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Cold War Playboys: Models of Masculinity in the Literature of Playboy

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Cold War Playboys:
Models of Masculinity in the Literature of *Playboy*

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctoral of Philosophy
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, who reads the articles and loves me unconditionally.

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ABSTRACT

“Cold War Playboys: Models of Masculinity in the Literature of *Playboy*”

emphasizes the literary voices that emerged in response to the Cold War’s redefinitions of space and sexuality and, thus, adds to the growing national discourse of Cold War literary and masculinity studies. I argue that the literature *Playboy* includes has always been a necessary feature to creating its masculinity model; however, that very literature often destabilizes the magazine’s grand narrative because it presents readers with alternative models of masculinity. To make that argument, I presume five things: 1) masculinity, like femininity, is a construct; 2) the mid-century masculinity crisis should be attributed to redefinitions of space and sexuality; 3) the crisis generated a variety of masculinity models; 4) *Playboy* presents its own, unified model of masculinity through its editorial features; and 5) finally, that *Playboy* should be considered an early Cold War artifact because the space *Playboy* magazine represents, dually domestic and privatized, is hardly trivial—decade after decade, it has absorbed society’s shifts and reflected them back to readers.

Citing biographical, historical, critical, and textual evidence, I consider how the literature of *Playboy* magazine responds to the construction of Cold War discourses regarding sexuality and space. In particular, I examine how *Playboy* contributions from Jack Kerouac, Vladimir Nabokov, and James Baldwin detail models of masculinity informed by Cold War culture. *Playboy*’s emphasis was obviously Playmates, but fiction

always appeared in its pages. As its largest component, fiction became the backbone of *Playboy*. Therefore, Hefner's educated, sexual male identity included, and still includes, reading a wide array of literature—from Ian Fleming to Ursula le Guin. “Cold War Playboys” asks: How did literature gain primacy in Hefner's ideal male identity? What purposes does reading this literature serve when appealing to a particular masculinity? Answering these questions allows me to explore how one mass-produced magazine and specific literary figures participated in and resisted the construction of Cold War discourses regarding space and sexuality.

INTRODUCTION

In “Cold War Playboys: Models of Masculinity in the Literature of *Playboy*,” I examine the literary voices that emerged in response to the Cold War and, thus, enter the growing national discourse of Cold War literary studies. Though I am too young to have any Cold War memories, I have traveled the intimate American landscapes of Vladimir Nabokov’s and Jack Kerouac’s road novels. I craved the testimonial and confessional poetry, what seemed to be the new expressive and powerfully descriptive “I” used by Allen Ginsberg and Frank O’Hara. For weeks, I found myself broken into incompatible pieces after sifting through Doris Lessing’s notebooks. Finding *The Invisible Man* on every corner, I have never watched a boxing match without thinking of the Battle Royal. Sylvia Plath’s tale of psychological ruin, framed by the Rosenberg’s execution, still haunts me, and James Baldwin’s images of homosexual passion set in foreign cities frankly stirs me. Like Thomas Schaub, I was not “aware” that the mesmerizing undertones of these works were really “expressions of political turmoil, in which the nature and obligations of writing were altered in response to the decline of the left, to the fact of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Holocaust, and to the anticommunism which dominated politics and culture for some years afterward” (vii). After learning about post-war America, it was difficult for me to ignore that the literature I loved revealed aspects of the cultural Cold War.

And then Hugh Hefner, in his silk pajamas and smoking jacket, began to invade my scholarship. While watching “The History of Sexuality” documentary on the *History*

Channel I was, at first, shocked to note that Hefner opened the series and was presented as the figurehead on American sexuality. Shortly after, in December 2009, *Playboy's* publication of Vladimir Nabokov's unfinished, fragmented novel, *The Original of Laura*, caused a media frenzy which reminded readers of the magazine's original objective—to combine physical and mental stimulation. Publishing *The Original of Laura* made it difficult for me to dismiss *Playboy's* literary history. *Playboy's* current literary editor, Amy Lyod Grace states that Nabokov knew *Playboy* presented readers with an interesting blend of high and low features by publishing quality fiction. Grace's revelations led me to concede that in over its five decades in print, *Playboy* has published an obscene amount of renowned authors—and all of the authors I was fascinated with. Therefore, I was forced to reassess the cliché I have heard so many times about why someone purchases *Playboy*—"I buy it for the articles" might actually be true; *Playboy* proves that literature can "live" anywhere. *Playboy's* sensational rise and continued dominance offers a compelling primary source to study the mid-century masculinity crisis, Cold War redefinitions of space and sexuality, and the literature this culture produced.

In "Cold War Playboys," I argue that the literature *Playboy* includes has always been a necessary feature to creating its masculinity model; however, that very literature often destabilizes the magazine's grand narrative because it presents readers with alternative models of masculinity. To make this argument, I presume five things: 1) masculinity, like femininity, is a construct; 2) the mid-century masculinity crisis should be attributed to redefinitions of space and sexuality; 3) the crisis generated a variety of masculinity models; 4) *Playboy* presents its own, unified model of masculinity through its editorial features; and 5) finally that *Playboy* should be considered an early Cold War

artifact because the space *Playboy* magazine represents, dually domestic and privatized, is hardly trivial—decade after decade, it has absorbed society’s shifts and reflected them back to readers.

Analyzing *Playboy* allows me to respond to Judith Keenan Gardiner’s call for an expansion of masculinity studies. Growing from the more traditional Second Wave feminism, masculinity studies posits that gender constructs mark men as well as women. Urging for more study into masculinity, feminist scholars, such as Calvin Thomas and Michael Kimmel, are committed to recognizing both genders as constructs, in order to render them permeable to change. Cultural concerns about manhood reveal that masculinity crises are cyclical and reciprocal in nature.

The mid-century masculinity crisis can be attributed to the Cold War redefinitions of space and sexuality. Government officials and cultural campaigns made the once private domestic space public, so that political subversives, or sexual deviants, could be identified as national threats. Cold War anxiety produced the need to classify who might be a Communist party member, and that anxiety encouraged the penetration of private and domestic space. The government infringed upon civil liberties “to preserve freedom in general” (Whitfield 233). In *Cold War, Hot Houses*, editors Beatriz Colomina, Annmarie Breannan, and Jeannie Kim argue that the Cold War was an incredible "conflation of public and private" (17). Public spaces, such as national parks and drive-in theaters, were privatized. Concurrently, private space, especially the domestic space, became publicized (14). Domestic space projected the image of the good life: "a lifestyle of prosperity and excess that was the weapon" in a war between capitalism and communism (16). The fight against communism was staged as a fight for commodities,

and as the “Kitchen Debates” between Nixon and Khrushchev aired to millions of Americans, congressional law and mass marketing served to domesticate war veterans.

The reconstitution of sexuality or space is not exclusive to the Cold War. As Michel Foucault's and Michel de Certeau's work have demonstrated, sexuality and space are two highly contested realms of power, especially because the meanings of these terms shift depending on context. Anthropologists Ellen Ross and Rayna Rapp declared, in their 1980s seminal research, that sex is "always experienced culturally, through a translation" (51). The bare biological notions of sex, and thus sexuality, cannot be viewed in isolation. Sex "feels individual or at least private," but those feelings are necessarily predicated on the "incorporation of roles, definitions, symbols and meanings of the worlds in which they are constructed" (51). According to geographers, the "relationships between sexualities and space are made clear when we begin thinking about the power of particular landscapes as either liberatory or oppressive sites for the performance of our sexed selves" (Bell 98). Because "space and bodies are intimately tied together," the relationship between space and sexuality is complex and discursively produced (Johnston 16). No spaces rest outside of sexual politics because "sex and space cannot be 'decoupled'" (Johnston 3). These works suggest that the simultaneous politicization of space and sexuality is made apparent during the Cold War.

Cold War Redefinitions of Space and Sexuality

The United States' political strategy to contain the expansion of communism overseas can be applied more generally to the domestic anxiety over boundaries, whether political, sexual, or racial. After World War II, complementary processes decentralized, and simultaneously concentrated, American space. For example, highway systems and

broadcast television decentralized space, while suburbia and corporatization centralized space (Kozlovsky 196). Based on the government's ideology of containment, the Cold War's reorganization of space delineated the unstable "boundaries between public and private life" (Nelson xii). George Kennan, director of Secretary of State George Marshall's policy planning staff, deemed containment of communism a necessary strategy, because, unlike the clearly demarcated boundaries of battlegrounds, Communist ideology could infiltrate borders and infect anyone. Kennan compared communism to "a fluid stream which moves constantly, wherever it is permitted to move. Its main concern is to make sure it has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power" (par. 24). The United States' Cold War containment strategy influenced how citizens viewed and participated in space; borders between private and public space became contested.

Anxiety over racial, sexual, and political borders caused suburban sprawl, which encouraged discriminatory practices, such as red-lining. The Servicemen's Readjustment Bill of 1944, popularly known as the GI Bill, provided education and housing to over eight million, mostly white middle-class, veterans. After the passage of the Interstate Highway Act of 1956, creating easy access to suburbs, the United States government finalized its subsidy of the domesticated male. Demographically, marriage rates increased, while the age at which couples married dropped to unprecedented lows. According to Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound: American Families during the Cold War Era*, families were encouraged by popular narratives to expand as the post-war housing boom transformed America's physical landscape. Eighteen million, white, middle-class citizens moved to suburbia after the war. In *Domestic Revolutions*, Steven Mintz and Susan

Kellogg claim that eighty-five percent of the thirteen million homes built between 1948 and 1958 were constructed in the suburbs. To keep new suburban communities white, government policy allowed banks to delineate areas suitable for investment. Realtors and bankers used red-lining to discriminate against African Americans by designating certain communities as white only. These officials claimed that sustaining housing-market prices—not racial discrimination—was the purpose of red-lining. Red-lining allowed officials to maintain control over communities and interfere in what was once considered private space. Likewise, government officials discriminated against homosexuals by penetrating their private spheres for proof of “deviant” sexuality and then ousting them from government jobs because their sexuality was labeled a national threat. During the Cold War, the United States government felt obligated to penetrate private space, in order to protect its national borders.

The rhetoric of containment for communism and domestic space extended to discourses regarding sexuality. American males needed to conform to Cold War redefinitions of public and private space, which meant they had to adhere to a strict code of heterosexuality. Post-war scientific studies, such as the Kinsey Reports of 1948 and 1953, suggested that sexual behavior is not static and sexuality should be viewed on a sliding scale. However, the “specter of the homosexual” caused widespread panic because, like Communists, homosexuals could not be easily identified (Chauncey). Robert Corber, Robert D. Dean, and David K. Johnson prove with their recent scholarship that homosexuality became a national security concern. Deemed a mental illness by the psychiatric community of the 1950s, especially governing officials, homosexuality was also considered immoral by societal values. Citizens “affected” by

this “illness” were susceptible to blackmail, and thus, security risks. The growing visibility of homosexuality during the Cold War, combined with a perceived crisis in American masculinity, made space and sexuality extremely contested realms in the post-war period.

This homosexual community was first solidified during World War II, and its visibility helped to spur a perceived post-war masculinity crisis. World War II's demands on the United States' population created an atmosphere that "fostered a tolerant attitude" toward sex and sexuality (Johnson 52). David K. Johnson explains in the *Lavender Scare* how the northern migration for Washington employment caused "horror stories" of housing shortages and more "opportunities for sexual encounters" (52). War took men away from families, women entered the workforce, and medical advances depressed the effects of sexually contracted diseases. Gore Vidal illustrates the heightened sexuality in the 1945-46 winter: "We were enjoying perhaps the freest sexuality that Americans would ever know" (qtd. in Johnson 52). A burgeoning homosexual literature bolstered the widening sphere of sexuality. But, by the time Alfred Kinsey published his first comprehensive survey of male sexuality in 1948, many Americans were concerned about the sexual freedom Vidal celebrated just three years earlier. In his journal, John Cheever declared that 1948 was "the year everybody in the United States was worried about homosexuality" (qtd. in Johnson 55). Cheever wrote:

A great emphasis, by way of defense, was put upon manliness, athletics, hunting, fishing, and conservative clothing, but the lonely wife wondered, glancingly, about her husband as his hunting camp, and the husband himself wondered with whom he shared a rude bed of pines. Was he? Had he? Did he want to? Had he ever? (qtd. in Johnson 55)

According to Cheever's observations, World War II's tolerant attitude toward sexuality reverted to fears regarding homosexuality. The shifting freedom of sexuality mirrored the unstable boundaries between "public and private life" in the United States (Nelson xii).

Concerns about manhood—its absence, possible withering, and inconsistent performance—became a focus for 1950s American culture. The mid-century witnessed what some historians deem a "male panic:" a time when "men self-consciously rebel against real or imagined "feminization" developing within the workplace, public spheres, and/or domestic relationships" (Gilbert 3). Historical and cultural studies like Robert D. Dean's *Imperial Brotherhood* and K. A. Cuordileone's *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* have focused on how government policy constructed masculinity and how aspects of masculinity shaped policy. From this scholarship, two main Cold War models of masculinity have been analyzed—the hyper-masculine and the domesticated. Icons like, John Wayne, and government officials, like John F. Kennedy, represent the hyper-masculine image. The domesticated male is best represented by William Whyte's "Organizational Man," a gray-flannelled, white-collared, suburban father.

More recently, cultural and gender scholars, such Bill Osgerby, James Gilbert, and Michael Davidson, have worked to define a spectrum of mid-century masculinity models, which encompasses more than the hyper-masculine and domesticated. With any number of masculine roles to choose from, masculinity "remained a contested terrain throughout the postwar period" and produced a masculine phenomenon much like the one chronicled by Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*.

Responding to the Cold War's changing notions of space and sexuality, *Playboy* mapped its own model of masculinity in the virtual space of its pages and the literal space in its clubs and mansions. For white middle-class, heterosexual men, *Playboy* formulated a particular model of masculinity with its extremely coherent editorial features, such as its playbill, advice columns, advertisements, pictorials, and nonfiction columns. A quick comparison between a table of contents from a 1950 issue to one from 2011 reveals that editors knew the secret to building a lasting brand—consistency. With its rabbit ears and fluffy tail, *Playboy* has mastered branding. Growing from publishing a modestly-sized magazine to running international clubs, the Playboy Empire has consistently presented a meta-narrative of heterosexuality, upward mobility, and the reclamation of domestic space. *Playboy's* editorial features work in conjunction to form a model of masculinity distinct from other Cold War models. *Playboy's* model of masculinity is heterosexual, wealthy, sophisticated, educated, single, and proud of his domesticated, urban space.

Constantly working to increase subscription rates, Hefner and his editors inevitably provided cultural commentary on the nature of American masculinity, making *Playboy* an early Cold War artifact. *Playboy* magazine should be viewed as an early Cold War artifact because it owes its success to Cold War paranoia, homophobia, conspicuous consumption and fears of feminization. From the city to the suburb, Cold War culture spawned new artifacts: TV sets, plastics, drive-ins, Tupperware, shopping plazas, office cubicles, national parks, etc. *Playboy* should be catalogued alongside these other artifacts. In *Mr. Playboy*, Steven Watts argues that “[i]n the heart of the Eisenhower era, it was the genius of Playboy and its editor to articulate an approach that tapped both mainstream aspirations and marginal unhappiness” (91). Russell Miller goes so far as to

suggest that “America had been waiting for *Playboy*” (44). If Hugh Hefner had gone to print just a few years earlier, during the height of the McCarthy era, the second issue would most likely have never been printed. Senator McCarthy would have branded Hefner as an enemy of the state; but, by 1953, McCarthy was exposed as a tyrant and a drunk and the economy boomed. Exploiting Cold War fears and new capitalistic agendas, Hefner produced a didactic manual for the upscale, urban bachelor.

In the decade following World War II, Americans experienced incredibly unsettling changes. As Americans adjusted to an uneasy peacetime, they worked to restore the family unit and stabilize gender roles. The war separated husbands from wives and moved women into the workforce. Immediately after the war, perceptions of juvenile delinquency and divorce rates spiked. Historians and cultural critics often cite fear as a part of the general Cold War atmosphere. Thomas Mann feared that “Barbarism [was] descending upon us,” and he was prepared for “a long night and perhaps a deep forgetting” (qtd. in Whitfield 232). For many, the Cold War became menacing. Norman Mailer declared, “Dread has been loose in the twentieth century, and America has shivered in its horror since the Depression and the Second War” (“Presidential Papers”). After 1947, Americans experienced “an increasing anxiety” (Field 7). Atomic anxiety, Red and Lavender Scares, and waning McCarthyism produced a general atmosphere of fear.

Directly responding to this sense of fear, Hefner positioned *Playboy* as a diversion, a light-hearted form of entertainment that offered sex, not politics, to the American male. His often-quoted first editorial note explains how *Playboy’s* main objective is entertainment.

Affairs of the State will be out of province. We don't expect to solve any world problems or prove any great moral truths. If we are able to give the American male a few extra laughs and a little diversion from the anxieties of the Atomic Age, we'll feel we've justified our existence. (2, Dec. 1953)

Playboy diverted readers from Cold War anxieties with nude pictorials, garish cartoons, and a joke column. In less than one year on the stands, *Playboy* was selling 185,000 copies per month, and by the close of the decade, those monthly numbers breached the million mark (Gunelius 14). In *Reaching for Paradise*, Thomas Weyr argues that the general public shied “away from politics—especially liberal or left-wing politics” in the early years of the 1950s (xvi). Sex emerged as a “surrogate” for politics, “a way of expressing opposition to the status quo” (xvi). *Playboy* embraced sex, “not only as a moral good but a moral imperative” (xvi). Hefner avowed that his entertainment magazine offered men a perfectly normal outlet to engage with appropriate sexual material.

Playboy's display of appropriate sexual content filled the void between swanky men's magazines, like *Modern Man*, and more high-brow entertainment journals, such as *Esquire*. Set within a Cold War context of fears regarding the state of masculinity, *Playboy's* overt emphasis on heterosexuality allowed the magazine to flourish. Hefner might have presented the magazine as apolitical, but he deliberately positioned its sexual content as a means for discovering national dissenters. Because the single bachelor technically defied the traditional, social institution of marriage, he could be branded as homosexual or sexual deviant. But, according to Hefner, if the single bachelor was interested in gazing at nude females, he couldn't be a Communist. Strategically placing his magazine within the Cold War anti-Communist and homophobic climate, Hefner

claimed that “a picture of a beautiful woman is something that fellow of any age ought to be able to enjoy. If he doesn't, then that's the kid to watch out for” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 41). Hefner later commented that “there were two kinds of boys—those who liked to pull the wings off flies and those who liked girls. We confess to preference in the latter. The deviants, the perverts, the serious juvenile delinquents—they are not interested in healthy boy-girl relationships” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 41). National anxieties regarding communism and deviant sexuality were intertwined. Gazing at female nudes apparently affirmed heterosexual virility and spurred on national well-being.

Playboy also owes its success to the fact that it stressed participation in conspicuous consumption. In features such as “The Advisor,” *Playboy* defined what to buy, what to listen to, what to read and how to respond. *Playboy* offered American men what Pierre Bourdieu would call “cultural capital.” David Halberstam attributes *Playboy's* spectacular rise to the “post-war decline of Calvinism and Puritanism in America” and as much as “anything else to the very affluence of the society” (576). Americans were begging for access into the post-war world of plenty because they “lived in a world of more and more toys” (576). But *Playboy* did not “link consumption to fatherhood and homeownership” (Corber 9). Severing the link between consumption and domesticity, *Playboy* encouraged males to satisfy their pleasure principle. In “Czar of the Bunny Empire,” Hefner claims that his magazine stimulated readers to join in the consumption campaign. Urged by the material and physical rewards presented in *Playboy*, readers would be encouraged to “educate themselves so they can make enough money to enjoy these benefits” (qtd. in Davidson “Czar” 32). Hefner then surmised that *Playboy* would “help overcome the educational gap between ourselves and the Russians”

(qtd. in Davidson “Czar” 33). Hefner thus exploited the Cold War fight over economic systems and helped *Playboy* readers join the capitalist cause by advertising a variety of items from liquor to high-tech gadgets.

The other Cold War concern *Playboy* exploited was the anxiety over the “womanization” of America. Cultural myths suggested that men had to relearn how to behave like men because the “sex roles” had been confused. The confusion could be traced to a variety of sources: the growing white-collar, masculine, corporate world of grey flannel suits; the feminization of the consumer society; or the burden of being of breadwinner. Whatever the source, mid-century critics, like Philip Wylie, “frequently charged” women with “trying to ‘dominate’ men” (Fraterrigo “Answer to Suburbia” 750). Betty Friedan explained that women were blamed for men's troubles: “No one has ever been blacklisted or fired for an attack on the ‘American woman’” it was “[s]afer to take it out on his wife and his mother than to recognize a failure in himself or in the sacred American way of life” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 29). Even family-orientated *Life* magazine claimed, in 1954, that women were “winning the battle of the sexes.” *Esquire* followed those critiques with questions such as “Whatever happened to the girl who was loving rather than just loved, serene rather than strident, comforting rather than competitive?” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 33). Assertions of masculine crisis often found their ways into the pages of *Playboy*. Philip Wylie's 1942 vitriolic attack on women, *Generations of Vipers*, continued throughout the magazine in articles such as “The Abdicating Male and How the Gray Flannel Mind Exploits Him” (1956), the panel on “The Womanization of America” (1958), and non-fiction articles on “The Career Woman” (1963). *Playboy* depicted caricatures of nagging housewives, who undermined individualism and

masculine authority. According to Hefner, “womanization meant the development of a 'female-oriented society...A matriarchy instead of a patriarchy’” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 33-34). Hefner claims that the anxiety over the sex roles stemmed from the woman being “pushed” into a more dominated position: “Woman's suffrage gave them the right to vote, etc. All very positive things...But we've gotten ourselves into a situation where...the roles of the sexes...are becoming less and less defined” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 33-34). Hefner continues to show how the once-clearly-defined roles have been muddled:

You know it goes back to the very beginning of time. The man goes out and kills a saber-toothed tiger while the woman stays at home and washes out the pots. Fair, unfair, good, bad, or indifferent, the roles were clearly defined. Sadly as they become less defined and more confused, we get into a situation...with a tremendous amount of national neuroses...She wants to dominate the male, the man gets into a position in which he feels dominated, and thus the woman loses identity...marriage collapses. (qtd. in Fraterrigo 33-34)

Outliving and outnumbering males, females wielded new political power as voters, earned their own wages, and constituted a major sector of consumption, but the rhetoric of female domination was overblown (Fraterrigo “Answer to Suburbia” 750-1).

Nonetheless, *Playboy* continually participated in the discourse of a masculinity crisis throughout the Cold War.

Research Questions

If *Playboy's* main objective is to present a specific image of manhood, how do the literary selections conform to that vision? Would the magazine have been as successful if it did not contain the larger editorial content? Much quality research has been completed on *Playboy's* didactic, mid-century program for American males; but hardly any scholars have analyzed its fiction. For instance, four recent works analyze *Playboy's* impact on

mid-century masculinity: Thomas Weyr's *Reaching for Paradise*, Bill Osgerby's *Playboy's in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth, and Leisure style in Modern America*, Steven Watts *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream*, and Elizabeth Fraterrigo's *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*. Each of these texts explores how *Playboy* editors created a specific, lasting image of American manhood. And while each mentions how *Playboy's* literary contributions include an “awesome selection of names, the making of any college course in contemporary American literature,” none devote more than a few paragraphs to analyzing *Playboy's* fiction (Weyr xii). Even Fraterrigo's most recent text does not examine how quality literature supports the ‘good life.’ “Cold War Playboys: Models of Masculinity in *Playboy's* Literature” responds to this oversight and situates the literature as an integral aspect of the *Playboy* model.

Playboy's emphasis was obviously Playmates, but fiction always appeared in its pages. David John Lambkin's rhetorical analysis of *Playboy* discloses how fiction is *Playboy's* single largest element; modeled on *Esquire's* editorial features, fiction became the backbone of *Playboy*. Therefore, Hefner's educated, sexual male identity included, and still includes, reading a wide array of literature—from Ian Fleming to Ursula le Guin. How did literature gain primacy in Hefner's ideal male identity? What purposes does reading this literature serve when appealing to a particular masculinity? Answering these questions allows me to explore how one mass-produced magazine and specific literary figures “participated in, responded to and resisted” the construction of Cold War discourses regarding space and sexuality (Redding 4).

Playboy's literary selections reveal wide-ranging models of masculinity. Unlike the pictorial and editorial features, which celebrate and perpetuate a heterosexual, upwardly mobile, and educated model of masculinity, the literature published in *Playboy* during the Cold War often contradicts this model, as well as the seemingly “tough guy” or domesticated Cold War images of masculinity. The chapters that follow specifically explore how *Playboy's* literary selections respond to Cold War culture. Citing biographical, historical, critical, and textual evidence, I consider how the literature of *Playboy* magazine responds to the construction of Cold War discourses regarding sexuality and space. In particular, I examine how *Playboy* contributions from Jack Kerouac, Vladimir Nabokov, and James Baldwin detail models of masculinity informed by Cold War culture. My first chapter thoroughly explores *Playboy's* model of masculinity and its tradition of publishing virile literature, so that comparisons can be made in subsequent chapters. Chapters 2 through 4 contain archival research, literary analysis of each authors' short stories, rhetorical analysis of their non-fiction, and an analysis of how selected contributions support or challenge *Playboy's* model of masculinity.

In “Chapter 1—Playing it Hot in the Cold War,” I focus on masculinity models and how the literature published in *Playboy* supports or negates the model of masculinity presented in the magazine's other features. I describe reigning Cold War masculinity models, as well as define *Playboy's* slightly alternative model. Relying on archival research, editorial manifestos, biographies, and recent scholarly attention, I examine *Playboy's* monthly features and ever-expanding Playboy Empire to explain how it promoted a new kind of masculinity—one that encouraged men to stay indoors and read

high-brow literature. I detail *Playboy's* editorial process and argue that *Playboy's* Associate Publisher and Editorial Director's main objective was to remasculinize the act of reading literature. To fulfill this objective, Auguste Comte Spectorksy relied on the popular personas of virile authors, especially Ernest Hemingway and Norman Mailer. However, even Hemingway's and Mailer's fiction provide an alternative image of masculinity to *Playboy's* readers.

Having established *Playboy's* model of masculinity in my first chapter, I move on to consider how Jack Kerouac's contributions undermine *Playboy's* grand narrative. In "Chapter 2—Broke and on the Run with Jack Kerouac," I analyze *Playboy's* strategic use of the Beats, especially Kerouac. I argue that Hefner used the Beats as a foil to *Playboy's* "Upbeat Generation." *Playboy* heavily solicited work from Kerouac, even while maintaining a sanctioned distance. As Barbara Ehrenreich observes, "the Beats' rejection of convention and their virtues of masculine independence, non-conformity and (often misogynistic) sexual expression found a degree with the playboy ethos of hedonism and personal indulgence" (qtd. in Osgerby 184). However, the Beats rejected *Playboy's* call for conspicuous consumption. To support my argument, I review all of Kerouac's *Playboy* contributions, as well as his short fiction, "Good Blonde" (1965). Then I move onto an analysis of "Good Blonde," in which Kerouac embraces mobility and uses the new highway system to defy implied gender roles and social responsibilities regarding work.

Vladimir Nabokov's fictional contributions, like Kerouac's, also undermine *Playboy's* model of masculinity. In "Chapter 3—Sophisticated Spending by Vladimir Nabokov," I argue that *Playboy* used Nabokov's high-brow literary status, in order to

enhance the quality of its regular contributors and present readers with serious, sophisticated fiction. I also reveal how Nabokov heightened the sexual and violent imagery when he translated his early Russian works for a *Playboy* audience. I then argue that the Cold War climate helped to make Nabokov an immensely successful author. I conclude this chapter with an analysis of how Nabokov's serialized selections from *Ada* (1969) construct an alternative model of masculinity from the *Playboy* model. While *Ada's* male narrator reclaims domestic space, he presents *Playboy* readers with a variant sexuality.

Similar to the ways that Kerouac's and Nabokov's fictional selections undermine *Playboy's* grand narrative James Baldwin's contributions offer *Playboy* readers an alternative model of masculinity. In "Chapter 4—Brick by Brick: James Baldwin in *Playboy*," I argue that *Playboy* relied on Baldwin as its representative for the Civil Rights Movement. Both Baldwin and *Playboy* preferred to ignore Baldwin's sexuality and focus on his efforts to promote racial equality. But Baldwin's open homosexuality directly opposed the *Playboy* ethos; Hefner admitted that, while *Playboy* did not discriminate against deviant sexualities, male readers preferred to view naked women. It was not until the late 1980s, with the publication of Baldwin's "Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood," that *Playboy* began to expand its notions of sexuality and consider how it participates in the construction of sexual identity. I conclude this chapter with an analysis of how Baldwin's "The Man Child" (1966) engages with Cold War discourses regarding space and sexuality.

I frame my study of "Cold War Playboys" with Ernest Hemingway and Norman Mailer because both represent ideal *Playboy* authors—virile and intelligent. In my first

chapter and conclusion, I argue that *Playboy* editors used Mailer's connections to Hemingway and his virilized, literary persona to remasculinize high culture. Like Kerouac, Nabokov, and Baldwin, Hemingway's and Mailer's cultural currency encouraged editors to continually publish their non-fiction and fiction. But, unlike to Kerouac, Nabokov, or Baldwin, Hemingway and Mailer were exactly the kind of authors one would expect to find in *Playboy's* pages. And yet, as I argue in Chapter One, even Hemingway's and Mailer's fictional works undermine *Playboy's* commitment to heterosexuality and conspicuous consumption. This discovery suggests that *Playboy's* literary feature is the only component of the magazine that contains models of masculinity which deviate from the other features. *Playboy's* inclusion of popular post-war literature expands the magazine's seemingly restrictive model of masculinity, suggesting that despite its seemingly didactic nature, editors were willing to publish contradictory images of masculinity.

CHAPTER 1—PLAYING IT HOT IN THE COLD WAR

The quantity of the fiction published in *Playboy* is astonishing. For instance, in its first year of publication, from December 1953 to 1954, *Playboy* devoted 168 pages to literary selections—over 30% of its content, making fiction the single largest component of the magazine (Lambkin 26). Increasing circulation allowed Hefner to offer writers the highest magazine trade fees, which in turn “increased the quality and quantity of literature and reportage that filled its pages” (Fraterrigo 46). Most of *Playboy*’s fiction is either written by popular, contemporary authors or can be classified as a parody of a famous story by an unknown author. Publishing only popular authors or familiar narratives proves that *Playboy* often relied on the cultural currency of contemporary authors to help sell magazine copies. The vast amount of literature published in *Playboy* makes it a valuable resource for analyzing post-war literature.

Playboy’s sensational rise and continued dominance offers a compelling primary source to study the mid-century masculinity crisis. Constantly working to increase subscription rates, editors inevitably provided cultural commentary on the nature of American masculinity, and their printed features explored how the Cold War affected masculine identity. In *Creating the Modern Man*, Tom Pendergast claims that “[m]agazines provide a fertile and contained testing ground” to assess changing images of masculinity (17). Yet, Pendergast ends his study of American magazine and consumer culture in 1950. Pendergast ignores the mid-century masculinity crisis, because he “assum[es] that by 1950 modern masculinity had attained a dominance akin to that which

Victorian masculinity had held in the late nineteenth century” (29). However, *Playboy's* lasting effect on masculinity should be recorded. *Playboy* promoted a specific, gendered narrative that responded to the explosive growth of suburbia and the so-called “feminization” of society. Its editorial features form a critique of “social and gender order in flux” for its readers (Fraterrigo, “Answer to Suburbia” 749). *Playboy's* editorial features include “Playbill,” “After Hours” Reviews, “Playboy Advisor,” “Dear Playboy,” panels, forums, advice columns, cartoons, joke column, pictorials, advertisements, and other non-fiction cultural commentary. Each of these editorial features supports *Playboy's* “idealization of straight masculinity through consumerism” (Pitzulo 1). The literature, however, must be categorized separately from these other editorial features because it often challenges *Playboy's* ethos of heterosexuality, upward mobility, and the reclamation of domestic space. Isolating *Playboy's* literary selections and analyzing how they differ from *Playboy's* editorial features helps to better define *Playboy's* masculinity model.

Cold War Models of Masculinity

Playboy's consistent message in its editorial features illustrates how the magazine constructed its own version of ideal masculinity in comparison to Cold War models of masculinities. Cold War popular and historical culture produced a variety of masculinity models, but the hyper-masculine and domesticated models are the most prevalent. Cultural critic Neal Gabler states that 1950s “American male sexuality” was generally “a function of muscle, aggression and force associated with such things as manly labor, the outdoors, athleticism, ruggedness and risk” (110, July 2010). Archetypes of this model range from John Wayne to Marlon Brando's Stanley Kowalski. Gabler suggests that “even the smarter, more self-reflective post-war male sex symbols—Bogart, Mitchum,

Lancaster, Douglas—were required to display masculine brio” (110, July 2010).

Historical and cultural studies like Robert D. Dean's *Imperial Brotherhood* and K. A. Cuordileone's *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* have focused on how the Cold War constructed masculinity or how aspects of masculinity shaped Cold War policy.

From this scholarship, two main Cold War models of masculinity have been analyzed—the hyper-masculine and the domesticated. According to Dean's *Imperial Brotherhood*, this model of masculinity influenced the United States' Cold War containment policy; officials had to remain steadfast and “strong” against the infiltration of Communists. The “tough-guy” masculinity produced “clichés from western films” and “served as descriptions of the strengths of American determination and the character of our response to threats” (Gilbert 3). Dean stresses the ramifications of “collective and 'hegemonic' aspects of cultural ideologies of masculinity” (12). The overwhelming, pervasive nature of these models made it difficult for individual males to contradict them.

The other main Cold War model of masculinity is the domesticated male, best represented by William Whyte's “Organizational Man,” a gray-flannelled, white-collared, suburban father. White, middle-class, heterosexual males conformed to suburban life, mass culture, and consumption practices. Just as communism needed to be contained during the Cold War, sexuality was contained by heterosexual marriages and the nuclear family. The traditional family, portrayed by popular television shows like *Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-1963) and *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-1963), upheld the primacy of the nuclear family and “supported conventional gender arrangements and sex norms, while also affirming the socioeconomic order” (Fraterrigo 3). These Cold War cultural studies

suggest that the mid-century crisis of masculinity resulted from, and caused shifts in, cultural and national policy.

Concerns about manhood—its absence, possible withering, and inconsistent performance—became a focus for modern American culture during the Cold War. The mid-century witnessed what some historians deem a “male panic”: a time when “men self-consciously rebel against real or imagined “feminization” developing within the workplace, public spheres, and/or domestic relationships” (Gilbert 3). The historical juncture of the Cold War produced a perceived masculinity crisis in which “assumptions about masculinity and expected male behavior are being undercut by circumstance and social and psychological changes” (16). For instance, anti-Communist sentiments ultimately encouraged anxieties about masculinity which had little to do with communism (Cuordileone viii). The anxiety regarding manhood also occurred because of the domineering nature and ubiquitous reproduction of the hyper-masculine and domesticated masculinity models. Analyzing the present masculinity crisis in *Stiffed*, Susan Faludi connects “the empty compensations of a masculine mystique” to the heavily prescribed 1950s gender roles (40). Although Faludi correctly links the current male panic to the 1950s, the recent crisis needs to be viewed as cyclical, rather than delineated. For Michael Davidson, the crisis of gendered identity “has revolved itself cyclically every decade since Freud,” and any gendered crisis “involves an attempt to stabilize or normalize categories that are then used as the basis upon which to erect juridical, social, and economic systems” (26). For instance, Cold War culture used the hyper-masculine model to reinforce military decisions and solidify economic institutions, such as high-capitalism. The domesticated model was used to support juridical policies, such as red-

lining. Concerns about manhood and resulting masculinity crises need to be analyzed in terms of their cyclical and reciprocal nature.

More recently, cultural and gender scholars, such as Bill Osgerby, James Gilbert, and Michael Davidson, have worked to define a spectrum of mid-century masculinity models that encompasses more than the hyper-masculine and domesticated models. With any number of masculine roles to choose from, masculinity “remained a contested terrain throughout the post-war period” (Corber 8). Bill Osgerby argues that, as the middle class adapted to new socioeconomic standards, “articulations of masculinities” erupted and Cold War culture presented the middle class with a variety of masculine identities (14). According to James Gilbert's study, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s*, assumptions about the male, sexed body during the Cold War need to be expanded in order to incorporate multiple masculinity models. Gilbert claims that there is no single, prevailing, agreed-upon norm of masculinity during the 1950s. Michael Davidson specifically inscribes the image of homosexuals into the wide range of masculine identities to remind readers that, during post-war culture, a burgeoning, though subversive, homosexual identity provided alternative models for young men and women. Davidson begins his Cold War literary study recalling the image of television comedian Ernie Kovacs playing the effeminate, outrageous Percy Dovetonsils, the “poet laureate” with the syrupy lisp, martini glass, and cigarette. While Kovacs’ portrayal of Dovetonsils was meant to reflect homophobic stereotypes, his television appearance as Dovetonsils still offered a homosexual representation. The growing body of Cold War gender scholarship works to justify how containment policy and cultural paranoia constructed wide-ranging cultural icons. This range of masculinity models, from Dovetonsils to

Kennedy, produced a masculine phenomenon much like the one chronicled by Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*. And *Playboy's* editors exploited this masculine phenomenon to construct and present *Playboy's* own model of masculinity.

***Playboy's* Model of Masculinity**

For white middle-class, heterosexual men, *Playboy* formulated a particular model of masculinity in response to Cold War ideology's reorganization of space and redefinition of sexuality. *Playboy's* model of masculinity is heterosexual, wealthy, sophisticated, educated, single, and proud of his domesticated, urban space. Even though *Playboy's* first editors, Hefner, Ray Russell, Arthur Paul, and Eldon Sellers, worked issue to issue, they maintained an invariable message throughout the magazine's basic elements. Hefner admits that the early issues consisted of “largely reprint material...It was pickup stuff” (Weyr 25). However, Lambkins argues that while this material was “pickup stuff,” it still presented a very specific image which “emphasized sexuality, material gains, and masculine cleverness” (38). Even if editors “didn't think more than one issue ahead,” Hefner “knew” from the magazine’s inception what he wanted to produce—a guidebook for the up-and-coming bachelor (25). Elizabeth Fraterrigo claims, in *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, that from its first drafting stage, Hefner envisioned *Playboy* would always promote a “masculine persona in tune with a modern, sexually liberated, consumer society, freed of the burdens of breadwinning and untainted by the feminine associations of consumption” (35). *Playboy's* masculinity model modifies the hyper-masculine model because playboys preferred to stay indoors entertaining female guests, listening to jazz and reading Nietzsche, as opposed to thrashing outdoors with other men on hunting expeditions. It

also revises the domesticated model because the playboy prefers bachelorhood in an urban setting over a nuclear family in the suburbs.

Playboy's alternative model of masculinity, however, only slightly deviated from reigning Cold War models. For instance, the playboy reinforced the virility of the hyper-masculine model, as well as preserved the heterosexuality of the domestic model. Hefner did change the representation of a man's 'good life' from one of ranch houses with grills and dens to one of bachelor penthouses with hi-fi stereos and entertainment spaces. Although, Hefner liked to characterize himself as a pioneer rebelling against the "conformity" suffocating other men, *Playboy's* model of masculinity was not completely subversive. The playboy model, for example, did not oppose working, women, or commodities. The playboy's most rebellious act was not getting married; with this simple refusal, the playboy ignored the cultural markers of maturation, denied the role of the breadwinner, and refused to support a family. While this might position the playboy as stalled in his maturation process, his multiple female partners and virility perpetuated a sense of masculinity: "a playboy didn't have to be a husband to be a man" (Ehrenreich 51). Thus, the playboy image as the rebel needs to be reconsidered. Barbara Ehrenreich argues that taking "fun morality seriously" was Hefner's only rebellion (45). *Playboy's* tempered model of masculinity helps to explain why the *Playboy* model of masculinity was so successfully adopted.

Sexuality

Sex, specifically heterosexual sex, was *Playboy's* model of masculinity's fundamental element. Editors knew that Playmates sold the magazine. Discussing *Playboy's* early readership, editor Ray Russell states that readers "bought the magazine

for the girls” (Weyr 35). If editors took the “sex out,” the magazine would “die like a dog” (Weyr 35). “We could have all the Nabokovs in the world and the best articles on correct attire,” Russell quips, “without attracting readers” (35). Thus editors offered readers sex, but the sex was far from vulgar; Hefner worked diligently to make “sex safe for America” (Gabler 108). As *Time* magazine remarked in 1967, a young, blonde Playmate carefully posed in familiar settings in order to resemble the girl-next-door is hardly erotic (Ehrenreich 50). Ehrenreich argues that Hefner’s family history and childhood faith mollified his vision of erotic. Growing up in the mid-west with incredibly conservative, religious parents, Hefner parlayed his sexual fantasies into a tasteful, controlled empire. His parents were high-school sweethearts from rural Nebraska who married in Chicago in 1921. Their “severe emotional decorum” often frustrated Hefner who assumed that “puritanical sexual tyranny” twisted “good people into sad deformity” (Valiunas 33). Hefner has claimed that “Puritan repression is really the key that unlocks the mystery of my life” (qtd. in Valiunas 33). Hefner was revolutionary only in his desire to show bare breasts and bottoms; in the early decades of the magazine, he refused to incorporate too much obscenity and the nudity had be tasteful. Hefner’s usual strict editorial control grew maniacal when it came to editing sexual content. Interested in the prolonged survival of *Playboy*, Hefner shrewdly edited explicit text. For example, Russell recalls having a conversation with Hefner regarding a story that included the word “ass.” Hefner wanted “ass” revised to something less explicit like “rump” (Weyr 35). Hefner also asked Russell to “bowdlerize excerpts from classics by Boccaccio and Balzac”; Hefner made Russell change the main character in a *Decameron* story from a young amorous priest to a student in order to “keep the church

off our neck” (35). The “interface of sexuality with composed self-possession” produced a model of masculinity that differed from crude, hyper-masculine models (Gabler 110). Intently controlling the magazine's basic sexual element produced an appropriate balance between sexual freedom and containment.

Wealth

Hefner’s desire to make the sexual content appropriate was also extended to the advertisements and editorials that promoted commodities. *Playboy's* liberated male model was urged to consume specific, sophisticated, manufactured commodities. Hefner’s most innovative advertisement campaign was “What sort of Man Reads Playboy?” Starting in 1958, editors began embedding monthly advertisements, which usually contained a picture of a dapper man interacting with an attractive woman in an urban setting. Some photographs contain men drinking expensive liquor, hailing cabs, or hosting a party, but all of the pictures reinforce the playboy’s purchasing power. Underneath every photograph was text declaring how the average *Playboy* reader was a trendsetter with an expendable income. The text in “What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?” was adopted from outsourced or independent studies on magazine readers, such as the *Playboy* commissioned survey by Gould, Gleiss, and Benn (1955), or the Daniel Starch and Staff (1958) independent study. These studies collected educational, economic, and marital statuses, as well as smoking, drinking, driving, and vacationing habits from *Playboy* readers. The “What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?” advertisements serve dual purposes: companies know exactly what products to market for the target audience and *Playboy* editors can portray a wealthy, cultured audience. By creating such a specific

target audience, *Playboy* encouraged advertisers to bombard the male consumer with upscale goods.

Playboy's promise of material reward echoed the national call to pursue pleasure. Hefner correctly gauged that “American consumer society, as it evolved to a more advanced stage in the post-war era, involved more than just buying goods. It was intimately connected to a larger ethos of pleasure, leisure, and entertainment. Uninhibited consumption depended on the emotional joys of self-fulfillment, not the moral satisfactions of self-denial” (Watts 129). The editorial focus on entertainment and leisure time actively encouraged men to partake in the “creature comforts and the infinite variety of man's more elegant, leisure-time possessions” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 48). According to Hefner, his magazine stressed the “prizes available in our society in return for honest endeavor and hard work” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 48). Clear to position readers as consumers of hi-fi stereos or mechanical beds, rather than lawn mowers or grills, editors avoid linking “consumption to fatherhood and homeownership” (Corber 9). As long as playboys participated in the preservation of capitalism through consumerism, they did not threaten the projected hyper-masculine or domesticated model. They could hang out in their kitchens, whip up appetizers, and wear their pajamas all day--as long they kept their purchasing power.

Sophistication

Playboy promoted an idealized figure who possessed sophisticated taste, employing wealth as a facet for its model of masculinity. In the April 1956 advertisement for *Playboy* readers, the playboy model was clearly depicted:

Is he simply a wastrel, a ne'er do well, a fashionable bum? Far from it: He can be a sharp-minded young business executive, a worker in the arts, a university professor, an architect or engineer. He can be many things, provided he possess a certain point of view. He must see life not as a vale of tears, but as a happy time, he must take joy in his work, without regarding it as a the end of all living; he must be an alert man, an aware man, a man of taste, a man sensitive to pleasure, a man who—without acquiring the stigma of voluptuary or dilettante—can live life to the hilt. This is the sort of man we mean when we use the word *playboy*. (73)

According to the above description, the *playboy* lived a full life. The ideal *playboy* had to work hard to play hard. But because most readers were unaccustomed to abundance of consumer goods, *Playboy* promised to instruct its readers in the “fine art of consumption, cultivating taste and imparting expertise” (Fraterrigo 49). Reading the advice columns, learning the jazz scene, collecting the right furniture, and absorbing the right literature were all necessary expenditures. From the first editorial, which deems the magazine quality entertainment “served up with humor, sophistication and spice,” to its music reviews, editors stressed sophistication (3, Dec. 1953). Thus, the material found in the pages of the magazine would help mold readers into connoisseurs.

Hefner hardly exudes hyper-masculine tendencies in his silk pajamas and bathrobe. Sophisticated but lanky, Hefner became “the antithesis” of the 1950s hyper-masculine model for his readers. Norman Mailer described Hefner as a “lean, rather modest cowboy of middle size” and seemed shocked that Hefner was the publisher and owner of *Playboy* clubs (qtd. in Gabler 110). The June 1957 “Playbill” introduced readers to Editor-Publisher Hugh M. Hefner. Penned by Hefner, the introduction claims Hefner is a “restless fellow” whose “conservative and casual” dress is always coupled with loafers and a bottle of Pepsi-Cola (2). Apparently Hefner liked the same things that *Playboy* readers supposedly liked: “jazz, foreign films, Ivy League clothes, gin and tonic

and pretty girls” (2). The introduction went on to reinforce the relationship between the editor and the reader. It concluded with “*Playboy's* unprecedented popularity with the young urbane male is a direct result of the fact that the editor-publisher and his audience see eye-to-eye” (2). Gabler claims that “forswearing macho,” Hefner “preferred cocktails to whisky or beer, Franz Kline to Thomas Hart Benton, foreign sports cars to Cadillacs and the indoors to the outdoors. He loved jazz, cutting-edge comics like Lenny Bruce and Dick Gregory, minimalist architecture in the Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright style, and modern furniture” (Gabler 110). Gabler ends his analysis of Hefner's masculinity by stating that “he was the epicure who always knew what was cool” (110). And if Hefner did not always know what was cool, he had the ability to commission writers to promote his version of sophistication.

Bachelor

The sophisticated playboy enjoyed a sense of sexual freedom. *Playboy* really only attacked the conventional male's monogamous marriage status. During a climate which stressed family togetherness, the *Playboy* model hardly goaded men to become the head of a household; rather, it suggested that men escape marriage by dating a variety of women. Ehrenreich reiterates that this notion of escape was “strong stuff” during a time of suburban migration and when *Look* coined the phrase “togetherness” (Ehrenreich 50, Fraterrigo 47). However, according to the *Playboy* philosophy, the magazine was “neither wholly against nor in favor of lifelong bachelorhood” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 47). Apparently the magazine was only concerned with promoting a longer period of bachelorhood, so that men could “assume adult responsibilities after they had formulated a clear sense of identity and had come to know what they wanted in a spouse and out of

life” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 47). Hefner even justified an extended bachelorhood for the good of the country. A longer period to “play at the finish of education and before taking the responsibility of having a family” would combat identity crisis caused by nuclear threats and “womanization of America” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 47). And, after this “period of play,” the playboy could settle down and “continue his well-honed pursuit of pleasurable consumption and keep the nation's economy humming along” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 47). Hefner assertions that the nation’s well-being depended on an extended bachelor lifestyle match his logic that *Playboy’s* centerfolds could uncover national dissenters.

Reclamation of Space

The reorganization of space is the last primary element of the *Playboy* model of masculinity—reclamation of domestic space. In his first editorial message to readers, Hefner reclaimed “*the indoors for men*” (emphasis Ehrenreich 44). The masthead editorial told *Playboy’s* readers that they should plan on spending “most of [their] time inside” (3). Hefner was insistent that the bachelor lifestyle did not require “thrashing through thorny thickets or splashing about in fast flowing streams” (3). Rather, playboys were encouraged to reclaim domestic space for themselves. Unlike domesticated males who had to carve out spaces, like dens or basements in order to do perform masculine activities, the playboy “would become a consumer of domestic space in his own right” (Fraterrigo “Answer to Suburbia” 754). By carving out a masculine domestic space, *Playboy* revolutionized the bachelor pad. The bachelor pad, or the

penthouse, emphasized sophisticated tastes with modern technologies, like the built-in bar or self-timing dimmers; advertised as necessary for successfully dating women, these technologies confirmed the bachelor's heterosexuality (Fraterrigo "Answer to Suburbia" 756). Holed up in his technologically advanced bachelor pad, making dinner for his date, the playboy converts the home-space from a feminized space to one for the upwardly-mobile man. *Playboy* used the city and the image of the bachelor pad as a foil to the allegedly feminized suburbia development.

The simple declaration to stay indoors, rather than "thrashing outdoors," proves Hefner's awareness of Cold War's spatial reorganization of domestic space. The magazine's constant focus on the bachelor pad and the playboy penthouse forced men to pay attention to interior spaces. As Beatriz Preciado's analysis of the *Playboy* architecture reveals, *Playboy* "played in a domestic space for a domestic audience" (Brennan 17). "Erotica in the age of suburbia," according to Beatriz Colomina, "is the fantasy of the girl next door, delivered to one's bedroom through the media" (18). Because *Playboy's* heterosexual bachelor feels most comfortable indoors, his skills in the kitchen and his appreciation of high art offer a slightly different model of masculinity during the Cold War.

Dually domestic and privatized, the space *Playboy* magazine represents may seem trivial—a glossy magazine with advice for the young bachelor. However, the magazine should be viewed as cultural artifact which has, decade after decade, absorbed society's shifts and reflected them back to readers in a surprisingly consistent format. A quick comparison between table of contents from a 1950 issue to one from 2011 reveals that the

editors knew the secret to building a lasting brand: consistency. According to Susan Gunelius's economic study, *Building Brand Value the Playboy Way*, there are three primary steps to branding: defining the desired image, communicating the brand message, and being consistent and persistent with the brand message and image (26). With its rabbit ears and fluffy tail, *Playboy* has mastered branding. Growing from publishing a modestly-sized magazine to running international clubs, the Playboy Empire has consistently presented a meta-narrative of heterosexuality, upward mobility, and the reclamation of domestic space. The only feature that interrupts this consistent message is *Playboy's* fiction. Therefore, it needs to be isolated from the magazine's other features, in order to understand how, and why, the fiction *Playboy* published often undermines its grand narrative.

Playboy and Fiction

From its inception, *Playboy* has always maintained an intimate relationship with literature. Using *Esquire* as a model, Hefner published well-known authors to help him defend *Playboy* as more than a mere "skin-magazine." At first, Hefner's limited resources forced him to search for fiction available in the public domain, such as Boccaccio and Arthur Conan Doyle's "Sherlock Holmes" stories. Yet, even when obtaining copyright-free material, Hefner often sought out a particular kind of fiction to suit his audience—one that privileged entertainment, consumption, and female objectification. Quality, entertaining literature helped make the magazine thrive. "Dear Playboy" letters prove that the published fiction is integral to its success. "Dear Playboy" first appeared in *Playboy's* second issue, January 1954. Only a third of the published letters addressed the magazine's sexual content and only one letter gushed over Marilyn Monroe's "*au naturel*"

centerfold pictorial (3, Jan. 1954). The majority of the letters discuss editorial features or the fictional selections. For instance, James M. Spivak wrote about how much he enjoyed Arthur Conan Doyle's "Sherlock Holmes." Spivak assumes that most of the "first-issue mail will be on Marilyn Monroe," and admits that he enjoyed her pictorial (2-3, Jan. 1954). Yet, Spivak confesses that he enjoyed "Sherlock Holmes most of all" (2-3, Jan. 1954). The publication of this letter suggests that, from the beginning, Hefner wanted to make literature an integral aspect of his enterprise.

Playboy's reputation for publishing quality literature continued to grow. The *L.A. Times* noted in 1957 that "[s]ome of the best short fiction written in America today is being published in *Playboy*. These short stories are gutty and imaginative, skillfully written, and—perhaps most important—experimental" (qtd. in Watts 131). A mere five years after *Playboy's* launch, Ray Russell, a contributor and executive editor, compiled an anthology of "the cream of *Playboy* prose" (vii). The collection includes stories by Jack Kerouac, P G. Wodehouse, Philip Wylie, William Iverson, Ray Bradbury, Herbert Gold, and Charles Beaumont. In his introduction to *The Permanent Playboy*, Russell posits that these stories will endure past the pages of the magazine because they "answer the description 'entertaining,' so—as Bryon sagely counseled—let joy be unconfined" (viii). Russell's introduction predicts three main threads of *Playboy* literature: a masculine forum, entertainment, and the "permanence" of the literary selections. Many of the authors that *Playboy* published did withstand the test of time, but not all of them addressed a masculine forum. In the 1960s, the magazine maintained over 200 page issues and published elite critics and authors, such as Alfred Kazin, Leslie Fielder, Shirley Jackson, James Baldwin, and Vladimir Nabokov. Contemporary fiction writers

and readers have come to regard *Playboy* as a quality source. Ranked third on a list of “great high-paying fiction markets,” Tina Samuels declares the magazine “one of the very top fiction markets in the world today” (par. 1) With its high author fees and incredibly large audience, *Playboy* still vies for quality, serious fiction.

Some critics claim that *Playboy*'s fiction fits more comfortably into an entertainment mode rather than a literary mode; a closer analysis, however, suggests otherwise. Thomas Watts claims that *Playboy* tries to publish easily digestible morsels of fiction, “providing a greater portion of pleasure than thought” (Watts 131). He states, when looking for the right kind of selection, editors sought to publish “a yarn that has all the elements of exciting story telling—suspense, ironic humor, a pip of a plot, and a twist ending—written with flair and flavor” (qtd. in Watts 131). According to Harvey Cox's 1961 “Playboy's Doctrine of Male,” the magazine's fiction is simply a “regular run of stories” with a repetitive and formulaic structure: “A successful young man, either single or somewhat less than ideally married—a figure with whom readers have no difficulty identifying—encounters a gorgeous and seductive woman who makes no demands on him except sex” (par. 12). Cox claims the heroine of *Playboy*'s stories duplicates the girl-next-door centerfold who “knows [her] place and ask[s] for nothing more” (par. 13). He argues that *Playboy* authors present “detachable and disposable” females who “present no danger of permanent involvement” (par. 13). Cox's notion of the female as an accessory can be generally applied to the magazine; however, much of the published Cold War fiction involves more than boy-meets-girl to have random sexual encounter. For instance, the first *Playboy* issue contains three fiction selections and only one of those deals with sexual intercourse—one of the “Tales from the Decameron.” And while Boccaccio's

bawdy classic can be classified as a humorous tale of adultery, the focus of this fiction is on the relationship between the two main male characters, Spinelloccio and Zeppa. The remaining two stories, Arthur Conan Doyle's "Introducing Sherlock Holmes" and Ambrose Bierce's "A Horseman in the Sky," do not even include any female characters, let alone one that readily seduces a young man. Thus, despite being marketed as a swinging bachelor lifestyle manual, Cold War *Playboy* fiction taught men to be romantic heroes, faithful companions, and keen observers.

With *Playboy's* wide array of fictional selections, editors seem to view literature as a necessary tool that proves a certain level of sophistication, a tool needed to 'get the girl'. *Playboy's* early literary selections were, in many ways, closer to the popular, instead of the literary culture: commentaries on sex, stories of "the jazz underworld," and far-out tales of science-fiction (Fogarty 228). Slow to publish up-and-coming challenging fiction, like the fiction that appearing in *The New Yorker* or *Esquire*, Robert Fogarty claims that *Playboy's* literary selections "always followed on the heels of success rather than breaking any new ground" (228). For evidence, Fogarty cites *Playboy's* propensity to publish authors, like Philip Roth and James Baldwin, only after their commercial success. But Hefner seems to have included popular authors for two main reasons: to help sell magazine copies and to propel readers into "mainstream debates about society, economics, and culture in post-war America" (Fraterrigo 2). If a playboy could participate in cultural discourses—he might be more successful in bed. *Playboy* successfully proves that quality literature can appropriately be juxtaposed with naked pictorials in mass-produced entertainment magazines.

A Literary Tradition of Virility: Hemingway and Mailer

Playboy linked sophisticated readings with nudity and restored “elite culture” to its “rightful place as a model of intellect and manliness” (Gilbert 199). Hugh Hefner hired the up-and-coming journalist Auguste Comte Spectorisky as an editor in 1956, for the express purpose of elevating the magazine’s literary content. Hefner considered Spectorisky “a real heavyweight” because of his literary talents and East Coast connections. Spectorisky’s *The Exurbanites* had recently reached the bestsellers list, and he had the literary connections needed to “upgrade” *Playboy*’s fiction (Fraterrigo 32). While Hefner and Spectorisky did not always agree on lifestyle choices, they were both committed to producing a virile, high-culture publication. According to Spectorisky, *Playboy* was his platform to “redefine male readers as ‘whole men’” (Gilbert 207). He wrote:

Each issue is a tacit statement to [readers] that they are responsive to fine fiction and to pretty girls; to Lucullan dining and drinking and to serious articles and interviews that bear directly or philosophically on today’s serious issues; to sports cars and classical music, jazz, fashion, the struggle for civil rights, bachelor high-life, and the world of business and finance. (qtd. in Gilbert 207)

Spectorisky sincerely believed that *Playboy* was a viable vehicle from which to “preach” his literary tastes. For Spectorisky, the literary selections would provide readers an outlet for discussing the pertinent issues of the day, providing them with the knowledge needed for sophisticated conversations. Spectorisky immediately began recruiting personal friends to contribute the magazine; for instance, he solicited Ken Purdy, Philip Wylie, Vance Packard, and John Steinbeck to write fiction and non-fiction pieces. Hefner and Spectorisky worked together to “remasculinize American literature and consumerism through the juxtaposition of good writing with pictures of nude women and sophisticated

advertising” (Gilbert 207). Spectorisky looked to authors, like Ernest Hemingway and Norma Mailer, to accomplish this lofty goal.

Spectorisky’s first order as editorial director was to increase fees for *Playboy’s* writers, “offering one of highest fee in the magazine trade” (Fraterrigo 46). By increasing author fees, Spectorisky altered *Playboy’s* editorial process for finding and publishing quality fiction. *Playboy* no longer had to recycle copyright-free material and, with fees ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 dollars per fictional selection, contributions began pouring in. Spectorisky created a literary editorial staff devoted to shifting through these contributions; he kept on Ray Russell, but later hired Sheldon Wax, Murray Fisher and Nat Lehrman to bring in fresh perspectives (Watts 193). Yet, Spectorisky was a hands-on editor, “shouldering many tasks...from securing writers to reading every word that went into the magazine, from integrating the various editorial functions to serving as a liaison between editorial and circulation” (Watts 91). Spectorisky also changed *Playboy’s* author contracts and began offering authors “first refusal.” Under this plan, which the magazine still operates under, authors send *Playboy* editors a large amount of material consisting of anything they might want published; *Playboy* reserves the right to refuse any material but in return for sending multiple contributions, authors can negotiate for higher fees (Combs 1003). Spectorisky set up clear guidelines to ensure that *Playboy’s* literature would remasculinize the act of reading (Gilbert 207). These literary guidelines suggest that Hefner and Spectorisky believed literary selections were a crucial component of *Playboy’s* ethos. Each issue of *Playboy* would be an implicit statement to readers—they were responsive to both naked women and fine fiction.

Spectorsky sought to publish works devoted to the celebration of masculinity as his response to the post-war masculinity crisis. He instructed his fiction staff to discard any “castration-defeat-doom stories” in favor of “Hemingway heroes...who deal with the world instead of cringing and having high-tone failures” (Gilbert 208). Using Hemingway to advertise the magazine's commitment to masculinity, Spectorsky helped to resurrect the masculine, intellectual man during the 1950s gender debates. Spectorsky based much of his criteria for quality fiction on Hemingway, the author and the man. The magazine's 1956 September “Playbill” proclaimed Hemingway as a man of “unimpeachable morals” and possibly the “greatest writer in the world” (4). *Playboy* relied on Hemingway to prove that reading elite literature would not negate masculine identity—that, in fact, reading such literature could make one more of a man.

Hemingway's words appeared in *Playboy* only minimally, but his literary presence directed much of the editorial content selected for publication. According to Thomas Weyr's *Reaching for Paradise*, Hefner desperately wanted to include a Hemingway original in the inaugural 1953 issue (10). Yet due to the magazine's content and budgetary restraints—*Playboy*'s first issue's editorial content only cost \$2,000—Hefner could not obtain the Hemingway, John O'Hara, or James Thurber pieces he so desired (Weyr 10). *The New Yorker* “haughtily” refused to sell Hefner reprint rights for a Thurber piece and Hemingway's publisher rejected Hefner's request “because his magazine had not ‘demonstrated its character’” (Miller 35). It would take three years and over 300,000 subscribers until Hefner and Spectorsky could include Hemingway's presence. They commissioned Jed Kiley for his unauthorized Hemingway biography, to be serialized over eight issues. Beginning in September 1956, with the first installment of Kiley's

“Hemingway: A title bout in ten rounds,” Hefner and Spectorisky added to the myths of Papa. In that month’s “Playbill,” editors remind readers that Hemingway has, for many years, “hit the bottle, tumbled wenches” and “enjoyed such organized carnage as war and bullfighting” (2). Quick to dismiss accusations that his actions were immoral or sinful, they paint Hemingway as a cheater of death who became “a scarred and bearded American legend, a Great White Hunter, a husband of four wives, a winner of Nobel and Pulitzer Prizes” (2). They quote Alfred Kazin’s praise of Hemingway as “the bronze god of the whole contemporary literary experience in America” (2). But what seems most important about the Hemingway myth is that he comes from a middle-class, devoutly Christian family in the Midwest—the same family history as Hefner and many *Playboy* readers. Hemingway appears to be the quintessential literary model for *Playboy* because of his roots and his eventual fame. Growing out of middle-class America and a devoutly Christian home, Hemingway became “the hard-drinking, death-happy...swaggering, irresponsible author of best-selling Hollywood fodder” (2). This image of Hemingway—a Midwestern everyman growing into a courageous, financially successful, and intellectual author—supports the grand narrative *Playboy* presented for its readers. Every male has the potential to get the woman of his choice if he works hard, participates in capitalism through conspicuous consumption, and reads quality fiction.

Playboy editors continued to add to the Hemingway myth throughout the 1960s. In January 1961, *Playboy* published “Hemingway Speaks his Mind,” quotations from a variety of Hemingway’s collected and unpublished works. Editors thoroughly searched Hemingway’s works for scraps of prose suggesting his lifestyle mimics that of a playboy. Quoted topics range from musings on Cuban women to his many cats, but the myth of the

man that emerges is one of strength and smarts. For instance, Hemingway's observations about war, being hit with a mortar shell, seeking death, killing, drinking, boxing, bull-fighting, cooking a lion steak, deep-sea fishing, gate-crashing and cursing remind readers of his masculine persona. His ruminations on hunting are particularly insightful: "You must be calm inside, as if you were in church, when a lion or a rhino is coming at you. A charging rhino will come in at a trot that turns into a gallop. I let him come much farther than is good for either of us in order to be truly sure of my shot. Then I squeeze the trigger" (96). Hemingway's use of the second person oddly addresses *Playboy* readers in the comforts of their suburban homes or urban bachelor pads. Littered in-between musings on big-game hunting are serious deliberations about being a writer. Editors present Hemingway's observations regarding the classics, contemporary themes, revision, Mark Twain, style, symbolism, the ice-berg principle, and the Nobel-prize. Editors even include Hemingway's criteria for what makes a great book: "after you finish reading it you feel that all of it happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you; the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people in it and the places and how the weather was" (96). Hemingway's criteria for active reader participation mirror how Spectorsky wants *Playboy* readers to feel after they finish reading his literary selections—as if the story's contents happened to them.

Hemingway's quotes concerning sexual relationships also support the *Playboy* lifestyle; Hemingway becomes an honorary playboy. Even in his dreams, Hemingway is the spitting image of a playboy: "In my nocturnal wanderings I am always between twenty-five and thirty years old and am irresistible to women, dogs, and on one occasion, to a very beautiful lioness, who subsequently became my fiancé" (96). The good things in life

that Hemingway wants are what *Playboy* readers allegedly want as well: wine, bread, oil, salt, bed, early mornings, nights, days, the sea, women, love, and honor (97). In this list, Hemingway conflates necessities, like food and sleep, with amenities like women and early mornings. Much of *Playboy's* editorial content, like its monthly *Playmate*, sought to make sex and honor necessities.

After the success of “Hemingway Speaks his Mind,” *Playboy* continued to use the myth of Hemingway to promote its literary selections and grand narrative. In 1961, Spector sky serialized Hemingway’s first authorized biography. Spector sky paid a reported \$25,000—approximately equivalent to \$160,000 in current United States dollars—for the serialization rights (Harry Ransom). Beginning in December, Leicester Hemingway’s “My Brother Ernest,” spanned four issues and over sixty pages. Published only eight months after Hemingway’s suicide, “My Brother Ernest” received favorable reviews from *Playboy* readers. Readers responded so well to the Hemingway material that Spector sky published Hemingway’s “Advice to Young Men” posthumously in 1964. Consisting of previously unpublished observations on some of the ground rules of life and literature, this piece is eerily similar to the earlier “Hemingway Speaks his Mind,” sans the heavy dose of observation on traditional masculine activities like boxing, big-game hunting, and fishing. The main focus of “Advice to a Young Man” seems to be on the art of writing and responding to critics. This shift could be due to the fact that this advice is dedicated to both young men and women; however, there is a section “On Love and Women” that invalidates women as an intended audience. Hemingway shares his wisdom on other topics, most notably education, achieving success, happiness, living with honor, prejudice, death, faith and the future. The piece concludes with a

Hemingway quote that reinforces *Playboy's* call for its readers: "All the glory of life, all the romance of living, all the deep and true joys of the world, all the splendor and the mystery are within our reach" (225, Jan. 1964). Hemingway's advice echoes the heart of *Playboy's* call to work hard enough in order to enjoy the products of capitalism and a female companion.

Relying so heavily on Hemingway allowed Spectorsky to "advertise the magazine's commitment to masculinity" (Gilbert 209). Hemingway's "reputation as a literary tough guy" had been well established in the 1930s (Osgerby 45). *Esquire* proudly featured Hemingway for his "rough-hewn machismo," even offering him one thousand shares of stock in 1937 (Osgerby 47). Due to Hefner's relationship with *Esquire* and Spectorsky's desire to remasculinize readers, Hemingway became an obvious "godfather" for the journal during the Cold War. For instance, rather than publish what Spectorsky deemed literature of "morass incense and butterflies and Spanish moss, of precieuse style and hyperfine imagery," *Playboy* published what it considered to be quality, albeit accessible, fiction for its masculine audience (2, Sept. 1956). It did not want any writers too busy "exploring stylistic jungles"; instead, it wanted Hemingway, "perhaps because he has trekked many a real jungle in his life" (4, Sept. 1956). Spectorsky claimed he wanted to veer away from stories likely published by *The New Yorker*; stories that reflected what he called a "womanized," "neurotic," and "castrating world" (Gilbert 208). He promoted Hemingway's attributes because he knew the magazine "was surely" to "get literally hundreds of 'fine' stories a month which are intricate embroidery on the motto: The Sensitive Misfit is a More Interesting Man and a worthier Topic than The Man Who Fulfill His Masculine Destiny" (Gilbert 208). Instead of wasting time reviewing stories

about sensitive misfits or mutilated heroes, Sectorsky wanted Hemingway heroes.

And yet, ironically, Hemingway's heroes are often castrated in some way or another. While many of Hemingway's characters are 'real' men on the battlefield or on the hunting grounds, they could also be classified as androgynous, in terms of their sexuality. These misgivings about Hemingway's sexuality are subtly addressed in the 1956 September "Playbill," the same one that praises him in comparison to other contemporary writers as a "standing out like a rugged oak in a field of delicate pansies" (2). In response to the rhetorical question, "What, then, is Hemingway?", editors list his drinking and death-defying, before calling him "sexually insecure" (2). Why would *Playboy* editors admit this, in the same announcement that begins over a decade of Hemingway contributions? Why would a magazine striving to push its elite, heterosexual agenda on middle-class American men, rely on a sexually insecure author? Quite possibly, Sectorsky assumed his readership would miss the subtle classification. Maybe Sectorsky published only Hemingway's non-fiction to avoid the obvious contradictions. Or, more likely, the myth of the man looms larger than fiction.

Similar to its heralding of Hemingway, *Playboy* relied on the cultural myths surrounding Norman Mailer; beyond writing combative and controversial prose, and stabbing his wife, Mailer looms over American literature "longer and larger than any writer of his generation" (McGrath). His virile image fits into *Playboy's* agenda, and his non-fiction texts reveal the historical shifts in post-war masculinity constructions. The "most transparently ambitious author of his era," Mailer was a prolific author, social commentator, and cultural provocateur (McGrath). He cofounded *The Village Voice*, won the Pulitzer Prize twice, ran for New York City Mayor, married six different women,

fathered eight children, directed films, and made sure everyone knew his name by appearing on talk-shows and participating in many interviews. In short, Mailer's ambition and the immense quantity of his work make him an appropriate *Playboy* contributor. Similar to the way *Playboy* recruited Jack Kerouac for his cultural currency, Vladimir Nabokov for his literary career, and James Baldwin for his racial stance, editors relied on Mailer for his ever-present, masculine persona.

Mailer had already established his tough-guy persona by the end of the 1950s. His violence in his war novel, *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), and the obscenity in *The Deer Park* (1959), set the stage for Mailer's 1959 *Advertisements for Myself*: "a tough-guy writer's apologia for his literary life" (Castronovo 180). In his life and literature, Mailer can stand in as a Hemingway hero, especially because Mailer lacked Hemingway's ambiguous sexuality. Thus, *Playboy* editors, from Spectorisky to Christine Hefner, frequently used Mailer to connect with readers. Beginning with an "After Hours" Book Review reference to *The Deer Park* in January 1958 and lasting to the publication of his conversation with Michael Lennon, "On the Authority of the Senses," in December 2007, Mailer contributed directly to *Playboy* on seventeen different occasions. Mailer even wrote the keynote piece for *Playboy's* fiftieth anniversary issue. *Playboy* posthumously published "A Man of Letters" in January 2009 to honor Mailer. The byline to the feature reads: "A literary giant's correspondence on Hollywood, celebrity, and society shows him to be a critic and crusader, pugilist and poet" (70). That simple eulogy for a poetic boxer sums up why *Playboy* continued to rely on Mailer for his non-fiction and fiction contributions; Mailer's persona represented *Playboy's* commitment to masculinity and intellect.

Mailer's relationship with *Playboy* involved lawsuits coupled with considerable praise. For instance, after *Playboy* editors paid \$5,000 for the essay on his debate with William F. Buckley, Mailer sued *Playboy* on the grounds that his work was worth more than the paid sum (Buckley). Mailer also wrote to editors denouncing them for labeling him a liberal: "I don't care if people call me a radical, a red, a revolutionary, an outsider, an outlaw, a Bolshevik, an anarchist, a nihilist or even a left conservative, but please don't ever call me a liberal" (8, April 1963). And later, in 1975, Elmo Henderson sued *Playboy* for publishing "The Fight," in which Mailer states that Henderson had been in an insane asylum (Manso 560). But, according Arthur Kretchmer, one of *Playboy's* executive editors, Mailer was "a long-run investment" (Manso 561). In an excerpt from Peter Manso's *Mailer: His Life and Times*, Kretchmer explains how *Playboy* did not "function on pornography or *Enquirer*-like sensationalism. It functioned on the fact that people who read *Playboy* have a certain sense of upscale events, and Norman's part of that psychology" (Manso 561). In the 1970s, Kretchmer wanted to publish a magazine that "reflect[s] what's going on in America...and that magazine has to have Norman because it's a different world without Norman. *Playboy* with Norman is a magazine of the moment, of impact. Powerfully, incontestably, Norman has tried to express our era. He looks through infinity and says, 'Who are we? What have we done? What can be done?'" (Manso 561). Kretchmer seems beguiled with Mailer, but other magazine editors, like William Phillips of the *Partisan Review* and Gordon Lish from *Esquire*, also sought out Mailer. Based on his growing fame, *Esquire* accepted Mailer's offer to write a monthly column, "The Big Bite," which ran from November 1962 to December 1963 (Dearborn 179). Clay Felker, *Esquire* editor, claimed that he assigned Mailer to write about Jackie

Kennedy because “at *Esquire* we loved to start fights”, and hiring Mailer to write about the First Lady immediately after he had stabbed his wife was “obvious” (Manso 353). The enthusiasm surrounding Mailer as a magazine contributor was only reinforced when his “Prisoner of Sex” (1971) sold more *Harper’s Magazine* copies than any other issue in the magazine’s history (Manso 462). Like Kretchman’s praise for the author, Mailer’s praise for *Playboy*, and its founding editor, seems equally enthusiastic. When covering the Liston-Patterson fights, Mailer recorded his first impressions of an after-hours *Playboy* Mansion party. After detailing the mansion’s exaggerated dimensions, Mailer compares Hefner to Fitzgerald’s American hero: “He had a quality not unlike Jay Gatsby...there was something of a mustang about Hefner. He was not the kind of man one would have expected to see as the publisher of his magazine, or the owner of the Playboy Club, nor certainly as the undemanding host of his exceptional establishment” (qtd. in Miller 130). This exchange of praise reveals how integral cultural myths can be for the success of a mass-produced glossy magazine.

To “further gentrif[y]” its heterosexual perception, *Playboy* hired writers like Mailer to virilize high culture (Schuchardt). For instance, editors asked Mailer to participate in the first *Playboy* “Panel on Censorship in Literature and the Arts” in the July 1961 issue. Mailer’s insights on censorship shine amidst the jumbled thinking presented by the panel and editors asked him to return for the next year’s panel on “The Womanization of America” (June 1962). In “The Womanization of America,” Mailer endorsed Spector’s claim that men are in need of remasculination. Mailer contended that “women are becoming are becoming more selfish, more greedy, less romantic, less warm, more lusty, and more filled with hate” (44). In response to *Playboy’s* concerns

about females refusing to complete household chores, Mailer states that “there’s been a shift in the social and biological function of the woman, where she is expected...not so much to create a home as she is to be an aide-de-camp or staff general to an ambitious opportunist” (49). Pinpointing the Cold War as the “certain historical phenomenon” that “allowed penis envy to develop,” Mailer eloquently states that during these “renaissance” moments in history, there is a tendency for “this coming together of sexes” (134,139). Mailer reminds *Playboy* readers that “masculinity is not something one is born with, but something one gains. And one gains it by winning small battle with honor” (142). He warns those American men who fear the destruction of their masculinity to be wary of mass media because it gives an unrealistic view of life. Mailer claims that the majority of mass media is out to “destroy virility slowly and steadily” (142). Mailer’s argument directly reinforces Spector’s thoughts on masculinity’s fundamental malaise in America and supports his argument for the necessity of *Playboy*. American men needed magazines like *Playboy* to help combat the insipid depictions of masculinity in the mass media.

Playboy relied on authors like Hemingway and Mailer to remasculinize literature; however, editors seem to rely on these authors’ personas rather than their prose. For instance, Mailer only published one true fictional work with *Playboy* and that work, unlike his non-fiction contributions, does not abide by Spector’s guidelines for masculine literature. Technically a screen-play, the “Trial of the Warlock” (1976) is an adaptation of J. K. Huysmans’ *La Bas*. In the screenplay, Mailer appropriates the original novel’s protagonist, Durtal, to revisit 19th century Paris. Superficially, the story seems to contain all of *Playboy*’s necessary criteria for a quality story: the hero is not castrated; he

is heterosexual, and he is an intellectual, deeply entrenched in his research about the first documented serial killer. However, the focus of the narrator's research is Gilles de Rais. Once Joan of Arcs' second in command, Gilles de Rais transformed into a documented serial killer and practitioner of Satanism who "cannot speak of the thoughts [he has] when young boys pass before [his] eyes" (132, Dec. 1976). De Rais moves beyond the 15th century acceptance of fornicating with young boys and begins to abduct, rape, and brutally murder them. Once dead, he uses their bodies in unheard of ways for sexual pleasure. While Mailer's tri-part role as novelist, journalist, and historian help to explain the fascination with the historical content, the story's form and style are extremely peculiar. Mailer's fictional contribution to *Playboy* is representative of the magazine's literary selections: it does not quite fit *Playboy's* masculinity model and it leaves the reader questioning certain aspects or characteristics of the story. With the "Trial of the Warlock," readers can question why Mailer used a screen treatment?; why the second person?; the original protagonist was a thinly veiled caricature of the original author, so what kind of layer does a new author offer? Upon closer analysis, Mailer's return to this century-old French novel erodes *Playboy's* heterosexual, wealthy model of masculinity. Why would editors pay for and publish fiction that undermines its stated objectives? In fact, much of the fiction editors published contradicted, in one way or another, the *Playboy* narrative.

Conclusion

Much of the fiction Spectorsky did end up publishing challenged *Playboy's* narrative. For instance, Jack Kerouac's "Good Blonde" (1965) contains a hero who would rather sleep under a bridge than in a round, mechanized bed. Vladimir Nabokov

and James Baldwin publish stories with homoerotic tendencies. And even Ian Fleming's James Bond series undermines *Playboy's* impetus for virile fiction because what, for *Playboy*, is sexual license becomes, for Bond, a license to kill (Nadel 143). Fleming and Bond, the archetypal *Playboy* author and hero, first appeared in *Playboy* in May and June 1953 with the serialized story, "On her Majesty's Secret Service." In *Containment Culture*, Alan Nadel argues that James Bond is "both quintessential playboy and the renunciation of almost everything for which *Playboy* argued" (143). Nadel suggests that Bond is "in fact the magazine's perfect mirror image" because Bond treated everything from technology to women differently than *Playboy* advised or promoted (144). Nadel states that, unlike the playboy, Bond has a cavalier attitude toward high-tech gadgets—he uses up gadgets as opposed to using them for leisure. Bond might have had been associated with good taste, with his high-class suits and expensive cars; but unlike the *Playboy* reader, Bond was "inextricably linked to an apparently limitless expense account" (143). *Playboy* editors encouraged readers to participate in consumer culture; Bond, on the other hand, is not a member of a society interested in acquiring commodities or in participating in codes of consumption. Besides Bond's rejection of capitalistic fetishes, Bond also relates to sex differently than a playboy does: "Whereas *Playboy* considered sex an appropriate topic of discussion for mature adults and urged frankness and openness, Bond specialized in the coy double entendre that made sex a topic always present but never frank and never open to discussion" (144). Bond does not even get to fully enjoy a female's companionship; Nadel cites *Thunderball*, in which Bond explains to his latest sexual partner that he had acted only in the interest of the Queen and "received no pleasure from the experience" (145). Fleming characterizes

Bond as regarding “women with distrust, seeing each woman as a potential assassin” as opposed to a potential playmate (144). Therefore, the pleasure principle—Hefner’s most oft cited principle—is absent in the Bond stories. On the surface, Bond gets the women, the high-tech gadgets, and the cars that playboys covet, but his relationship to them is autoerotic.

A great deal of the fiction also destabilizes *Playboy’s* praise of the bachelorhood lifestyle, in addition to undermining *Playboy’s* pleasure principle. For instance, through the mid 1960s much of the literature could be classified as Gothic romance fiction, which often includes narratives of traditional marriage. Marilyn Michaud, English and American Gothic scholar, analyzes why *Playboy’s* early fiction “paradoxically” encouraged readers to become husbands. She questions, “What does Gothic romance fiction teach the aspiring playboy? How does an aesthetically middle-brow publication with images of wholesome, semi-clad young women sit comfortably beside tales of horror and distress?” Exposing the magazine's internal contradictions, Michaud argues it is “not surprising” to find traditional narratives in *Playboy* “given the gender politics and the national anxiety over masculinity in the post-war period.” Michaud concludes that the Gothic stories, while seemingly paradoxical to Hefner's agenda, reflect post-war culture because they focus on marriage and family. According to Michaud, teaching bachelors to be heroic rescuers of distraught females will teach them to be good husbands. Thus, it seems plausible that while Spectorsky sought to publish accessible, entertaining fiction with masculine heroes, he ended up relying more on authors’ reputations or their cultural myths—like Jack Kerouac, Vladimir Nabokov, or James Baldwin.

CHAPTER 2—BROKE AND ONE THE RUN WITH JACK KEROUAC

On the surface, Jack Kerouac's "Good Blonde" (1965) supports *Playboy's* Cold War masculinity model. *Playboy's* editorial content promotes a heterosexual, well-educated, upper-middle class, model of masculinity for its mainly white, male readers. The playboy ethos rebels against monogamous relationships and celebrates Cold War calls for conspicuous consumption. Its centerfold encourages the male gaze upon the objectified female body. In the "Good Blonde," the half-naked, female character becomes the focus of each male character's gaze; the male narrator blatantly rejects the ideal post-war suburban life by refusing to marry or settle down outside of an urban center. And, yet, this selection opposes *Playboy's* masculine narrative because the "Good Blonde" negates one of *Playboy's* most valued criteria: lavish spending on goods acquired for the display of wealth. The main character, like Kerouac and the Beats, presents himself as vagabond; he would prefer to camp out on the "riverbottom" than dwell in the Playboy mansion (144). Marking the beginning of the end of Kerouac's relationship with *Playboy*, "Good Blonde" represents the rocky relationship between author and empire. In *Jack Kerouac: A Biography*, Tom Clark states that the men's entertainment magazines "were just about the only publications that held no prejudice against Kerouac" (177). Yet, Clark's

assessment disregards *Playboy's* obvious prejudices against Kerouac and the Beats. For example, editors would solicit Kerouac for articles concerning the Beat Generation and then print selections condemning the Beat lifestyle, such as Martin Scott's "Hickory, Dickory, Kerouac" or the reportage in "The Beat Mystique." In one aspect, *Playboy* tried to "co-opt the movement" with Kerouac and features such as the "Beat Playmate" (Watts 134). But, ultimately, editors used the Beats as a foil to help define *Playboy's* model of masculinity. *Playboy* aligned itself with the Beats' rebellious lifestyle but distanced itself from their low-class living. Even though Hefner admired the Beats for their non-conformity and sexual excesses, he was appalled with their disillusionment with American capitalism and claimed that "*Playboy* has become, in its first five years, the voice of might be aptly called the Upbeat Generation" (qtd. in Watts 134). Whereas the Beat Generation was known for dropping out of society, Hefner's "Upbeat Generation" embraced American creeds of working hard for social and material successes. Hefner used the "up" to stress the main difference between the two movements: *Playboy* readers were hardly beat down because they understood that working for a living equated to having a good time.

The Beats' model of masculinity established the "rebellious, free-spirited, and sexually charged male persona as a popular model of masculinity for young American men" (Carroll 50). Triggered by Allen Ginsberg's obscenity trials for *Howl* and Kerouac's success with *On the Road*, the Beat movement became a national phenomenon associated with cross-country hitchhiking, hipsters, spiritual journeys, and juvenile delinquency. According to Amiri Baraka, the Beat movement involved a "distinct reaction...to reactionary politics, reactionary life style of American ruling class and sections of the

middle class, reaction to conservatism and McCarthyism” (Baraka 130). Even though this reaction often lacked a cohesive protest, it created an intense model of masculinity. The Beats’ iconic model was marked by “spontaneity, improvisation, and self-expression to convey both their deep alienation from consumer society and their rejection of a post-war masculine ideal that stressed hard-work, family responsibility, and strict heterosexuality” (Carroll 49). The Beats rejected the rise of materialist values by refusing corporate employment and the availability of mass-produced consumer goods. They interpreted middle-class life as a threat to the individual male spirit. Hollywood and men’s magazines, like *Playboy*, celebrated the Beats’ “supposed personal and sexual freedom as representative of longstanding American ideals of manhood” (50). Generally viewing women as sexual objects, the Beats “nurtured a defiant masculine subculture founded on male comradeship and dedicated to a kind of personal freedom defined by sexual license, casual drug and alcohol use, and literary experimentation” (50). For the Beats, male bonding was required for the adventures that would lead to spiritual fulfillment. However, this bonding incurred fears of homosexuality and gang violence, making the Beats a focal point for mainstream anxieties. *Playboy*, in particular, promoted the Beats’ heterosexual indulgence, while ignoring their more transgressive tendencies.

Setting Up the Foil

Immediately after the success of *On the Road*, men’s magazines promoted the Beats movement by “featuring the Beats as audience draws in their circulation and status wars” (Lee 190). Many magazines engaged in a publishing battle, promoting the Beats’ literature to a mainstream audience. *Playboy* editor, Ray Russell actually purchased John H. Kerouac’s “The Rumbling, Rambling Blues” from Sterling Lord sometime in 1957,

even though Russell, enjoyed the piece, he did not push publication until Kerouac “hit it big” after *On the Road* (Weyr 47). *Life* magazine covered the Beats after Ginsberg’s 1957 trial, and *Esquire* commissioned John Clellon Holmes for “The Philosophy of the Beat Generation” in February 1958. In Paul O’Neil’s “The Only Rebellion Around,” *Life* observed that the Beats were “against virtually every aspect of current American society: Mom, Dad, Politics, Marriage, the Savings Bank, Organized Religion...to say nothing of the Automatic Dishwasher, the Cellophane-wrapped Soda Crackers, the Spilt-Level House and the...H-Bomb” (qtd. in Ehrenreich 53). In 1958, *Holiday* purchased Kerouac’s travel pieces for \$2,000 an article. In 1958, *Esquire* added to its status by purchasing works from Kerouac for its March and May issues.

This publishing battle resulted in cultural exposés that focused more on lifestyle than literary accomplishments. A year later, *Playboy* trumped *Esquire* by publishing Kerouac’s more serious “The Origins of the Beat Generation” and printing “Before the Road” in its December 1959 issue. *Life* followed with the photo-essay “Squaresville U.S.A. vs. Beatnik” in 1959 and “added its middlebrow weight” to the magazine obsession with a “disapproving” story (Lee 190). Ironically, even these negative representations of the Beats furthered promotion of the “beatnik lifestyle” (190). *Holiday* published Kerouac’s “The Roaming Beatniks” in October of 1959. *Newsweek* got in on the action, publishing “Every Man a Beatnik?” and “Ministers for the Beatniks” in June. In 1960, Kerouac refused *Holiday*’s \$1,200 offer to write a piece on Canada but published “Tangier to London—A Beatnik Pilgrimage” in February and “The Vanishing American Hobo” in March. Other men’s entertainment magazines, such as *Swank*, *Pageant*, and *Nugget*, included Beat prose in the early 1960s; for instance, *Swank* included “Dreamed

in *My Sleep*” in its March 1961 issues. *Escapade*, a slick glossy that competed primarily with *Playboy*, commissioned Kerouac for his “The Last Word” bi-monthly column between 1959 and 1961. *Newsweek*’s 1963 review of Kerouac’s *Vision of Gerard* labeled him as a “tin-eared Canuck,” but *Holiday* ignored the slander and published “On the Road with Mother” in May 1965 (Maher 385). *Playboy* seemed to have the last word when it published Kerouac’s “Good Blonde” in 1965. Even when the magazines negatively depicted the Beats, their lifestyle was spread over expensive layouts in America’s largest circulating magazines (Ehrenreich 65). Focusing on the Beats’ lifestyle, rather than their literary accomplishments, allowed each magazine to exploit the movement for particular capitalistic agendas.

Playboy’s exploitation of the Beats, especially Kerouac, often resulted in turbulent relationships between authors and editors. *Playboy* did not hide its ambivalence for Kerouac and the Beats; in the late 1950s and early 60s editors followed every Beat selection with a negative review or satirical articles. The first hint of these mixed feelings appears in the November 1957 “After Hours” Book Review of *On the Road*. They describe Kerouac’s novel as a “far-out tale of a cross-country romp by two articulate members of the ‘beat generation’” (17). Seemingly proud of the characters’ lifestyle of “hitchhiking, stealing, loving, digging cool jazz and yakking,” editors state that they “live life furiously” (17). As in Norman Mailer’s “White Negro,” the hipster lifestyle is revered because there is “much drink, all kinds of dopes, there are poets, jazzmen, whores and plenty of sex” (17). The last line of the review foreshadows the tumultuous relationship between so-called hipster and sophisticated playboy: “Nevertheless, *Road* is a disturbing book, a sharpie’s travelog full of literary

Weltschmerz, jazz slanguage (sic) and the frenetic doings of a bunch of sensitive, pathetic—but interesting—cats” (18). By using “*Weltschmerz*,” a word coined by Jean Paul to describe romantic writers’ pessimistic worldview, editors illustrate the connection they see between the Beats and the romantic authors. Editors depict the Beats as an empathetic group saddened by the realities of Cold War America, but they were too affected by post-World War II traumas, causing editors to label them “pathetic.” Beats may pursue the same acquisitions of a playboy—jazz, women, and quality literature—but because they ruminate on suffering, they are little more than “interesting—cats” (18). The success of *On the Road*, however, encouraged editors to publish Kerouac’s “The Rumbling, Rambling Blues” for the January 1958 issue.

“The Rumbling, Rambling Blues” is a complex vignette, which includes the characteristics that would later make up Kerouac’s “Legend of Duluoz.” The short sketch is set in a post-war Des Moines diner and contains typical characteristics of Kerouac’s literary style: a young, seeking narrator; an older, wiser vagrant; first person narration; romanticized Others; and the pull of the road. The simple plot consists of a young narrator, Slim, serving an old African American hobo from the Southern swamps. In exchange for a meal, the hobo sings the blues. In his first song, he sings about travelling north, to Montana, in search of his father. Most of Kerouac’s characters in his *oeuvre* search for their fathers, and Montana holds particular importance for Kerouac because it “symbolizes both the origin of the Missouri River and the land of the macho father” (Jones 247). To characterize the hobo, Kerouac uses a regional dialect: “He pronounced his words so darkly I had to ask him what they meant: ‘nine-tunny-na’ was nineteen twenty nine, ‘polan-may’ was Portland, Maine” (71). The adjective “darkly” refers both

to the hobo's dark skin and his swamp homeland. But when Slim claims that "[p]rint can't read like he sounded, so mournful, hoarse, and swampy-like," Kerouac implies that this poor African American needs a white translator; what the hobo has experienced cannot be known or expressed in print. Kerouac idealizes the hobo's dialect: Slim assumes he has the earthly knowledge of a "witch-doctor," and knows they will meet 'at least once more' on the road (71). What seems like a "merely unusual interlude during down-time in a small city diner" is actually a prophetic meeting for the young narrator (Jones 250). Before the counterman heads to the rail yard, he warns that Slim is a "river log ain't rolling" because he has become "CAUGHT in a snag where the witch doctor lie down with the snake" (71). Slim knows of the logs that come down from Montana: "Odysiac logs, stately wanderers, moving slowly with satisfaction and eternity down wide night shores out to sea" (71). The logs represent those Cold War wanderers that refuse to partake in mainstream culture. And even though Slim does not fully understand the hobo's allegory, he follows his lead, packs his bags, and hops a freight in search of a father figure.

Kerouac's style in "The Rumbling, Rambling Blues" resembles the experimental style found in *On the Road*, but it was most likely written a decade before (Jones 248). As opposed to *On the Road*, the composition of "The Rumbling, Rambling Blues" is much more rough and includes random breaks in dialogue and the lack of transitions. In *Playboy's* "Playbill," editors advertise the text as "every bit as beautifully executed as his praise-garnering novel" (2). But readers were not as equally impressed with Kerouac's first *Playboy* publication. Always scrupulous with selecting the amount and quality of the responses that would be published in "Dear Playboy" responses, editors printed two

letters about this story in April 1958: one praising Kerouac as the “most refreshing young writer to grace [*Playboy*’s] pages” and one begging Kerouac to do more travelling and “less writing” (5). These divided letters represent the ambivalent feelings *Playboy* itself had towards Kerouac’s literary style. Editors enjoy including his work because of his fame, but they never praise Kerouac’s style or the characters he created.

Kerouac’s characters refuse to participate in the rising, domesticated, middle-class. The hero of this sketch, the “best bum of all the bums...walked the American night just as he was” wearing only burlap pants and a greasy apron (57). He needs nothing else to survive, and, without the desire for mass-produced products, he seems out of place in the sea of advertisements *Playboy* began printing as early as 1955. Because *Playboy*’s audience could afford the \$0.50 cover price in 1958, it could hardly associate with Kerouac’s and his characters’ poverty level. The unnamed counterman only has “one lead nickel for coffee,” and Slim does not have enough money to leave Des Moines (57). Kerouac’s glorified depiction of poverty, as well as African American suffering, allows his white narrator to reflect on his plight while “deflecting the difficulties” of the marginalized other (Holten 275). Slim states that the hobo represents all those post-war victims, those that “possessed...a suffering that was seamed into the flesh, face and neck” (57). *Playboy* editors most likely did not want their readers to experience this kind of suffering.

Kerouac’s idyllic depiction of the African American counterman in “The Rumbling, Rambling Blues” parallels *Playboy*’s depiction of the victimized, white male. This early illustration of a hobo reflects Kerouac’s adoration of what he calls the “fellaheen” peoples of the world. Kerouac uses “fellaheen” to describe his feelings of

solidarity with peasants, people of color, and people living at or below the poverty line. Kerouac's fellaheen work the earth with their hands or wander in search of enlightenment. Kerouac, through his white characters, patronizingly "flatter[s]" these fellaheen with "suggestions that their lives are idyllic and charmed, free of White worry, white responsibility, White inhibitions" (Richardson 225). In Kerouac's narratives, his fellaheen are actually "freer" than white, middle-class Americans. Norman Mailer in the "The White Negro" and *Existential Errands* posits similar claims, but usually with an intent to outrage and always with a hint of irony. For instance, in *Existential Errands*, Mailer "wickedly" claims that African Americans are "sufficiently fortunate to be alienated from the benefits of American civilization" (Richardson 230; Mailer, *Existential* 270). In Kerouac's "weird ...revival of the plantation tale," the "white characters describe themselves as repressed even as they oppress others" (Richardson 226). Like Kerouac and Mailer, *Playboy* uses cultural discourse, such as Philip Wylie's "Womanization of America," to depict persecuted males.

Kerouac's idealization of the poor, the negro, or the hipster does not prove that his white characters actually know poverty. Kerouac, and his wandering heroes, always have a financial sponsor—an aunt, a mother, or a friend who willingly sends money. The hobo in "The Rumbling, Rambling Blues" or the "old Negro cotton pickers" in *On the Road* do not have the same luxury. Appalled at Kerouac's emulation of the poor, James Baldwin claims that any reference to happy American Negroes in the 1950s is "absolute nonsense, and offensive nonsense at that" (*Nobody* 231). In *Nobody Knows My Name*, Baldwin dares Kerouac to declare how African Americans are better off than their white counterparts "from the stage of Harlem's Apollo Theater" (231). This "abominable"

culture of “racism” from privileged, white males mirrors mid-century arguments about the feminization of America (Richardson 226). The rise of the companionate nuclear family, the entrance of women into workforce, and the praise of the domesticated male reinforced the trope of the mid-century masculinity crisis. But men, especially white, heterosexual men, were still afforded the freedoms denied to African Americans and women. To appease its white, heterosexual audience, *Playboy* often reiterated the need for men to reclaim domesticated and public realms. Throughout the Cold War, *Playboy* promoted its virile masculinity model; charging into the battle of the sexes, *Playboy* claimed that men were in need of remasculinization because women had come to dominate “all domains: culture, style, consumption, sex, and marriage” (Gilbert 210). According to *Playboy* columnists like Philip Wylie, this “she-tyranny,” had “created an emasculated majority.” *Playboy* even created a symposium on the Cold War masculinity malaise; in 1962, *Playboy* gathered Norman Mailer, Herbert Mayes, Alexander King, Edward Bernays, Ernst Dichter, Ashley Montagu, Theodor Reik, and Mort Sahl for the “Womanization of America Panel.” Comparing Kerouac’s “free” fellaheen with dominating women suggests how both Kerouac’s fiction and *Playboy*’s ethos simultaneously create and reveal American cultural fictions; the magazine could selectively use Kerouac’s “The Rumbling, Rambling Blues” to show how some Americans are not bound by anything, even a woman. Because *Playboy*’s grand narrative relies on reminding men of their virility, editors need to reproduce cultural myths regarding the victimization of white men.

The mixed reader reviews of “The Rumbling, Rambling Blues” encouraged editors to publish “The Beat Mystique” the following month. A tri-part dissection of the

Beats, “The Beat Mystique” was written by Herbert Gold, Sam Boal, and Noel Clad. Gold degrades all that is Beat, while Boal and Clad satirizes the Beat lifestyle. Applying Betty Freidan’s familiar title, *The Feminine Mystique*, to its report on the Beats allows *Playboy* editors to demean feminist movements, feminize the Beats, and remind possible female readers that they are not the primary audience. In a six page rant, Gold accuses the Beats of being addicted to heroin and embracing far-out religions in a fever of despair (86). They do not even deserve to invoke their literary forefathers—Rimbaud, Villon, and Genet—because unlike the “American literary hipster,” Rimbaud, Villon, and Genet were true outcasts: “they did not pick themselves up by the seat of their own pants and toss themselves out. They were driven by class difference and economic pressure” (85). According to Gold, the Beats’ “soul, sense of meaning, individual dignity... has been excised”; as hipsters, they were the “victim[s] of the most hopeless condition of slavery—the slave who does not know he is a slave and is proud of his slavery, calling it ‘freedom’” (86, 87). Viewing Beats and hipsters as nihilists joining an empty fad, Gold claims the Beats become asexual, “a sexual zero” (84). Because of their drug induced state and the desperate need to be cool, Gold invalidates the main connection between the Beats and the playboy: sexual pleasure. To offset the demeaning language in “The Beat Mystique,” the “Playbill” and editors praise the Beats as a “national phenomenon which knows no barriers of age—or economic or social status” in their in-house introduction (20). The “Playbill” even mimics Kerouac’s rambling, alliterative, long lines: “backwards roll the sentences till reels the mind which dips into the deep-freeze of coolsville and comes up with a penetrating and peppy triple-decker report” (3). Yet descriptions like “off-beat,” “infiltrates,” and “angry, roving youngsters,” belie editors’

true feelings. The subtitle is less than subtle: “aspects of the new nihilism—frozen faced, far out, devoid of normal meaning” (20). Instead of condemning the Beats in their introduction, editors allow Herbert Gold to humiliate them.

Much of what Gold says about the Beats is true; they used drugs, got kicks out of stealing cars, and rejected unnecessary consumption. Even though Kerouac claimed, on television spots and in other interviews, that the Beats are “into everything” from “Billy Graham, the Big Ten, rock and roll, Zen, apple pie, Eisenhower—we dig it all,” Gold depicts them as completely “tuned out.” Gold focuses his rant on Kerouac because he felt that he was “just a jock,” “anti-Semitic,” and “a creep from the beginning” (Beeber). In “The Beat Mystique” Gold fails to mention his long-time friendship with Allen Ginsberg or how he often patronized the same Greenwich coffee shops as the Beats. It was not until the 1970s that Gold admitted that he “was pretty hard on them” in his *Playboy* sketch (Weyr 48). His humiliating chronicle was most likely requested by *Playboy* editors; Spector sky often asked regular contributors to write real “blast-off..bang-up, furious” non-fiction pieces in order to sell more issues (Gilbert 211). A *Playboy* contributor since 1954, Gold debased the Beats so that *Playboy* editors did not have to. With Gold’s article, *Playboy* editors could demean the movement without being responsible for the attack. Editors did not want to directly humiliate Kerouac—rather they wanted to present themselves as identifying with the Beat’s rebellious traits, while indirectly critiquing their rejection of conspicuous consumption.

In “After Hours” reviews, *Playboy* editors reveal that they wanted Kerouac to contribute to the magazine for his literary fame, not his lifestyle. In the August 1958 “After Hours” Book Review of Gene Feldman's and Max Gartenberg's *The Beat*

Generation and the Angry Young Men, Kerouac and the Beats are deemed “heroes of post-war fiction” (10). This anthology included works from Beat authors as well as commentary by literary or cultural critics. *Playboy* editors claim that they are “disappointed” that their own “The Beat Mystique” did not make it into the anthologized pages (10). They assume Feldman and Gartenberg excluded the *Playboy* article because it “put the finger on the nihilist anti-social anti-creative elements in the beat mystique,” which subverts the movement’s “generally adulatory premise” (10). Regardless of their disappointment, *Playboy* still endorses the “bloody cool collection” because Feldman and Gartenberg have introduced the Beats as “reacting to a world they never made—the latter in a search for sensation, a 'sordid dance of violence and pain,' the former by strangling their 'betters' with their old school ties” (10). From editorial reaction to Feldman’s and Gartenberg’s anthology, it is clear that editors simply wanted *Playboy* to be associated with the movement for its popular status, rather than its literature.

As long as Kerouac remained in the literary spotlight, he provided *Playboy* with more material to boost its cultural currency. Editors continued to use Kerouac as a foil to their Upbeat Generation by flip-flopping between their appreciation for, and disdain of, the author. For instance, after publishing a negative review of *The Dharma Bums* in its October 1959 issue, editors champion Kerouac once again by publishing “Before the Road” in December 1959. Kerouac’s 33-page manuscript detailed Neal Cassady’s Denver poolroom days during World War II. Spanning 17 magazine pages, “Before the Road” discusses what the Beat had been in a time before the fame and the disillusionment that followed. This portion of *Visions of Cody* is often hailed as Kerouac’s “modernist masterpiece...for its sheer linguistic boldness and exuberance” (Amburn 172). When

Kerouac could not get his seminal work published with Viking Press, *Playboy* snapped up this excerpt. *Escapade*, *Transatlantic Review*, *Oui*, *New Directions* and *The Moderns* each paid for other excerpts from *Visions*, but *Playboy* was the first to publish. In the typescript, Kerouac made over 200 corrections and a *Playboy* editor made additional punctuation and spelling corrections (Christie's). The typescript and galleys show how Kerouac "fashioned his most ebulliently lusty style as if intending to explore the full resources of Cassady's gusto and enthusiasm for living" (Tytell 178). In *Naked Angels*, John Tytell claims that this text was "written with amazing inventiveness, stylistic freedom, and originality" and proves to be Kerouac "at his best" (Tytell 178). Even if *Playboy* editors did not agree with the critical acclaim, they did want to be the first magazine to catalogue this American popular culture event.

During 1959, *Playboy* included the Beats or representations of the Beats in more than half of its issues. In June, they commissioned Kerouac for "The Origins of the Beat Generation," a revision of a speech he gave at Hunter College. The in-house editorial introduction praises him for "sounding depths hitherto not plumbed, dispelling widespread misconceptions, debunking...phonies ..to reaffirm his faith in the basic principles of true Beat" (31). Editors go so far as to state that it is their "pleasure and privilege to publish this statement here" (31). "The Origins" begs readers to take the Beats' literary accomplishments seriously. In the article, Kerouac claims the movement is an American one, as it is rooted in American music, language, and popular culture. In the next issue, editors publish three new Beat poems: Kerouac's "To Harpo Marx," Ginsberg's "To Lindsay," and Gregory Corso's "Made by Hand" (44-5). The two-page spread, containing photos of poetry readings in coffee houses, helps to introduce July's

“Beat Playmate,” Yvette Vickers. Vickers poses nude like every other Playmate, and editors stress that she is a typical woman from the Beat generation.

With Jim Morand’s “Coffee Houses of America” and “The Beat Playmate,” *Playboy* had once again used the Beats as puppets. The men displayed in Morand’s photo-spread are better dressed than most authentic Beats. Even the “Beat Playmate” appears better off financially than most women associated with the Beat Generation. and her Hollywood aspirations make her far from “representative of the girls who inhabit the beat coffee houses” (47). According to her brief bio, what defines her as a Beat is that she has “strong opinions,” love for poetry and classical music, and a reckless nature that encourages to jag race cars in the desert for kicks. The editors’ word choice reveals that they do not mind this kind of Beat because even if she is “more than a bit of a rebel,” she “frown[s] prettily on conformity” (47). Her full-color spread proves exactly what kind of Beat *Playboy* editors appreciate—half naked, Yvette is surrounded by an open book of verse, a bottle of wine, mismatched half-full wine glasses, an overflowing ashtray, and vinyl. With her hand on the record player and bright red lipstick on her face, she is an audience-appropriate representation of the Beat Generation.

Reader response proves that editors had struck the proper balance—more focus on the nude, Beat model than on the Beat poetry. The October 1959 “Dear Playboy” contains seventeen letters about its Beat coverage. Eight of those letters are short praises for Yvette that include beatnik word play; for example, J. Calder Joseph of Orlando, FL, writes that the “poetry was tops and the *Playmate* a real *sweetnik*” (8). Only one letter condemns editors for their “pretty corny publicity gimmick” (8). Other letters question why editors “are giving such a large emphasis to the beatnik ideology” or printing their

poetry (11). One lengthy letter complains of all the Beat attention and suggests that there is no such thing as the Beat Generation, “only a scattering of goofballs...uttering animal whimpers of protest...while belting themselves silly with drink” (12). This letter warns of the high rates of juvenile delinquency and compares Beat stylistics to “the hysterical yip of a frustrated virgin who has been unexpectedly goosed” (12). Four letters label the poetry “The Beat Sound” as “pure tripe,” “utter drivel,” and “lousy” (11). Only one letter praises *Playboy* for giving the Beats a chance to be read so that the general public can make its own conclusions. While *Playboy* might have offered the general public a chance to read the Beats, it most definitely had already come to its own conclusion—the Beats were good for business. Any attention, even if it is negative, is good attention.

Playboy editors’ negative discussions and reviews of Kerouac must have made some readers wonder why his contributions continued to appear in the magazine. For instance, in March 1958 editors published Scott Martin’s “Hickory, Dickory, Kerouac,” a satire about mice on the go. In November of that year, they commissioned satirist John D. Keefauver to write an “appreciative parody” that echoes Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s poetry. And four years later, in the same September “After Hours” Book Review that praises James Baldwin’s *Another Country*, editors reviewed Kerouac’s *Big Sur*. The basis of the review—that *Big Sur* is a rehash of *On the Road*—is fundamentally correct; Kerouac’s work mainly functioned as extended autobiographies. Besides the autobiographical nature of the novel, editors take issue with his experimental style; Kerouac relied heavily on dashes to separate time lapses and thoughts in the novel. *Playboy*’s obvious prejudices against Kerouac’s style forced them to heavily edit his typed manuscripts. For example, “The Beat Generation” manuscript contained two

poems that editors refused to publish: “Harpo, I’ll Always Love You” and “Love’s multitudinous boneyard.” (Although “Harpo” was later published in “Beat Sound.”) Editorial sheets advise to “allow Kerouac a measure of freedom in punc. Etc, but put in those apostrophes...” (Christie’s). Editorial markings and a number of penciled deletions appear on the typed manuscripts for each of Kerouac’s selections. Editorial marks reveal that editors were particularly perturbed by Kerouac’s habit of leaving the gs off of his gerunds. In a review of *Vision of Cody*, editors discuss Kerouac’s “stylistic excesses”: “his metaphors stumble over each other in various stages of disarray”; his “sensitivity slips into sentimentality”; and he has a “patchwork philosophy” (4). And yet, editors continued to ask him for contributions over the next decade. A mere three years after the negative *Visions of Cody* review, *Playboy* commissioned Kerouac to write “Good Blonde.” And after the Beat movement had waned, *Playboy* published Holmes’ moving obituary of Kerouac in February 1973. This strange move to memorialize Kerouac after years of debasing him reinforces *Playboy*’s central concern—cultural currency. *Playboy* needed to include Kerouac’s works because they stressed the popular Beat lifestyle.

Unlike the restrictions placed on him by *Playboy*, *Escapade* encouraged Kerouac to write about anything that moved him. A direct *Playboy* competitor, *Escapade* featured Nelson Algren and Ray Bradbury, as well as articles on Hemingway and Salinger (Birmingham). In his Kerouac biography, Tom Clark claims that *Escapade* was one of the few outlets that “had no prejudice” against Kerouac, “his lifestyle, or his writing style” (Clark xii). Kerouac’s “Last Word” columns have a “preoccupation with ‘real life’ –‘real things and real people’” (Clark xii). In them, Kerouac writes on jazz, the literary scene, Zen Buddhism, baseball, history, and politics. Unlike the work he offered

Playboy, these columns did not “chronicle the hot, racy, underground culture” or the “sexually hip” (Birmingham). Rather, they reveal the “nostalgic and conservative side of Kerouac that fully emerged in the 1960s” (Birmingham). For instance, in an astute column on the literary scene, Kerouac explains why he refuses to use the “conventional English sentence” in his prose. He claims that “shame” keeps artists from composing a “true” sentence (*Good* 145). He also suggests that the “best” of American Literature “has not been published yet” because critics and editors have “been engaged in a campaign of systematic rejection of everything except the most systematic manuscripts” (Kerouac, *Good* 147). In these non-fiction columns, Kerouac proves that he can, when he chooses to, abide by the conventions of standard American English. His call for artists to create “unabashed language” suggests that he does not want the political climate to contain authors. Never organized fully or driven enough for political activism, the Beats championed personal and spiritual liberation rather than a social revolution. But in his seventh “Last Word” column, Kerouac offers political commentary on the Cold War climate. He condemns the American free press for bending to the times and “assuming that the ‘the news’ has got to be bad” for anyone to follow it (*Good* 161, 162). Kerouac reminds readers that if he defends artists or Nikita Khrushchev, he should not be branded a Communist. Most likely Kerouac would not have been able to discuss the political climate, or “speak *for* things,” in his *Playboy* contributions (Creeley xii). *Playboy*’s manipulative presentation, liberal editing, and undermining reviews constrained Kerouac to writing strictly about the Beats so that it could continue to use him as a foil.

The relationship between *Playboy* and the Beats signifies how aggressively the empire fulfilled its capitalistic agenda. By using Kerouac as a foil, the magazine serves

more than one audience—readers that enjoyed Kerouac’s works are genuinely pleased by his inclusion in the magazine and those that are not can take pleasure from editorial content like Gold’s “The Beat Mystique.” In *Reaching for Paradise*, Thomas Weyr documents how the magazine’s ambivalent perspective on the Beats, and Kerouac specifically, allowed readers to enter the ongoing cultural discourse surrounding the Beats and nonconformity in general. *Playboy* could also go “on record as having displayed and confronted the movement” (Weyr 49). It competed with other men’s magazines covering the Beats and offered a more in-depth, cultural analysis than *The New York Times* and *Newsweek* ever could. Kerouac’s exposure also forced the magazine to reconsider its *playboy* ethic. Russell remembers that “we liked the sort of freedom they espoused,” and “we were in favor of any kind of sexual liberation, as long as it was heterosexual lib...But we also felt that there was a lot in it counter to what we promoted” (qtd. in Weyr 49). Russell reiterates how the Beats, with their “sandaled, dirty feet,” and their “antiestablishment attitude” did not mesh well with *Playboy*’s objective. Russell states: “We were telling people how to make out, not just with girls, but in business and in their jobs” (qtd. in Weyr 49). Hefner agrees that, as “an interesting phenomenon,” the Beats did not fit the magazine’s ethos (qtd. in Weyr 49). Hefner even admits in an interview that editors were “apt to give them a shot one time and a compliment at another” (qtd. in Weyr 49). What Weyr fails to mention in his chronicle of this relationship is that Kerouac, accordingly to his letters, was an unsuspecting foil.

Working-for-hire at the height of his career, Kerouac willingly wrote for *Playboy*. Because *Playboy* paid Kerouac so handsomely for his work, between \$500 and \$2,000 per piece, he never questioned the magazine’s quality as a publishing venue. He even

persuaded other members of the Beat generation to submit their work to *Playboy*. In a 1962 letter to Holmes, Kerouac dismisses *Esquire* as “bunch of arty faggots” for rejecting Holmes’ excerpts (Charters, *Selected Letters Vol I*, 337). Kerouac tells Holmes to have his work “sent directly to Thomas Payne” at *Playboy* because he is “[his] buddy” (Charters, *SL Vol I*, 337). Kerouac writes that “Spectorsky has the final say but he was the one, remember, who published my ‘Out of the Poolhall’ to perfection without one typo error” (Charters, *SL Vol I*, 337-8). In January 1962, editors apparently informed Kerouac that *Playboy* wanted to devote a “whole edition” to one of his novels, similar to *Life’s* entire Ernest Hemingway *Old Man and the Sea* issue (Charters, *SL Vol I*, 322). But in all likelihood, *Playboy* had no intention of devoting an entire issue to the Beat because of its ambivalent attitude toward the Beats and its dislike of Kerouac’s prose.

Playboy’s choice to simultaneously solicit Kerouac for his work and to share its prejudices suggests that *Playboy* selectively borrowed from popular 1950s figures to create its model of masculinity. Coupled with his fame in literary circles, *Playboy* seemed to rely on Kerouac’s good looks. According to Jed Birmingham, a William Burroughs scholar, Kerouac looked “like James Dean and Marlon Brando [and] could write” (Birmingham). Salvador Dali went farther and pronounced Kerouac as “more beautiful than Marlon Brando” (Douglas ii). His good looks could have propelled *Playboy* to publish his photographs and his prose. Editors used him the same way they used Yvette Vickers, as a “sweetnik.” To further Birmingham’s claim, *Playboy* exploited Kerouac looks and his supposed heterosexuality. Interested first and foremost in façade, *Playboy* needed a good-looking, straight member of the Beat Generation as a foil to its grand narrative. Editors could not have published works by Ginsberg or Burroughs

because of their blatant homosexuality—even though they “cultivated a homosexual identity that was defiant, rebellious, and masculine” (Carroll 5). The Cold War’s Lavender Scare and consumer capitalism encouraged *Playboy* to simultaneously use and abuse Kerouac.

“Good Blonde” as a Cold War Text

Playboy printed “Good Blonde” in a tour-de-force issue including the renowned interview with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stories by Vladimir Nabokov, P.G. Wodehouse, Ray Bradbury, and Harold Pinter, and satire by Woody Allen and Shel Silverstein. The interview gave Dr. King a forum to discuss his philosophy of nonviolence and “explain the reality of African American despair that had become manifest in the riots of the previous summer” (Fraterrigo 148). Other articles in the December 1965 issue present a slice of American Cold War culture. J. Paul Getty writes of “The Psychology of Personnel Management”; Wodehouse comments on the contemporary nuclear crisis in “Bingo Bans the Bomb”; and Sir Julian Huxley warns that the population growth will overwhelm physical resources and global institutions (Watts 194). December’s “Playboy Philosophy” includes a discussion of religion and Reverend Harvey Cox’s praise of the magazine. All of this is “sober content for a magazine that once promised no interest in the world’s problems” (Fraterrigo 148). But, of course, *Playboy* is very interested in the world’s problems and its cultural occurrences.

Embedded within this serious content is Kerouac’s “Good Blonde.” The story describes an actual encounter Kerouac experienced while hitchhiking from Mexico City to California in September 1955. Kerouac was picked up by a young, blond female in a 1955 Mercury Montclair. The woman was returning to San Francisco after visiting her

family in Texas; she stopped to pick up Kerouac on U.S. 101 outside of Santa Barbara wearing only a strapless, white bathing suit. Kerouac wrote: “I was bloody well afraid to look at her, the curl of her milk armpits, the flesh of her cream legs, the cream, legs, curls, milk, wow did I love that, not looking, but giggling” (Charters, *SL Vol I*, 522). To make the trip without stopping, Kerouac shared with her his ample supply of Mexican Benzedrine. They talked while she pushed her Mercury to speeds over a hundred. She told Kerouac how “everyone in Texas was getting stoned” and “even tobacco-chewing farmers were beginning to cultivate ‘loco weed’ in their yards” (Amburn 220). According to a letter Kerouac wrote to Holmes, she was “the sweetest little perfect everything you know” (Charters, *SL Vol I*, 522). The blond dropped him off at the South San Francisco rail yards, exchanging empty promises to meet again.

This chance encounter impressed Kerouac, and he used the incident in his novel, *The Dharma Bums*, before expanding it into a short story. When Kerouac described the “good blonde” in a letter to Holmes, he declared that “the peace and happiness the Beats had forecast in 1948 was coming true; President Eisenhower was dismantling the military-industrial complex, and war would soon be a thing of the past” (Amburn 220). Because Kerouac obviously thought this experience was a good omen, he strategically used it in his fiction—both as a parenthetical aside and as a short story. As a parenthetical aside, Kerouac uses the ride to get one of his main characters to the Six Gallery reading of *Howl*, the most pivotal event of the Beat Generation. The expanded version of this encounter marks one of Kerouac’s full immersions in the short story genre. Like the rest of the Beats, Kerouac relied on the novel and poetry for self-expression. His

other published short fiction, categorized as short stories, are really just excerpts from longer works.

“Good Blonde” is simply an extended version of a parenthetical snippet from *The Dharma Bums*. Written in response to Malcolm Cowley’s 1957 request for an *On the Road* sequel, *The Dharma Bums* was “a real American book and [had] an optimistic American ring of the woods in it” (qtd. in Theado 152). As frontiersmen, the main characters reveal their rootlessness and offer readers a glimpse into 1950s San Francisco Bay culture—from the growing Buddhist following to the nightlife on the bay. Finished in ten marathon caffeine induced sessions, *The Dharma Bums* contains barely any of Kerouac’s experimental prose; it is told linearly, contains identifiable characters, and maintains a controlled style. After reading it, *New York Times Book Review* columnist J. Donald Adams revised his original opinion of Kerouac as a hack stylist: “Offhand I would say that when Kerouac sets his mind to it he can describe the world of physical experience better than anyone since Hemingway. When he writes unaffectedly and unselfconsciously, but with control, he writes very well indeed” (qtd. in Theado 153). With “Good Blonde,” Kerouac returns to his “preferred exploratory style,” defying *Playboy’s* desire for a more contained style (Jones 140).

Poised between an introduction to Buddhism and simply another journey across America, *The Dharma Bums* includes a fitting Cold War narrator—one initially full of post-war hope. Told in the past tense, the novel opens with the narrator, Ray, hopping freights outside of Los Angeles. Ray shares his necessities (wine, a little bread, Mexico City cheese, and some candy) with an old bum who “spoke from far away inside a little meek voice-box afraid or unwilling to assert himself” (281). Originally pleased with his

charity, Ray eerily foreshadows the changes in his mentality and age. He becomes very critical of his post-war devotions. Ray tells readers that he has now grown old and “a little hypocritical about [his] lip-service and a little tired and cynical” (282). The elongated ellipses, in the original manuscript, suggest Ray’s drastic demise in mentality. Immediately after the war, Ray “really believed in the reality of charity and kindness and humility and zeal and neutral tranquility and wisdom and ecstasy” (282). The majority of the plot details his optimistic tale, but it is told from a distant, unenthusiastic narrator. This narrative technique allows Kerouac to frame Ray’s “long, post-adolescent” journey as a spiritual journey of “personal and national dimensions” (Richardson 219). Ray’s personal journey has national dimensions because it exposes mid-century tensions—a tragically-optimistic narrator wanders through a “hopeful, doomed decade” (Richardson 220). With Ray, and his other narrators, Kerouac critiques the utopian and dystopian aspects of the Cold War culture.

Ray’s waning sense of happiness represents the tragic optimism of 1950s Cold War American culture. From the constant crisscrossing of America, Kerouac’s characters show an America that is “promise and piety on the one hand, wickedness and fraud on the other” (Richardson 219). Mark Richardson connects Kerouac’s tragically optimistic works to a “Young Goodman Brown sort of story” (219). Richardson argues that *On the Road* invokes both dystopian and utopian possibilities: “tumbledown holy America” (*On the Road* 251). Kerouac explores the seediness and grace of American Cold War culture. This tension can be easily transferred to “Good Blonde.” For instance, while waiting about a half hour to hitch a ride, the narrator’s anger becomes palpable: “I got madder and madder and finally I was swearing to myself ‘I will never hitchhike again, it’s getting

worse and worse every goddamn year” (146). A few breathless sentences later, “at the moment when [he] was the maddest, and was standing there, thumb out, completely infuriated and so much so that...[his] eyes were slitted, [his] teeth clenched,” a car pulls over. The following sentences are stripped down and direct: “I couldn’t believe it. I figured she wanted road information. I picked up my pack and ran” (146). The change in sentence structure signifies the narrator’s shifting moods. Similar to Ray, the narrator of “Good Blonde” seems to be torn between believing in the “hearthside” American ideals and recognizing Cold War tragedies.

Kerouac composed his characters during cultural upheavals like the American National Security State, the Civil Rights Movement, the Organizational Man, suburban sprawl, and red-lining. Defense spending quadrupled; 1950 witnessed the beginning the Korean Conflict, the first significant armed conflict of the Cold War. The United States detonated the first hydrogen bomb in Eniwetok Atoll in 1952. Fear and hysteria escalated with the Rosenberg’s trial and execution. In “Mad Beast,” Jean-Paul Sartre describes the palpable fear of the Cold War: “In killing the Rosenbergs, you simply tried to stop scientific progress by a human sacrifice. Magic, witch hunts, autos-da-fe, sacrifices: we've reached that point. Your country is sick with fear. You're afraid of everything: the Russians, the Chinese, the Europeans. You're afraid of each other. You're afraid of the shadow of your own bomb. Ah, what fine allies you make!” (210). Sartre laughs at United States officials’ desire to assume global leadership. He writes “And you would like to lead us! You are leading us to war out of terror, and you'd lose it out of panic at the first bombardment” (210). His simplified explication reflects the tension between

dystopia and utopia; the United States wanted to be a hopeful leader and, yet, that hope was often trumped by a culture of fear and containment.

Kerouac's characters often refer to Cold War culture. For instance, Ray wants "the whole world" to be as "dead serious" about food as Japhy rather than concerning itself with "silly rockets and machines and explosives using everybody's food money to blow their heads off anyway" (Kerouac, *Dharma*, 217). Ray wishes to escape the "regular hell" of Los Angeles because it is an "industrial jungle" (137, 117). He bemoans the sad pattern of conformity as people experience a uniform response to television programs and describes the mass of young men dressed in gray suits scurrying to their office jobs (39, 131). Dean and Sal, in *On the Road*, pass by Washington D.C. on President Truman's inauguration day; they remark on the "great displays of war might lined up along Pennsylvania Avenue... There were B-29s, PT boats, artillery, all kinds of war material that looked murderous in the snowy grass" (Kerouac 112). They comment on the "Victorian police force" involved in "psychological warfare;" the police force "peers out of musty windows and inquires about everything" (113). Old Bull Lee rants about predatory "bureaucracies" and the "big grab" between Washington and Moscow (221). Throughout his works, Kerouac's characters ask the essential Cold War questions—"Who are Americans? Are we the chosen or the damned?" (Richardson 221). The narrator of the "Good Blonde" questions American cultural illusions regarding conformity, counter-culture, and models of masculinity. The answer to these questions is usually a "peculiar optimism" that "always has a haggard air of defeat about it" (221). Kerouac's narrators subsist on apple pie and ice cream, consistently go west, and "dig" everything. Readers are left to "infer that...to live in faith and goodwill is also to labor

under a fortunate illusion—under the dominating power of belief; to be digging everything is somehow willingly to be subject to a con” (222). With his works, Kerouac catches the moment’s optimism, while playing down its darker side.

Beyond the tragic optimism, *The Dharma Bums* and “Good Blonde” explore why Cold War America became fascinated with Buddhism. While Americans “had been producing and consuming Asia symbolically for the previous century and a half,” American Buddhism coalesced as a religion during the early Cold War (Klein 4). Interest in eastern religions in the United States had been increasing since the 1940s (Douglas xi). After World War II, and most likely in part because of the war, Americans looked East: journalists documented the atom bomb, playwrights brought Okinawa onto Broadway, political observers traced historical roots, restaurants surrounded patrons in Polynesian chic, and lecturers, like Alan Watts, popularized Zen Buddhism (Klein 2-4). D.T. Suzuki lectured on Buddhism at Columbia during the 1950s and Buddhism continued to grow (Douglas xi). The heightened focus on Buddhism revealed the crisis of belief that marred a post-war era, one that could concurrently embrace *Playboy* and evangelism. Ann Charters notes that, in July 1958, *Time* stated that “Zen Buddhism is growing more chic by the moment,” and even *Mademoiselle* intelligently covered the movement. Rod Phillips’ scholarship on nature in Beat literature suggests that Buddhism offered the Beats a way to transcend Cold War American culture; culturally, mainstream America was “routinely” offered two choices—“Soviet-style communism or American capitalism, democracy and all that went with it” (Douglas 23). Calvin Steinmetz explained that “Buddhism is interesting to some of the best minds in the West because it is different enough from westernized religions that the contrast is striking” (qtd. in Masatsugu 447).

Like it did for Hinduism, Buddhism offered a middle path for some Americans—most notably for the Beats, who “envisioned Buddhist teaching and practice as an alternative path toward meaning, peace, and spirituality in an increasingly materialistic and unstable Cold War world” (Masatsugu 428). The Beats, like other San Francisco Bay converts, were “haunted by the unparalleled destruction of World War II and the increasing prospect of nuclear war” (Masatsugu 439). The Beats envisioned a future full of “monk figures who rejected Cold War materialism and likened cycles of production and consumption to the *samsara* (the Buddhist view of the endless cycle of birth and death)” (Masatsugu 441). In their rejection of materialism, the Beats had come to recognize one of Buddhism’s four noble truths: that all life is suffering.

The Beats’ search for comfort in religion is similar to *Playboy’s* search for “a few laughs and a little diversion from the anxieties of the Atomic Age” (3, Dec.1953). The Beats, like the Transcendentalists before them, looked to eastern religions and mythologies. Douglas posits that Kerouac’s “turn East” is due to rereading Thoreau’s *Walden*. The Transcendentalists movement, like the Beats, marked “a crisis and a renewal of belief” (Douglas 19). John Tytell claims that the Transcendentalists encouraged Kerouac’s “aggressive idealism, his...distrust of machines and industry, his desire to return to the origins of man’s relations to the land” (4). Like the Beats, the Transcendentalists “felt betrayed by the organized, productive society of their day and said NO to the prevailing mores in the name of an individualistic search for mystical unity” (Gelpi 60). The shared sense of betrayal encouraged the Beats to define themselves “against domesticity and consumerism” and align themselves with “racialized figures at the margins of white, heterosexual, middle-class America for inspiration”

(Masatsugu 439). The role of the exoticized Oriental played into the Beats' construction of an alternative vision.

When Kerouac crafts a vision of Buddhism as an Oriental alternative to white middle-class culture, he critiques Cold War cultural anxieties regarding the Other. Kerouac continues this problematic embrace of the Other in "Good Blonde." Unlike *The Dharma Bums* or *On the Road*, "Good Blonde" does not begin with the narrator noting that the good times are already over. Rather, the narrator introduces an old Greek who reminds him of his east-coast uncle, and the work presents a dialogue that is full of possibility. After the first descriptive paragraph characterizing the old Greek as a father, or uncle figure, Kerouac immediately begins a dialogue without specific referents:

"What do you think? You think all this is a dream?"

"What?"

"Life."

"Here? Now? What you mean a dream, we're awake, we talk, we see, we got eyes for to see the sea and the sand and the sky, if you dream you no see it."

"How we know we're not dreaming?"

"Look my eyes are open ain't they?" He watched me as I washed my dishes and put things away. (145)

As a point of departure, the conversations between the old Greek and the narrator parallel *The Dharma Bums* use of Buddhism. In "Good Blonde," Kerouac's narrator asks specific questions regarding the illusion of life and references meditation practices that include washing dishes. He seems to want to share basic principles of Buddhism with the older character, without alienating him. Kerouac even makes the narrator sound equally

foreign as the old Greek. By removing the auxiliary “do” in the question “How we know?”, Kerouac aligns his narrator with his non-native old Greek. Directly after the old Greek watches the narrator put his dishes away, the narrator states “I’m going to try to hitchhike to San Francisco or catch a freight, I don’t wanta wait till tonight” (145). By not including any prologue or reference to his travels, readers can only infer that the old Greek was aware of the narrator’s plans. The old Greek responds with “You mens always in a hurry, hey, he he he he...laugh[ing] just like Old Uncle Nick” (146). Using the old Greek, Kerouac hints at the Beats’ restlessness toward the oppressive middle-class life. As opposed to Uncle Nick, who resembles the gray-suited organization man and participates in political discourse, the old Greek becomes a nostalgic reminder of a different America: “In his green gray eyes which were just like the green gray sea I saw the yawning eternity not only of Greece but of America and myself” (146). Disregarding fears associated with the containment culture, Kerouac posits the old Greek “wandering on the mystical margin mentioned by Whitman where the sea kisses the sand in the endless sigh kiss of time” (146). The old Greek’s direction “in the void” seems “sadder” than the narrator’s, but the narrator “knew that in reality [his] own direction...was no higher and no lower than his own humble and unsayable state” (146). Deploying Buddhist allusions in the “Good Blond” allows Kerouac to share his crisis of renewal and faith with *Playboy* readers.

This strange interaction between these two male characters at first appears to be the beginning of a framed narrative, but, because Kerouac never returns to the old Greek, it could express Cold War culture’s focus on masculinity. The old Greek’s significance to the short story can be likened to the male interaction in all of Kerouac’s works.

Kerouac's male characters and the Beats represent an example of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "homosocial desire." For instance, in *The Dharma Bums*, Kerouac's characters were "guys" who lived on a mountaintop talking about how they would lead a "great world revolution" (430). As a brotherhood, they excluded women as spiritual equals, colleagues, or intellectuals. They bonded over "heavy drinking, hard living, fast cars, sports and sexual excess" (Davidson 16). The absence of women in Ray's clique represents just one of the numerous homosocial communities formed during the Cold War. In *Imperial Brotherhood*, Robert Dean lists the ways United States leaders were shaped into a hyper-masculine fraternity: boarding schools, ivy league universities, secret fraternities, social men's clubs, and voluntary military service, which offered a "martial masculine virtue ... inseparable from masculine civic and political virtue" (38). Dean's controlling image of Cold War warriors, the imperial brotherhood, reveals that United States leaders were obsessed with virile masculinity and relied on hyper-masculine attitudes to create foreign and domestic policy. Distancing themselves from homosexuality (which equated to weakness), men in these fraternities promoted a toughness that shaped Cold War policy. As a result, Cold War politics elevated "men's men" from homosocial communities, while damning intellectuals as poor leaders. Dean proves how difficult it was for individuals to contradict reigning models of masculinity (12). The reigning model for the characters in *The Dharma Bums* is Japhy Ryder, a Northwest woodsman, mountain climber, and Oriental scholar. Practicing the simplicity of Buddhism, Japhy nonchalantly attracts women—inviting women over for clothes-optional meditation sessions. Throughout the novel, Ray frantically tries to conform to Japhy's model of masculinity. Ray mimics most of Japhy's characteristics, especially his

denial of materialism. Ray follows him up the High Sierras to climb the Matterhorn and agrees to be a fire lookout for the United States Forest Service on Desolation Peak, a job he takes only to impress Japhy. And while he participates in the constant partying, Ray can never match Japhy's sexual promiscuity.

The characters in Kerouac's texts were mirror images of the artists of the Beat Generation; they created a homosocial community dependent on its "differentiation from (1) society, (2) marriage, and (3) ('perfum'd') women" (Davidson 14). John Clellon Holmes first labeled the Beats as a "boy gang" in a 1954 letter to Allen Ginsberg (Davidson 13). Holmes wrote "the social organization which is most true of itself to the artist is the boy gang" (qtd. in Davidson 13). Kerouac, like Holmes, believed wholeheartedly in the "pervasive" homosocial bonds. These bonds can be seen throughout Kerouac's works and in his life. And unlike Ginsberg or Burroughs, whose works contain homosocial bonds which lead to explicit homosexual acts, Kerouac's depiction of homosocial bonds do not alienate the Cold War audience because they are contained within a heterosexual realm (Harris 185). These homosocial bonds relate to Cold War politics because they debunk notions of homosexuality and celebrate a shared masculinity. For instance, Kerouac uses the "symmetry of divorce and marriage" to frame the homosocial bond between Dean and Sal in *On the Road* (Harris 185). This heterosexual frame negates suspicions of homosexuality in the text. In his personal life, Kerouac's homosexual relationships are framed by heterosexual marriages and relationships.

Kerouac and his characters ignore the mainstream impulse to marry and function on the sliding scale of sexuality. By 1955, Kerouac had two failed marriages and the

narrator of "Good Blonde" reflects the author's rejection of marriage: "Been married twice and I've had it" (Turner 149). Barbara Ehrenreich claims that Beats, and their imitators the beatniks, rejected the "pact that the family wage system rested on"; they refused to financially support women via marriage (53). This refusal supports the fact that the Beats were "deeply, if intermittently, attached" only to each other (Ehrenreich 53). The responsibility and commitment of the monogamous life was "just uninteresting compared to the ecstatic possibilities of male adventure" (Ehrenreich 54). Personally, Kerouac's male adventures and strong homosocial bonds often lead to homosexual encounters; these included merchant marines, Beat members, and Gore Vidal, who claimed that he and Kerouac "both thought...that we owed it to literary history to couple" (Solomons). Congruous to Alfred Kinsey's findings on sexuality, biographer Ellis Amburn argues that "rigid divisions such as hetero-, bi-, and homosexuality do not fit reality, certainly not Kerouac's, and should not be used to label him. Though everyone seems to have a genetic inclination in one direction or the other, it is dangerous to use sex to define anyone" (32). Although other Beat scholars disregard some of Amburn's biographical findings, Kerouac's sexual experimentation has been noted by Gerry Nicosia and Ann Charters. Kerouac and other members of the Beats were subjects for some of Kinsey's interviews, and his subsequent findings regarding the sexuality continuum enthralled Cold War America. Kinsey's findings deconstructed dominant perceptions of sexuality and critiqued popular conceptions of marriage as the moral union between men and women.

Kerouac's allusions to Kinsey's definitions of sexuality help to demonstrate the Cold War's reconstitution of space. The survey of male and female sexual behavior

illustrates that “mapping could yield a radical critique of society” (Kozlovsky 204). Besides Kinsey’s mapping of sexuality, Senator Joseph McCarthy constantly mapped the spread of communism within the United States. His maps were a “rhetorical device for exaggerating the threat of communism,” and they created a “powerful analogy between the nation and body” (202-3). McCarthy’s mapping of the Communist threat allowed him to equate sexual deviants with political subversion. He used the maps in an attempt to “homogenize and normalize American society and to impose the ideology of containment and exclusion from without as well as within” (206). Redefining the boundaries between public and private, McCarthy’s mapping encouraged the Beats to employ mapping as a form of resistance. In Kerouac’s works, especially *On the Road*, he maps the North American continent by reporting his cross country road trips. In “Good Blonde,” the north-west destination traces the California coast and exposes “the concrete historical space as it was forged by the systematic transformation of American politics, economy, demography, and technology, which began with Roosevelt’s New Deal and climaxed in the early Cold War era” (194). The Cold War’s new highway system encouraged Kerouac’s cross-country moves and changed his notions of space.

“Good Blonde’s” Model of Masculinity

“Good Blonde’s” model of masculinity illustrates Cold War tendencies regarding the redefinition of space and sexuality. Kerouac’s sexual conquests, the Beats’ resistance to the domesticated male, and their redefinition of space supports *Playboy’s* model of masculinity. However, “Good Blonde” undermines *Playboy’s* grand narrative because of the narrator’s rejection of conspicuous consumption. The narrator tells the “Good Blonde” that he “doesn’t want anything...I think life is suffering, a suffering dream, and

all I wanta do is rest and be kind somewhere, preferably in the woods, under a tree, live in a shack” (149). Barry Miles states that Kerouac showed that “conspicuous consumerism, the giant cars, split-level homes and suburban conformism of the fifties were not the way to happiness” (xviii). He proposed an alternative lifestyle to American conformity and “preached personal freedom” (xv). The narrator shares his alternative plan to “grab his pack and a month’s essential groceries” and “go to the riverbottom and build a little shelter with twigs and stuff and a tarpaulin or a poncho and lay up and do nothing for a month” (Kerouac 151). The narrator obviously does not want to participate in the growing capitalistic economy that *Playboy* consistently promotes. Manipulating the Beats and Kerouac’s exposure over the past decades, *Playboy* editors had most likely prepared readers for this variance. But more subtle discrepancies, such as the narrator’s ambiguous heterosexuality, reaffirm that *Playboy*’s publication of “Good Blonde” presents readers with a variant model of masculinity. “Good Blonde’s” plot and characterization make it an even more unlikely choice for a *Playboy* audience. For instance, while *The Dharma Bums* depicts free love and unbridled sex, “Good Blonde” leaves the narrator questioning how the female character might react to sexual advances.

Model of Masculinity: Space

Kerouac’s study of America critiques Cold War cultural changes, such as urban to rural and the redefinition of domesticity. In *The Culture of Spontaneity*, Daniel Belgrad remarks that, by nature, Kerouac was more of an observer than a confident outsider; Kerouac applied his constant observations to chronicling the changing American landscape (209). In an April 1947 letter to Hal Chase, Kerouac shares his literary aims to map America: “I have begun a huge study of the face of America itself, acquiring maps

(roadmaps) of every state in the USA, and before long not a river or a mountain peak or bay or town or city will escape my attention” (Charters, *SL Vol. I*, 107). Post-war space was simultaneously decentralized via technology and concentrated by production, management, and government agencies. The Beats exploited the “centrifugal and centripetal tendencies” of Cold War space “for their strategies of resistance and escape” (Kozlovsky 197). According to architect Roy Kozlovsky, the Beats’ writing method helped to “carve out of the concrete space of America an alternative, fictional space that would redefine the relationship between space, society, and power” (194). Using his (then) innovative literary technique of spontaneous prose, Kerouac “transforms literature into a spatial practice” (192). In “Good Blonde,” the spontaneous prose leads readers on a journey of the West Coast, with both characters headed to San Francisco.

Kerouac’s westward movement is a frantic attempt to retrace the meaning of the American dream, escape the confines of post-war modernity, and rediscover the final frontier. Leslie Fiedler argues that the western direction is the “symbolic escape of the male from the domain of the house and its effeminate culture” (qtd. in Kozlovsky 198). “Good Blonde’s” west coast destination reflects the Beats’ desire to escape from the Cold War socioeconomic conditions “that subordinated the person to a world of consumer object” (Johnson 107). Ironically, the escape from post-war consumption and production is always done in a car—an emblem of American “progress.” And the good blonde is not travelling around in a stolen jalopy; rather, her cinnamon colored Lincoln is brand new, and the narrator, amazed by the driver, covets her ride. Right before the narrator hitches a ride from the blonde, he hears a broadcast of a Michigan football game and looks back to see all the “golden wheatfields of American Football Time stretching out clear back to the

East coast” (Kerouac 146). The football game, as well as a later baseball allusion, reference the realm of male sports, a space designated for masculine activities far from the domain of the house. Broadcast technology and the new highway system allowed the narrator to travel to the other coast. Coming from the South, headed up the West Coast, Kerouac insists on providing the names of each city the characters pass through, “as if to allow the reader to follow [their] exact route” (Kozlovsky 195). Their mobility represents how post-war economy displaced millions of Americans and changed settlement and migration patterns: the blonde’s move from Texas to California represents the opening of the Sunbelt. The speed at which they travel up the coast also suggests the accelerated experiences of the Cold War and suggests how the car “democratized access to the experience of speed by allowing individualized control of speeding” (Kozlovsky 200). Even though class and race restraints denied some access to owning or driving an automobile, the car represented the capitalistic identification with the individual, as opposed to the collective. Kerouac’s use of north-west journey challenges Cold War notions of containment and highlights the movement of marginalized figures.

The narrator in “Good Blonde” travels by car from a serene beach scene to an urban center, unlike the characters in *The Dharma Bums*, who escape from the city toward nature. This move parallels *Playboy*’s celebration of the city and critiques post-war population declines in American cities. Drawn to the urban experience, the narrator finds refuge in the “Cameo Hotel on the corner of Harrison and Third, where for seventy-five cents a night you could always get a clean room...and quiet sleep” (154). His celebration of the cheap, urban hotel proves his disregard for a suburban homestead. The mass homeownership sponsored by the G.I. Bill promoted the home as a safe space, “the

moral and economic ideal of the Cold War era” (Kozlovsky 210). William Levitt went so far as to say that “[n]o man who owns his own house and lot can be a Communist” (qtd. in Kozlovsky 210). Therefore, being a vagabond was a sign of the narrator’s deviance. Transferring the intimacy relegated to a suburban home to the space of a car was another way Kerouac challenged domestication. When the narrator and the blonde begin “talking like two kids and completely unself-conscious,” the car becomes alternative to the intimate space of a home (Kerouac 150). Kerouac’s narrator uses the car to escape to the city, but Kerouac makes it clear that his narrator could never afford to purchase such an expensive commodity.

The narrator’s journey, and Kerouac’s meticulous mapping of it, corresponds with Fredric Jameson’s assertions regarding the 1950s shift from the modernist parameters of time and history to the postmodernist parameters of surface and space (214). Daily life, psychic experience, and languages are “today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time” (qtd. in Kozlovsky 214). Critical of the changing spatialization of cultural production, Jameson argues that suppressing the historical, in favor of the spatial, is symptomatic of late capitalism. Kozlovsky argues that Beat literature’s spatialization of literature serves a critical, political agenda, even if the Beats have traditionally been viewed as apolitical. He uses the shifting definition of political, and the Beats’ insistence on testing state imposed boundaries, to make this argument. Cold War struggles occurred in the realm of individual rights, with a modern state working to homogenize and normalize its heterogeneous populations into one rational economical system. Because Beat literature worked to expose spatial boundaries, it shows how Cold War redefinitions of space manifested themselves in popular culture.

Kerouac's texts often contain confusing, or diluted, messages regarding space, consumption and sexuality.

Model of Masculinity: Sexuality

Most of Kerouac's works center on his male characters, exposing "his own troubled masculinity, homosexual impulses and all" (Douglas 27). Readers are often "invited to understand a fear, a belittling of women" that Kerouac does not entirely condone or examine (Douglas 26). The "Good Blonde" does not contain a cast of male characters; rather, the male narrator mainly interacts with a female. This slight variance to Kerouac's traditional narrative parallels how the "Good Blonde" presents *Playboy* readers with an alternative model of masculinity.

The Beats' model of masculinity pivots on homosocial bonds. Kerouac's narrators and characters are traditionally men joining together to seek some sort of stability in the tumult of the post-war society. Male friends become "substitutes for both brother and father" (Jones 244). Michael Davidson refers to these bonds as "compulsory homosociality," joining feminist and queer theory to analyze Cold War literary "boy gangs." Davidson's fused label exposes heterosexuality as the standard for evaluating gender difference. It also highlights the political implications of marginalizing others based on sexuality: in Cold War America "certain types of homosocial bonding (board room politics, corporate networking, locker room badinage) are essential to the perpetuation of capitalist hegemony" (Davidson 28). The splicing of Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience" with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men* connects homo- and heterosexual group dynamics and illustrates the lively 1950s debate regarding sexuality. The "inquisitorial" Cold War climate linked political

and sexual deviance, often reinforcing a sense of alliance between homosocial groups (31). Compulsory homosociality could be extended to other male groups besides the Beats that rejected “vestiges of female authority:” urban bachelors, motorcycle renegades, Hollywood cowboys, rock stars, jazz musicians, Black Mountain poets, or even Robert Dean’s imperial brotherhood (31). Traditionally misogynistic, these new “masculine identities within the popular imagination” offered alternatives to the reigning domesticated model of masculinity (31). The homosocial bonds in Beat literature reinforced same-sex bonding that helped to define Cold War masculinity.

Compulsory homosociality can best be recognized in Kerouac’s male narrators. In his 1961 “Jack Kerouac and the Beats,” W. M. Frohock observes a homosocial pattern in each of Kerouac’s novels; there is a “first person narrator who controls the point of view and is at the center of the important events; and then there is a second character toward whom the narrator takes a peculiarly respectful attitude” (146). This male relationship pattern originated in novels as old as *Don Quixote* and “lies at the heart of American male mythology” (Jones 241). Applying Frohock’s narrative observations to Kerouac’s characterization of the American male, Jones argues that the repetition of this fraternal love made Kerouac a cultural icon. “Obvious to any man who looks honestly at his own life or the lives of the men around,” this fraternal relationship “is replicated on every level, from the personal to the familial” (242). Thus, male readers can find Kerouac’s characters accessible and “at an acceptable distance—the rarefied passion of universal male homosexual love” (242). While Jones is able to analyze how this homosocial bond functions in Kerouac’s major works and his shorter pieces, like “The Rumbling, Rambling Blues,” he fails to note the effects of this pattern’s absence.

In the “Good Blonde,” the old Greek could be conceived as a father figure with whom the narrator shares his thoughts; yet, rather than a lead male character, “Good Blonde” presents readers with a predominant female character whom the narrator respects. The good blonde is patient, reflective, and seems so much more in the know. When the narrator gets anxious looking for his supply of Benzedrine, he begins to panic. She calmly responds with short declarative sentences that do not end with exclamation points: “Take your time” (Kerouac 147). When discussing the difference between her rural upbringing and her “new life now modeling and acting in cities,” she wonders if her past was more satisfying (146). She is very well versed in city life; she had been to New York, laughs at the narrator’s naiveté about bar décor, and shares tips about jazz hotspots. She has taken all the same drugs as the narrator and knows similar musical trends. She even has a theme song, a little bop arrangement that a jazz band plays whenever she walks into the local bar. Her ability to drive also earns her respect. She had driven the car from Texas to California by herself, and, by the time she picked up the narrator, she “had the heap jet gone up the road and went up to sixty and kept it there hard and clean on the line, driving like a good man driver” (147). When the car begins to run out of gas, miles outside of Salinas, she swerves the “car from side to side in a graceful dance” (147). The narrator immediately questions her actions, and she informs him that by splashing what gas is left into the carburetor, the car can travel for a few more miles. At these moments in the story, the narrator “loves” the good blonde: “Ah well and what a strong sweet angel to spend the rest of your life with” (152). The good blonde’s strength and stereotypical masculine qualities make her a suitable road companion. She even has the same frantic energy as Dean Moriarty: “talking a blue streak,” driving all night, and

pushing the car to beyond its limits (148). These qualities justify Kerouac's choice of a female for a lead character, but they are also constantly undermined by a strange heterosexual tension.

The narrator's sexual tension undermines traditional gender roles and makes the blonde the dominating figure in the story. The tension begins as soon as the good blonde pulls over to pick up the narrator. The narrator "keeps wondering" why the good blonde picked him up; in parenthetical asides, the narrator questions her motives and his luck (145). When she tells him she is going all the way to San Francisco, the narrator's response shows the tension: "'Wow, great.' (To myself: who will ever believe I got a ride like this from a beautiful chick like that practically naked in a bathingsuit, wow, what does she expect me to do next?)" (147). The parenthetical aside is just one of Kerouac's literary techniques that expose his character's sexual tension. "Unable to present homosexuality clearly, unable to settle into heterosexuality cleanly," Catharine Stimpson argues that Kerouac devised "several narrative and rhetorical belts with which to buckle his discomforts" (173). When the narrator finally asks the blonde why she picked up a "guy like [him]," she repeats, "Well I told you I needed someone to help me drive to the City and I figured you could drive, you looked like it anyway..." (147). Kerouac's use of ellipses undercuts the blonde's logical answer, as if she had really had other intentions when she saw him hitchhiking.

Kerouac's first person narrative stance often objectifies the good blonde as a sexual being, which only increases the tension between the characters. The narrator wants her to want him. For instance, he is amazed at the "way she looked straight ahead and drove with no expression and sending no mincing gestures [his] way or even

telepathies of mincingness” (146). Although, his amazement is rooted in a highly ambiguous heterosexuality; he admits that in his “scheming mind” he wants her to “secretly” be a sex fiend, pull over and force him to “make it” but his bashfulness, and her grave nature, prevents him from acting on his “really insulting proposition” (148). Immediately after sharing this thought with the reader, the narrator calls the blonde a “young lady” and admits he was “afraid to turn and look at her” (148). A “young lady” differs greatly from the other things the narrator calls her: Good Blonde, Pretty, Cleopatra, Angel, doll, or cold and boring. Simply because she is a female, the narrator cannot resolve his respect with his yearning.

Kerouac’s portrayal of gender roles in “Good Blonde” conflicts with the Beats and *Playboy’s* always, dominate male role. Analogous to the Playmate, the “beat chick” existed for play only. Both female characterizations are “neither good, nor wicked, only inviting” (Lee 190). The airbrushed centerfold and the Beat chick present safe partners for heterosexual men living in Cold War America; *Playboy* editors and Beats depict females as “attractive, young, sexually available, and above all silent” (Lee 189). In *The Beat Generation Writers*, A. Robert Lee wants critics to read that characterization of females as “silent” as “dumb”; he claims the silent female will not ask for marriage, apply guilt, demand financial transaction, or “tell their side of the story” (Lee 189). Walter’s wife in *On the Road* epitomizes a model female: unnamed, she is the “sweetest woman in the world...she never asked Walter where he’d been, what time it was, nothing...She never said a word” (Kerouac *On the Road* 192). Far from silent, the good blonde never stops talking. She even questions the narrator about the futility of his

travels. By questioning his lifestyle, the blonde undercuts the narrator's authority and forces the narrator to second guess his sexual desires.

The narrator's ambiguous sexuality is displayed by his adolescent reactions to the woman. When the narrator first comments on her looks, she "turn[s] and look[s] at [him] with bland frank green eyes" and asks, "What do you mean?" (Kerouac "Good Blonde" 149). The narrator wants to tell her that she should "get thee to a nunnery" because she is too pretty, too gone, and not yet married (149). But once again, the narrator is too ashamed to share his thoughts. The blonde breaks the silence by asking if he has change so she can call her "man" (149). To contain the blonde's strength, Kerouac characterizes her as someone's girlfriend and on the verge of getting married. He also has his narrator oscillate between representing her as a mother figure and a whore. There is a moment on the 400 mile drive in which the narrator "felt the urge" to "just lay [his] head in her lap" while she drives (150). The level of comfort the narrator feels quickly reverts to questioning why she picked him up and "what she really secretly thought of [him]" (150). And when the blonde rejects the narrator's choice of living down by the river, he reacts by claiming he "definitely didn't like her...because in her secret bedroom she probably yawned a lot and didn't know what to do with herself and to compensate for that had a lot of boyfriends who bought her expensive presents (just because she was beautiful, which compensated not for her inside unbeautiful feeling), and going to restaurants and bars and jazz clubs and yooking it up because there was nothing else inside" (151). This childish rant, which is only shared with the reader, slips into empty, abusive threats. Then, when the blonde surprises the narrator with in-depth conversation regarding the city, he reverts

back to wanting to have intercourse with her. His schizophrenic feelings for the blonde, expressed four different times in a relatively short story, reflect his indistinct sexuality.

“Good Blonde” presents a heterosexual model of masculinity, but because of the good blonde’s stereotypical masculine qualities, and the narrator’s reaction to those qualities, it is an ambiguous heterosexual model. Most of *Playboy’s* and Kerouac’s female characters are “all too often marginalized, mere sexual objects preferably dumb and willing” (Mayer). The good blonde has all the physical attributes of a *Playboy* bunny, but she is far from dumb and hardly a willing next-door girl. Retelling his fantastical ride with a “blonde bombshell” seems to perfectly fit the *Playboy* narrative regarding the mystery and excitement of the girl next door. But she is so very different. Are *Playboy* readers too blinded by the blonde’s attire, or lack of one, to notice her command of the wheel, conversation, and situation? Catharine Stimpson suggests that Kerouac’s “burnished traditional portraits of femininity...offer an alternative to the homosexuality that male friendship both contained and constrained” (375). The blonde’s complexity overwhelms the narrator, and he has to return to the Zen Buddhist theme that began the work: “Ah hell it’s all a dream including beauty” (Kerouac “Good Blonde” 150). From the narrator’s perspective, she doesn’t want to sleep with him because “life is nothing but a short vague dream encompassed round by flesh and tears, and the ways of men are the ways of death...the ways of beautiful women such as those pictured in this magazine are eventually the ways of old age” (152). Kerouac’s varying depiction of the blonde as a desired, but unattainable, sex object, maternal presence with whorish qualities, or equal intellectual presents *Playboy* readers with an inversion of the *Playboy* centerfold. The good blonde represents all the fears regarding the feminization of

America, but by writing her, Kerouac contains her and by publishing Kerouac, *Playboy* owns her.

Conclusion

During the Cold War, *Playboy* featured authors, like Jack Kerouac, who responded to redefinitions of space and sexuality. In “Good Blonde,” Kerouac’s narrator is hardly the virile playboy—he ends up alone in the Cameo Hotel. His 75 cent hotel room also rejects *Playboy*’s focus on conscious, conspicuous consumption. The narrator regrets the “too new, too fancy” electric train and wants to live by a river without earthly possessions (Kerouac “Good Blonde” 154). But his search for something to believe in during the post-war crisis is also experienced by playboys—only the Beats began their search with ridding themselves of possessions, and the playboys bought new gadgets. The fundamental difference between *Playboy*’s and the Beats’ vision of happiness—consumption—forced editors to use Kerouac as a foil. The magazine and the author possessed the same rebellious, sexual qualities, except for the desire to participate in Cold War capitalism. Thus, Kerouac presents a model of masculinity that can simultaneously serve and undermine the grand narratives presented in *Playboy*’s editorial content.

CHAPTER 3—SOPHISTICATED SPENDING BY VLADIMIR NABOKOV

Vladimir Nabokov is a representative *Playboy* author due to his popularity and multiple contributions. Nabokov's open admiration for American-style capitalism, his celebration of middle-class individualism, and his exploitation of Cold War sexual politics made him an obvious spokesperson for *Playboy*. Nabokov's *Lolita* best represents his admiration for America because it is a record of Cold War America; Leslie Fiedler claimed that "[n]owhere in our recent literature is there so dedicated and acute picture of our landscape, topographical and moral, as in *Lolita*...*Lolita* herself is America" (335). Nabokov's formidable literary output, lecture appearances, and thirty-plus interviews helped to create the persona of an elitist, strongly opinionated aristocrat. While Jack Kerouac was pressured to produce works equally sensational as *On the Road*, Nabokov did not have to compose new works or try to maintain the admiration of the literary critical community after the United States publication of *Lolita* (Johnson "Nabokov" 141). Nabokov used his thirty-year reservoir of Russian and French literature to keep his name in the public eye, even while settling down abroad in Switzerland, where he wrote *Lolita*. Nabokov dominated the 1960s literary scene, which is why *Playboy* editors persistently pursued him. As a magazine that "moved in the wake of the culture and followed it greedily," *Playboy* needed to have Nabokov in its pages—especially because he was considered a serious, high-brow writer (Fogarty 7). To maintain its cultural currency and enhance its level of sophistication, *Playboy* editors diligently worked to get Nabokov to contribute to the magazine.

Even though Nabokov's sophisticated persona matched *Playboy's* aspirations for serious content, his literary contributions provide *Playboy* readers with a slightly different model of masculinity than the magazine's traditional editorial content. His literature supports *Playboy's* model of affluence, as well as its call for men to take charge of the domestic sphere. His émigré status gives his literature an exotic, foreign aspect that differs from the editorial content geared toward white, mid-western, Christian males. While Nabokov's ethnicity could potentially ostracize him from American popular culture, his support for Cold War containment policy and the Vietnam War converted his émigré status into an allowable exoticism. As Chelsea Bauch claims in her *Huffington Post* report on *Playboy's* scandalous fiction, the "men's magazine is far more varied when it comes to its featured fiction" than its consistent set of criteria for Playmates. Whereas most of *Playboy's* editorial content maintains a strict heterosexual content, Nabokov's literature presents a spectrum of sexuality.

Getting Nabokov's Attention

In its January 2009 issue, *Playboy* ranked Vladimir Nabokov twenty-second in its list of "The 55 Most Important People in Sex." Alfred Kinsey topped the list, but Nabokov's high ranking indicates editors assume that, like Hefner, Madonna, Howard Stern, and Marilyn Monroe, Nabokov affected the way sex was viewed in American culture. Editors sandwiched Nabokov between Catharine MacKinnon, a University of Michigan law professor best known for crafting concepts of sexual harassment, and Anita Bryant. While *Playboy* editors credit MacKinnon for changes to work place demeanor and attribute the galvanization of gay rights to Bryant's wild accusations, editors make no special reference to Nabokov and simply quote his 1964 *Playboy* interview: "I shall never

regret *Lolita*...she was like the composition of a beautiful puzzle. There is a queer, tender charm about that mythical nymphet.” This description suggests that Nabokov is on the list solely for the creation of *Lolita*. Merely quoting Nabokov’s interview, as opposed to listing any credentials, proves that Nabokov and his *Lolita* maintain their mythical charms. *Playboy* has canonized little Lo. Lee. Ta. in its annals, as literary and cultural critics have canonized her into the annals of the American imagination. The relationship between *Playboy* and Nabokov grew into a relationship marked by mutual affection, and the understanding that this was a profitable relationship for both parties.

Playboy’s September 1958 “After Hours” Book Review of *Lolita* marks *Playboy*’s first mention of Nabokov and his greatest contribution to sex. This review mimics the divided critical reception after *Lolita*’s American release—as many literary critics wondered, “is *Lolita* a work of art or just a work of pornography?” *The Providence Journal*’s reviewer thought “most readers will probably become bored...or sickened,” and Orville Prescott, in *The New York Times*, deemed *Lolita* “repulsive,” “disgusting,” and “highbrow pornography.” However, the *Playboy* “After Hours” review does not hint at the book’s taboo subject; in fact, editors only hint that Putnam has kept “intact” the “gamy Paris version” of the novel (21, Sept. 1958). Editors most likely did not need to call attention to *Lolita*’s pornographic status, which was rejected by educated readers in general, and, surely, *Playboy* readers would not find the pornographic aspect repulsive. Instead, *Playboy* editors focus on Nabokov’s literary talents. They write that the novel is “Brow-creasing” because it is simultaneously a “masterpiece” and “an obscene, pornographic subversive work” (20, Sept. 1958). They mention how the first-person narrative describes *Lolita* in “extensive, pathetic, comic and horrendous detail” (21, Sept.

1958). Editors include Nabokov's mastery of three languages, his positions at Ivy League universities, and his international reputation, aligning Nabokov with sophistication—one of *Playboy's* favorite qualities.

Editors compare Nabokov's literary talents to "the richest of Rabelais, Dostoyevsky and Spillane" (21, Sept. 1958). Comparing Nabokov to Rabelais references the authors' linguistic advances, while Humbert could easily be one of Dostoyevsky's human psychological case studies, with mental anguishes similar to Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov. But the comparison to Mickey Spillane seems less fitting, as Spillane's Mike Hammer detective series contains graphic violence and pulp eroticism that, at first glance, seems far from Nabokov's novel about an old-world European committing pedophilic acts on a conventional, American teenager. Spillane "linked sexual desire with crime and violence" and revealed fears that sexual crimes in urban America were a symptom of a disease—aberrant sexuality (Sanders 276). Out of the 1950s ten best sellers, six belong to Spillane; on *Time's* 1968 list of the 25 all-time bestsellers, Spillane's name appears five different times (Whitfield 34; "Books: Alltime"). Popular sensibility put the Spillane novels on the bestseller's list, proving that Americans delighted in Hammer's "gruesome murders in the name of combating the red menace" (Courdileone xiii). Stephen J. Whitfield argues, in *The Culture of the Cold War*, that Spillane "recruited more Americans than any other author" in McCarthy's battles against Communists and homosexuals (37). While *Lolita* may have shared a bestseller's list with one of Hammer's adventures, it did not convert anyone to McCarthy's cause; yet, the Spillane reference suggests that *Playboy* editors suppose both Spillane and Nabokov exposed shifting cultural values and expanded notions of the taboo, including violence, sexuality,

and incest.

The “After Hours” review reveals Cold War attitudes concerning national feminization and juvenile delinquents. Ignoring the characters’ sexual acts, editors repeat critical claims that Humbert, not Lolita, is the victim of sexual deviance: “Lolita deserves to be seen in all her sugar-plum sweetness, outrageous sportiveness and astonishing schoolgirl lechery” (21, Sept. 1958). Assigning adjectives like “sportive” and “lecherous” reinforces Cold War commentary on aggressive females, juvenile delinquency, and teenage consumption. Theodor W. Adorno frequently stereotyped the American female teenager as “obnoxious,” overindulgent, demanding and a child who “behaves toward her father in an incredibly inhuman and cruel manner” (486, Sanders 279). Lionel Trilling applies this description to Lolita, and Thomas Molnar labels her a “spoiled sub-teenager with a foul mouth, a self-offered target for lechers” because she had “a nasty little affair with a nasty little thirteen-year-old” (102). When *Playboy* editors prepare readers for this particular perspective on Lolita, they play into the Cold War wariness of the “combination of femaleness and aggressiveness” and ignore the novel’s description of rape, pedophilia, and incest (Sanders 279). Throughout the review, editors blame Lolita for her own victimization. Editors argue that Lolita’s actions, her expression of “the myth of contemporary American passion of youth” and her history (“the most touching and amusing of the century”) make this a novel to “buy, borrow, or heist” (21, Sept. 1958). Simultaneously idealizing and degrading Lolita confirms that *Playboy* agrees with critics who ignore the novel’s sexual crimes in favor of its high literary value.

Nabokov’s literary talent and his cultural capital ensured that *Playboy* editors

would find a way to get him into the magazine's pages. Including Nabokov in its pages would position the magazine within the literary traditions set forth by *Esquire*; it would evince the search for inventive work that challenged readers. Yet, *Playboy* editors seem to waver between awe at Nabokov's fame and consternation regarding the seriousness of his literature. For example, editors immediately use the word nymphet in its pages; they describe Sharon Wallace, a ten-year-old who wrote to *Playboy* inquiring about Playmate clubs, as a nymphet. In her "Dear Playboy" letter, Wallace "thinks" it might be "fun" to start a Playmate club; she asks about a possible fee for membership cards and "a book telling...how to start your club" (8, Jan. 1960). Editors, also calling Sharon a "sweetie," suggest she wait "eight or nine years" before joining a Playmate club. A few months later, in the July 1960 issue, Shel Silverstien pairs a black and white television snapshot of a young blond and a much older man with the caption: "And this fellow is willing to pay us plenty of money for our story. What do you say, Lolita?" (73, July 1960).

Nabokov admittedly enjoyed the jokes, and *Playboy* continued to reinforce his image as a high-brow, elitist artist. For instance, in the December 1960 "After Hours," editors put him in the "elite corps of writers who have contributed words to the language," but then went on to mock him by suggesting he has overstepped his boundaries as an author (19). The "After Hours" update described Nabokov's court hearing to obtain proprietorship over the word "nymphet" (19, Dec. 1960). Nabokov was pressing charges against a French film outfit planning to shoot *Les Nymphettes* because he did not want the word nymphet to enter the public domain. Referencing the court hearing allows editors to posit the "itchy question" of whether or not authors are the proprietors of coined words (19, Dec. 1960). Satirically, editors remind Nabokov that the "French film is not calling its

flick—*Lolita*” and proceed to call Nabokov “possessive” (19, Dec. 1960). Once again, he is compared to other writers, “Cervantes, Capek, Lewis, Porter, Potter, and Kerouac,” who have also coined their own words that have “enriched the world’s languages” (19, Dec. 1960). The ambivalent tone of the “After Hours” update might be an early indication that Nabokov’s literary talents would overwhelm some readers; or, the tone could be a reaction to Nabokov’s initial reluctance to publish his fiction with *Playboy*.

Nabokov refused to have any contact with the magazine until 1961. His first contact was a heated response to *Playboy*’s publication of Maurice Girodias’ memoir “Pornologist on Olympus” in the April 1961 issue. In his memoir, Girodias reveals his version of the “epic” history of *Lolita*’s publication, which resulted in the “some of the best and some of the worst” publishing experiences for the new owner of Olympian Press (68, April 1961). Girodias also includes disparaging comments about Nabokov. Like other publishers in the international literary community, Girodias had not heard of Nabokov and claims that “the enthusiastic recommendation of his literary agent seemed to point rather to scholarly pomp than to originality” (68, April 1961). Girodias praises the novel, but condemns the author for being snobbish. Their first few exchanges were pleasant and Girodias obtained world English-language rights for the novel. Nabokov wrote Girodias in July 1955 requesting the suppression of possible scandals surrounding his “serious book with a serious purpose” (145, April 1961). Because United States Customs did not withhold an English version of the text in 1957, Girodias went forward with his plan to “make *Lolita* famous” by using the novel in international obscenity trials against country-wide bans (145, April 1961). Ignoring Nabokov’s initial request, Girodias’ “boosting and hustling” made international sales very successful (146, April

1961). Shortly after American publishers contacted Nabokov for publication opportunities, pleasantries between Girodias and the author ceased. Nabokov sent a registered letter stating “I declare our contract null and void,” a completely illegal and almost childish move (146, April 1961). Girodias goes on to declare that Nabokov has developed a “Hugolian stature” and a “formidably centrifugal personality” (146, April 1961). He repeats *Playboy’s* “After Hours” update regarding the French film court trial and then describes Nabokov’s “flamboyant impertinence” (146, April 1961). Girodias’ portrait reinforces Nabokov’s growing elitist persona.

Playboy wanted to promote Nabokov precisely because he was a pretentious, high-brow author. Girodias’s description of his first confrontation with Nabokov, and Nabokov’s reaction to the publication of this description, depict an incredibly aloof artist. According to Girodias, the encounter occurred at a French literary occasion held in the “dignified salons of Gallimard” (146, April 1961). After exchanging a few complimentary words and forcing grins for the camera, “Nabokov’s grin underwent a subtle change” and “with the easy grace of a dolphin he plunged backwards and sideways, and made his way toward Mrs. Nabokov” (147, April 1961). Girodias seemed to have expected something more explosive after their “violent epistolary exchanges” (147, April 1961). Nabokov denied being aware of meeting the Olympian Press owner to his literary agent and complained to *Playboy* editors for printing the memoir. *Playboy* published Nabokov’s denial in its July 1961 “Dear Playboy.” In a letter postmarked from Nice, Nabokov claims the “amusing memoir” contains “a number of inaccuracies,” especially the “bizarre charge” that he was aware of Girodias’ presence at the Gallimard cocktail party (10). Nabokov reverts to calling himself “extremely *distrain* (as Humbert

Humbert would have put it in his affected manner) and...liable not to make out mumbled presentations” (10). Nabokov suggests that he would have only recognized Girodias if he was “carrying a plate with an author’s head” (10). Nabokov implies he is the victim in this relationship, as Girodias was the one obsessed with the financial aspect of *Lolita*.

Nabokov felt further victimized by the fact that *Playboy* editors did not publish his correspondence sooner. Brian Boyd declares that “Nabokov was chary of *Playboy*” for the publication of the memoir and “outraged” when *Playboy* delayed printing his rejoinder to Girodias (464). He was so “chary” that he turned down Spector’s offer to write a piece on Brigitte Bardot due to the popularity surrounding Simone de Beauvoir’s 1960 *Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome*. Always aware of international, and particularly French, intellectual critiques, Spector wanted to capitalize on de Beauvoir’s critique of the new ideal for women—a nymphet; he assumed Nabokov, with his recent celebrity and intimate knowledge of nymphets, would compose an excellent editorial for the magazine. Nabokov refused. He even made his wife, Vera, respond to Spector, as if he could not be bothered with the offer. Vera wrote that, while her husband was “flattered by [Spector’s] confidence in his versatility,” he has “never seen Brigitte Bardot either on screen or in life, and that the entire project has no interest for him” (Nabokov *Selected* 335). Vera concluded the letter by sending her husband’s “kindest regards,” but editors knew that they would have to find another way to get Nabokov into the magazine. Spector kept a close eye on literary movements, and Hefner insisted on the magazine’s cultural currency—therefore, they wanted to be a part of Nabokov’s growing popularity. Even though editors might have been wary of the complexities of Nabokov’s literature, *Playboy* needed to publish him if *The New Yorker*

and *Newsweek* had already done so.

Mutual Kicks

Playboy's 2010 publication of Nabokov's *The Original of Laura* produced a media frenzy. As described in various outlets, such as *The New York Observer*, the five-thousand word excerpt is only fragments of a novel, dispersed over 138 note cards, which Nabokov wanted destroyed upon his death in 1977. Rather than destroying the fragments, Vera let the novel sit in a Swiss bank vault for three decades. Last spring, Nabokov's son, Dmitri, wrested it out of the vault and entrusted its sale to Andrew Wylie, a notoriously tough literary agent. To obtain serialization rights for *Playboy*, literary editor Amy Loyd Grace bombarded Wylie with bouquets of orchids. The orchids were meant to reference Nabokov's *Ada*, which *Playboy* serialized in 1969, and remind Wylie "that Nabokov really liked publishing with *Playboy*, and how devoted Hef is to Nabokov and his legacy" (Grace). "I would get nice notes back from him, but he really wouldn't give me anything," said Grace; "He said he wasn't sure that *Playboy* was the place to launch the novel in the United States." Grace persisted because she believes that "Nabokov loved being published in *Playboy* and got a kick out of it. Also, he really read it. In his collected and selective letters, even when he wasn't writing directly to Hef or A.C. Spector and Robbie Macauley...he is writing to other people and saying, hey did you see the great cartoon in *Playboy* about *Lolita*?" (Ciotta). According to Grace, Nabokov knew that *Playboy* published good fiction, presenting readers with an interesting blend of high and low features.

After working at publishing houses, such as *The New Yorker*, Grace liked the challenge of reuniting *Playboy* with its initial objective to combine the physical with the

intellectual. She recalls her undergraduate years at Bowdoin College, when she realized that *Playboy* combined elements that first attracted “a man’s eye” then “enrich[ed] his intellectual and spiritual life” (Ciotta). To officially secure her job as *Playboy*’s literary editor, Grace curated a special feature marking the fiftieth anniversary of *Lolita* (Neyfakh). Pursuing *The Original of Laura* five years later offered Grace the chance to remind people of *Playboy*’s “literary history because it is easy for people to dismiss [it]” (Ciotta). Grace’s advances paid off when *The New Yorker* refused interest in the fragmented novel, and *Playboy* received first serial rights. The serialization deal consisted of the highest sum *Playboy* has ever paid and did not include a preview of the literature. Even so, it was “reckoned to be a coup” for *Playboy*, as it reestablishes its “long-held reputation as a publisher of literary works as well as girlie pictures” (Bremer). Grace’s successful pursuit of Nabokov’s last work helped to reestablish *Playboy* as a publisher of quality fiction.

Much of Grace’s argument for pursuing *The Original of Laura* is true—Nabokov and *Playboy* do share a long history, and Nabokov did read the magazine. Also, Hefner forfeiting such a large amount for 5,000 words sans preview does suggest that he is “devoted” to Nabokov and his legacy, or at least Hefner is devoted to re-attracting a literary audience. However, Grace’s offhand comment that “Nabokov loved being published” in the magazine might be a stretch. Rather, Nabokov’s collected and selected letters reveal that “love” should be downgraded to “getting a kick.” As noted above, Nabokov refused to appear in the magazine, and it was not until after being pleased with the printed version of the 1964 interview that Nabokov’s relationship with *Playboy* grew. In total, he published two complete novellas, a long excerpt from *Ada*, and four short

stories between 1966 and 1976. After Nabokov's death, *Playboy* published another excerpt from *Ada*, two more short stories, and, of course, *The Original of Laura*.

To build their relationship, editors continued to focus on Nabokov's literary talents and then tried another avenue to get him to contribute to *Playboy*. The July 1962 *Pale Fire* "After Hours" review predicts that the book, an "elaborate literary leg pull," will not have as many readers as *Lolita* (27, July 1962). Editors insist that "Nabokov writes brilliantly" but claim that "his doses of melodrama, satire, fantasy and a highly sophisticated irony produce a concoction that will daunt most readers" (27, July 1962). In the "After Hours" review of *The Gift*, editors state that the novel is "like *Pale Fire*, a system of mirrors, conundrums, books within books" (14, July 1963). Exploiting Nabokov's émigré status, editors claim his "cruel wit" is "the wit of an exile—eyes fixed on things with distaste and apprehension, agonized intelligence trying to get on top of life" (12, July 1963). But they are much kinder in *The Gift* review than in their assessment of *Pale Fire*. They actually take the time to explain the protagonist, plot and premise of the novel and praise it as "an elegant farewell" to his Russian writings (12, July 1963). Editors bestow even more praise in their October 1964 review of *The Defense*; they go so far as to claim that Nabokov could "if he chose" compose "an enthralling story out of the life and times of an artichoke still on the stem" (38, Oct. 1964). In March of 1963, *Playboy* sent Alvin Toffler to Montreux for an interview to discuss his literary talents. A young editor from *Fortune*, Toffler had been in Europe that summer looking for suitable interview subjects, while teaching at the Salzburg Seminar of American Studies (Weyr 152). When they met, Toffler claimed Nabokov was "agreeable, but set peculiar ground rules" (Weyr 153). He refused to be interviewed face-

to-face. Instead, Toffler submitted written questions to Nabokov's hotel room and waited for his response before sending more questions. The process stretched over ten days and took much more time to refine it for "the illusion of spontaneity" (Boyd 473). It is the only nonverbal interview *Playboy* ever published. The unconventional experience reaffirmed Nabokov's haughtiness, but the final product must have pleased Nabokov. The January 1964 interview confirmed Murray Fisher's theory that "the interview could be used as a lasso to snare authors unwilling to write directly for the magazine" and marked the beginning of Nabokov's long publishing legacy with the magazine (qtd. In Weyr 153).

The "Playbill" introduction to Nabokov's interview lists all the reasons why editors desperately sought his presence for the magazine. Editors claim that this "first appearance" reveals Nabokov as he is—"the celebrated commentator on manners and morals," "highly controversial", "inventor of the nymphet", "world's most meticulous and original stylist" and "widely read" (2, Jan. 1964). In the introduction to the interview, editors recap *Lolita's* fame and use a Jack Kerouac quote to balance the critical fuming and intellectual theories regarding the novel. Disregarding the obscenity and the "old world seducing the new world" theories, Kerouac muses that *Lolita* is nothing more than "a classic old love story" (35, Jan. 1964). In the interview, Toffler quickly moves past *Lolita* and gets Nabokov to discuss why he lives in Switzerland, whether his art should serve a social purpose, how he composes or translates a work and what he considers his "principal failing" (40, Jan. 1964). Nabokov declares his "principal failing" to be a lack of spontaneity: "inability to express myself properly in any language unless I compose every damned sentence in my bath, in my mind, at my desk" (40, Jan. 1964).

The following exchange is quite misleading for those readers unaware of the nontraditional interview format. Toffler praises Nabokov for “doing rather well at the moment,” and Nabokov retorts with “It’s an illusion” (40, Jan. 1964). And for unassuming readers, it was an illusion. Nabokov painstakingly crafted responses to Toffler’s questions, and the two spent more time creating the illusion of spontaneous speech than composing questions and answers. The illusion is necessary for both the author and the magazine: Nabokov remains sophisticated in so-called spontaneous dialogue, and the magazine finally gets Nabokov in its pages.

Playboy wanted to participate in the commerce generated by Nabokov and the controversies surrounding his works. But they also wanted to give readers a glimpse of his style. Readers seemed to enjoy the brilliant dialogue between Toffler and Nabokov; Herbert Gold, one of the most prolific contributors to the magazine, congratulates Alvin Toffler for “finally cornering Nabokov” and praises Nabokov for always stating “exactly what he wants to say” (8, April 1964). Another published “Dear Playboy” letter expresses the author’s “exhilaration” that “the author of *Lolita*” wanted to “skip sex” (8, April 1964). The often-quoted interview revealed to *Playboy* readers that sex is only one of Nabokov’s concerns: Nabokov politely demurs Toffler’s request to talk sex because he finds it “too tedious for words” (36, Jan. 1964). The interview process let the author and editors use each other for mutual gain; *Playboy* would pay well, and Nabokov would heighten the sensual aspects of his works so that *Playboy* readers could more easily find what they were searching for. No longer “cool toward *Playboy*,” the interview assured Nabokov that editors would provide him with authorial rights and handsome commission for both *The Eye* and *Despair* (Boyd 484).

The changes Nabokov makes to the English versions of both *The Eye* and *Despair* deserve more attention because they highlight how Nabokov responded to a mid-century American audience. First written for “a small audience of Russian émigrés who lived in something of a hothouse atmosphere,” Nabokov’s English inclusions of “some rainbow patches” seem to be prepared with the *Playboy* audience in mind (Johnson “Nabokov” 395; qtd. in Boyd 484). Boyd quotes a typical example of these revisions; in the Russian original, *The Eye* closes with “And what do I care if she marries another? She and I have had heart-rendering meetings by night, and her husband shall never find out about these dreams I’ve had of her.” The *Playboy* English version becomes: “And what do I care if she marries another? Every other night I dream of her dresses and things on an endless clothesline of bliss, in a ceaseless wind of possession, and her husband shall never learn what I do to the silks and fleece of the dancing witch” (qtd. in Boyd 484-485). The attention to Vanya’s garments and implications of masturbation support *Playboy*’s model of masculinity—any playboy can possess any playmate in his dreams. In the revised description, Smurov reduces Vanya to mere possessions. The clothesline display of Vanya’s expensive undergarments implies expensive tastes more suitable for an affluent playboy than a Russian émigré.

Nabokov also adds details to heighten Smurov’s sensual impressions and adds word-play to stress his disturbed mentality. Jane Grayson’s *Nabokov Translated* contains comparisons of the Russian and English version that prove Nabokov added sexual references and heightened Smurov’s sexual frustrations in the English version. For example, he alluded to Smurov’s affair with a dentist’s young daughter and changes physical details of Smurov’s mistresses. Matilda’s “straddles with her strong fat thighs”

her “hobbyhorse” and the maid is now a “creamy-haunched wench” who places “her breast on the sideboard” along with a bowl of fruit. Vanya’s lips now “need so badly ‘the balm of a butterfly kiss’” (qtd. in Grayson 86). Other additions, like Roman Bogdanvich’s theory that Smurov is a frustrated homosexual, stress the text’s tone of frustrated sexuality. For example, Nabokov adds “I believe I might have consummated a shiver of oneirotic rapture had I been able to hold her a few seconds longer” (qtd. in Grayson 87). Smaller edits, such as changing the smell of English cigarettes from honey to candied prunes, suggest that Nabokov wants to elaborate on Smurov’s characterization. Candied prunes require another stage of processing than the more natural honey. With these small edits, Nabokov adds to Smurov’s capitalistic tendencies. Grayson argues that these changes “intensify the ironies of the plot and enable the reader to dissociate himself more from Smurov’s point of view” (88). Grayson’s assessment regarding Nabokov’s desire to “widen the critical distance between the reader and the characters” does not account for the make-up of Nabokov’s readers (88). Nabokov made these revisions with the *Playboy* audience in mind; he is obviously aware of *Playboy*’s primary audience and took this opportunity to parody both his iconic status as the author of a dirty book, as well as critique America’s Cold War fears regarding variant sexualities.

Nabokov kept his *Playboy* audience in mind while making edits to *Despair*. Poised between desire and reality, Nabokov’s *The Eye* and *Despair* contain themes regarding the abstract notion of the Other which support the *Playboy* narrative that the “girl next door” could be anyone—even a lover. *The Eye* and *Despair* both contain first-person narratives, and treat a mentally unstable protagonist; the English versions were prepared at approximately the same time—*The Eye* on 19 April 1965 and *Despair* on 1

March 1965. In her analysis of *Despair*, Grayson is careful to compare both of Nabokov's English translations, the first dating to the 1937 London publication. Grayson claims the second translation is "a more sophisticated and extensive elaboration of the two pre-existing versions" (65). Nabokov "tidies up" the logical progression of the narrative and includes "other forms of authorial patterning" to better expose Hermann's delusions (Grayson 65, Connolly 138). For example, in the second English translation Nabokov includes three more references to Hermann's stick, three more references to his car, and multiple allusions to Lydia's love affair with Ardalion (Grayson 65-66). These additions make the puzzle of Hermann's delusional desires easier to decipher, which suggests that the average *Playboy* readers need more clues to move through the labyrinth of Nabokov's narratives.

Playboy readers would have also enjoyed Nabokov's heightened depictions of violence and sexual obsessions. Nabokov adds five references to madness and violent death, includes grotesque humor when Hermann reunites with his brother, and increases the suspense surrounding Hermann's nightmare (Grayson 69-71). Nabokov better illustrates Hermann's sexual obsessions with a "two-page description" of intercourse and "the dissociation he experiences during the sexual act" (77). But Nabokov also includes smaller sexual references, such as adding a sausage to Felix's pack and describing Hermann's premarital brothel experience in a more comic way. Compare the *Playboy* version:

At sixteen, while still at school, I began to visit more regularly than before a pleasantly informal bawdy house; after sampling all seven girls, I concentrated my affection on roly-poly Polymnia with whom I used to drink lots of foamy beer at a wet table in a orchard—I simply adore orchards.

with the 1937 version: “When still at school, in the last form but one, I became a fairly regular visitor at a bawdy house; used to drink beer there” (qtd. in Grayson 77).

Including adjectives such as “foamy” and “wet” moves Hermann’s flat announcement of beer drinking to a heightened sensual experience. Besides expanding on Hermann’s “sampling” of women at the brothel, Nabokov focuses on one female character, and even names her. These additions are similar to the stories *Playboy* editors create about their monthly playmate.

These conscious revisions can be assigned to the cultural climate which introduced less censorship and more attention to sexuality. For example, Grayson reveals translation embellishments to Lydia’s naked body (“fat thighs so tightly pressed together she could hardly stand”), as well as homosexual innuendos. The trend of Nabokov’s translations moves toward more curvaceous females: “roly-poly Polymnia” and Matilda’s and Lydia’s thick or fat thighs. In his foreword to the 1965 edition of *Despair*, Nabokov claims that many of these revisions were already written in the 1930s and were “omitted in more timid times” (Nabokov *Despair* xi). Readers can infer from this forward that Nabokov “consciously curtailed erotic content...in deference to the pressures of public opinion and the tastes of his potential readers” (79). In other prefatory notes, Nabokov describes accounts of editors censoring his works: *Sovremennyya Zapiski* marked Prince’s homosexual practices with suspension points and the Russian version of *A Dashing Fellow* was rejected as “improper and brutal” (qtd. in Grayson). (*Playboy* went on to publish *A Dashing Fellow* in 1971, in all of its improper brutality.) Though some government restrictions were placed on Nabokov, so much self-

ensorship is suspect: 1) the “émigré literary scene could hardly be described as prudish”; 2) Nabokov’s early Russian writings are hardly free of sexual details; and 3) few critics questioned Nabokov’s moral integrity (79-81). Rather, “in the wake of *Lolita*,” Nabokov deliberately fostered his public image of the so-called ‘pornographic’ writer and stepped up the “erotic content of his novels not to ape pornography, but to parody it, and to parody the image of himself as a pornographic writer” (81, 116). Grayson contends that Nabokov’s sensitivity to criticism encouraged him to react by parodying the image himself as a pornographic writer. *Playboy* would prove to be the perfect venue for that reaction because of its obvious pornographic affiliations.

The sexual content in Nabokov’s works does grow exponentially after *Lolita*; *Pale Fire* deals primarily with the Cold War’s containment of homosexuals, and *Ada* contains multiple erotic themes besides incest. And because his major works after *Lolita* were not written for the casual reader or for the monetary reward of the bestsellers list, it is possible that Nabokov was parodying his pornographic status. However, the degree of attention paid to sexuality in American Cold War culture must have also played a factor in Nabokov’s revisions. Saunders argues that, by the 1960s, the “war over ‘sex in the novel’ was in full swing” (259). In *The First Sexual Revolution*, Kevin White claims that, after 1880, American citizens were experiencing a break-down of Victorian morals leading editor William Marion Moody to declare that 1910 was “Sex O’Clock in America” (qtd. in White 13). After World War I, fears regarding the drastic changes in attitude toward sexuality increased public discourse, as well as “sexual behavior in print” (Saunders 259). World War II’s northern migration for Washington employment caused "horror stories" of housing shortages and more "opportunities for sexual encounters"

(Johnson *Lavender* 52). A burgeoning homosexual literature proves the widening of sexual expression. But, during the early Cold War, Americans simultaneously feared sexual deviants and gave the sex industry millions in yearly profit (D’Emilio and Freedman 279-80). With his *Playboy* connection, Nabokov would capitalize on American Cold War sexual discourse.

Playboy’s willingness to pay for contributions from the iconic pornographic writer made Nabokov revise his contributions with the *Playboy* audience in mind. What Grayson, Appel, Andrew Field, Julian Connolly, and Carl Proffer do not allude to during discussion of Nabokov’s translations of *The Eye*, *Despair*, and *A Dashing Fellow* is *Playboy’s* monetary inducement for these revisions. I argue that *Playboy* gave Nabokov \$8,000 to serialize *The Eye* over three issues, and editors offered him a \$1,000 bonus, in hopes that he would make extensive revisions to the galley proofs (Boyd 481, 484). *The Eye* “exhibits many of the same features” as *Despair*; just on a “smaller scale,” proving that Nabokov reworked these texts for *Playboy’s* American audience (Grayson 89). *Playboy* editors did not offer Nabokov the same \$1,000 incentive to revise *Despair*; but they did bestow upon him the annual “Best Fiction” award for 1966—which included a cash prize of \$1,000. In the January 1967 “Playbill,” editors call *Despair* an “elegantly wrought” tale of “narcissistic double identity,” at once “brilliantly witty and profound” (3, Jan. 1967). Nabokov wrote to Hefner, expressing “how very much touched” he was by the award (Nabokov *Selected* 399). Nabokov states that this is “the first time that any magazine—or in fact any kind of publication—has awarded [him] a prize” (Nabokov *Selected* 399). He closes the letter exclaiming that *Playboy* “can be always depended upon to provide brilliant surprises” (Nabokov *Selected* 399). In this letter, Nabokov

admits that he received a bonus, of an undisclosed amount, before receiving the prize.

That admittance means that *Playboy* paid him additional amounts, which would make the total payment for *Despair* over \$10,000. The magazine's hefty commission funds need to be considered a factor in, and for, Nabokov's revisions of his Russian short fiction.

Editors were so pleased with Nabokov's admiration of *Playboy* that they published the second paragraph of this letter in the May 1967 issue. They also published Nat Hentoff's gracious note in response to winning the 1966 "Best Non-Fiction" prize for his "The Cold Society." Hentoff's letter offers insight into how much *Playboy* editors revere its literary content: "Not only in generosity in financial terms, which manifests itself in the fact that as the magazine's circulation and revenues have grown, so have its rates to writers; but more importantly, [Hentoff's] appreciation is for the freedom [he has] experienced at *Playboy*" (16, May 1967). Thus, *Playboy*'s growing subscription audience, its ability to financially compensate for quality literature, and its willingness to provide authors with the freedom to express their opinions encouraged Nabokov to continue to publish with the magazine. *Playboy* provided him with the chance to heighten his erotic content and parody his both his pornographic image and his audience's attraction to his work, all the while enjoying the fact that the average *Playboy* audience does not include his ideal, active reader.

The strange dearth of reader response to Nabokov's serialized novellas supports notions that Nabokov's literature might be too complex for most *Playboy* readers. For Nabokov, the author often "clashes with readerdom because he is his ideal reader and those other readers are so very often mere lip-moving ghosts and amnesiacs" (Nabokov *Strong* 183). The average *Playboy* reader was most likely looking for the sexual content,

while being a “mere lip-moving ghost.” The amount of space allotted to Nabokov’s fiction does not correspond with the amount of published “Dear Playboy” letters—the 54 pages of both works serialized over two years only elicited two letters. While both published letters praise the texts, the majority of readers did not write in to comment on the works or editors decided not to publish the responses. The amount of dialogue spurred by other fiction contributions dwarfs the two letters regarding Nabokov’s works. For example, editors published over 23 responses to Kerouac’s contributions and the amount of “Dear Playboy” letters concerning Ian Fleming’s Bond series or stories by Herbert Gold and Ray Russell are too great to count. The only response to the serialization of Nabokov’s *The Eye* was that it should not have been broken into parts; Josef Schwann of New York wrote that “[p]art one of *The Eye* transported [him] to another world, a world of troubled dreams that vie with reality,” and, when he arrived at the “unworthy cliff-hanger trick,” he was thoroughly disturbed (12, April 1965). Editors responded that they did not want to “mutilate” the text by condensation or excerpting. In March 1966, Vernon Williams’ letter also praises *Playboy* for printing *Despair* and helps to explain the lack of reader response. Williams claims that the first installment of *Despair* “gives promise that this novel will be the closest book of his to the incomparable and wicked *Lolita*” (8, April 1965). Thus, the majority of *Playboy* readers are searching for more of the controversial sexual content found in *Lolita*, content that they will be hard-pressed to find in the original versions of his Russian works.

So why would Nabokov want to publish his works for less than ideal readers and why would editors publish works beyond their readers’ scope of intellect? In his *Lectures on Literature*, Nabokov was very specific about his ideal reader: “The good reader is one

who has imagination, memory, a dictionary, and some artistic sense – which sense I propose to develop in myself and in others whenever I have the chance.” With such high circulation numbers, *Playboy* might have been the perfect venue for Nabokov to help develop that artistic sense in a few of the millions of readers. And editors devoted so much space to Nabokov because he represents the high expectations *Playboy* editors placed on their readership. For example, in the first survey of *Playboy’s* readers, conducted by the “independent market research organization” Gould, Gleiss and Benn, Inc., researchers claimed that “over 70% of *Playboy* readers have attended college” and the “great majority of *Playboy* readers are business and professional men...*Playboy* has a greater percentage of college men in its audience than any other national magazine” (36, September 1955). But upon closer inspection of survey results, less than 30% of readers had obtained a college degree and the remaining 40% had only attended college at some point. Editors greatly wanted to claim college-educated, business, or professional readers, in order to promote *Playboy’s* model of masculinity as educated, white, heterosexual, and financially sound. Therefore, the same way Nabokov uses *Playboy* as a venue to parody his image, *Playboy* uses Nabokov. He becomes the serious author editors (specifically Spector sky) need to balance out lighter material published in the magazine.

Playboy’s intricate balance of challenging works with ribald classics and nude pictorials makes Nabokov a fitting spokesperson for the magazine. Robert Fogarty argues, in “Current Fiction on the Up Bounce,” that *Playboy* was “slow to publish serious fiction” and did not include provocative or challenging works (227). Aware of readers’ capacities, editors have been known to turn down works deemed to challenging for their

audience base. For instance, Sectorsky refused to publish Nabokov's *Solus Rex* in the early 1970s because of its intricate plot. Editors also tried to persuade Nabokov to dumb-down his works by "making new stories using the elements" of his submitted work (Nabokov *Selected* 415). He, of course, responded to these suggestions with a typical tongue-in-cheek comment: "Your suggestion...is amusing, but completely unacceptable" (415). But Nabokov's presence in the magazine and *Ada*'s publication discredits Fogarty's claims in some regards. Even though editors carefully selected which chapters to publish—five, six, nine, fifteen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, and twenty-five—the text is still challenging. Macauley's *Ada* selection does not include the fixation with time, Lucretia's suicide or any of Nabokov's theories on family or history. But the excerpt's plot, characterization, and style still present a challenge next to Boccaccio's commentaries on sex, the stories of the jazz underworld, or the science fiction. Andrew Field, author of *Nabokov: His Life in Art*, agrees that Nabokov's prose presents a challenge to *Playboy* readers. However, he also insists that printing *Ada* "presupposed the interest and existence of a highly sophisticated readership in matters more than mammillary" (12, July 1969). After the *Ada* excerpt, Field revises his previous condemnation of *Playboy* as "a randy magazine with occasional lapses in good taste" to declare the magazine "a dandy magazine with frequent leaps into fine taste" (12, July 1969). In support of his observations about the magazine's "frequents leaps into fine taste," one needs to simply glance at the contents of the April 1969 issue, in which *Ada* is published. Editors included content such as Allen Ginsberg's interview, Richard Matheson's "Prey" and articles concerning "The Toys and Games of War and Peace." And, in true *Playboy* fashion, editors balance that with the ribald classic "The Fixer,"

Reginald Potterton's "I Cut out Her Heart and Stomped on It," humor pieces, such as Jean Shepherd's "The Grandstand Passion Play," travel, food, and fashion content, as well as the multiple pictorials. This balance is best paraphrased in a response to Congressman's William G. Bray plea that *Playboy* ignore printing serious or political editorial content and stick to the "pictures and cartoons and...interesting bits of humor" needed "in these tense and troubled times" (12, Oct. 1966). Pleased that the congressman reads the magazine, editors "think the publication's popularity is directly related to the balance it provides between thought-provoking articles on serious themes and its lighter pictorial, satirical and service features" (12, Oct. 1966). Therefore, unlike Kerouac who *Playboy* used as a foil, *Playboy* uses Nabokov as a serious author, who happens to deal with sexual themes. The author and the empire profited from the relationship.

A Suitable Climate in Cold War America

Nabokov's profitable relationship with *Playboy* reflects how welcoming the American Cold War climate was to both the magazine and Nabokov's works. As discussed previously, *Playboy* owes much of its successful launch to Cold War redefinitions of space and sexuality. In a similar vein, Nabokov's popularity in America can be attributed to Cold War culture; or, Nabokov exploited Cold War cultural changes for his benefit. Either way, the Cold War proves to be a suitable climate for the reception of Nabokov's works. Most Nabokov scholars shy away from politicizing Nabokov because of his self-described apolitical status. Denying claims to either the Bolshevik Reds or monarchist Whites, Nabokov describes himself "as a child of democratic liberalism" (Nabokov *Strong* 22). In *Strong Opinions*, he claims he cannot tell a

Democrat from a Republican. Nabokov's only stated political conditions are "no torture, no executions" and no "regimentation of thought, governmental censorship, racial or religious persecution" (Nabokov *Strong* 34, 48). Regardless of Nabokov's consistent statements regarding his apolitical status and critics shying away from political readings of Nabokov's texts, it is possible to situate his works within the political climate of the Cold War. Nabokov's themes of containment, sign-economy and collapsed identities echo Cold War concerns—even his syntactical use of the personal pronoun reflects the rising focus on the individual.

In the midst of Cold War containment policies, Nabokov's Russian status would normally provoke audience hesitation or critical censorship. He should share Humbert's anxieties about being a "brand-new American" from "sweet, mellow, rotting Europe" (105, 280). But Nabokov was far from a shabby émigré and is not treated "like one of those suspicious foreigners...whose citizenship and nationality is dubious" (Petitte 85). Rather, Nabokov was very outspoken about his allegiance to United States policy and collaborated with the CIA and FBI. In this paradigm of foreigner and intellectual, Nabokov is "beyond reproach" (Kovačević's 24). Outspoken against the Communist take-over in Russia, Nabokov could not be "vilified;" his self-portrayal as a modern, democratic liberal negated labels of "outdated monarchist" (Kovačević's 24). Therefore, Nabokov "occupies the place of America's imaginary desire for Russian (Eastern European) elites that are rational, in step with the 'progress' in the world, and reliable as Western allies" (Kovačević's 25). In *Strong Opinions*, Nabokov admits that he "deplores the attitude of foolish or dishonest people who ridiculously equate Stalin with McCarthy...and the ruthless imperialism of the USSR with the earnest and unselfish

assistance extended by the USA to nations in distress” (50). Nabokov’s strong opinions regarding communism make him a welcomed exile.

Playboy also has strong opinions regarding American policies. Even though editors refrained from straying from *Playboy*’s entertainment focus, they still argued that the magazine could be used as a weapon in the war against communism. Hefner claimed *Playboy* was a way to discover national dissenters. Because the single bachelor technically defied traditional social institutions, he could be branded as a homosexual or a sexual deviant. But if the single bachelor was interested in gazing at nude females, he was not a homosexual. And since illogical rationale linked homosexuals with Communists, the *Playboy* reader was not a Communist because of his heterosexuality. Strategically placing his magazine within the Cold War homophobic climate, Hefner argued that “a picture of a beautiful woman is something that fellows of any age ought to be able to enjoy. If he doesn't, then that's the kid to watch out for” (qtd. in Fraterrigo 41). Hefner, like Nabokov, also championed the universal rights of the individual and tried to deny political labels. But, *Playboy*’s championing of conspicuous consumption and Nabokov’s praise of Cold War strategies suggests that a political reading can be applied to both.

Nabokov distanced himself from Russia and pledged his allegiance to America. Far from the 1960s cultural upheavals, in an old-fashioned Edwardian luxury hotel in Montreux, Switzerland, Nabokov declared himself “as American as April in Arizona” (Nabokov *Strong* 98). In *Bend Sinister*, Nabokov’s first novel “composed in his adopted country,” he “saluted America’s most exuberantly patriotic poet with a strange new adjective: ‘waltwhitmanesque’” (Sweeney 65). Nabokov’s decision to never write in

Russian again after *The Gift* serves to further distance him from his exiled homeland. His dual labels—Russian émigré and American novelist—allow him to be concurrently Othered and acceptably exotic. His autobiographical text, *Speak Memory*, “hinges on precisely this dynamic of exile and its ambivalence” (Straumann 9). Nataša Kovačević’s second chapter, in *Narrating post/communism: colonial discourse and Europe’s borderline civilization*, claims that “his political and cultural Othering of Communist regimes aligns him with Western liberal discourses, while his Russianness makes him... ‘different’ to American audiences” (6). Timofey Pnin, “perhaps the character that Nabokov most admired”, exemplifies this trait (Krushcheva 67). In *Pnin*, Nabokov tells the tale of an awkward Russian émigré teaching Russian studies at an upstate university. Like Nabokov, Pnin’s “socially, awkward Russian ways” are surprisingly welcomed. Pnin has the “useless and impractical knowledge of a Russian intellectual” and can “perform a number of other tame tricks that Russians have up their sleeves” (Krushcheva 59). *Playboy’s* pursuit of the popular Russian émigré reinforces how suitable his exiled status had become; as discussed earlier, editors praise the “cruel wit” Nabokov gained from his exile.

Nabokov’s texts contain tropes of American capitalism. Nabokov’s texts and *Playboy* can be studied as products of capitalism; Frederic Jameson dates the new moment of capitalism to the United States’ post-war boom, right as Nabokov began to “invent his America” for *Lolita* and Hefner launched his first issue. For instance, *Lolita* is set within the context of consumer society and reflects results of the sign-economy, in which “advertising has operated to colonize the social world and materialize desire” (Odih 113). What Pamela Odih calls “sign economy” can be witnessed in the

advertisements that bombard Lolita and Humbert on their cross-country drive: “If a roadside sign said: VISIT OUR GIFT SHOP—we had to visit it, *had* to buy...” (Nabokov *Lolita* 136). Lolita constructs her identity according to the images advertising and popular culture provide for her. Humbert describes her as the “ideal consumer,” “to whom the ads were dedicated” (136). Charlotte Haze’s behavior is “determined entirely by homemaking guides, Hollywood films, movie magazines, advertisements, psychoanalytic clichés and such deadly conventionalities as book clubs or bridge clubs” (Brand 15). *Lolita’s* villain, Humbert, can “resist the influence of these new and powerful forms of coercion” (Brand 14). In resisting the sign system of the capitalistic economy, Humbert also misses all the signs that would reveal his double. Lolita’s savvy sign reading allows her to read the maps and routes, in order to meet up with Quilty. As a foreigner, Humbert has nothing but “contempt” for the sign systems, and his critique offers insight into the post-war American economic system (Brand 15).

Pnin also offers insight into how Nabokov constructs and critiques American culture. Unlike Humbert, Nabokov’s foreign narrator, Timofey, cannot resist the advertisements or the efficiency of American capitalism. Even though Pnin confesses to Joan that he cannot understand “what is advertisement and what is not advertisement,” he always “carefully” scans them (Nabokov *Pnin* 60; 75). At this point in American capitalism, much of print media was an advertisement. Besides advertisements, Pnin is also awed by efficiency, an aspect of capitalism that free market advocates champion and *Playboy* continuously praises in its advertisements for new technology. Intrigued by Joan’s washing machine, Pnin disregards being forbidden to come near it and feeds everything he can to the new machine: “Casting aside all decorum and caution, he would

feed it anything that happened to be at hand, his handkerchief, kitchen towels, a heap of shorts and shirts smuggled down from his room, just for the joy of watching through that porthole what looked like an endless tumble of dolphins with the staggers” (40). Pnin’s willful exchange of his perfectly healthy teeth for dentures proves his obsession with American capitalism. Ten days after the extraction, Pnin enjoys his dentures, “the new gadget,” so much so that he declares them a “revelation”: “a sunrise, it was a first mouthful of efficient, alabastrine, humane America” (38). Pnin even tries to persuade a colleague to have all of his teeth removed because then he “will be a reformed man like [Pnin]” (39). Thus, through the eyes of his European narrators, Nabokov confronts complex aspects of America’s Cold War consumer culture. Nabokov’s capitalistic commentary ironizes consumer culture.

Nabokov incorporates many American Cold War tropes, such as the expansion to new frontiers. Similarly, Hugh Hefner’s *Playboy* launch and its “daring trailblazing on the sexual front” changed the way Americans viewed pornography during the Cold War (Watts 297). In his 1964 *Playboy* interview, Nabokov confesses that *Lolita* was the most difficult text to compose because he “did not know America” and, therefore, had to invent it (38). Many of Nabokov’s inventions incorporate American mythology. For instance, the last scene of *Pnin* has Timofey “lighting out of the territory,” representing the American moves toward the final frontier. Pnin’s “lighting out” reflects Nabokov’s artificial construction of America: “I have invented in America my America and just as fantastic as any inventor’s America” (Boyd *American Years* 375). In her analysis of East-European immigrant narratives, Magdalena J. Zaborowska claims Pnin’s move is “very American, if not Americanized” (263). After much heartache, Pnin pushes out to

discover what else America can offer. His move also signifies the third phase of American empire-building, reflecting the United States' expansion of new territory (Nugent 309). Historian Walter T. K. Nugent suggests that the Cold War's "[c]ontainment-as-imperialism took the United States into space and into the disastrous Vietnam intervention in the 1960s, clothed in the 'classic idiom of the frontier'—Kennedy's 'New Frontier,' space as the 'the final frontier' (312). Pnin's move, though, is not a heroic conquest of any frontier; as he "drive[s] off into the proverbial sunset," he is a loser, having been "ousted" by the more virile, manipulating Sirin—his Russian counterpart.

Nabokov's inclusion of counterparts, or *doppelgangers*, in his works also reflects Cold War fears of espionage and secret agents. Of course, the double motif appears in Nabokov's early fiction, and the history of the traditional double in literature is long. But Nabokov continues, and even heightens, this motif in his Cold War texts. For instance, written precisely at the exhaustion of the double theme in modern literature, Nabokov's *Pale Fire* features a monumental doubling, or even tripling, of character (Appel, *Annotated Lolita* x). The doppelganger motif is just piece of the puzzle of Nabokov's works; Nabokov professed that he had "no special purpose, no moral message" or any "general ideas to exploit" but he did like "composing riddles" and "finding elegant solutions to those riddles" he, himself, composed (*The Listener* 857). When situated within Cold War fears of the Communist enemy, this literary element reflects fears of the unknown double, fears regarding the concept of individuality. Communists could invade their inner circle at any time unbeknownst to Americans. According to Douglas Field's *American Cold War Culture*, the turning point in American Cold War politics was the "growing awareness of communism's ability to seduce and infiltrate disparate countries"

(3). The fear of infiltration sparked numerous cultural artifacts, like Mickey Spillane's detective novels and even *Mad Magazine's* "Spy on Spy". The real event of the Rosenberg's supposed espionage found its way into American authors' works; David Cauter calls it "the midsummer's night of post-war anti-Communist, anti-Soviet hysteria" (62). For instance, their 1953 execution haunts Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. In his "Cold War Correspondents: Ginsberg, Kerouac, Cassidy, and the Political Economy of Beat Letters," Oliver Harris traces Allen Ginsberg's telegram to Neal Cassidy recording the event as "a key document" in the intersection of the "paranoid style of American politics" (170). Political paranoia in the United States encouraged government officials to wage domestic war on possible enemies within its borders.

One of Nabokov's favorite games to play with his reader is hiding "enemies within" his text. This technique seems to "parody the typical mystery or suspense story" (Davidson "Images"). In *Playboy's* publication of *Despair*, Hermann devises the perfect crime to kill his double, and *Playboy* readers would feel comfortable with the motif because they had encountered it in other works. In both his English and Russian versions, Nabokov clearly presents Hermann's crime as "devoid of any pragmatic purpose" (Davydov). (Hermann's so-called "perfect crime" resembles the charges Senator McCarthy placed on hundreds of state officials.) In *Ada*, Nabokov combines the double motif with the incestuous account of Van's and Ada's love affair: "Ada's 'right instep and the back of her left hand' bear the same 'indelible and sacred birthmark' that marks Van's right hand and left foot" (Hayles 34). Ada's nose is Van's in miniature, and they have the same molar on opposite sides of their mouths filled with gold, which suggests that Nabokov wanted to make Ada and Van mirror images of each other.

The sexual relationship between the counterpart, or doubled characters, reveals Cold War homosexual fears, best depicted by David K. Johnson's *Lavender Scare*. Johnson reminds readers that historical and cultural literature about the "McCarthy era focuses on the hunt for Communist and headline-grabbing cases such as those of Alger Hiss" (3). But the typist of the "Pumpkin Papers" and the Rosenbergs' were anomalies in America's hunt for enemies within its domestic borders; the majority of those fired or accused as security risks in the Cold War were homosexuals—not spies. Johnson reveals the contradiction between congressional fears of a powerful, threatening homosexual ring in the State Department and the notion that homosexuals can be targeted as blackmail victims because of their weak will. The ridiculous hunt for homosexuals played out by the HUAC committee and government officials resembles Nabokov's dizzying maze of doubles; Nabokov critiques "reading homosexuals as political threats on par with Communists" throughout *Pale Fire* (Belletto 756). As Charles Kinbote desperately looks for clues to Zembla in John Shades' poem, careful readers can decipher the doppelgangers and note that Kinbote serves as both sexual subversive and Cold War warrior.

Nabokov's criticism of American sign economy and "the sociopolitical implications of a pop-Freudian understanding of homosexuality" reveal his debasing of an uncritical populace and his championing of the individual—a feeling shared by *Playboy* and its ethos based on the individual (Belletto 760). In *Strong Opinions*, Nabokov reminds readers that he doesn't "give a damn for the group, the community, the masses" (33). Born into an aristocratic, politically powerful family that employed more than fifty servants, Nabokov's life of luxury was "cut short" by the revolution, and he

was forced first into European exile by the Bolsheviks and then to American exile by the Nazis (White, Khrushcheva 3). His father was assassinated, and his homosexual brother was murdered in a concentration camp; T. J. White argues that these events “not only displaced” Nabokov but they might “be the reason for his individualism.” His ardent respect for the individual and disdain for totalitarian governments can even be recognized in his syntax. His Russian writings are “saturated with echoes of French and English,” and his sentence structure has always been very Latinate, making him very easy to translate on a syntactical level (Scammell). Though Nabokov grew up in an affluent Russian household, he called himself “an English child” (Nabokov *Strong Opinions* 81). Nabokov’s wrestling between his Western and Russian identification often finds its way into his works.

Nabokov’s sentence structure, with a heavy emphasis on the English “I,” reflects America’s Cold War stress on the individual. In English, “I” “shamelessly” starts most sentences, and it never “renounce[s] [its] exclusiveness in favor of general accord” (Khrushcheva 13). In *Imaging Nabokov*, Nina Khrushcheva’s states that Nabokov “loved the prim and proper ‘I’ which—unlike the tiny, derided Russian *ya*—is anything but the last letter of the alphabet (13-4). The “I” allows Nabokov to avoid awkward Russian constructions such as “it’s fearful to me,” making the doer an active subject, as opposed to “an *object* of action” (Khrushcheva 14). Khrushcheva admits that Nabokov taught her “how to be a single “I” instead of a member of the many “we” in that vast, undifferentiated, traditional Russian collective of the peasant commune, the proletarian mass, the Soviet people” (4). Refusing to add to the stock characters already present in Russian literature, Nabokov “sought to liberate the thinking ‘I’” (5). The emphasis on the

individual, as opposed to the collective good, mirrors Cold War emphasis on those individuals who made up the growing middle-class. The privileges that came with being a member of the middle class can, according to William H. Whyte, render individuals more susceptible to the pressures of conformity—something neither Nabokov nor Hefner would have championed (unless it included purchasing more goods).

The “paradoxical” rise of high-brow art blending with popular culture during the Cold War proves why *Playboy* wanted to be associated with Nabokov’s “serious” or sophisticated status. Andrew Hoberk argues that the boundary between high and middlebrow culture is difficult to demarcate, despite a post-war intellectuals' obsession with doing so. Nabokov, like Saul Bellow and Flannery O'Connor, is “an obvious candidate for representatives of fifties fictional high culture” because he had a household name and was “published in middlebrow venues” (Hoberk 397n8). Nabokov was, and still is, revered by literary critics, regardless of the sexually explicit content of his work. For instance, *Lolita*’s “serious” writing made it much more elusive for critics to deem obscene. Unlike the more over language in *Lady Chatterly’s Lover*, *Lolita* “intermingled decorum and deviance” (Giles 58). In *Lolita*’s afterword, Nabokov praised the blend of “deliberate lewdness...with flashes of comedy” associated with the French Enlightenment, *Playboy* editors included prominent cultural figures and elite literature in order to achieve this particular blend. The blend of high and low culture allowed *Playboy* editors to dismiss charges of commercialized pornography, which Nabokov also denied. Nabokov claimed modern pornography was a “commercialized and entirely predictable operation, stylistically limited to ‘the copulation of clichés’” (qtd. in Giles 58). The paradoxical rise of high-brow culture during the Cold War led to the growth of American

Studies and the rise of New Criticism. While literary critics, such as Lionel Trilling, Edmund Wilson, Alfred Kazin, Irving Howe, and Allen Tate, debated over definitions of the novel and analyzed Nabokov's novels, *Playboy* readers could read Nabokov's fiction and participate in critical speculations. As a "serious" author, the Cold War provided Nabokov with the chance to indulge his "fascination with American vulgarianism" (Bell-Villada 165).

The Cold War also allowed Nabokov to explore "meshes of sexual and military affairs" (Petitte 81). As detailed by Adam Petitte's *The Literary Cold War*, Nabokov's Humbert participates in the military explorations of the Arctic DEW Line for uranium. Humbert's complicity in the "mechanics and economy of wartime and Cold War secrecies...match his own secret sexual project" to acquire nymphettes (82). Connecting Dolores Haze to the United States' search for nuclear materials, radiation, and bombs reinforces the relationship between Nabokov and the Cold War. Petitte argues that "[s]olipizing Lolita is identical to solipsizing Cold War America—both girl and state are under threat," and "Humbert...is a criminal psychiatrist, exploiting and exposing the nuclear symptoms of Cold War sexuality" (97). With *Lolita* and his other Cold War texts, Nabokov exploits post-war policies, such as the redefinitions of domestic space and the creation of a masculinity model that stresses the affluence of *Playboy's* post-war narrative.

Ada's Model of Masculinity

Nabokov's *Playboy* contributions create an exotic model of masculinity, which values sophistication, virility, and sliding scale of sexuality. His dense prose contains old-world narrators and multiple literary allusions. According to Boyd's *Russian Years*,

Nabokov's father passed down a "strict sense of manliness and personal honor" (97). In *The Gift*, Nabokov writes that the protagonist, Fyodor loves his father's "live masculinity," and Boyd supplants this character's adoration on to the author. A quick survey of Nabokov's texts reveals that virility is a highly desirable trait; for instance, in *Playboy's* December 1971 "The Dashing Fellow," Nabokov's narrator cannot concentrate on any business, until he takes care of his "romantic interests" (121, Dec. 1971). One of Nabokov's most vulgar narrators, Konstantin "longs to tangle with a graceful gold-bright little devil in a fantastically lit hotel room!" (122, Dec. 1971). His wife is "not overbright" and "therefore, not jealous" of his sexual encounters on trains and in foreign cities (122, Dec. 1971). His multiple affairs are judged based on the financial cost of each tryst. Besides his meticulous focus on adding up the dollar and cents of each sexual encounter, Konstantin's unquenchable virility fits very well into the *Playboy* ethos. Nabokov's "live masculinity" supports *Playboy's* call for consumption and explores how male characters should reclaim domestic spaces. But like Kerouac's model of masculinity, Nabokov's contributions do not always depict a clear heterosexuality, and they can undermine aspects of *Playboy's* white, American narrative because of their tendency to be told from an exile's perspective.

Model of Masculinity: Space

Continuing the tradition of Russian writers, like Lev Tolstoi and Ivan Turgenev, Nabokov thoroughly maps his narrative space. Unlike twentieth-century Russian writers or authors like Dostoyevsky, Nabokov renders his narrative space by carefully mapping it like a cartographer (Shrayer 641). His earlier Russian works contained explicit descriptions of narrative space, but his later fiction, especially his Cold War texts, employ

specific literary devices that map space and time. Nabokov often disregards the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate critical discourse; his narratives blur genre boundaries. In “Mapping Narrative Space in Nabokov’s Short Fictions,” Maxim D. Shroyer argues that Nabokov’s works “attribute enormous significance to representing the space where a given narrative unravels and where characters interact” (641). Stephen Hardwick Blackwell argues that Nabokov’s later fiction challenges readers to recognize the “chilling parallels between the overconfidence of scientific progress and the dogmatic certainty of the Soviet regime” (ix). Marina Grishakova connects Nabokov’s handling of space with contemporary philosophical models, thus situating Nabokov’s artistic and scientific endeavors into the cultural framework of the Cold War. Scientific, metaphysical, and ethical theories often permeate Nabokov’s Cold War texts.

Playboy’s 1969 excerpts from *Ada* highlight mid-century concerns of domestic space and the blurring of geographical and time boundaries. Slightly joking, Nabokov declared his novel *Ada* “a book of genius—the pearl of American literature”; but the novel has divided scholars, provoking intense distaste and praise (Boyd *Ada* 3). *Ada’s* first sentence is an “eversion” of Tolstoy’s first sentence in *Anna Karenin*: “the opening sentence of *Anna Karenin*...is turned inside out” (Nabokov *Strong* 285). *Anna Karenin* begins with “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way,” and *Ada* with “All happy families are more or less dissimilar, all unhappy ones are more or less alike.” Throughout the novel, Nabokov inverts time, the planet Earth, and sexual gender: “Time is turned inside out, so that much of the present becomes the past” (Swanson). Nabokov anachronistically confuses the centuries and transposes the eastern and western hemispheres. The confusion could relate to Cold War fears regarding the

Iron Curtain. But *Playboy's* excerpt does not expose most of these inversions or the philosophical material that divided scholars, such as Van's long philosophical diatribe, *The Texture of Time*, which describes his attempt to control time. Rather, *Playboy* editors provided readers with less difficult material, due to concerns that it might be beyond their readers' intellectual abilities. *Playboy* excerpts recount Van's youth at his uncle's opulent country mansion, Arcadian Ardis Hall.

The excerpt's opening contains a lengthy exposition of Van's first journey to Ardis Hall; in the early afternoon, Van enters the "sunny peace of the little rural station whence a winding road led to Ardis Hall" (94, April 1969). A "chance crease in the texture of time" presents Van with a hackney coach to complete his journey (94, April 1969). Nabokov thoroughly describes the half-hour jog "through the pinewoods and over rocky ravines" and uses "sun flecks and lacy shadows" skimming over Van's legs to show the progression of time (94, April 1969). Nabokov includes names of places and details that situate Van in a familiar, albeit foreign, setting. For instance, the first paragraph contains references to recognizable pinewoods, animals, flora, and people. But the "dreamy hamlet" he passes through has an exotic name—Torlyanka—and contains izbas and ruinous black castles (94, April 1969). Nabokov's reference to a "half-Russian village" only slightly reassures readers that this narrative space is a realistic representation (94). With every description of the setting, Nabokov manages to include "knowledge of our real world but undermine[s] it at every line" (Boyd 3). As Van arrives at Ardis Hall, the three-story romantic mansion "built of pale brick and purplish stone," the estate looms realistic, like John Updike's suburbia (94, April 1969). And then Nabokov jars readers out of this realism: "the mansion sat on a rise overlooking an abstract meadow with two

tiny people in cocked hats conversing not far from a stylized cow” (97, April 1969). The painterly flourishes, like “abstract” and “stylized,” reinforce that this setting has been carefully mapped on a canvas. Ardis Hall somehow sits above the abstractions. Van’s memories interrupt the forward motion of the narrative, and the setting of Ardis Hall emerges as the most stable literary element.

Nabokov uses a tour of the hall as the first interaction between Ada and Van, and this tour foreshadows their incestuous affair. During their first tea, Marina tells her nephew/son about the library’s view and explains that Ada will show him “all the rooms in the house” (98, April 1969). The tour has no discernible pattern and takes up three pages of *Playboy’s* May issue. For days, Ada leads Van up and down the stairs, exposing all “those nooks” in which “they were to make love so soon” (100, April 1969). She takes him through semi-secret staircases, multiple bathrooms, servant chambers, drawing rooms, and the attic. But the first stop on the tour, Ardis Hall’s library, later becomes the space in which Van and Ada consummate their adolescent affair. Ardis Hall’s library was its “pride,” even if it was not often entered. It contained “collected works of uncollected authors”, “tall bookcases and short cabinets”, “dark pictures and pale busts”, “ten chairs of carved walnut and two noble tables inlaid with ebony” (98, April 1969). After listing off the room’s contents, Nabokov describes the library’s divan and a pair of candlesticks, “mere phantoms of metal and tallow” (98, April 1969). The divan, or day bed “covered in black velvet, with two yellow cushions, was placed in a recess, below a plate-glass window that offered a generous view of the banal park and man-made lake” (98, April 1969). Later in the summer, Van and Ada have sex on the divan, while the rest of the household tries to save the burning barn across the reservoir.

The setting of their clumsy, passionate tryst echoes two of *Playboy's* main themes: masculine reclamation of domestic space and sexual stimulation as a matter of the mind, not the body. Hefner declared that the “whole idea behind *Playboy* was to put the two parts back together again—mind and body—that have been in conflict so long in our society” (qtd. in Weyr 11). During Van’s and Ada’s sexual experience in the library, Ada constantly asks questions regarding his anatomy. Slithering away from Van’s caresses, Ada “wannask” why Van “gets so fat and hard there when you—” (250, April 1969). Her childish dialect and insistent curiosity remind readers that she is just a child during this encounter. When she sees Van’s erection, her “tone of voice change[s] immediately,” and she becomes sympathetic, imploring whether or not “it hurts” because “it’s all skinned and raw” (250, April 1969). Van explains to her that touching it will make it feel better and begins to trace the “relief map” of his penis: “Her index traced the blue Nile down into its jungle and traveled up again” (250, April 1969). Completely ignorant of the male sexual organ, Ada compares his penis to things she understands—maps and flowers. The library setting provides Ada with a fitting backdrop to learn about sex. Joe Andrew’s study of modern Russian literature discusses how the library setting was once used as a motif in Russian literature: “A young woman’s simultaneous entrée into knowledge and sexuality by means of stealing books from an older man, or library, was a common motif in Russian literature” (41n31). Ada does not need to steal any books during her “simultaneous entrée” because both sexual partners are virgins. Nabokov’s twist on this Russian motif can be attributed to his characters’ age and the love that they share. Nabokov creates the space of the library to “unravel his narrative” and allow his characters to sexually interact.

Model of Masculinity: Sexuality

As in *Lolita*, *Pale Fire*, and most of Nabokov's works, sexual relationships are complicated by social taboos. His *Playboy* contributions are no different. In both *The Eye* and *Despair*, Nabokov alludes to characters' homosexuality. The narrator in "The Dashing Fellow" (1971) engages in multiple adulterous affairs. Nabokov exposes readers to middle-aged pedophilia in "A Nursery Tale" (1974), and, in "The Admiralty Spire" (1975), Nabokov makes readers question why authors turn love affairs into novels. In "The Doorbell" (1976), *Playboy* readers are misled to believe that Nikolay Galatov's search for his mother is a quest to rekindle a love affair. While *Playboy's* *Ada* excerpt exhibits a clear heterosexual relationship, the incest factor undermines *Playboy's* model of masculinity as boy-meets-neighbor/officemate. These instances of sexual deviance represent Nabokov's model of masculinity.

On a superficial level, blurring the lines that separate normal sexual behavior from deviant behavior supports *Playboy's* deviance from Cold War culture. However, *Playboy* really only deviated from mainstream culture's emphasis on the nuclear family—not heterosexuality. As Barbara Ehrenreich has stated, *Playboy's* deviance was not the "voice of sexual revolution...but of male rebellion" (51). Its didactic editorial content reclaimed domestic space for masculine pleasure and presented a critique of marriage, a strategy for remasculinization, and a spirit of acquisition best represented in its call for conspicuous consumption (50). *Playboy's* deviance was focused on the escape from "the bondage of breadwinning"—not on deviant sexuality or sexual behavior. In fact, there is nothing really deviant, or even erotic, about *Playboy's* sexuality. Playmates and bunnies are usually replicas of each other; most are blonde with 35-23-35

measurements. According to Playboy's own statistics, the average Playmate is 22 years old, 5' 6" and 115 pounds. Since the 1960s, Playmates have gained about a pound and almost two inches. The average bust size has dropped about an inch, waist size has increased an inch and hip size has remained about the same ("Playmate FAQ"). These statistics prove that Hefner has always been "puritanical" about his Playmate's image and their semblance of innocence. *Time's* 1967 review of *Playboy* argues that its depiction of sex is more akin to "a Midwestern Methodist's vision of sin," whereas Nabokov's *Playboy* contributions include references to homosexuality, pedophilia, and incest—much more highly contested versions of sex.

Nabokov's works reflect Alfred Kinsey's controversial scientific surveys of American sexuality and expose cultural fears of a sliding scale of sexuality. For instance, *Ada's* depiction of incest explores the "volatility of subjective, social constructs of 'deviance' and 'normality'" (Goldman 88). In "'Knowing' Lolita: Sexual Deviance and Normality in Nabokov's *Lolita*," Eric Goldman argues that Nabokov "utilizes the sexology that was so controversial in the 1950s" to present alternative interpretations of his characters' sexuality (88). For Goldman, *Lolita* should not be characterized as a femme fatale or special nymph with a heightened sensuality; she should be viewed as an "ordinary, juvenile girl whose 'normal' sexual development is warped by a maniacal, myth-making pedophile" (88). In order to create *Lolita* as an "ordinary" American girl, Nabokov completed hours of field research: attended primary schools, rode school busses to eavesdrop on conversations, scoured popular magazines for phrases, and read psychological studies on development. Through *Lolita's* characterization, Nabokov rendered a devastating commentary on American adolescents. Rachel Devlin states, in

her study of the post-war father-daughter relationship, that Lolita's personality "sets the stage for a certain kind of adult masculinity," and Humbert represents the "kind of masculine personality that was often *produced* through a relationship with a teenage daughter" (Devlin *Relative Intimacy* 159). Devlin's thorough study of America's post-war record of father-daughter incest suggests that Nabokov's story of sexual deviance "played a role in creating and sustaining important ideas about gender, family, paternal power and the sexual order" (Devlin "Acting Out"). Goldman's and Devlin's theories can be extrapolated to Van's and Ada's adolescent incest and applied to Nabokov's model of masculinity.

Ada's innocence might reflect the manipulated image of a centerfold's innocence, but her incestuous relationship with Van undermines *Playboy's* promotion of consenting, adult heterosexuality. Incest, in Kinsey's reports and Kirson S. Weinberg's 1955 sociological text, is defined as "lying with a near relative." But the data presented in these texts mainly deals with incestuous contacts between post-puberty family members. Critiques of Kinsey's work on incest involve his claim that incest between adults and consenting children can prove to be a satisfying experience. Kinsey's study of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* contains passing references to incestuous contacts between pre-adolescent children and Kinsey does acknowledge that "at least some children experience sexual interest and pleasure during these contacts" (Bancroft m). In his section "Pre-Adolescent Sexual Development," Kinsey reports that "14% of all the females...recalled that they had reached orgasm either in masturbation or in their sexual contacts with other children or older persons" (105). Clearly Kinsey's reports, however compromised they might have been, warn against viewing children as asexual, a warning

that Nabokov exploits. Unlike Humbert, who was unable to consummate his romance with Annabel, Van and Ada consummate their romance during adolescence and continue their sexual relationship for the remainder of their adult lives. The knowledge that Van and Ada share a healthy adult relationship undercuts assumptions that their adolescent deviance should have wrecked havoc on their mental stability. In this sense, *Playboy's* excerpts of *Ada*—like Kinsey's reports—challenged notions of sexual deviance, notions that shocked Americans into reconsidering definition of “normal” sexual behavior. Ironically, *Playboy's* inclusions of Nabokov's contributions, all of which present some sort of sexual deviance, end up undermining *Playboy's* very clear model of heterosexual behavior.

Conclusion

Nabokov's *Playboy* contributions offer readers a slightly different model of masculinity than the coherent narrative presented by *Playboy's* editorial content. Nabokov's characters participate in “deviant” sexual behaviors, ranging from incest to homosexuality. However, his depiction of domestic space in *Ada* reinforces Hefner's wish for men to reclaim the indoors. Like *Playboy*, Nabokov benefitted from the Cold War culture's emphasis on conspicuous consumption and the blend of high and low brow art. An Olympian Press author, along with Beckett and Burroughs, Nabokov's works first shocked the post-war generation because of their sophisticated construction and vulgar subject matter; *Playboy's* didactic program for post-war males pairs serious social commentary with nude pictorials. The relationship between the author and the empire suggests that both used each other for mutual gain—a relationship that Nabokov's son, Dmitri, profits from decades after his father's death.

CHAPTER 4—BRICK BY BRICK: JAMES BALDWIN IN *PLAYBOY*

As an African American, homosexual writer, James Baldwin's *Playboy* contributions seem out of place in the magazine's didactic program for white, heterosexual, male members of the rising middle-class. But *Playboy* has always adhered to an ethos of racial equality, even if it is dedicated to the dissemination of normative sexuality. *Playboy's* push for civil rights can be evidenced in its liberal activism during the 1960s; aligned with broad political movements, *Playboy* championed individual rights, especially economic freedom. According to Steven Watts, in *Hugh Hefner and the American Dream*, *Playboy* promoted a particular activism, one that sought ways to break down barriers "to provide greater, freer access" to the socioeconomic system (193). To promote that brand of socioeconomic equality, different kinds of editorial content began to appear in the 1960s, and Hefner hired new editors, like Sheldon Wax, Murray Fisher, and Nat Lehrman, to influence the political bent of the magazine—no longer would *Playboy* pretend to remain strictly in the entertainment realm. Lehrman claims that, during the early sixties, "We were doing very interesting things, particularly in the sexual area and in the civil liberties and civil rights area" (qtd. in Watts 194). Watts suggests that the "most striking aspect of *Playboy's* heightened social awareness" was in the realm of race relations (qtd. in Watts 194). Concurrently, Baldwin was "desperately" seeking to "define his identity as an American Negro writer and as a spokesman for his people" (Jones 107). Unsure of what kind of role he could play in the Civil Rights Movements or how to confront the political shift toward Black Nationalism, Baldwin increasingly

adopted the stance of the “representative race man” (McBride 10). Having exiled himself to Paris, Baldwin was, at first, not convinced he should be actively involved in the movement; but, after a second visit to the South in 1960, Baldwin became a member of Congress of Racial Equality and Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (Field 460). He ceased “polishing [his] fingernails” in France and realized that he “did have a role to play” (qtd. in Field 460). His role as a writer, with an international audience, and a reporter was unique because Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, and Ralph Ellison did not publish significant texts during this time. Biographer James Campbell argues that Baldwin’s “value to the [civil rights] movement was mainly symbolic,” because he was neither a rank-and-file member nor part of the leadership (Campbell *Talking* 175). Due to his symbolic role, *Playboy* used Baldwin, and his international fame, to present its liberal stance on racism.

Always short of money, Baldwin offered essays and articles to numerous magazines. He published in small, literary magazines, like the Paris-based *Zero*, *The Nation*, *The New Leader*, *Partisan Review* or the *Commentary*, as well as larger more commercial magazines, such as *Esquire*, *Harper*, *Encounter*, *Time* or *Mademoiselle*. When *The New Yorker* published Baldwin’s twenty-thousand-word “Letter from a Region in My Mind” on 17 November 1962, sales soared, and Baldwin became “the talk of the town” (Leeming 145). After *Time* magazine featured Baldwin on its cover, his fame spread to an even wider audience. David Leeming claims that some of Baldwin’s critics and friends resented Baldwin’s relationship with the larger magazines; some “complained” when he sold “serious articles to *Playboy* and *Mademoiselle*” (145). Detractors complained because his work was placed “among the elitist ads for expensive

cars and clothes” (145). Baldwin’s response to these criticisms was that his audience was the “‘publicans and tax-collectors’ as well as the righteous” (145). Expanding his audience base by publishing in small and large magazines afforded Baldwin the chance to expand his role as an artist and as a spokesperson. It also afforded the magazines, especially *Playboy*, the opportunity to cash in on Baldwin’s fame.

Playboy relied on Baldwin’s authority to explain the magazine’s stance on race as soon as he became a household name; but the whole of his *Playboy* contributions reveal a strikingly complex nexus of race and sexuality. Because Baldwin’s open homosexuality obviously contradicted its celebration of heterosexuality, *Playboy* never acknowledged Baldwin’s publically known homosexuality, until the end of the Cold War when it published “Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood.” While many young authors and leaders of civil rights movements publically condemned Baldwin’s sexual identity, *Playboy* simply ignored it. Baldwin was also taciturn on the subject of his homosexuality in his non-fiction texts and always dealt with the questions of race, before sex. His move away from writing about his sexuality during the Cold War encouraged *Playboy* to keep publishing his non-fiction contributions. Only later in his career does Baldwin directly address his homosexuality in non-fiction, but from the beginning of his literary career, his fiction contained homosexual characters. Baldwin’s texts illuminate the social construction of both race and sexuality. For instance, two of Baldwin’s *Playboy* contributions analyze the constructed nature of both race and sexuality: his short story, “The Man Child” (1966), and his essay, “Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood” (1985). In “The Man Child,” Baldwin employs white, heterosexual characters to deconstruct the mid-century masculinity ideal. Many characteristics of this ideal

masculinity are upheld through *Playboy's* editorial content; for instance, *Playboy* celebrates heterosexuality, capitalism, and patriarchal hegemony in its pictorials, advertisements, and articles, such as Philip Wylie's "The Womanization of America." Part of the ideal masculinity that Baldwin scrutinizes is the "consumer ethics underpinning post-war prosperity and endorsed by *Playboy*" (Fraterrigo 148). By critiquing *Playboy's* conspicuous consumption and presenting characters with homosexual tendencies, Baldwin's fictional selection undermines much of *Playboy's* grand narrative.

Using Race, Not Sexuality

From its inception, *Playboy's* grand narrative suggested that any male, regardless of race, could enjoy the playboy lifestyle. Hugh Hefner also claims that *Playboy* was always "colorblind." Distraught with previous workplace discrimination, Hefner integrated the *Playboy* staff and refused to ask for racial identification on the application for a Playboy Club "key." Any male with twenty-five dollars to spare on a one-time fee for a Playboy Club "key" could always gain access to the empires many night clubs. In 1962, civil rights groups awarded Hefner the "Brotherhood Award" and the "Good American Award" for his commitment to "the fundamental right of equality of opportunity in employment without regard to color, creed, sex, or national origin" (qtd. in Watts 195). However, most African Americans were denied a lifestyle of luxury in post-war culture. John H. Johnson, founder of *Ebony*, understood the discrepancy between race and affluence as a notion of citizenship: "to be American was to be a consumer, and vice versa" (qtd. in Fraterrigo 139). Pervasive discrimination excluded African Americans from earning expendable incomes, and mass media often ignored African Americans during advertising campaigns. As a media outlet, *Playboy* did not address an African American audience or

include images of Africans in its pages until the 1960s, because during the 1950s it “assumed a white middle-class audience and represented a world of white affluence” (Fraterrigo 138). In 1961, comic Dick Gregory performed at the Chicago Playboy Club, the first African American performance in a mainstream club. Hefner’s 1960s late-night television shows, *Playboy’s Penthouse* and *Playboy after Dark*, presented a racially integrated crowd and hired black entertainers like Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, Sammy Davis Jr., and Ray Charles to perform and socialize with white guests. Editors ran Alex Haley’s Miles Davis and Malcolm X interviews in September 1962 and May 1963, respectively. The January 1965 issue included an interview with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jennifer Jackson graced the March 1965 centerfold as the first African American Playmate. In the context of post-war society, these contributions can be commended. Brigitte Berman’s recent documentary, *Hugh Hefner, Playboy, Activist and Rebel*, praises Hefner as a civil rights pioneer, and journalist Mike Wallace states in Berman’s documentary that “Hefner helped build the audience for a different attitude about civil rights.” Most *Playboy* readers appear prepared for this “different attitude,” but some stressed that they did not want to mix their entertainment with serious civil rights concerns. The primarily affluent, white audience and Hefner’s goal for racial equality reveals *Playboy*’s complicated participation in the Civil Rights Movement.

Playboy often relied on James Baldwin to promote its views on racial equality. For example, *Playboy*’s first full report on the plight of African Americans in the post-war era was “Through the Racial Looking Glass” (July 1962), by Nat Hentoff. *Playboy* commissioned Hentoff, instead of Baldwin, for this report because Hentoff represented a larger, albeit “less affluent, less certifiably liberal, and surely less educated,” audience

than Baldwin (Wyer 132). Importantly, though, Hentoff quotes Baldwin and relies on him for insights regarding the African American community, insights Hentoff would be unable to posit because he was white. Hentoff uses Baldwin for his authority on various subjects—a tactic *Playboy* editors quickly adopted. In “Through the Racial Looking Glass,” Baldwin explains reasons for the growing Muslim population, as well as the underlying cause for stereotypes, such as the African American inability to swim. In the article, Baldwin calls for African Americans to recognize how the majority culture systematically enslaves the minority. According to Hentoff, Baldwin’s declaration for emancipation from controlling images is “the one organic change which now applied to nearly all Negro adults—including the vast majority of the unorganized” (66, July 1962). White Americans created, and then promoted, a particular eroticized, debased image of African American: “The American Negro can no longer be, nor will ever be again, controlled by white America’s image of him” (66, July 1962). Baldwin also points out the “awkward insight” that most African Americans have “allowed” whites to impose on them “their own self-image,” even though they had “superior knowledge of the battleground” (66, July 1962). To support this claim, Hentoff cites another African American artist, playwright Lorraine Hansberry. She reminds readers that the African American maid has observed so much from “washing everybody’s underwear for 300 years. We know when you’re not clean” (66, July 1962). Regardless of that superior knowledge, Dick Gregory, like Baldwin, is “so goddamn sick and tired of a white man telling *us* about *us*” (66, July 1962). Baldwin tells *Playboy* readers how white Americans’ image of African Americans makes them ashamed “to have ‘nappy’ hair” or “ashy” skin: “One was always being mercilessly scrubbed and polished, as in the hope

that stain could thus be washed away” (66, July 1962). These cultural insights allowed *Playboy* to participate in the civil rights discourse by explaining the damaging effects of images to white readers.

After Hentoff’s article *Playboy* increased its reliance on Baldwin, as well as its civil rights content. In the October 1962 issue, editors published fifteen “Dear Playboy” letters responding to Hentoff’s article. Only two of those letters include negative comments; the first criticizes *Playboy* for not hiring an African American to write the magazine’s first “perceptive report” on the race, and the second wants *Playboy* to publish the South’s views on desegregation. Editors print lengthy responses to these letters, solidifying their front for racial equality. For instance, in response to C. Summer Stone’s objection to Hentoff’s race, editors introduce the reader to a future *Playboy* author, James Baldwin, “one of [Stone’s] nominees...who, incidentally is author of an upcoming *Playboy* article” (7, Oct. 1962). Editors then go on the “record” and declare the magazine’s colorblind status in “hiring staffers, assigning art, photography and writing, purchasing creative work”; they claim that the only “criterion—in judging people and their work—has always been and will always be professional excellence” (7, Oct. 1962). Editors repeat this motto for equality in response to Bill Castle’s desire for “equal space” to the South’s viewpoint: “Playboy stands for the individual...We are as much opposed to the bigotry that strikes out at racial and religious groups as we are to the bigots who burn books and attempt to censor and oppose all ideas and ideals that differ from their own” (14, Oct. 1962). Yet, neither of the editors’ diatribes compare to James Baldwin’s succinct approval for Hentoff and his article—“If I can go downtown—then Nat certainly can go uptown” (7, Oct. 1962). Writing from Dakar, Senegal, Baldwin writes to “Dear

Playboy” that he has long “admired Nat” and “he is one of the people on whom [Baldwin] most depend[s] to help bring these walls of incomprehension down” (7, Oct. 1962). Using Baldwin’s response to Hentoff’s article gives *Playboy*’s campaign more authority, because, by the early 1960s, Baldwin had become an eloquent literary spokesperson on equal rights.

Baldwin’s first appearance in *Playboy*, “The Uses of Blues,” revealed more insight into African American culture for the *Playboy* audience. William I. Smith claimed that Baldwin’s article “moved” him to write his first letter to *Playboy* because he could better “understand” his minority students (8, April 1964). Subtitled soliloquy, “The Uses of Blues,” celebrates the blues as a “uniquely American art form” and serves as decisive metaphor for the struggle for racial freedom. Because of its soliloquy label, or in spite of it, Baldwin speaks his mind directly to the *Playboy* audience. He refers to his audience using the second-person pronoun and asks them to consider the myriad of things the blues are about—from love to lynching. Baldwin calls the blues the facts of life and cites blues singers, such as Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Leadbelly, Frank Sinatra, Harry Belafonte, and Miles Davis. Baldwin also refers to writers, like Horatio Alger and Henry James. This range of American popular culture figures allows Baldwin to relate to *Playboy*’s readers.

Baldwin’s allusions, syntactical choices, and tone suggest that he envisioned his audience to be educated, white males unaware of the realities African Americans faced. For instance, he references European and American historical facts, Sigmund Freud and explains the “Negroes...difficult days” to the reader (131, Jan. 1964). Baldwin begins his essay slowly, by defining his title and the conversation he is engaged with, as if the

readers are just being made aware of this particular conversation, which started a long time ago. He explains things like the blues on incredibly basic levels, as if he was “scolding a Sunday school classroom” (Pickney 2). He tells readers about the blues “because they contain the toughness that manages to make this experience articulate”; he lets readers in on the secret, “however odd [it] may sound”, that the blues also create “a kind of joy” because the pain is commonplace (131, Jan. 1964). For Baldwin, the blues can “make people learn, mature, and ultimately gain wisdom from suffering, which may be seen as the blues connection to the Biblical concept of suffering as a way to wisdom” (Miller 16). Baldwin assumes *Playboy* readers are ready and willing to read how the blues relate to the African American fight for rights.

In “The Uses of the Blues,” Baldwin “bargains” that *Playboy* readers will be willing to learn from his insights. Baldwin hopes that readers will “listen and learn about the experience the blues make ‘articulate’”; he wants readers to understand how racism affects everyone, regardless of race (Hardy 52). However, Baldwin critically reminds white readers of their responsibility in the racial inequality. For example, he claims white readers have lost their humanity and describes the American psychological landscape as a festering, guilty wound. Baldwin condemns readers for their guilt and their inability to survive if, and when, trouble comes. He says that guilt is a “peculiar emotion” that coaxes Americans into inactivity; no one wants to “act” because then one must be “conscious and take great chances and be responsible for the consequences” (240, Jan. 1964). *Playboy* readers must have wondered what kind of bargain Baldwin was brokering after reading these condemning, although honest, claims.

Baldwin uses such accusatory language because he wishes to probe far deeper

than the overt issue of racism. Throughout the essay, Baldwin calls for readers to face reality by asking those “very difficult questions” concerning humanity (241, Jan. 1964). For him, the real “Negro problem” is not about “injustice, murder, or criminal racism”—because “what has been done to me is irrelevant simply because there is nothing more you can do to me” (132, Jan. 1964). The real problem is about the lessons children will learn; the real “Negro” fight is about finding a way “to make a child who will be despised, not despise himself” (240, Jan. 1964). Baldwin urges *Playboy* readers to go beyond empty statistics, which suggest that African Americans are financially succeeding: “walk away from the TV set, the Cadillac, and go into the chaos” and learn about reality (241, Jan. 1964). Undermining the standards by which middle-class Americans live, Baldwin seems to call for new standards. He wants them to get involved with the realities of racism, as opposed to assuming that, as liberals, they are free from guilt. “You don’t know what the river is like or what the ocean is like,” Baldwin says, “by standing on the shore” (241, Jan. 1964). He criticizes readers for believing in the reality set forth by John O’Hara’s novels and *Life* magazine: “Nobody lives in that country. That country does not exist and, what is worse, everybody knows it” (241, Jan. 1964). Baldwin complains about those who are building bomb shelters to hide from the atrocities of humanity and exposes the deep divide between the “American dream” and the “American Negro’s experience of life” (13, Jan. 1964). Through all of these complaints, Baldwin uses the second person, directly calling out the white *Playboy* reader—“*You* haven’t [forgotten the guilt]. And that *is* the problem” (214, Jan. 1964). Guilt seems to have forced white liberals into inaction, exactly when America is simultaneously plagued with a myriad of social issues, such as classism and sexism.

These early radical declarations take white liberals to task for failure to recognize how racism is just one aspect of America's problems.

And yet, throughout "The Uses of Blues," Baldwin employs a calm tone that negates associations with other militant activists, such as Eldridge Cleaver or Malcolm X. Baldwin seeks to "understand even as he condemns" (Pickney 2). Through his consistent attacks, Baldwin seems to believe his integrated audience has the potential to be better itself. For example, he constantly champions loving one another and switches to the more encompassing "we" when discussing how to be more humane. There is even a sense that he reined in his passionate tirades for the broad *Playboy* audience. He often halts, mid-thought, to quote a passage or familiar author; for instance, right after he states that the only way to change the hatred is to "ask ourselves very difficult questions," he simply begins a new paragraph: "I will stop now. But I want to quote two things," and he goes on to compare a passage from Henry James to lyrics from Bessie Smith (241, Jan. 1964). James Campbell states that Baldwin "enjoyed the attention of editors" and steadied his "hand behind the furious pen," when writing for national magazines ("Sorrow"). This appears to be true for "The Use of the Blues:" *Playboy* editors required minimal changes to the manuscript and rushed the non-fiction piece to print, most likely because it contained the appropriate mix of alienation and compassion.

Playboy published another Baldwin soliloquy less than a year after "The Uses of the Blues"; "Words of a Native Son" (1964) also begs readers to act. In the by-line to "Words of a Native Son," Baldwin is labeled as "the eminent author" and the "Playbill" refers to him as "the Negro's most eloquent literary spokesman" (120, 3). In response to Baldwin's second *Playboy* appearance, Morton W. Darby claims that Baldwin's elegant

candor outshined the “rest of [*Playboy*’s] fine, fat Christmas package” (10). Darby calls for other writers to mimic Baldwin’s “capacity to get under the surface in looking at himself and his work” (10). In “Words,” Baldwin reveals the creative process of an artist who wants to tell the “terrible damage we are doing to our all our children” (241, Dec. 1964). He tells *Playboy* readers that the “humanity” of the menaced population is “equal to the humanity of anyone else, equal to yours, equal to that of your child” (241, Dec. 1964). Employing the second-person pronoun again, Baldwin directly calls out to the white *Playboy* reader. Equating the dead Harlem boy, Emmett Till, to the child of a *Playboy* reader allows Baldwin to appeal to the audience’s emotions: “As long as my children face the future that they face, and come to the ruin that they come to, your children are gravely in danger, too” (241, Dec. 1964). Demanding that readers assess the national nightmare provides the essay with a sense of urgency, similar to the “The Uses of the Blues.” Baldwin also maintains a similar tone and adopts a “spokesperson stance...[that] invites the audience to actively participate” (Norman 108). He shares the blame and the responsibility for deaths of children like Emmett Till: “I know you didn’t do it, and I didn’t do it either, but I am responsible for it, too, for the very same reason” (241, Dec. 1964). Because Baldwin could strike this rhetorical balance, *Playboy* was encouraged to continue to rely on him as its “face” of the Civil Rights Movement.

This rhetorical balance is exemplified in Baldwin’s “Dialog in Black and White” (December 1966), a conversation with Budd Schulberg on how radicals and liberals might form a coalition. Liberals, both black and white, focused on a more superficial freedom for the individual; some liberals tended to ignore the various forces of oppression and viewed racial integration and consumption as markers of freedom.

Playboy promoted a very particular political orientation, rather than something more radical. Before being disillusioned by King's assassination, Baldwin also seemed to promote a liberal understanding of racial equality. But in this dialog, he functions more as a liaison between liberals and radicals. A white liberal, Schulberg obtained National Education for the Humanities funding to establish the Watts Writers Workshop, a program for high school dropouts in underprivileged communities following the 1965 Watts riots. While praiseworthy, Schulberg's work still represented a white liberal agenda because he used funds from the national government to endow a particular kind of a freedom—education. *Playboy* sought out “big names” like Schulberg to discuss race (Wyer 141). Schulberg's relationship with Baldwin is one that “included fervent agreement and fierce disagreement” (279, Dec. 1966). Known for his community outreach and being on “liberal-interracial side,” Schulberg's dialog with Baldwin centers on the role white liberals can play in the cause for civil rights. The dialog raises key issues, such as African American's rising skepticism toward the role progressive whites can play in fight for racial equality. As a white progressive, Schulberg was perturbed by Dick Gregory dismissing his liberal support at the 1964 Democratic Convention. Schulberg turned to Baldwin for explanations regarding the growing hatred of “whitey.” *Playboy* spent years promoting its liberal image, and publishing this dialog between Schulberg and Baldwin bolsters this image. Throughout this provocative, although fruitless, conversation, Baldwin “refused to concede that blacks had any need of white liberal support” (Wyer 141). The split between the radical- liberal alliance foreshadows the imminent changes of the Civil Rights Movement, and this dialog becomes integral primary material regarding this pivotal moment.

Baldwin negotiates between the Black Nationalist movements and white liberal concerns, while defending the criticism offered by Black Nationalists. Many leaders of Black Power movements viewed Baldwin as anachronistic. Middle-aged, gay, and associated with King's non-violent program, Baldwin had a love-hate relationship with movements like the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. Cultural critic Cheryl Clark shows how Baldwin did not fit into the political view of the Black Power Movement. The "marked resurgence of radical black consciousness" included the rejection of WASP American values, repudiation of homosexuality, and the embrace of nationalist, separatist, Pan Africanist sentiments (qtd. in Field 462). The potent masculinity of the Black Panther Party contained an intolerant attitude towards weakness; it denied leadership opportunities to women, homosexuals, and those who aligned themselves with non-aggression. To be a member, much less a leader, in the movement, one had to be heterosexual, virile, and young. Henry Lois Gates, Jr. notes that as a older homosexual, and an intellectual who befriended white liberals like Schulberg, Baldwin "was now a favorite target of for the *new* cutting edge" (qtd. in Field 462). According to Gates, "Baldwin bashing was almost a rite of initiation" for the younger members of the more violent civil rights movements (qtd. in Field 466). As leaders, like Eldridge Cleaver, and writers, such as Ishmael Reed, dismissed Baldwin as a "bootlicker" kowtowing to the white liberals, Baldwin never "fired back" (Field 466). Rather, in "Dialog in Black and White," Baldwin admits that he "can understand the appeal of the black power to young black people who have felt their identity crushed and denied in a world of white power" (286, Dec. 1966). Deeply disillusioned by the recent assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and bombings of churches, Baldwin seems to have become more committed to

radical change.

Baldwin previously promoted humanity's potential for love as major element for the Civil Rights Movement, but, after being disillusioned, Baldwin calls for new tactics. For example, in response to Schulberg's questions about which side he is on, separatist or integrationist, Baldwin suggests that he will side with the separatists, if radical alterations are not made to the structure of "all our institutions in the direction of a greater freedom, recognizing that the Negro is an integral part of this nation, has also paid for it with his blood, and is here to stay" (287, Dec. 1966). Baldwin tells Schulberg that the United States is "trapped in a massive moral contradiction...we will perish if we cannot resolve it" (287, Dec. 1966). He rails against the conflict in Vietnam as a fight for freedom because freedom "is precisely what Americans fear most" (287, Dec. 1966). Baldwin even reiterates W.E.B. Du Bois' criticism of Booker T. Washington's education programs: being "toilet trained and know[ing] how to use a shower" is not "by some miracle of transcendence, able to free millions" (287, Dec. 1966). Baldwin argues that federal progress is not enough because "from where [he sits], and from where [his] brothers are huddling tonight in their black ghettos from Boston to San Diego, we can't wait for laws that take so long to pass and then so much longer—it seems forever—to enforce. We're ready now. We've been ready for generations" (279, Dec. 1966). Like the above response on federal progress, Baldwin redefines what Schulberg sees as the African American problem into the white liberal problem; he forces the majority race to review the damage and destruction it causes, converting African Americans from victims to citizens with waning patience.

Through Baldwin's radicalized rhetoric, he maintains a friendly dialog with

Schulberg. In “Dialog,” Baldwin’s word choice and tone begins to more closely resemble the persuasive language used by other radicals, such as Bobby Seale. Hinting at the violence on the horizon, Baldwin calmly answers Schulberg’s questions, and they only each interrupt each other’s retorts seven different times. Baldwin often begins many of his responses with friendly nicknames or “baby;” for instance, when Schulberg poignantly asks Baldwin “which side are you on, Elijah Muhammad’s side or what you call my sloppy liberal-interracial side?”, Baldwin replies with “Baby, don’t lay that on me” (279, Dec. 1966). Using “baby,” could also be a rhetorical move, evoking the term “boy” that a white male would have used when addressing Baldwin. The combination of heightened rhetoric and calm tone makes this a friendly dialog that white *Playboy* readers can listen in on. Gates claims that Baldwin more “carefully crafted” his voice in his essays, which “came to represent his official voice...of the public intellectual, James Baldwin” (qtd. in Field 466). Extremely sensitive about the younger generation’s attacks, Baldwin had to reexamine his place in the Civil Rights Movements. *Playboy*’s “Dialog in Black and White” presents this voice, a balance between radical reformist, fiery intellectual, and friend of willing whites. Publishing “Dialog” affords *Playboy* the chance to build its liberal base and provide its white, liberal readers the logic behind the more militant Civil Rights Movements.

While *Playboy* continually stressed Baldwin in content regarding racial equality, it never mentions his sexuality. In its December 1962 “On the Scene” Baldwin exposé, *Playboy* glosses over the author’s sexuality. Below a flattering picture of Baldwin are details regarding his self-imposed exile, return to America, and his publications to date. Editors suggest that Baldwin creates a “dark and desolate novelistic wasteland” in which

“men and women wallow in suspicious, fear, hate and lust, searching helplessly for a sanctuary” because he himself is wallowing (126, Dec. 1962). Yet, they do not fully disclose why he is wallowing. As a gay, black man in post-war America, Baldwin felt the urge to flee. In “Revisiting *Madeleine* and ‘The Outing’: James Baldwin’s Revision of Gide’s Sexual Politics,” Jerome de Romanet claims that “very little attention has been paid” to the sexual nature of Baldwin’s self-imposed exile (3). Romanet argues that Baldwin’s exile was “as much concerned with issues of critical and racial affirmation and identity as with the private aspects of his emerging sense of sexual emancipation” (4). *Playboy* editors support Romanet’s claims by mentioning that Baldwin “deserted race-conscious America for race-tolerant France” and being mute on the homosexual persecution that also propelled his self-exile (126). And while Baldwin’s sexuality was public knowledge, editors never mention it in in-house introductions or book reviews.

In place of Baldwin’s sexuality, editors consistently remind readers about his best-seller status and cultural fame—by the time he wrote “The Uses of the Blues,” *The Fire Next Time* had been a bestseller for almost a year, and Baldwin was “busy shepherding his play, *Blues for Mr. Charlie*, toward its Broadway opening” (2, March 1965). Editors remind readers of his elevated fame: “nearly everyone has come to know the names James Baldwin, Dr. Martin Luther King and even Ralph Ellison” (24, March 1965). Besides *Playboy*, multiple magazines devoted many pages to Baldwin. As the mid-sixties approached, Baldwin commanded an incredible amount of public interest. John Stevenson states that, during this time, he “lit up the cultural landscape like a bolt from the heavens—a prophet of the decade’s black liberation struggle who became one of the most widely read African-American writers in this country’s history” (2). In May 1963,

Time featured him on the cover, and *Life* did a nine-page spread. His interviews were reprinted in magazines as wide-ranging as *Encounter*, *Essence*, *Opera News*, and *Transatlantic Review*. Coupled with his interviews, Baldwin published four essay collections, two novels, one collection of short stories, and one play during the sixties. *Playboy's* silence regarding Baldwin's sexuality, in favor of his fame, evidences *Playboy's* reliance on authors who have already gained cultural currency.

Playboy also ignores Baldwin's sexuality during the Civil Rights Movement because it does not want to undermine his authority as its racial spokesman. Similarly, *Time* magazine manipulated Baldwin's public persona so as to not alienate its large, white audience. In its 1963 cover spread, *Time* describes Baldwin as "nervous, slight, almost fragile figure filled with frets and fears" and characterizes him as "a sweet, exotic black boy who cries for his mother," in order to suggest that Baldwin "is not threatening to its white readership" (Field 461). Unlike *Time* magazine, which alludes to Baldwin's sexuality by emphasizing his "effeminate" manners, *Playboy* highlights his anger. For instance, in an "After Hours" book review of *Another Country*, Baldwin is described as an author intent on "articulating" the rage of "country full of fury and torment" (47, March 1964). Editors even compare Baldwin to the militant LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka)—besides being "angry" men, both were intently discussed and admired in post-war literary circles (137, Feb 1965). The constant references to his anger, coupled with silence on his sexuality, helps to create the stereotypical image of an angry, black man—exactly the image Baldwin warns against in Hentoff's report. Rather than connecting Baldwin with his sexuality or his homosexual characters, editors depicted Baldwin as the fiery intellectual so as to not alienate *Playboy's* heterosexual audience. Ignoring

references to Baldwin's "Martin Luther Queen" nickname, *Playboy* could concurrently continue its crusade for heterosexuality and racial equality.

Playboy's refusal to mention Baldwin's sexuality was very much in line with his own insistence that sexuality was a personal matter. Both the magazine and the author assumed that matters of race took precedence over Baldwin's sexuality; Baldwin and *Playboy* "steer[ed]" readers away from his homosexuality and his characters' sexuality. Baldwin claimed that his sexuality was "very personal, absolutely personal. It was really a matter between [him] and God" (qtd. in Field 459). Rejecting labels such as homosexual, gay, or bisexual, Baldwin never "adopted a publicly homosexual persona or the stance of a gay activist during his lifetime" (Romanet 4). In an interview with Richard Goldstein, Baldwin states that the word gay "has always rubbed [him] the wrong way. [He] never understood exactly what is meant by it" (13). When Goldstein pressed Baldwin to categorize his sexuality, he responded with: "I didn't have a word for it. The only one I had was homosexual and that didn't quite cover whatever it was I was beginning to feel" (13). Baldwin was also suspicious of the gay movement (Field 458). Donald Gibson claims that his "attitude toward homosexuality is decidedly critical" (qtd. in Field 458). These revelations are made more complex by Baldwin's "so fearlessly and tirelessly" addressing homosexuality in his fiction (Field 458). Romanet divides Baldwin's *oeuvre* into the public realm of his essays and lectures and the private realm of his fiction; the supposed private space of his fiction afforded Baldwin the opportunity to explore sexuality (8). Douglas Field touches on the irony that Baldwin "used the very public forum of the novel" to explore what he considered very private matters (459). Most likely, the novel form offered Baldwin some distance from his audience and

partially liberated him from a potentially hostile audience. Jerome de Manet reasonably claims that Baldwin reserved his public voice of racial spokesperson for his essays and lectures because they were a direct reflection of his role in the Civil Rights Movements (Field 459). Field takes Manet's observations further by suggesting that Baldwin's audience awareness and sensitivity to criticism of his fictional characters kept him from divulging information regarding his private sexuality—he simply did not want to make readers uncomfortable with his sexuality because then they might not accept his stance on racial equality. Applying both Manet's and Field's observation to Baldwin's choice to distance himself from public discussions of sexuality can help to explain why *Playboy* editors were silent on his sexuality. The magazine needed a non-threatening spokesperson to bolster its stance on racial equality, and, even if readers were aware of Baldwin's sexuality, silence was in the interest of both the author and the empire.

Hefner never considered himself homophobic, and he viewed *Playboy's* “healthy heterosexuality” as an antidote to the gender confusion plaguing Cold War America (Watts 113). According to Elden Sellors' memoir, Hefner's “thirst for sexual experience became so strong...he even had a one-time homosexual encounter” (Watts 59). But for *Playboy* to fulfill its grand narrative properly, it had to stress heterosexual sex.

Promoting a healthier attitude towards sex in Cold War America often forced *Playboy* to keep within certain bounds; for instance, *Playboy* “appealed for a more sympathetic consideration of homosexuality” by taking the “more progressive position that a ‘sickness’ formulation should be dropped” (Watts 215). However, in the “Playboy Philosophy,” Hefner still encouraged homosexuals to seek therapeutic help because homosexuality was still “deviant” from the norm. It was not until the 1970s that *Playboy*

specifically addressed homosexuality, with a panel of eleven contributors. And in the 1980s, with the end of the Cold War in sight, *Playboy* finally turned its attention to “the world of sexual identity—possibly the most important factor in determining the differences in our changing sexual styles” (126, May 1983). *Playboy*’s gradual change to identifying a sexuality that deviates from the norm parallels the societal focus on identity politics.

A few years later, *Playboy* published Baldwin’s philosophical critique of sexual identity, “Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood” (January 1985). Baldwin’s non-fiction essay is the “most explicit statement regarding his sexual coming-of-age and his most rigorous historico-sociological genealogy of the customs and norms surrounding American sexuality” (Lombardo 41). Baldwin does deal with homosexuality in two earlier essays, “The Preservation of Innocence” (1949) and “The Male Prison” (1954); however, in these essays, he avoids discussion of his own sexuality and claims, in “The Male Prison,” that author Andre Gide’s homosexuality “was his own affair which he ought to have kept hidden from us, or if he needed to be so explicit, he ought to have managed to be a little more scientific...less illogical, less romantic” (Baldwin 128). The fact that Baldwin’s first non-fictional foray into his homosexuality was published in *Playboy* suggests that, by the close of the Cold War, both the author and the empire were more comfortable with deviating from their normal patterns.

Similar to his earlier *Playboy* contribution on race, Baldwin deployed specific rhetorical tactics in “Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood.” For instance, he begins slowly, as he did in “The Uses of Blues,” by defining androgyny, and he conflates questioning sexual identity with larger, universal acts of drinking, breaking bread, or

making love (149-150, Jan. 1985). Baldwin very clearly states, “The American *ideal* ... of sexuality appears to be rooted in the American ideal of masculinity. This idea has created cowboys and Indians, good guys and bad guys, punks and studs, tough guys and softies, butch and faggot, black and white” (192, Jan. 1985). To help ground the reader in his logic, Baldwin references ancient and more recent history, as well as Sigmund Freud, Karen Horney, Carl Jung, and Wilhelm Reich. He blends notions of racism with heterosexism, connecting oppressive patriarchal systems (258, Jan. 1985). To avoid alienating his heterosexual audience, Baldwin employs anecdotal evidence, uses “we” throughout the essay, and states that “[t]here is nothing more boring, anyway, than sexual activity as an end to itself” (260, Jan. 1985). He goes so far as to suggest that “a great many people who came out of the closet should reconsider,” and he questions popular cultural figures like Boy George (260, Jan. 1985). For Baldwin, conceptions of manhood are embedded in social constructions, like race. Baldwin even returns to his adage regarding the sanctity of children; he is deeply concerned that the American boy will never be allowed to “evolve into the complexity of manhood” (192, Jan. 1985). These rhetorical techniques mimic the ones used for his earlier diatribes on race relations.

Baldwin was careful to not estrange his audience in both his earlier essays on race and this later essay on sexuality; his overall attack on capitalism and the structures of the American middle-class challenge *Playboy's* call for conspicuous consumption. In “James Baldwin’s Philosophical Critique of Sexuality,” Marc Lombardo argues that Baldwin “tailored” his message in “Freaks” for the *Playboy* audience (41). Lombardo says that “instead of telling an audience what they (sic) wanted to hear, Baldwin always seemed to tell them what they (sic) did not want but, rather, *needed* to hear” (41, emphasis original).

Lombardo champions Baldwin for asking *Playboy* readers to recognize their own androgynous counterpart, as well as the connections between sexual identity, racism, and the development of capitalism. According to Tim Libretti, Baldwin's sexual identity is "part of a complex, yet single or unified history, and must be understood...as shaped historically by the system of racial patriarchal capitalism" (159). Combining Lombardo's and Libretti's observations regarding Baldwin's "Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood" proves that Baldwin ultimately argues that America's socioeconomic system enslaved its citizens. What both Lombardo and Libretti fail to acknowledge is how this argument complicates why *Playboy* published Baldwin's contributions. Baldwin's condemnation of capitalism undermines *Playboy's* push to purchase more goods. For instance, in his earlier essays on race, Baldwin condemns the gentrification of cities and refuses to be mollified by statistics claiming African Americans are better off because they can purchase more goods. In "Freaks," he traces the exigencies of sexuality to the Industrial Revolution, when "for the first time in human history, a man was reduced not merely to a thing but to a thing the value of which was determined, absolutely, by that thing's commercial value" (192, Jan. 1985). Embedded between advertisements for menswear, technological fare, and liquor, Baldwin's essays illustrate the irreducible gap between an American's lived experience and the societal ideal.

Baldwin in the Cold War

The intricate relationship between *Playboy* and Baldwin can best be understood when contextualized within the Cold War. *Playboy* owes its success to Cold War redefinitions of sexuality and space. Likewise, much of Baldwin's work "illuminates" the Cold War's confining racial and sexual boundaries (Field 90). He can be and should

be, considered a Cold War writer. Some scholars, such as Stephen Whitfield, do not associate Baldwin with the Cold War; Whitfield argues, in *The Culture of the Cold War*, that the “trajectory” of Baldwin’s works “was unaffected by Cold War demands” (14). But a simple glance at the span of Baldwin’s literary career suggests that his work was directly responding to Cold War concerns—Baldwin was a prolific writer from April 1947, when Randall Jarrell commissioned a review of Maxim Gorki, to January 1987, when *Playboy* published “To Crush the Serpent.” Other scholars have worked to contextualize Baldwin’s writings within the Cold War; Douglas Field, in “Passing as Cold War Novel: Anxiety and Assimilation in James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room*,” Richard Corber, in *Homosexuality in Cold War America*, and William Spurlin, in “*Go Tell it On the Mountain* and Cold War Tropes of National Belonging,” make convincing cases for why Baldwin’s works need to be situated within the larger socio-historical context of the mid-century. Baldwin, himself, references his “obsession with the McCarthy phenomena” in “No Name on the Street” (Baldwin *Price* 466). As the United States’ rise to world power was threatened by the strength of the Soviet state, Baldwin and his works represent the “twin domestic fears of racial integration and sexual deviance, which in turn were quickly linked to Communist activity” (Field 90). Baldwin exiled himself to Paris “at the very moment” when the United States was “rife” with racial anxieties (Ferguson 234). A witness to the damaging effects of Cold War restraints, Baldwin embarked on a self-imposed exile on 11 November 1948.

A black, homosexual Baldwin was oppressed by the ceaseless racism and sexual discrimination of the Cold War United States space (Ferguson 233). For instance, barred from New York City restaurants, Baldwin felt deliberately “beaten” down: “The whole

society has sought to make you nothing” (qtd. in Ferguson 233). Baldwin specifically condemns the actions of the FBI, who accosted him in 1945 and began his extensive file in 1951. Baldwin concludes that the FBI “frightened [him], and they humiliated [him]—it was like being spat on, or pissed on, or gang-raped” (qtd. in Field 90). Baldwin’s FBI file grew to over 1,700 pages and it erroneously categorized him as a supporter of Soviet-style communism—a professed anti-Stalinist, Baldwin had become a Trotskyite during World War II (Wallace 296, Ferguson 239). Douglas Field claims that Baldwin’s FBI surveillance in American and in France “points to a wider connection between the bureau’s monitoring of racial progress and the ways in which early civil rights achievements were connected to subversive political activity” (Field 91). The mid-fifties “witnessed a sharp redrawing of racial boundaries” and a “horror of racial amalgamation” that deeply divided the country, forcing people and parties to decide on either segregation or desegregation (Field 91). In the post-war, the connection between racial equality and political subversion was reinforced.

While embattled against communism, the United States government had to project the illusion of progress on civil rights issues, all the while reassuring Southern Congressmen that it would not uphold federal ruling to desegregate “with all deliberate speed.” Both Baldwin and *Playboy* were known for promoting desegregation. Their very relationship complements Arthur Davis’ 1955 predictions that after desegregation “the Negro will move permanently into full participation in American life—social, economic, political, and literary” (qtd. in Field 95). But both *Playboy* and Baldwin knew that full immersion would hardly be speedy. Hefner continued to face obstacles with his “colorblind” policy. When the New Orleans *Playboy* clubs barred African Americans

from entering, Hefner had to buy back the franchised club in order to regain control. And Baldwin acknowledged that full participation would not be possible unless drastic changes were made to all institutional structures, especially economic ones (Baldwin “The Uses” 126). In response to seemingly ridiculously arguments regarding a hurried integration, Baldwin composed fictional works with all white characters, as well as works that fused black and white cultures.

Baldwin’s white cast of characters helps to illustrate the strict maintenance of boundaries that coincided with Cold War containment strategies. Around 1953, Baldwin wrote two works with all white characters, *Giovanni’s Room* and “The Man Child.” After publication of *Giovanni’s Room*, scholars and civil rights advocates, like Langston Hughes, Robert Bone, and Richard Wright, criticized Baldwin for disregarding his race while writing *Giovanni’s Room*. For instance, Hughes claimed that his white characters represented the integration that would “RUIN Negro business—as it apparently threatened to ruin the finest young writer of fiction in the race” (qtd. in Field 95). In *The Negro Novel in America*, Bone “lambastes” *Giovanni’s Room* for its “bleached” characters (qtd. in Field 95). More recently, scholars, like Yasmin Degout and Dwight McBride, commend Baldwin for creating complex representations of individuals, regardless of race. The white characters in *Giovanni’s Room* and “The Man Child” makes Baldwin’s “racial identity...textually ambiguous” (Field 95). This narrative technique can be compared to his *Playboy* contributions, in which he adopts “racially interchanging” pronouns to better connect with his audience (Field 95). From this stance, Baldwin acts as a “witness,” exploring the United States’ contradictions regarding race relations (Miller 337). For instance, when Baldwin discusses ghettos in “Dialog,” he

critiques government branches for simultaneously subsidizing suburbia via the Servicemen's Readjustment Bill of 1944 and deterring African American homeownership via redlining. And when Baldwin talks about war, in "The Uses of Blues," he questions why the same African American soldiers who fought for "freedom" in foreign wars are not afforded certain freedoms at home. In his essays and fiction, especially his "raceless" works, Baldwin interchanges pronouns, in order to illuminate the "contradictions between the United States' liberal-democratic claims and its practices" (Ferguson 256). Hughes "bemoans" Baldwin's fused perspective, suggesting his writing is "somehow bastardized—neither white nor black" (Field 95-96). However, employing these narrative techniques permits Baldwin to comment on Cold War concerns regarding race, as well as other power relations—namely sexuality.

Cold War concerns regarding sexuality are rooted in World War II's growing, visible homosexual community. As Baldwin began to explore his sexuality in the new institutions of the gay bar, Hugh Hefner was expanding his sexual encounters through experimentation, stag parties, and swinging. Alfred Kinsey's scientific reports provoked post-war redefinitions of sexuality, which both Baldwin and Hefner exploited. During the Cold War, a national discourse that championed the nuclear family, fostered capitalist means of production, and challenged the spread of communism negated the recently emerged homosexual subculture, in favor of a universal-heterosexual culture. This universal-heterosexual culture ultimately "construct[ed] the liberal citizen-subject of the United States as implicitly masculine and heterosexual" (Ferguson 234). Even if it did not endorse marriage or the nuclear family, *Playboy* participated in this masculinity discourse by disseminating strictly heterosexual editorial content. Baldwin, on the other

hand, promoted complex representations of sexuality in his fiction and threatened the national narrative that privileged heterosexual masculinity. Baldwin's *Another Country*, for example, contains characters, such as Rufus, who exist on a hetero-homosexual continuum; Rufus has intimate sexual relationships with both male and female characters. Or, consider David, the white, athletic, virile narrator of *Giovanni's Room*, whose guilt over his homosexual acts causes him to engage in heterosexual relationships. David disrupts Cold War notions of heterosexual masculinity simply by having the ability to "pass" for straight. As the Lavender Scare unfolded, the homosexual who could pass as straight became associated with threats to the nation's security. Supposedly, homosexuals had the potential to infiltrate straight communities and convert patriots into Communists. Like the discriminated against African American, the figure of the homosexual often equated to the subversive. As a gay, civil rights activist, Baldwin posed a dual threat. For instance, in the margins of Baldwin's FBI civil rights file, Hoover referred to his "deviant" sexuality by scribbling "Isn't James Baldwin a well-known pervert?" (qtd. in Field 90). Hoover (the ultimate voyeur) was suspicious of both Baldwin's race and sexuality. Arthur Schlesinger's correlations between the homosexual and subversive activity reveal larger Cold War concerns of policing the porous boundaries of race and sex. Baldwin exploited these boundaries in his fiction by creating complex characters that often split Cold War dichotomies of black/white, straight/gay, and American/subversive. Addressing the hegemonic discourses of masculinity in his fiction and non-fiction, Baldwin reveals that the Cold War crisis of masculinity can be viewed as a crisis of heterosexual, white masculinity. Post-World War II, the United States invested in white masculinity through subsidizing education, relocating women to the domestic realm,

replacing African Americans workers with white veterans, and expanding the “great” middle-class.

This subsidized, white masculinity was in crisis “almost from its inception” (Taylor 73). Responding to pressures of corporate, consumer, and domestic culture, some white men began to “feel ambivalent about whiteness” (Taylor 97). As the white, working class “rejected those aspects of themselves that they believed indicated their low origins—dirt, physicality, sexuality, labor,” racism between whites and blacks increased (Taylor 72). According to Douglas Taylor, white workers “repressed and projected” those unwanted aspects “onto the bodies of black men and women” (Taylor 72). At any other time in United States history, this repression and projection might not have caused a crisis. But because the Cold War era was increasingly concerned with cultivating an image of freedom and opportunity, the “contradictory desire to expel blacks from, and incorporate blacks into, the ‘mainstream’” wreaked havoc on whiteness (Taylor 72). The effects of this havoc have been noted by cultural critics, such as David Riesman, Theodore Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse. One major effect of this crisis was that some white men began to view themselves as victims because they lost their place in the societal hierarchy. In *Taking it Like a Man*, David Savran “traces the genealogy of the fantasy of the white male as victim” to the 1950s (4). *Playboy* responded to this sense of crisis by presenting a particular brand of white masculinity—one that was victimized by the feminization of America, as well as pressured to conform to organizations and domestication.

Playboy adopted the rhetoric of crisis and victimization to appease its mainly white, middle-class target market. According to “Meet the *Playboy* Reader” advertising

campaigns, young, white men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four made up about 75 percent of the magazine's readership (qtd. in Fraterrigo (68). Baldwin gently pushed back against this victimization in his *Playboy* contributions. In an attempt to move closer to some form of racial reconciliation, Baldwin used narrative techniques to renegotiate homosocial relations between black men and white men. But as noted in "Dialog," Baldwin's vision of racial reconciliation does not come easily—in fact, it contained a sense of rebellion.

White men wishing to rebel against "de-ethnicized, classless, hyperrational whiteness" turned to alternative models of masculinity (Taylor 73). *Playboy* offered one available alternative for the white, middle-class male desiring more than the utilitarian goals of the nuclear family. The Beat Generation offered yet another. And, for some white males, African Americans represented a viable masculinity because of their association with sex and the body (Taylor 73). Savran claims "oppressed" white males sought refuge in Norman Mailer's hipster. In "The White Negro," first published in *Dissent* in 1957, Mailer suggests that the white masculinity crisis was produced by the threat of assured nuclear annihilation. Emerging from this bleak future was a hipster: a hybrid, white figure who absorbed the supposedly essential elements of African Americans, such as the "libidinal drives of the body" and living in, and for, the moment (Taylor 76). Like Baldwin's use of interchanging pronouns or fused black and white characters, Mailer's hipster is racially united: he is a white male who has "been coupled" to an African American "by means of a 'wedding' in which 'it was the Negro who brought the cultural dowry'" (Savran 50). In his "admiration and desire for blackness," Mailer romanticizes African Americans similarly to the ways Kerouac romanticizes his

fellaheen characters (Taylor 76). But rather than praise for the lack of materiality or a connection to the earth, Mailer praises African American's supposedly authentic and primitive sexuality (Mailer 10). Because of a desired coupling with the eroticized black body, the hipster becomes the most controversial alternative model of masculinity to emerge mid-century. Clearly a product of the moment, Mailer's white negro embodies Cold War anxieties by disrupting racial and gendered norms.

In "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," Baldwin responds to Mailer's "The White Negro" by illuminating the hipster's homoerotic nature and confining gender role. Baldwin condemns Mailer's portrait of the African American as hypermasculinized. He suggests that Mailer has stereotyped African Americans as a "walking phallic symbol" (217). Baldwin questions why the African American body has to be eroticized "in order to justify the white man's own sexual panic?" (230). Yet, Baldwin ultimately fails to "disentangle" himself "from the masculinist premises" he critiques in Mailer's essay (Taylor 80). For instance, in "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," Baldwin deploys two contradictory tropes of masculinity: an endless hall of mirrors and a boxing match. In the endless hall of mirrors, "white men desire the imagined emotional wholeness of blacks, and black men yearn for the wealth and security that white men scorn" (Taylor 85). In the boxing match metaphor, both white and black men square off, each "attempting to affirm his masculinities at the other's expense" (Taylor 80). Besides the common association of Mailer with boxing, the pugilist trope makes readers aware of performative nature of both gender and race. For instance, Baldwin describes their first encounter in France, with each author trapped in their respective roles:

To proceed: two lean cats, one white and one black, met in a French living

room. I had heard of him, he had heard of me. And here we were, suddenly, circling around each other. We liked each other at once, but each was frightened that the other would pull rank. He could have pulled rank on me because he was white; but I could have pulled rank on him precisely because I was black and knew more about the periphery he so helplessly maligns in “The White Negro” than he could ever hope to know. Already, you see, we were trapped in our roles and attitudes: the toughest kid on the block was meeting the toughest kid on the block. (290-91)

The intensities needed to fulfill these “tough-guy” roles must be tiring. Baldwin claims that continually playing the hyper-masculine role is “always extremely hard—to maintain a kind of watchful, mocking distance between oneself as one appears to be and oneself as one actually is” (290). Besides being tiring, gender performance also limits the roles one can play. And because Baldwin was so intent on the individual, as opposed to the universal, he does not want to be limited by any restraints. For example, he admits that he envies Mailer’s success, youth, and love; he even says that they liked each other, emotions that would not be possible if he always had to play the “toughest kid on the block” role. In his response to Mailer, Baldwin exposes how both popular authors have dealt with confining gender roles that dictate sexuality.

The dialog that exists between Baldwin’s “The Black Boy” and Mailer’s “The White Negro” can shed light on Baldwin’s complex relationship with *Playboy*. Obviously, Mailer cannot stand in for the entirety of *Playboy*’s editorial content, but he can stand in for its narrative of both the virile and victimized white male. Like Mailer’s “The White Negro,” the internal logic of the magazine reiterated gender and sexual constructs, playing up the divisions between men and women, homo- and heterosexual. Baldwin’s *Playboy* contributions resisted an uncritical embrace of these gender and

sexual constructs. From “The Uses of the Blues” to “The Man Child,” Baldwin tries to show *Playboy* readers that everyone, not just white males, is victimized by the limiting experience of these social constructions. Baldwin employs similar techniques in his response to Mailer as he does in his *Playboy* contributions. Baldwin approaches Mailer with his concerns regarding his eroticization of the African American the same way he presents his concerns about racism to the *Playboy* reader—carefully. For example, even though the boxing metaphor reinscribes stereotypes of masculinity, he adopts it because it is familiar for his readers. Just like he defines the blues in “The Uses of the Blues,” Baldwin clearly defines his perspective, “as a black boy from the Harlem streets” in “The Black Boy.” Baldwin reassures readers that his reference to Mailer “as a middle-class Jew” is not a form of anti-Semitism. Rather, Baldwin introduces the issue of ethnicity and class because he is interested in the ways they “overlap,” in regard to masculinity (Taylor 79). He even suggests that he can “understand” Mailer because of their similar professions. And, when Baldwin admits he respects Mailer, one might be reminded of his admiration for Nat Hentoff or Bud Schulberg. As the black, gay man gazes back at the white, straight man with respect or envy, Baldwin “reveals American masculinity to be an endless hall of mirrors with white men desiring the masculinity of black men, and black men desiring the wealth, freedom, and culturally endorsed confidence that come with white masculinity” (Taylor 83). This obviously intricate relationship, between a black and white man, is like the complex relationship between *Playboy* and Baldwin because Baldwin’s contributions are situated within *Playboy*’s didactic narrative for its white audience. Baldwin’s non-fiction works on race remind readers that blackness is not an essence to be desired or feared; it is a process, a performance, which occurs in direct

relation to process, and performance, of whiteness. His fictional contribution with an all white cast of characters offers the *Playboy* reader yet another model of masculinity—one without clear heterosexual characters.

“The Man Child’s” Model of Masculinity

Published in *Playboy*’s January 1966 issue, Baldwin’s “The Man Child” provides readers with an alternative model of masculinity—one that critiques *Playboy*’s economic and heterosexual editorial content. Literary editors also undermined their own authority when they published “The Man Child.” For instance, in the November 1965 issue, editors describe Baldwin’s fiction as “abstract and lifeless” in the “After Hours” Book Review of *Going to Meet the Man*. *Going to the Meet the Man* contains Baldwin’s most anthologized short story, “Sonny Blues,” and *Playboy*’s choice for publication, “The Man Child.” Editors argue that Baldwin is a much better essayist than creative writer. He is at his “best when he addresses our society directly” with his “tender anger” and “delicate agony” (27, 26). Apparently his essays can “movingly persuade” readers, but his stories “somehow diminish” the truth “by imprisoning it within a metaphor” (27). Speculating on the reasons for his disappointing collection of short stories, editors suggest that “perhaps” Baldwin knows too much pain, too much personal tragedy, to write fiction (27). Editors conclude the review by labeling Baldwin’s stories wooden and shallow, only to directly contradict themselves two months later by introducing “The Man Child” as “chilling, starkly brooding story of frustration, madness, and murder” in January’s “Playbill.” Obviously, editors could not deride their own fictional selections, but this direct contradiction reinforces Robert Fogarty’s accusations that *Playboy* “always followed on the heels of success rather than breaking any new ground” (228). Baldwin

had been in the spotlight for *The Fire Next Time* and his bitter play, *Blues for Mister Charlie*. Besides supporting Fogarty's claims, publishing "The Man Child" emphasizes Chelsea Bauch's statement that editors allow for more varied material in *Playboy's* fictional selections; in comparison to its consistent criterion for *Playmates*, *Playboy* is "far more varied when it comes to its featured fiction." "The Man Child" offers an alternative model of masculinity, another mirror in the hall of masculinities.

"The Man Child's" lack of critical reception reinforces *Going to Meet the Man's* poor commercial success, as well as *Playboy's* harsh reviews. Biographer James Campbell states that the entire Dial Press collection of stories was "not well received," and W.J. Weatherby suggests that critics respectfully reviewed it (qtd. in DeGout 135). Campbell goes so far as to claim that the collection might reflect "an actual decline in the quality of [Baldwin's] work" (qtd. in DeGout 135). Besides "Sonny's Blues," most of the stories in *Going to Meet the Man* have received sparse critical attention and "none have been more overlooked than 'The Man Child.'" (DeGout 136). John Rees Moore's 1965 review, "An embarrassment of riches: Baldwin's *Going to Meet the Man*," contains a brief paragraph on the story. Moore labels "The Man Child" a "made up horror story" and claims that it is "unforgettable" because the "flow of the feeling among the four characters is projected with subtlety and skill" (12). Nevertheless, Moore argues that "too well made well to carry conviction," the story leaves readers with "an unpleasant sensation of the author's self-indulgence" (12). David Leeming calls "The Man Child" an "improbable tale of veiled homosexuality culminated in a child's murder at the hands of his father's best friend" (qtd. in DeGout 136). Yasmin Y. DeGout fills a dearth in critical analysis and situates the story within Baldwin's larger gender study.

“The Man Child” contains incredible imagery, strong homoerotic bonds, and brutal treatment of women and children. The plot of the story is simple: a young eight-year old, blonde boy dies at the hands of his father’s bereaved best friend. Amidst this simple plot is incredible imagery which reveals startling dichotomies between the urban/rural, adults/children, poor/wealthy, and men/women. For instance, Baldwin’s point of departure is the sun moving from the city buildings to the country fields: “The city is like an experienced whore, night comes and goes in her, she is indifferent to his approach and is left unchanged at his departure—but for the countryside, it is a different matter. There night watches his opportunity, bids his time, is patient with the silly, upbraiding sun” (210, Jan. 1966). Besides exposing the differences between the city and the country, this exposition genders the city and the sun as female and the night as male. Baldwin applies the same vivid imagery and gender constructs to Eric’s father. Striding tall across his many acres, Eric’s father is depicted as the “ideal” American male; Jamie calls him “the giant-killer, the hunter, the lover—the real old Adam” (211-212, Jan. 1966). Eric’s father “symbolizes the white, monied, ruling class,” and Jamie is characterized as his war companion, drinking buddy, best friend, and servant (DeGout 136). Importantly, Jamie (the best friend), Eric (the child), and Sophie (a miscarried fetus or stillborn) are the only named characters. Diminishing the identity of Eric’s mother and father forces readers to focus on Jamie’s and Eric’s actions. Eric’s mother “had been captured by his father” (22, Jan. 1966). “The Man Child’s” narrator claims that she “did not know that she was chained any more than she knew that she lived in terror of the night” (102, Jan. 1966). The narrator flashes back to when Eric’s mother has been “sent away,” and “it was said that she would never, really, be better, that she would never again

be as she had been” (102, Jan. 1966). She seems to only serve the men, cooking, cleaning, and laundering for both her husband and Jamie. The final description of her is ghostly; pale and full of worry, she paces the yard calling for Eric. Her disembodied calls echo as the night covers the countryside. By the story’s end, all of the children are dead. Eric’s mother has either miscarried or birthed dead infants twice, and Eric gets strangled by Jamie.

Baldwin’s model of masculinity presents dour outcomes for greedy, white men whose society requires passing wealth from one generation to the next—both adult male characters end up heirless. In the story, Eric’s father explains to him how his own children will one day own the land they walk:

He paused and stopped; Eric looked up at him. “When you get to be a big man, like your poppa, you’re going to have children. And all this going to be theirs.”

“And when *they* get married?” Eric prompted.

“All this will belong to *their* children,” his father said.

“Forever?” cried Eric.

“Forever,” said his father. (213, Jan. 1966)

When Eric asks his father if he will get married and “have a little boy” to pass his land to, Eric’s father “seemed for a moment both amused and checked” (213, Jan. 1966). He looks down at Eric “with a strange, slow smile” and reassures him by replying, “Of course you will” (213, Jan. 1966). Therefore, with “The Man Child,” Baldwin presents a model of masculinity that is “linked to broader societal ideologies” of race, class, and gender (DeGout 142). “The Man Child” helps explain how Baldwin contextualized black masculinity in the “most volatile decade of the Civil Rights Movement, a decade that witnessed the rage of Watts, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Moynihan Report, and the inception of the Black Panthers” (Shin and Judson 255). By using young, blonde Eric as

the story's center of consciousness, Baldwin shows how homophobia, classism, and sexism force children into binary oppositions. Eric's death "signals an interruption in the ideology that disrupts transcendental maturity" (DeGout 149). Baldwin gives *Playboy* readers a model of masculinities suggesting a continuum between the homosocial and homosexual, and "The Man Child's" model of masculinity seems especially critical of gender (males), race (white), and class (wealthy) constructs. True to most reviews, this facet of the text is heavy handed, while others, like the critique of space and sexuality, are more complex.

Model of Masculinity: Space

Besides being more complex than his critique of gender or race, Baldwin's comment on space is also not as thorough in "The Man Child" as it is in his other works. Most of Baldwin's fiction uses the city as a setting, and he often employs the city as a spatial metaphor to analyze how the confines of the ghetto force particular interactions. Consider his works like "Sonny's Blues," *Another Country* or *Giovanni's Room*, in which the city setting exposes class discrimination and encourages sexual explorations. In "The Man Child," however, Baldwin replaces the city with a rural setting to critique the greedy accumulation of private property. He also contrasts a gendered, confining domestic space with the great outdoors and a local dive bar, The Rafters—both the great outdoors and the bar are clearly masculine spaces used as a means of escape. Baldwin's spatial dichotomies (urban/rural; private/public) reinforce Cold War remediations of private space that allowed the government to intrude upon, and survey the actions of, subversives. Baldwin's spatial dichotomies and spaces of escape also reflect *Playboy's* Cold War agenda to redefine masculine space and the search for a safe space for the

urban bachelor.

Baldwin's white, male characters loom over their land. Both men are farmers and sons of farmers. Eric is the only heir for the expansive farmland. When Eric's father takes him for a long walk on Jamie's birthday, he points out his expansive land: "'You know all the way we walked, from the house?' Eric nodded. 'Well,' said his father, 'that's all your land.'" Admiring his property, Eric's father puts pressure on Eric's shoulder, turns him, and shows him the farm's expanse; wide-eyed, Eric asks his father where the property line ends, and his father boasts that it is too far to walk (213, Jan. 1966). As geographer Nancy Duncan claims, in "Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces," the space of the private farm is "subject to various territorializing and deterritorializing processes whereby local control is fixed, claimed, challenged, forfeited and privatized" (129). Walking his son through the farm is a territorializing act; Eric's father fixes his claim on the farm and bequeaths it, even Jamie's former property, to his son. Handing down the farm in this manner leads to Eric's ultimate demise. On the day of his murder, Eric "pretended that he was his father" and walked the expanse of his land "pleased, knowing that everything he saw belonged to him" (214, Jan. 1966). That day, Eric had "been many places, he had walked a long way and seen many things" on his land (214, Jan. 1966). He "passed an apple tree" and wondered if the apples "lying on the ground...belonged to him, if he were still walking on his own land or had gone past it" (214, Jan. 1966). When he returned to the farm house at his mother's beckoning, Jamie leads Eric to the barn and strangles him. As Eric struggles for breath, he whispers "Jamie...you can have the land. You can have all the land" (214, Jan. 1966). Jamie responds calmly to Eric's desperate pleas: "Jamie spoke, but not to Eric: 'I don't want the

land'” (214, Jan. 1966). Fearing for his life, Eric adds to his first offer, telling Jamie that he can have it all: “if you kill my father I can be your little boy and we can have it all” (214, Jan. 1966). But Jamie seems all the more intent on killing Eric after he voices this option. Jamie gets silent, stops weeping and says directly to Eric: “This land...will belong to no one” (214, Jan. 1966). Killing Eric allows Jamie to cease the cycle of privatization, and he drops Eric on the straw, “his yellow head useless on his broken neck,” and walks out into the night that covering the countryside (214, Jan. 1966). Once murdered, Eric is no longer useful in the cycle of territorializing land and with him dies the patriarchal system of inheritance.

Besides rewriting the wealthy, white relationship to private land, Baldwin also critiques the gendering of space and offers his male characters an escape from the domestic realm. Hardly any of the story's action takes indoors; even Jamie's birthday is held outside of the farm house. The domestic space of the farmhouse becomes less vital to the story's plot. Eric's mother rules the domestic space, making the farm house an inhospitable place for the male characters because they are not in charge of this realm. For instance, when Eric's mother was sent away to a either a mental institution or a hospital towards the end of her pregnancy, Eric's father “rarely went into the fields” or Jamie moved into the farm house (213, Jan. 1966). Eric was thoroughly disturbed by this reversal of gendered space; he found it “unnatural” and “frightening to find [his father] around the house all day, and Jamie was always there, Jamie and his dog” (213, Jan. 1966). When Eric's mother returns from the hospital, she once again takes charge of the domestic realm, but the strict order of space has been upended. The adult male characters seem to escape more often to The Rafters, and Eric wanders off farther than ever before,

spacing his new land. In *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, Elaine Tyler May claims that some American citizens sought ways to escape the ultra-contained, confining spaces of the Cold War. May states that rural areas “offered the combined appeals of escape from the threat of nuclear attack and a retreat into a vision of old-fashioned family life” (103). Baldwin depicts both Eric and Jamie as escaping, when they walk through the countryside. “The Man Child’s” narrator states that Jamie’s wife left because he constantly strolled the farm with his dog, as opposed to being with her in their home. For Eric’s father and Jamie, the escape to The Rafters mimics the suburban males’ escape of confining, domestic spaces.

Hefner often admitted that reading *Playboy* was one way for males to escape Cold War confines; in a 1955 interview, Hefner says that *Playboy* was “an escapist magazine” because it offered “an imaginary escape into the world of wine, women and song” (qtd. in Watts 78). Emily Gold, in “Into the Wild: The 1950s Suburban Male’s Escape Tactic,” supports Hefner’s claims that magazines “allowed the male reader to be an individual rather than a part of the faceless and domesticated suburban masses” (par. 1). Gold goes on to argue that

[f]or men, there was a feeling that the domestic sphere had not only invaded, but even “penetrated” the sphere of masculinity, and instead of men being wild, free-loving, travel and experience heavy bachelors, men were traveling to the nearby grocery store, golf course, or job. Men lost their primal selves and became domesticated. Although the veneer of men as masculine was hard fought and still in place according to Stephen Gelber, men’s roles within the community and especially within the home had shifted. (par 1)

Men’s magazines and bars, like The Rafters, provided an escape from the daily “mundane,” as well as “from the traumas and identity crises suffered” by males (Baxley

par 1). By providing his male characters with a safe space to escape, Baldwin censures the gendered divide between public and private spaces.

Model of Masculinity: Sexuality

Baldwin's critique of gendered spaces exposes the story's focus on the homoerotic bond between Jamie and Eric's father. For instance, when Eric's mother is sent away, Jamie quickly takes her place in the farmhouse. Baldwin constantly stresses their homosocial bond. Their bond is one that cannot be broken; the two men were "never...to be divided" (211, Jan. 1966). Jamie admits that Eric's father is the only reason he returned to the country after his own father lost his land; Jamie had "nothing—*really*—to keep [him] here. Just all the things [he] knew—all the things—*all* the things—[he] *ever* cared about" (211, Jan. 1966). Because Eric's father is Jamie's only friend, the italicized text suggests that Eric's father is all Jamie knows, all he cares about. Their strong bond expresses how the "effect" of the "construct of manhood in the white male hegemony" has negative effects on women and children (DeGout 146). Possibly, Jamie murders Eric to assure that their bond can never be broken. When Eric pleads for his life and questions why Jamie hates his father, Jamie tells him that he "loves [his] father" (214, Jan. 1966). However, there is a "homoerotic subtext to the homosocial bond between the two men" (DeGout 136). As Jamie hints at their past experiences together, too damaging to tell Eric's mother, Baldwin characterizes Eric's father in terms of much broader sexual preferences.

Jamie's and Eric's father's homoerotic bond disrupts Cold War discourses, which discriminated against any sexuality that was not clearly heterosexual. Homosexuality, in particular, is demonized. Bruce A. McConachie argues, in *American Theatre in the*

culture of the Cold War; that “post-war psychiatry worked hand in glove with militarization to demonize homosexuality” (61). The classification of homosexuality as a mental illness allowed government officials to present homosexuals as a threat to national security. Regardless of Kinsey’s research regarding the continuum of sexuality, anyone not strictly heterosexual also experienced discrimination. Baldwin characterizes Eric’s father as existing on this continuum. For example, during Jamie’s birthday party, Jamie asks Eric’s mother if he “ever told [her]...about the things we used to do?” (211, Jan. 1966). Eric’s mother admits that she doesn’t want to hear about them, and Eric’s father quickly chimes in: “He wouldn’t tell you anyway...he knows what I’d do to him if he did” (211, Jan. 1966). And later, when Eric’s father discusses Jamie’s old age (34), Jamie claims that he is young enough to “still do all the things [they] used to do” (211, Jan. 1966). The men also share exclusive moments of tenderness in between moments of aggression (210, 211, Jan. 1966). According to Eve Sedgwick, this type of interaction—between the homosocial and the homoerotic—draws the homosocial back into the realm of desire: “the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between the homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted” (1-2). Through their homoerotic relationship, Baldwin reveals the “political agenda that acts across the boundaries of sexual preference” (DeGout 146). Expressing that sexuality exists on a continuum, as opposed to a strict dichotomy, offers *Playboy* readers a model of masculinity that encompasses more than a fascination with the-girl-next-door Playmate.

Conclusion

By publishing “The Man Child,” *Playboy* editors provide readers with another

model of masculinity—one that offers sexuality on a continuum and critiques gendered spaces. Baldwin’s fiction also illustrates the danger of strict dichotomies, something his non-fiction *Playboy* contributions highlighted as well. When read together, the entirety of Baldwin’s *Playboy* contributions reveal his main concern—that children, African American children especially, are afforded the opportunity to grow up and out of simplistic binary oppositions (DeGout 150). His non-fiction essays on race and sexuality, and his dialog with Bud Schulberg, all mention children. Appealing to *Playboy* readers, this shared concern for future generations allows Baldwin to critique aspects of *Playboy*’s grand narrative. *Playboy*’s editorial content promotes an ideal masculinity that includes heterosexuality, capitalism, and patriarchal hegemony. All of Baldwin’s *Playboy* contributions undermine conspicuous consumption, but *Playboy* editors continued to publish him because his cultural currency provided *Playboy* with an African American correspondent on the Civil Rights Movement. And later, towards the end of the Cold War, *Playboy* used Baldwin as its reporter on the changing sexuality scene, when it published his “Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood” in January 1985.

CONCLUSION

Reminiscent of Baldwin's claim that the "great force of history...is literally present in all we do," studying *Playboy* as a Cold War artifact bridges the gap between Cold War historical, gender, and literary studies. More than an arms race, the Cold War was the emergent superpowers' struggle for governance, labor, wealth, and resources. This global conflict altered, and continues to alter, the American landscape; national security concerns forced permanent militarization, and the nuclear war produced intense uncertainties. Space and sexuality became sources of post-war tension, as cultural ideology strove for homogeneity. Government policy encouraged the eruption of homogenous suburbs. Organizational men drove to white-collar jobs on new highways and an exaggerated domestic ideology reminded women of their familial priorities. Undiscriminating market forces offered standardized fare; McDonaldization and Disneyfication promised predictable, sanitary conditions. The standardization from suburbs to sexuality required a tiring, constant performance on behalf of United States citizens. This performance, and the reactions to it, need to be studied. *Cold War Playboys* reinforces that "the normative characteristics of masculinity—and of whiteness, middle-classness, and Americanness—require constant culture work in order to appear the effortless attributes of a privilege they simultaneously justify and disguise" (Gardiner 17). Containing the normative characteristics of masculinity, as well as all of the tendencies of the Cold War, *Playboy* is an appropriate site of study. Embedded in the

glossy pages of *Playboy* are the inextricably intertwined narratives of Cold War history and post-war literature.

In his first editorial, Hugh Hefner reinforces the purpose of *Playboy* and of literature; he reminds readers that, like *Playboy*, literature is meant to delight and instruct. Consequently, when *Playboy* prints a story, it reinforces classical assumptions stated by Aristotle and Matthew Arnold. The literature of *Playboy* requires an analysis that no one seems to want to complete; even the most comprehensive scholarship on the trajectory of the “Playboy Empire” or on Hefner’s biography ignores *Playboy*’s literary pretensions, or only provides them with a few paragraphs. This omission is striking, because, as Elizabeth Fraterriggo claims, in *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, *Playboy* would not have “stood out from the numerous men’s magazines that traded in female flesh if it had not been for the larger editorial content” (3). And because Hefner has always stated that sex “by itself” was never enough, the literature in *Playboy* is just as, if not more, important than the Playmate centerfold. For Hefner, wooing women required being sophisticated, which meant engaging with literature. Hefner claims the “whole idea behind *Playboy* was to put the two parts back together again—mind and body—that have been in conflict so long in our society. Sex, after all, is more a social than a physical experience” (qtd. in Weyr 11). Accordingly, Hefner knew that seduction was a matter of the mind, not the body. Recently, at a *Playboy* mansion reunion, seventy-year-old Hefner thanked his Playmates: “Without you gals, without the Playmates, I’d be the publisher of a literary magazine” (Corliss). When *Playboy*’s early editors quip that *Playboy* would “die like a dog” without the sex, even if it had “all the Nabokovs in the world,” they inadvertently prove the necessity of the literature, not the

naked playmates (Weyr 35). Thus, the literature and the sex become codependent features in *Playboy*. And, if seduction is a matter of the mind and not the body, it makes sense that the literature component of the magazine offers the most variety. Month after month, the centerfolds are all similarly posed and each has that same doe-eyed gaze, making their photo-spread more innocent than erotic. For variety, readers must turn to the literature.

Consequently, the huge amount of space—the literal thousands of pages—which the magazine devotes to literature becomes a form of escape from the grand narrative, from *Playboy's* ethos of heterosexuality, wealth, and sophistication. The literature carves out a niche, in between the calls for conspicuous consumption and the female objectification. *Playboy's* literature can offer readers alternative models of masculinity. The space *Playboy's* literature presides over in the magazine parallels *Playboy's* reclamation of masculine space in the 'feminized society' of the Cold War. *Playboy* "grounded its vision of the good life in a different kind of space"—the bachelor pad (Fraterrigo 83). In 1962, it started to advertise its bachelor pads by sharing layouts and full-color spreads of *Playboy's* Chicago townhouses and the *Playboy* penthouse; the bachelor pads promoted "an ultra-urban island of individuality...the best of all possible worlds for the unattached, affluent young man happily wedded to the infinite advantages of urbia (sic)" (84, 105, May 1962). With this reclamation of domestic space, *Playboy* attempted to "reaffirm male privilege and power at a time when gender boundaries were shifting and the physical spaces of the city and the family home were being transformed" (Fraterrigo "Answer to Suburbia" 769). Editors advertised the bachelor pad as a way for men to rule a particular domain, and the bachelor pad allows men to construct "an

imagined space that served as an extension” of their constructed masculine identities (Fraterrigo “Playboy” 761). The bachelor pad was divided into two zones: the active zone and the quiet zone. Editors considered the living room, dining area, and kitchen to be active, entertaining zones and the bedroom, study, and bath to be quiet zones. One might assume that a playboy’s bedroom should be part of the active zone, but editors made sure that the quiet zone of the bedroom, bath, and study, were “private spaces within the privacy of the penthouse” (Fraterrigo 91). The bedroom and the study were adjacent in the layouts, reinforcing the connection between physical and mental stimulation. One might also assume that editors would put primacy on the bedroom, but, instead, they claim the study is “the sanctorum, where women are seldom invited, where [playboys] can work or read or just sit and think while gazing into the fireplace” (70). In the study, the playboy can escape from the tiring performance of his playboy life. In the safety of his sanctorum, he can read quality, serious literature. Therefore, *Playboy’s* literature offers the ultimate escape from the magazine that prides itself on offering its own “imaginary escape into the world of wine, women and song” (qtd. in Watts 78). As a complementary feature to the magazine’s nudity, *Playboy’s* fiction safely provides readers with alternative images of masculinity.

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