with strong Mediterranean looks.” He lives in the Washington, D.C., area. See Master Taíno.
 28. For a rare literary example that considers the master and slave erotic relationship between women as a complicated dynamics of coercion and care, see “The Mistress and the Slave Girl” by the African American writer Ann Allen Shockley.
 29. In his essay “Family Romances,” Freud recounts the fantasy that one’s family is not really one’s family in a way that curiously inverts the normative narratives of adoption, in which adoption marks a trauma that must be protected against through erasing biological family ties and remaking the adoptive family the

- new "biological" family. In Freud's formulation, the fantasy of adoption can provide solace from the reality of biological family trauma. Freud's 1909 essay contends that the child who feels slighted or who feels that his affections are not reciprocated "finds a vent in the idea, often consciously recollected later from early childhood, of being a step-child or an adopted child" (298). Of course, in Freud's scenario, these fantasies make the parents and/or siblings more sexually available, even as they create a more exalted version of those kin. But in queer erotic family-play, these dynamics are exploited for their erotic potential rather than repressed or pathologized as immature expressions of adult sexuality.
30. Less often mentioned in the queer worlds of fantasy play are traces of mommy as a site of erotic possibility, one that is also multiply inflected through gestures of care, discipline, power, seduction, and availability, but more often understood through mundane gestures of intimacy. See Robin Maltz's essay "Genesis of a Femme and Her Desire: Finding Mommy and Daddy in Butch/Femme." This is somewhat changing, and there now seem to be more references in queer subcultural forums like FetLife for Mommy/boy or Mommy/girl play. In popular discourse, there is also the now common reference to MILFs (Mothers I'd Like to Fuck). On the erotics of the maternal, see also Carter, "On Mother-Love"; Holland, "To Touch the Mother's C(o)untry"; Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*; and Lorde, *Zami*.
31. This appeal to an imagined feminist outrage about underage and cross-generational sexual practices inspired Pat Califia to pen the 1981 essay "Man/Boy Love and the Lesbian/Gay Movement." There Califia asserts, "This attempt to define pedophilia as a male issue simply alienates and enrages women whose lesbian experiences include cross-generational contact. . . . [R]esearch clearly demonstrates that it is consent, not gender, that makes the difference in young people's reactions to sex with adults" (139–40).
32. The urgent and compelling topic of queer sexuality and age exceeds the scope of this project, but let me offer some suggestions for further research. For a discussion of silence and invisibility surrounding LGBT elders, see Maria T. Brown. For a general review of social science literature on sexuality and aging that includes discussion and a helpful bibliography on lesbian and gay populations, see de Vries. For a discussion of legal implications of aging LGBT populations, see Knauer, who argues that we need to better engage the complexities of queer kinship and sexuality in order to confront the legal obstacles that queer elders face. For activist projects that address the issue, see Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders, a support and advocacy organization that has been in existence since 1978. SAGE recently joined with the National Center for Transgender Equality to produce a resource and policy guide entitled *Improving the Lives of Transgender Older Adults: Recommendations for Policy and Practice*. For documentation on black lesbian elders, the filmmaker Tiona McClodden and the publisher Lisa C. Moore are currently in production for a feature-length documentary film with the working title *Untitled Black Lesbian Elder Project*.
33. At the last Folsom Street Fair I attended in 2013, at each entrance there was a large sign that stated, "This Street Fair is Adult Orientated. Folsom Street Events strongly discourages people from bringing either children or pets on to the fairgrounds. We feel that the Fair is not an appropriate environment for them. This is an event created by and for the adult alternative lifestyle community. If you choose to bring your child or pet, then we cannot prevent you from entering; however, our security volunteers may reinforce this message." Its website includes the following description of its mission: "The mission of the Folsom Street Fair is to create world-class leather and fetish events that unite adult alternative lifestyle communities with safe venues for self-expression and exciting entertainment. Our events raise funds to sustain San Francisco-based and national charities. We value sexual freedom, diversity, and volunteerism."
34. The politics around the expansion and assimilation of the FSF into the larger landscape of San Francisco's public image are complicated, however. Even as many longtime members bemoan how the FSF has been overrun by "tourists"—that is, those perceived to not be connected to more established BDSM and leather communities—in the past decade the fair has also become decidedly less white and more diverse in terms of racial representation and in terms of what is understood as alternative sexual cultures.

CHAPTER 2: SODOMY, SOVEREIGNTY, AND OTHER UTOPIAN LONGINGS

1. All translations, unless indicated, are my own.
2. In Spanish the word *partido* (party, as in political party) is also used to refer to effeminate men, from the word *partir* (to split or part). "Partido Homosexual" therefore plays on this double connotation of the word.
3. As I will argue with the help of Dávila-Caballero, the meaning and implications of the law in Puerto Rico are not limited to or defined by sodomy as a defined sexual act that references anal penetration. Because this statute is termed a "sodomy law" in the surrounding discourse, I have elected to cautiously use this term at points in this essay for the sake of brevity.
4. In most newspaper articles and in the official court record, her surname is given as Sánchez; in her own essay, she uses de León; I have elected to use Sánchez de León to avoid confusion.
5. This online article was published without indicating an author, but several sources, including Sánchez de León, have indicated that it was authored by the Puerto Rican activist Georgie Irizarry. It was originally entitled "Soy Lesbiana, Arrestame K-bron," but was later archived under the title "Tanto la llamaron criminal los legisladores que ella confesó su delito y los retó a que la arrestaran; ella sigue libre."
6. Codefendants named in the case included Fulana de Tal, José Joaquín Mulinelli Rodríguez, Sutano Más Cual, Edgard Danielsen-Morales, and William Moran Berberena (ACLU, "Complaint").