CASTING THE CRISIS:
REPRESENTATIONS OF GAY MEN'S IDENTITIES AND THEIR GENDERING IN NEW YORK'S AIDS LITERATURE

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by

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Abstract

This paper provides an analysis of both negative affect and the unique gendering of gay men in AIDS literature distinguished by the new social roles that emerged in response to the AIDS crisis. For affect analysis, I use a methodology of three queer theorists: Leo Bersani, Heather Love, and J. Halberstam. Taking concepts such as Bersani's self-shattering, Love's looking backward, and Halberstam's queer failure, I look at how AIDS writers depict the hardship of the AIDS crisis. Centered on New York's gay district, the dominant depictions of gay men rely heavily on a gender binary that places caregiver gays on one feminized side and the protesting activists on the other, masculine side. To look at this relationship, I turn to *Eighty-Sixed* by David B. Feinberg and Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart*. Through *Eighty-Sixed*, I look at how gay men's occupancy of the role of caregiver closely aligns their altruism with women and the feminist movement that was prominent in the 1980s, bridging some solidarity between the two social justice movements. In the second text, I look at how the militant rhetoric hones in hyper-masculinized ideas of fighting and resistance. Kramer writes of, as well as practices, highly aggressive activist methods that mirror the patriarchal and misogynistic rhetoric of the Reagan administration in its silencing of gay and feminist movements. The tactics that AIDS activists use are meant to encourage participation in AIDS activism but ultimately end up pressuring and demonizing anyone who is unable to dedicate their entire presence to the AIDS efforts. I turn to Edmund White's *Chaos* in the last chapter of the thesis to show the lingering negative affects and fragments of the gay men's gendered

system in contemporary gay, New York-based literature. White's novel suggests that holes in the gay community that the AIDS crisis created are still gaping open, filled only with self-hatred, denial, and isolation.

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Introduction

AFFECT AND THE WAY IT USED TO BE:
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Among the milestones in gay men's American history, the AIDS crisis stands out as one of the most tragic yet formative events. The AIDS crisis, throughout the 1980s and 1990s challenged gay men in numerous ways that pulled them from their lives and into roles of the sick, the caregiver, or the activist. These roles tend to be distinctly separate from one another in literature; the protagonists of each story tend to fill only one of these positions at a time. These roles are common and quite consistently represented in literature from the AIDS crisis. In this thesis, I will examine the representations of these roles, particularly how these roles encompass negative affects and a gendered binary. The roles framed in heteronormative categories of masculine and feminine. In reading gay men's literature through a lens of affect, gender, and queer theory, I hope to complicate the common understanding of the visible AIDS narratives.

This thesis has two overarching goals. The first goal is to highlight the negative affects in each literary work and its significance for casting the texts of the AIDS crisis. The second goal is to explore the peculiar gendering of the gay men in the stories and to open a discussion of the binary system that gay men forced themselves into. The

significance of the first goal is to evaluate the purpose of negative affects and what they bring to the literature in terms of persuasive power. The second goal gains its significance from understanding of history the AIDS activism and the battles that it faced from the US government, feminists, and even some gay men themselves. The texts I discuss in this thesis – David B. Feinberg's novel *Eighty-Sized*, Larry Kramer's play *The Normal Heart*, and Edmund White's novella *Chaos* – were selected from a large body to show the most readily available representations of gay men and AIDS in literature. Each chapter will focus on one of these texts and I will analyze it in terms of affect and the use of gendering within the text.

In order to establish the goals of this thesis, I first must establish several concepts. The remainder of this introduction will lay out general information on the AIDS crisis in the context of my focus parameters, the ideology between history and fictional representations, and the methodological framework utilized throughout the entire thesis, the conceptions of femininity and masculinity during the AIDS Crisis and its relationship to what I will call the Bad Activist. In setting up these points, a better understanding of the theoretical work I do in the body of the thesis becomes clear.

During the mid 1980s and throughout the 1990s, New York City made visible a spectacle that was previously much harder to find in media: gay man dying. The AIDS crisis gave millions of people a center-stage view of what it is like to die unexpectedly in youth and the worst part of this spectacle was that the audience was part of the show. Representing the AIDS crisis in literature offered authors a way to preserve their unique relationships with suffering in either dying or watching their friends and constructed

families die – or both. The AIDS crisis ignited a number of changes to the identity of gay men, most notably the drive to become activists and caregivers. Many men dedicated the rest of their lives to AIDS activism. Gay men fought and unified in numbers unheard of for gay communities at the time. Most began their activism in response to their fear of vanishing and, for most gay men at least, they did indeed have an AIDS related death. To counteract their erasure, however, many AIDS patients told their stories and had their friends tell their stories, and so forth, in art of all kinds that helped cement their place in time. As gay men flooded the hospitals and doctor's offices in the 1980s, of varying degrees of illness, a 'new' social role emerged for the gay community. As more and more gay men became incapacitated, they required constant assistance just to stay alive. The community rose to the situation and became caregivers of the dying gay men in order to ease the trauma of dying unexpectedly.

The AIDS crisis sits quite uneasily between historical and fictional boundaries that frame gay men's experiences. As David B. Feinberg suggests, "I've been straddling the line between fiction and fact for quite some time now…I filtered my experiences through a fictional persona... This mask allowed me to selectively reshape my past. Yet I found that the more I wrote, the fewer alterations of fact I made" (Feinberg 1994, xi). While the borders may appear thin, every depiction of the AIDS crisis is a filtered representation of reality constructed to explore a particular piece of the experience. Feinberg may have written closely to his own history; however he builds a narrative in his works that encompasses a narrowed lens of how AIDS impacted the gay community. The framing of AIDS narratives as close to histories may blur the lines between fact and

fiction, but it is crucial to understand that, regardless of factual evidence in a narrative, it is still a non-holistic representation of the AIDS crisis.

The focus for this thesis is only a subsection of the gay community in New York in the 1980s. Those most readily affected by HIV/AIDS in the early years before much was known about the diseases were the sexually active gay men who used public bathhouses, theaters, and bars to express themselves; the Gay men who made their sexuality not only a way of self satisfaction, but a political action and a spectacle for other gay men to interact with. While there are plenty of other subsections of gay men, – those in committed, monogamous relationships, in the closet or afraid of acting on their sexuality, or drag queens to name a few – they are not the subject of this project. While their perspectives are equally interesting, the end result of my research has led me to a frame of the most visible group in the 1980s: upper-middle class white gay men. More social communities, women's and men of color's alike, will be touched on in the conclusion of this project but could have easily had theses of their own and thus it is not my goal to shortchange their importance here or in the conclusion. It is my goal to explore the visible narratives to suggest an alternative, deeper, reading that shows the peculiar gendering of gay men during the AIDS crisis through different social roles. I plan to read the texts of this thesis through a methodological framework consisting of three queer theorists who use affect theory in an attempt to reevaluate how gay and lesbian texts are read.

Methodologically, it is crucial to understand the tools of my approach to reading the literary texts of my project. The core concepts of Leo Bersani, Heather Love, and J.

Halberstam join nicely to form a framework for how to read the chosen texts in terms of affect. The essay "Is the Rectum a Grave?" by Leo Bersani as well as the books *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* by Heather Love and *The Queer Art of Failure* by J. Halberstam all work together to explore the significance of gay shame, trauma, and failure. While Bersani and Love both explore negative affects in terms of queer existence, Halberstam theorizes the failure that queer people experience and calls for embracing failure as a part of queer life. Chronologically, each theorist builds on the last: Bersani published his essay in 1987 and from there Love released her work, which is largely in conversation with Bersani, in 2009. Finally, Halberstam released *The Queer Art of Failure* in 2011 and discusses the works of both Bersani and Love in its theorization of failure. I use the theorists to build a framework to understand the role of negative affects in gay men's writing and their significance in writing about the past and present gay history.

Leo Bersani's "Is the Rectum a Grave?" explores gay men's relationship with sex, dominance, and self-hatred. The essay is largely a criticism of gay men's identity formation and the cultural glorification of the binary of an ultimately masculine subject and an ultimately feminine subject in sexual encounters. The AIDS crisis is the example that Bersani uses to anchor his theory in that the AIDS crisis led to the demonization of any sexual expression outside of monogamy from both gay men and the straight media. To combat this, Bersani suggests that "if sexuality is socially dysfunctional in that it brings people together only to plunge them into a self-shattering and solipsistic *jouissance* that drives them apart…Gay men's 'obsession' with sex, far from being

denied, should be celebrated…because it never stops re-presenting the internalized phallic male as an infinitely loved object of sacrifice" (Bersani 30). Bersani explains that gay men's willingness to risk being 'annihilated' by a masculine, penetrative subject suggests a courage that dismantles the binary representation of sexual relationships as having one actor and one passive subject. In his reading, the gay bottom (and women) undergo(es) a self-shattering that allows for a redistribution of power for the participants of the sexual encounter, create an equalized expression of power that makes having many sexual partners a political tool to combat the moralizing of anal sex. By constantly disrupting heteronormative dominance, gay men's sexual practices exist as a gay mode of resistance.

Heather Love's *Feeling Backward* identifies the importance of negative affects within queer history. Love writes about the relationship between affects and history in that gay and lesbian critics tend to erase the hardships of queer existence in order to create a progressive narrative. Love argues that, viewing the past as a traumatic experience that queers have moved on from, it is crucial to let the past give insight only to the past (Love 19). The value of this, Love explains, is that "despite complaints about their toxicity, such tragic, tear-soaking accounts of same-sex desire compel readers in a way that brighter stories of liberation do not. Although it may be difficult to account for the continuing hold of these texts on us in the present, we have evidence of it in the powerful feelings – both positive and negative – that they inspire" (Love 3). In looking at the hard affects of queerness, like self-hatred and gay shame, one can better understand a complex queer past. It is critical to realize that, while Love's writing about queer pasts,

those queer pasts were once contemporary views of queer existence. Love argues that analyzing the parallels between a contemporary queer identity and that of the past in terms of negative affects debunks the idea of progressivism or significant improvement of queer life and allows for queers to appropriately express their negative affects.

J. Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* focuses on the concept of failure and recognizing it as a form of queering. By looking to the long history of queers as failed heterosexual and cisgender people, Halberstam suggests a reclaiming of their titles of failed normal people. By aligning with losers, queer people undermine the political advantages of winning, and thus perform resistance by associating with failure. In looking at expressions of failure, Halberstam argues that "one form of queer art has made failure its centerpiece and has cast queerness as the dark landscape of confusion, loneliness, alienation, impossibility, and awkwardness" (Halberstam 97). In identifying with failure, queer people are surrounding themselves with, and potentially embracing, the negative affects that Love deems critical for the complexity of queer history. Halberstam, in connection with Love, suggests that it is potentially damaging to queer studies if one tries to separate queer people from failure and erase the historical connections that gay and lesbian studies has with failure and its negative affects. Ultimately, with *The Queer Art of Failure*, I plan to analyze the ways in which gay writers utilize failure on the level of character to achieve greater political leverage.

Using Bersani, Love, Halberstam, and historical writings from the period, I plan to show how gay men depict their activism and the hard affects of gay men's existence to showcase gay men's identities and the changes those identities faced from the AIDS

crisis. In analyzing the portrayals of gay shame and self-hatred in AIDS narratives, I will show that the author's political implications are manifested in the failures of the characters of texts and ultimately serve as a call-to-action for gay men and their allies to perform their activism more vigorously, passionately, and strategically.

Gay writers in their renditions of the AIDS crisis borrow tools from the feminist literary theory to help readers further empathize with foreign experiences and emotions. A crucial aspect of feminist literary tradition is to redirect the reader's perspective to that of an oppressed community. Women have used this approach to read traditional literary canon and feminists have used it to write women's narratives that force the reader to identify with a woman's perspective to give women someone to identify with that is not, most often, their white heterosexual male oppressors. An additional purpose to this tradition is that it forces readers from outside the oppressed identity to further empathize with the lived experience that they are reading through. Gay men are participating with, or adapting, this tradition to give insight to the lived experience of gay men who struggle with HIV/AIDS positive diagnoses. This writing strategy is a form of political resistance to show the importance of the issue and is also a tool to gain political footing in their efforts to dismantle the stigmatization of HIV/AIDS and to receive greater support.

The utilization of feminist literary tools is interesting for two reasons. First, the AIDS crisis allowed some solidarity, through compassion, between gay and feminist movements. Second, because the AIDS crisis simultaneously provided a platform for gay white male supremacy that showed the stark differences between movements due to AIDS activism's usage of patriarchal tactics and ideologies. A large portion of AIDS

activists, mostly gay men, utilized a patriarchal activism style that demonizes/shames gay men who do not participate and valorizes those who do. In doing this, gay men erase class, race, and ability and police each other on their ability to participating with activism. This mirrors misogyny very closely, so in practice, gay men are fighting a heteronormative patriarchal government with patriarchal methodology and using those methods within the gay community on gay people and women who do not participate with them in the activist effort. The narcissistic, or abusive, use of their visibility within the social, political, and media realms leads me to characterize many AIDS activists as Bad Activists. These Bad Activists clashed with feminists and the feminist movement that shattered the possibility of widespread unity between the movements in the eighties.

The theoretical differences between AIDS and feminist activists at the time are seen in the ideological stances of Larry Kramer compared to Susan Sontag. Their opposition shows the stark differences of the two social movements as well as the patriarchal problems in Kramer's own ideology. To frame Sontag, she is a theorist of literary criticism, medicine and photography. Her work in "AIDS and Its Metaphors" sets out to break down the imagery of war in the context of AIDS and medicine in general. One of her criticisms is that "war-making is one of the few activities that people are not supposed to view 'realistically': that is, with an eye to expense and practical outcome. In all-out war, expenditure is all-out, unprudent – war being defined as an emergency in which no sacrifice is excessive" (Sontag 99). By presenting the body as a battlefield, illness as a war, one is metaphorically suggesting that the illness must be stopped regardless of how; whether they survive the illness or not. While the idea of avoiding all-

out warfare may seem quite easy to get behind, it is far from what AIDS activists had in mind. Larry Kramer is often criticized for his harsh militarism within AIDS activism. He helped form the organization Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) but was forced out of the group because his relentless activist style. He then created his own organization, ACT-UP. ACT-UP, with its full title being AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, uses the slogan "ACT UP! FIGHT BACK! FIGHT AIDS!" This puts such a heavy emphasis on militarism and the battlefield that Kramer found it impossible to use any other tactic. Kramer binds himself to a proving ground where he, along with his followers, must embody masculinity, and violence, to reach their goal. He uses the tools of patriarchy to fight the patriarchal system that oppressed AIDS patients and activists. Sontag, contrarily, attempts to pull apart the patriarchal tools of analysis through an emphasis on re-humanizing AIDS patients.

Within Kramer's toolset of patriarchal tactics, is erasure. Kramer is quite clear in his activism that the only way to be his ally is to do exactly as he does. His departure from GMHC due to his excessive militarism is just one example of this because the rest of his organization did not wish to join him in his tactics. Sontag is cautious of the war metaphor because it gives both activists and oppressors an excuse to be hyperbolic. Sontag critiques the metaphor by explaining that "the effect of the military imagery on thinking about sickness and health is far from inconsequential. It overmobalizes, it overdescribes, and it powerfully contributes to the excommunication and stigmatization of the ill" (Sontag 182). The idea of having no sacrifice too grand for victory places all of the involved parties in a competition to outperform the other displays of masculinity.

Kramer is guilty of this often. In a speech shortly after his exile from GMHC, he declared that

> I am sick of closeted gays. It is 1983 already, guys, when are you going to come out? By 1984 you could be dead. Every gay man who is unable to come forward now and fight to save his own life is truly helping to kill the rest of us…As more and more of my friends die, I have less and less sympathy for men who are afraid their mommies will find out or afraid their bosses will find out or afraid their fellow doctors or professional associates will find out. Unless we can generate visibly, numbers, masses, we are going to die. (Kramer 1994, 45)

Despite one's other identities, gay men's commitment to their sexuality must remain most important to Kramer. In this, he shames closeted people for not dedicating their lives to activism for fear of the ramifications of coming out. Despite their class, race, religion, and ability, Kramer voices his disgust with gay people who, regardless of their sexual practices and proximity to AIDS, do not fight with him. He erases all nuance in gay men's identity for the purpose of solidarity in activism, however he asks this without adjusting his activism to encompass the needs of other gay me. Kramer uses erasure and other patriarchal tools in his activism and thus I would label him as a Bad Activist.

Historically speaking, prior to the AIDS crisis, gay men were figuratively constructed entirely around sex. The Stonewall Riots produced a bold new resistance that gay men quickly framed their lives around. To resist societal and governmental oppression as well as find solace from the negative affects of sexual attraction, many gay men took to the bathhouses and restructured their identities around gay sex. In an essay,

"Esthetics and Loss," Edmund White explains the significance of sex in this period, mid/late sixties and the seventies, as "not simple, humdrum coupling, but a new principle of adhesiveness. Sex provided a daily brush with the ecstatic, a rehearsal of forgotten pain under the sign of the miraculous – sex was a force binding familiar atoms into new polymers of affinity" (White 2003, 166-167). For many, sex was liberating because it was often a reason for delegitimizing homosexual relationships. A homophobe may have argued that there was no way for two men to have sex; gay men responded with a vibrant display to prove them wrong. One example of this pre-AIDS fixation with sex that gay men had is in David B. Feinberg's *Eighty-Sixed*. Very early in the novel, before there is any AIDS awareness, the main character, B.J., describes one of his visits to a bathhouse in that:

> We lay down on the bed. He opened a tiny bottle and offered me a hit of poppers. I nodded yes…Suddenly I was all sex, he was all sex, I was overwhelmed by it, this drive, everything was sex, every touch was completely sexual, my heart was beating, all I could think of was sex, my heart was pounding loudly, violently, I was obsessed, I wanted to touch him all over, I wanted everything inside me at once, I wanted to envelop him, every sensation was magnified, I was a sex machine, I forced myself to take him slowly, I savored every inch of him down my throat, he was sucking me at the same time, I went deeper and then pulled away, twisting his nipples, licking his balls, tongue darting in and out, and then I felt weak, the feeling waned, I was pounding air, my head hurt a little, I slowed down and stopped. (Feinberg 1989, 22)

This graphic depiction of homosexual sex does much work to carve out the reality of gay sex for anyone who doubted its possibility. In living out new sexual, personal, and societal possibilities, gay men worked to establish the political validity of homosexuality with gay activism of the seventies and onward.

From bathhouses, HIV spread rapidly and launched the crisis into its maximum impact. A fundamental timeline of events is helpful in framing my thesis in a historical context. AIDS, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, was first noticed in 1981 when a string of young gay men developed extremely rare diseases, among the most common being Kaposi's sarcoma (Whiteside 1). An important note on the naming of AIDS is that it was initially called GRID, the Gay-Related Immune Deficiency and while the medical industry was willing to rename AIDS upon the realization that it could affect anyone and not just gay people, they ultimately named it 'Acquired' Immune Deficiency Syndrome, which serves to highlight its inorganic nature and suggests blame onto those who acquire the disease. When first discovered, it was unclear as to how AIDS was transmitted and that resulted in a, relatively, widespread hysteria around AIDS. It was not until 1984 when doctors differentiated AIDS into stages, with the first stage being HIV, or Human Immunodeficiency Virus (Whiteside 2). The first known treatment was a drug called AZT (azidothymidine). It was approved for human trials in 1986 and used extensively early in the AIDS crisis. Among the problems with the drug at the time was that it was unspecific for each HIV/AIDS patient's immune system. Since the variation of the patient's severity of sickness is not taken into account, many patients responded very negatively. If a patient had a mostly-functioning immune system and the medicine's

target was not abundantly present to be neutralized, the medicine became toxic to the patient's functioning immune system instead (Whiteside 32). It was not until 1996 that, at least in the United States, the number of new HIV infections decreased (Whiteside 108). Contextually, that means that for the entirety of the eighties and most of the nineties were an uphill struggle for AIDS patients, caregivers, and activists alike.

Each chapter in this thesis centers around one text and works with the concepts of affect and the gendering of identities. The first chapter will highlight the caregiver role that gay men reluctantly took on in the novel *Eighty-Sixed*. The novel shows the potential bridge between gay men and women in caretaking and the solidarity that could have been achieved to help bring the feminist and gay/AIDS activists together in a more coherent manner. The second chapter focuses on how that bridge was ultimately shattered by the Bad Activist and his gross mistreatment of others to get ahead in his struggles. The chapter centers on the play *The Normal Heart*. Lastly, the third chapter explores how the gendering of gay men in their roles has persisted in contemporary literature revolving around HIV/AIDS. The novella *Chaos* shows both caretaker and a masculine identities and centers on a sense of failure in one or both of those categories. In the conclusion of this thesis, I will draw more attention to the outcome of the silenced groups that the Bad Activist forced out of the visible literature of AIDS.

Chapter One

LEARNING HOW TO CRY: DEPICTING THE GAY CAREGIVER AND AIDS SENSITIVITY IN DAVID B. FEINBERG'S *EIGHTY-SIXED*

As I have suggested, the caregiver role was new for the gay community in a social, or public, setting; however the caregiver role is far from new and the struggles associated with the role are far from foreign to women. Just as mothers, daughters, and sisters have filled this role in other contexts, gay men stepped up to assist their dying friends during the AIDS crisis. Prior to the 1980s, the Gay Rights Movement and the Women's Movement had some tensions between them as to whose voices were to be included where, whose movement was of the greater importance, and ultimately where one's loyalty should lie between the two. The AIDS crisis, however, brought a unique circumstance that offered the two communities solidarity through the link of care. Gay men came to empathize with women's struggles with imposed caregiver roles, which offered a release of some of the conflict between the two social movements. *Eighty-Sixed* by David B. Feinberg shows these tensions and the complexity of personal struggle associated with becoming the caregiver of someone with AIDS. Through the methodological frame that I have constructed using the work of Bersani, Love, and

Halberstam, I will argue that Feinberg's use of negative affects highlights queer suffering and failure by showing the unabashed ugliness of AIDS. I also will make the connection that gay men's initial reluctance to occupy the caregiver role exists as a conflict in the construction of gay men's masculinity and their inevitable struggle with it serves as an act of solidarity between the AIDS activists and the women who are fighting with them.

The novel itself is composed of two parts that both have two overarching purposes. The first part, "1980: Ancient History" explores the parameters of gay men's sexuality in pre-AIDS New York. Through a plethora of sexual encounters, visits to bathhouses, and numerous 'social diseases' (Feinberg 1989, 24), – namely gonorrhea and Herpes among others – readers are invited to a moment in gay men's history where sex was available and largely nonlethal. The sexual freedom experienced by main character Benjamin (B.J.) Rosenthal is common amongst urban gay men's communities. In addition to graphic depiction of gay men's sexuality, the first part of the novel also sets up B.J.'s uncomfortable relationship with his family in showing his emotional and spatial distance from them. The second part of the book, "1986: Learning How to Cry" focuses on the impact of AIDS and B.J.'s reluctance to join the others in his community to support those with AIDS. The fear of the unknown is quite prevalent in the novel, from his unwillingness to touch persons with AIDS at first to his sexual frustration in not knowing what constitutes safe sexual activity prior to a complex understanding of AIDS. The second part, similarly to the first part, focuses on his family but this time it is his attempt to reconcile with them, particularly with his mother. The before-and-after setup

of the story helps showcase the dramatic impact that the AIDS crisis had on the New York gay community.

Eighty-Sixed opens a nuanced dialog of gay men's relationship with both affect and feminists. Using the tools from the theorists – namely, Bersani's self-shattering, Love's feeling backward, and Halberstam's failure – I will examine Feinberg's political claims. Feinberg's novel opens conversation about the miscommunications between different identities during the AIDS crisis. In questioning the relationship that gay men held during the crisis, Feinberg becomes an advocate for the solidarity that Larry Kramer desired but approached problematically.

In connection with Leo Bersani's work, *Eighty-Sixed* shows an effective self-shattering that, while plunging B.J. into negative affects, illuminates the strength in gay men's existence. B.J. initially falls into one of the traps that Bersani warns against that erases gay men's possibility. In "Is the Rectum a Grave?," Bersani states that "the dead seriousness of the gay commitment to machismo…means that gay men run the risk of idealizing and feeling inferior to certain representations of masculinity on the basis of which they are in fact judged and condemned" (Bersani 14). The sexual appeal of the masculine ideal gives overwhelming power to the gay men who fall under the machismo type while other gay men are overshadowed by machismo and conceptually devalued by the gay community and society at large. Feinberg writes of this problematic valorizing of heteronormative masculinity in his descriptions of homosocial spaces like bathhouses and gay gyms. In a gym locker room, B.J. explains that "Carlo was gorgeous, and he knew it. His eyes were ice-blue, his hair soft and tousled brown, his mustache immaculately

trimmed. Carlo reeked of sex and masculinity. He had huge thighs and delicate nipples atop boulderous pecs. I'd get hard whenever I was near him" (Feinberg 1989, 33). By ogling Carlo, a random guy he ran into at the gym and eventually had a one-night stand with, he unequally distributes power between them. B.J. has to chase Carlo for attention and, after several communication attempts after their sexual encounter, he gives up trying to turn their one-night-stand into a relationship.

B.J. grows by the second half of the novel, however, and acknowledges the negative affects which allow him to experience the self-shattering that Bersani encourages. Well into his devotion to being a caregiver to his friend Bob, he meets Mario by chance and is reminded of sex before AIDS. He decides to break his celibacy and during his sexual encounter, he confesses his feeling that "He looks better naked than I expected. I want to lick his cock, but I can't; I'm afraid to even touch it this soon because I might smear some precum accidentally on his nipples and suck them afterward. I feel confined, a million invisible strands of thread forming a skein of restriction. Mario lies on top of me, holds my arms by my head so my biceps are tensed, and slowly humps my stomach" (Feinberg 1989, 319). In this, B.J. finds the non-machismo body of Mario appealing and despite the risk that a basic understanding of AIDS holds, initiates sexual activity. This knowledge, of feeling constrained by millions of threads, is his shattering and, in going through with his sexual desires despite his fear, the power of the gay sexual experience is equalized because both parties take the risk. By taking the risk, B.J. stands as resistance towards the societal warning that any and all gay sex will result in death by AIDS.

Next, analyzing *Eighty-Sixed* with the tools that Heather Love establishes leads to an emphasis on the negative affects in the novel. The affects of fear and gay shame and loneliness particularly play a large role in the power of the novel. As Love suggests, the intensity of the painful feelings offers a compelling desire for stories (Love 3). The portrayal of informed queer lived experience, especially a negative one, holds a particular sharpness that triggers either sympathy or empathy. An example of gay men's loneliness in *Eighty-Sixed* is, in the second part of the novel when B.J. describes his non-intimate way(s) of having sex after AIDS becomes a public concern for gay men. He says "the closest thing to unsafe sex I've had in the past three years was masturbating to a bodybuilding video on my VCR with someone else in the same room. We both wore rubbers. I still feel nervous" (Feinberg 1989, 262). This shows a vivid stripping of previously established sexuality in that there is physical distance between B.J. and his partner. They are not next to each other, but only in the same room. The threat of a traditional pornographic movie is far too great, for the viewing of homosexual, most likely penetrative, sex would trigger too much temptation. Condoms are an unpleasant necessity whereas they were hardly considered in the past, for any threat could be easily resolved with a trip to the doctor and an inconvenient week or two without sex. Where sex was an active form of resistance before AIDS, it is now a torturous temptation for B.J.

Additionally, B.J.'s fear and gay shame highlight the power of negative affects. As a caregiver to Bob, B.J. gradually becomes more and more anxious as to what his life would be like if he were in Bob's position. As a part of his façade of strength for Bob, he

finds crying difficult. He proclaims that "…now I am afraid of crying. I am afraid that once I start crying, I will be on a jag that won't end for days. I will never stop; I will cry and cry and cry. I have so much pain and frustration bottled up that if I ever let go, even for a moment, I'll fall to pieces" (Feinberg 1989, 295). The sharp negative affects show B.J.'s concerns of the instability of his position not only as a caregiver but in his community in general. If he falls apart, Bob will suffer because of it. Also, in connection with B.J.'s expresses deep anxiety that the AIDS crisis put the gay community in a place where it is impossible to view its futurity. Once B.J. emotionally shatters, he will figuratively and literally die from AIDS. In connection to Bersani's shattering, B.J. would have to allow himself to give in, shatter, and die in a sense. While resistant to shattering, he does eventually give in. The pressure established through his role as Bob's caregiver puts a heavy burden on B.J. and his hardship with this showcases the power of negative affects.

In a last point building from Love's work, it is easy to see the impossibility of gay men's existence through the concept of looking backward at the time of the AIDS crisis. In dealing with a gay past, it is almost instinct to judge it based on the queer present to see how far a community has come. By critiquing gay men's narratives in terms of progression, part of the narrative is systematically masked by heteronormative temporality. Instead, in viewing the work that negative affects play in this process, Love explains that "I do argue for the importance of such [negative] feelings in general. Backward feelings serve as an index to the ruined state of the social world; they indicate continuities between the bad gay past and the present; and show the inadequacy of queer

narratives of progress" (Love 27). The author of the story, as they write contemporaneously, is not aware of the definite direction in which queer existence will go, therefore for present-day readers to view novels as a piece of a progressive chain is to impose a false linear movement of social rights for queer people through history. *Eighty-Sixed* deals with this inadequacy of the queer future during the 1980s. In describing the anxiety of a doctor's visit, B.J. tells the reader that "at three o'clock I decide that I am dying. Five years ago I could have attributed my sore throat to strep, clap, or sheer stretching in the act of fellatio, but now I know that it is candidiasis, a.k.a. thrush a.k.a. a logical precursor to AIDS, which means I will be dead before the year is out" (Feinberg 1989, 209). The impossibility of a foreseeable future during the AIDS crisis caused many authors to write up to a cliff in which the negative affects of the characters take over and send them to their abrupt end. There is more to be said on gay men's futurity within the AIDS crisis later in this chapter, but the central idea of Love's relation to it is that AIDS infected the liberated gay past, and to look back caused immense suffering to the gay men who were lonely, sex deprived, and increasingly self-hating. The pain that they felt forced them to look towards the future when there was not one visible, and thus required their death in one fashion or another.

Finally, Halberstam's conception of failure is helpful in analyzing *Eighty-Sixed* in terms of queerness and its relevance to the newly emerged gay caregiver role. B.J. fails on numerous fronts and his failure helps shape his understanding of the importance of the caregiver. Firstly, B.J. struggles to find a monogamous partner in the sexual culture of New York prior to AIDS. His frustration with this suggests his preference for a life that

borders on being homonormative. In this, homonormativity is failure due to its submission to heteronormative ideology and refusal to combat dominant norms gender and sexuality. In assimilating to the dominant culture, gay men erase pieces of their identity that do not fit evenly into mainstream society. B.J.'s desire for a normative relationship is apparent from the start of the novel. He says that "I wasn't asking for much. I just wanted someone who was overwhelmingly appealing physically, sexually, and mentally, who told jokes and could always keep me entertained and knew calculus…and read books and lifted weights and was hot enough to pose in a pornographic magazine but wouldn't for reasons of privacy and wasn't married to anyone" (Feinberg 1989, 12). Paying particular attention to the order in which B.J. lists his desires, he more than anything wants a partner who physically fits the part. After finding a partner that would physically help him fit into normative community, his next greatest concern is his sexual satisfaction and then lastly his mental match with his partner. His drive to blend into the larger New York community by finding the perfect partner pushed him further away from normativity and into the realm of failure.

Another strand of failure present in *Eighty-Sixed* is shown through family. Family and futurity have strong connections to queer failure and offer a look at how gay people tend to carve alternative into their environments. Linking B.J.'s refusal of familial lineage contributes to his failure in the context of resistance. Halberstam describes the connection of lineage and failure in saying "queer lives seek to uncouple change from the supposedly organic and immutable forms of family and inheritance; queer lives exploit some potential for a difference in form that lies dormant in queer collectivity not as an essential

attribute to sexual otherness but as a possibility embedded in the break from heterosexual life narratives" (Halberstam, 2011, 70). Failure is about creating space for alternatives of normative culture and that space manifests as a disruption to otherwise normative-leaning lives. Feinberg writes of this disruption at the end of the novel when B.J. and his mother get into an argument in which B.J.'s mother brings up the complications of her age in terms of normativity. She says "Dying is a fact of life. You don't know what it's like to see your own mother sitting in the lunchroom all alone. If I don't look after her, who will? Last week she had a bowel movement in the shower. What's going to happen when I get old? You're off in New York; you've got your own life; you're not going to come home. Sheila's just struggling to survive. They barely make enough to make ends meet. I'm all alone. I thought it was going to be easier when I got old…I'm all alone in this world" (Feinberg 1989, 315). It is clear to see the anxiety that B.J.'s mother faces with the uncertainty of her security in old age. Due to her children's failure in terms of normativity, it has caused a disruption in her own life. B.J.'s gayness does attempt to unlink familial connections because of his geographical distance as well as emotional incongruity between B.J. and his family. Through this severance of familial ties, it allows for other connection, which B.J. uses to become a caregiver to Bob.

Furthermore, B.J.'s relationship with alternative kinship is not without failure of its own. B.J.'s struggle with the identification as a caregiver is one of the central foci of the latter half of the book. B.J.'s failure to get a boyfriend pushes him closer to the alternative kinship which Halberstam discusses; however, he also fails as a caregiver in his alternative kinship because of his discomfort with the role. This discomfort is very

visible at first. In the novel after hearing of Bob's degeneration, B.J. explains "I figured when your legs go, you're on the way out. I don't want to commit myself to playing Mother Teresa twice a week. Yet I don't know how to say no. I really identify with Bob: his pain, his helplessness. It could easily be me. I am sucked into his disease" (Feinberg 1989, 235). When first presented with the position as one of Bob's caregivers, B.J. immediately shies away from the traditionally feminine role. He internally refuses the commitment, or burden, of being a caregiver and refuses to bear witness to the hardship of closely watching someone die. His reluctance is an effort to preserve his masculinity but in the end he gives up and his autonomy in that sense is taken away from him and he is sucked into the disease and loses his power and control. This is further emphasized because he doesn't want to become Mother Teresa, because she is a woman and because she is a caregiver, but most importantly because she is celibate. B.J. does not want to give up but he for Bob or for his own safety but he has to or he will die. Over a few months, B.J. becomes more and more involved with Bob's care until he takes time to rekindle his relationship with his family and goes home for Thanksgiving. On the night of the return to New York, B.J. decides to go to a bar instead of the hospital where Bob is staying. From there, he meets Mario and decides to take him home. During their sexual encounter, B.J. receives a phone call and listens to the answering machine. B.J. dictates the message: "'B.J., it's Dave. I got a call from St. Clare's a few minutes ago. Bob Broome just died. His lungs had filled with fluid, and he drowned. I didn't want you to go there and visit him straight from Rochester and find out he was dead.' He hangs up. I go limp. Mario Stops. I wait for the tears to flow" (Feinberg 1989, 319). B.J. decides to put himself first

in this instance and because of it misses his chance to be close to Bob in his death. This places his failure outside of the kinship binary established between familial and alternative affinities. The breaking of binaries is a project of gay and lesbian studies in itself and Feinberg's exploration of alternatives through failure is a significant during the AIDS crisis when alternatives became critical.

A final point for Halberstam's theory is that failure can be used to analyze B.J.'s conclusion in the epilogue. After Bob's death, B.J. goes through the stages of morning, but ultimately becomes insecure of his place within the AIDS crisis due to his experienced failure as a caregiver. Halberstam stresses the importance of failure in that "we can recognize failure as a way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and as a form of critique. As a practice, failure recognizes that alternatives are embedded already in the dominant and that power is never total or consistent; indeed failure can exploit the unpredictability of ideology and its indeterminate qualities" (Halberstam 88). As it has been established, failure as a mode of resistance sets out to carve more space for alternative to be visible. While the alternatives have always been options, they have not seemed like plausible options because of the societal normativity. In resisting, gay men embrace alternative possibilities. In the closing paragraph of the book, B.J. expresses his distraught nature when another one of his friends announces his positive AIDS diagnosis. B.J. says "it begins as a gentle rain. Just a drop, for each illness, each death. And with each passing day it gets worse. Now a downpour. Now a torrent. And there is no likelihood of its ever ending" (Feinberg 1989, 326). B.J. expresses the apparent impossibility of fighting AIDS. He cannot imagine himself repeating the process

that he went through with Bob and is struck with melancholy. In conjunction with Heather Love, B.J. seems unwilling to look back at the gay past pre-AIDS. The current, horrific affective state makes it clear that backward glances are painful because of the great disparity between them and the present. If looking back is painful and there is no futurity because of the negative societal response to AIDS, than the people of the AIDS crisis are pushed to the far reaching edge of failure. The only viable option is to accept gay men's sexuality as a death wish, which initiates a few possibilities. The first is to resist the damnation of gay life and to continue the path towards AIDS and death, or to admit heteronormative failure and abandon desired sexual satisfaction. As some slept to their AIDS related death, many, like B.J. froze, unsure of what to do next; futurity and gay men's lives in flux.

The concept of care is important to realize the role it has in gay men's identity during the AIDS crisis. In the 1980s, an understanding of care was crucial for both feminist and gay movements in that they emphasized compassion, which the movements used to evoke empathy from others. Philip Kayal describes the role of care giving and AIDS activism in his book *Bearing Witness: Gay Men's Health Crisis and the Politics of AIDS.* He explains that "AIDS turns a condition of marginality into the basis for community. This life in community makes living in peace with ourselves possible, especially since there is no easy way to differentiating who is actually sick and contagious or of determining who will be sick or well at any given moment. The gay mobilization in AIDS mirrors and encapsulates the totality of human needs and desires. It is the essence of communalization" (Kayal 200). Kayal focuses his attention on optimism

and describes the way that the AIDS crisis brings the community together. The willingness of a marginalized community to come together and tend to itself in a time captures the true nature of care and ultimately attempts to align gay men and women closer in terms of empathy. While Feinberg sets this out theoretically, he allows B.J. to struggle with his position. B.J. is slowly worked into the role of care giver and early on he was still very unwilling to bear witness to the hardship of Bob's illness. In describing a visit with Bob, B.J. says that "Bob tires easily. Ten minutes later he says there are too many people and asks if some of us wouldn't mind leaving…I stay with Bob, Jerry, and Dave. We chat for an hour and a half…I feel bad that I can't get physically close to Bob; I should do more, but how can I express physical affection for Bob without being phony" (Feinberg 1989, 250)? He further goes on to explain how whenever the room begins to smell, a nurse, with emphasis on her pronouns, comes in and changes the sheets while he steps out of the room (Feinberg 1989, 258). This shows B.J.'s proximity quite well in that he agrees to help but does whatever he can to avoid anything explicit, at least initially. Feinberg establishes the discomfort that B.J. has with his shifting role within his community and while Feinberg offers this perspective onto history, it seems fair to suggest that he is doing so from a point of compassion, not support with B.J.

The outcome of gay men's embracing of caregiver roles could change the relationship that gay men have with other minority groups and create a stronger solidarity against patriarchy. During the AIDS activism of the 1980s and 1990s, there is still a large divide between gay and feminist communities and the caregiver role had the potential to bridge that gap. Kayal discusses the potential that care giving can have of the AIDS

community. He says "when gays learn to nurture one another, to love, accept, and express the affective in themselves and affirm it for others the very meaning of what gay is and the daily relations of gays to one another are irrevocably altered" (Kayal 220). Gay men are lacking the feminist understanding of altruism and the AIDS crisis offered them a way to gain this knowledge. With this understanding, one would better be able to actively resist patriarchal thinking. Feinberg is aware of this flaw within the gay community and extensively writes about it through the relationship between B.J. and his mother. The parallels between their caregiver roles are strong and that does cause them to open dialogue, albeit through an argument, and their experiences. Feinberg presents the argument to show the imperfection of the current gay understanding of altruism. During their fight, B.J.'s mom says that "it's not easy for me, either. You know, three people died at the home this week. I go there every day to see my mother. She's not going to be around forever. I volunteer and help out in the crafts room; I go on trips with them; I help feed them at mealtime. We're all going to die. Your sister, Sheila, I'm lucky if she visits grandma once every two months. I'm all alone in this big house. I hardly ever get out, except to see my mother" (Feinberg 1989, 314-315). Feinberg draws parallels between B.J. and his mother to emphasize their shared experience. While the characters do not necessarily mend their relationship after this, it is nonetheless presented to the readers to ponder its relevancy in the history of the AIDS crisis. Care and empathy are key components to reaching solidarity within the feminist and gay movements and gay men's acceptance or embracing of their nurturing elements is the main roadblock of this solidarity.

A last topic for this chapter and the caregiver role is a discussion of the theoretical unification under empathy that gay men and women would have developed during the AIDS crisis if it had not been for the activist style of many AIDS activists. Feinberg offers an explicit look at the tensions between gay and feminist communities with his treatment towards feminine subjects within *Eighty-Sixed*. Through B.J.'s occasional, often contemptuous, remarks about feminism, and his visibly selfish demeanor for most of the novel, Feinberg lays out the different motivations for feminist and gay/AIDS activists. Early on in the novel, while 'consoling' his friend Rachel about her breakup, he declares "…Listen Rachel, you're a feminist; we're all feminists. I'd burn my bra if I were a transvestite as an act of solidarity with the movement" (Feinberg 1989, 80). B.J.'s clear trivialization of the Women's Movement in the 1980s touches on not only Rachel's concerns about being a decent girlfriend but also women's activism as a whole. While this may seem obscure, Feinberg inserts this dialogue to point out misogyny within the gay community. At this point in the novel, it is pre-AIDS and therefore gay and feminist movements are both on the up-swing and fighting for their causes at the same time. Bell Hooks does an excellent work to show the relationship of men, gay and straight, towards women in her book The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love. She states that "more often than not, gay males, unless they have consciously decided otherwise, are as patriarchal in their thinking about masculinity, about sexuality, as their heterosexual counterparts. Their investment in patriarchy is an intensely disordered desire, because they are enamored of the very ideology that fosters and promotes homophobia" (Hooks 86). The same masculine idolization that Bersani discusses in relation to self-shattering,

Love explains that this masculine identity, despite being largely homophobic, is desirably and often enacted by gay men. If gay men mimic straight, hyper masculine men, then misogyny and homophobia are both going to manifest.

The AIDS crisis suggests a difficult time for gay men's masculinity in that sex, the main way men are socialized to achieve manhood, is largely off limits. Whether it is through wealth, physical dominance, or reproducing a particular appearance, men have always found ways to reaffirm their masculinity and one of the ways that they often do this is through sex. Michael Kimmel describes men's relationship with sex in saying "sexual pleasure is rarely the goal in a sexual encounter, something far more important than mere pleasure is on the line, our sense of ourselves as men. Men's sense of sexual scarcity and an almost compulsive need for sex to confirm manhood feed each other, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of sexual deprivation and despair" (Kimmel 269). If this is true, then gay men lost their ability to prove their manhood at the start of the AIDS crisis and this has accumulated anger and frustration. Feinberg shows this in B.J.'s outbursts in his argument with his mother near the end of the book. He exclaims at his mother "It's always your pain that's real. Never mine. Nothing that happens to me ever matters. Listen, I'm sorry your life's all fucked up. I didn't tell you you have to spend your life looking after your senile mother, but that's what happens: People grow old, get senile, and die. But Bob is only thirty-five. And he's not the only one. The Hospital wards are overflowing. A lot of people are dying, and it's horrible, and I'm not playing one-upsmanship with you" (Feinberg 1989, 315). B.J. does not have any reservation about arguing with his mother after her initial passage of the argument used earlier in this

chapter. His inability to express himself sexually and prove his manhood has led to built-up anger. Typically, when communities of men lose their ability to prove their manhood, they will find new ways to prove it to them, and in this case, the gay men of the AIDS crisis became new, voracious activists.

Men discover new avenues to prove their masculinity and during the AIDS crisis, the new avenues were the activist and caregiver roles. These roles were largely adopted due to necessity to combat the overwhelming governmental opposition to the AIDS effort. By creating hysteria, political officials tried to deter the public from empathizing with people with AIDS. Philip Kayal describes this as "AIDS hysteria is designed to oppress and destroy community. It goes far beyond the social and cultural annihilation of the gays, the control of homosexual desire, or even the deinstitutionalization of gay community life. AIDS hysteria celebrates dominance over the individual by being rooted in the indivisible fusion of the sacred with the state" (Kayal 200). It is, quite clearly, true that the political opposition to homosexuality does celebrate the domination and suppression of the gay community. What is truly tragic, however, is that to combat this oppression, the gay men become activists and often fall into the same traps of domination over their otherwise allies. While men may be creating new ways to explore manhood, old manifestations of masculinity can appear. At one point in *Eighty-Sixed*, for example, B.J. is discussing being a caregiver with another gay man filling that role. The other man says "you know, I don't know if I could be a volunteer at GMHC as a buddy. I mean, I could handle answering the phones and giving out information – simple office work, data entry on their personal computers. But I don't think I could face the one-on-one

relationship with a buddy dying of AIDS" (Feinberg 1989, 269). There is still a sense of devaluing caregiving in the man's dialogue. Instead of participating, he says he would rather help in other ways if the person was not a close friend. It also highlights the class of many of the prominent activists, as data entry on computers during the 1980s shows a vast wealth, as computers were far from household items. The devaluation of what is considered feminine work is troublesome from a feminist standpoint and shows that while men may have been making more of an effort, they were far from misogyny-free.

Eighty-Sixed offers a unique look at the negative affects of the AIDS crisis and the emotional hardship for those with AIDS and their caregivers. Bersani, Love, and Halberstam all offer useful tools in reading the novel for its use of trauma and gay shame. Additionally, the novel allows for a positive look at the feminine gendering of gay male care givers and their altruism. While the gay men in the novel fluctuate with their comfort of this gendering, its presence within the novel shows Feinberg's attentiveness to the tensions between feminist and AIDS activist communities. *Eighty-Sixed* offers a well established look at the gay care giver role and the complications and negative affects associated with it.

Chapter Two

FIGHTING THE GAY FIGHT:
REPRESENTATION AND IMAGERY OF AIDS ACTIVISM IN LARRY KRAMER'S *THE NORMAL HEART*

Representations of AIDS extend well beyond the body and physical illness. The second key shift in gay men's identity that is reflected quite prominently in literature of the AIDS crisis is the emergence of an activist identity. While gay men's resistance is far from a new concept in the 1980s, as the 1969 Stonewall riots truly ignited the gay activist identity, the AIDS crisis produced exponential growth in that identity and ultimately made activism the gay man's duty. Many authors set out to depict this new identity; one strong example is Larry Kramer's play *The Normal Heart*. Through this play, Kramer tells the story of early AIDS activism while simultaneously defining his own activism. In this chapter I will argue that Kramer's rendition of the gay activist identity relies on battle imagery and masculinity to demonstrate his passion for his cause and to invoke empathy from the US Government. In this, Kramer's use of literature is read as a mode of resistance. Bersani, Love, and Halberstam help in reading the affect and gender of Kramer's story.

To further illuminate Kramer's representation of the AIDS activist that he creates in his narrative, I will highlight the perception that, at different moments, aided, harmed, and redirected public reception of the AIDS efforts. *The Normal Heart* has a deep autobiographical thread that runs through it in that the organization Ned Weeks founds in the play mirrors Kramer's experience with the Gay Men's Health Crisis; Ned's severance of connections with the group seems to be a lightened version of Kramer's expulsion from GMHC. Kramer pinpoints a specific rhetoric that paints volunteerism as the gay man's duty and his refusal to participate for the community's greater good has consequences on various levels. Between both Philip Kayal and Randy Shilts, it is clear that Kramer's depiction of this necessity for 'altruism' is not a dystopian construction but a true ideology that existed within the gay community, for better or worse, during the AIDS Crisis in New York in the 1980s and early 90s.

Using Bersani, Love, Halberstam, and historical writings as tools, I plan to show how Kramer depicts his activism and the hard affects of gay existence to show gay men's identity and its changes from the AIDS crisis. In analyzing the portrayals of gay shame and self-hatred in AIDS narratives, the author's political implications are manifested in the failures of the characters of texts and ultimately serve as a call-to-action for gay men and their allies to perform their activism more vigorously, passionately, and strategically. Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* stands as a strong example of the gay activist identity and the political gains that authors can achieve through their writing as a form of activism.

The Normal Heart by Larry Kramer is by far one of the most read texts from the AIDS crisis. The play is a key example through which to further explore the concept of emerging activism. Kramer tells the story of Ned Weeks who notices that his gay friends are all reporting the same symptoms of a sickness and immediately forms an activist group to combat the silence that surrounds the illness. While Ned pushes his initiatives within the organization, he develops a relationship with Felix, which he identifies as his first desire for a committed long-term partner. Ned is eventually removed from the organization that he formed because of his aggressive activist style while his partner simultaneously becomes sick with the illness that Ned has been fighting against. Eventually, Felix loses his life to the sickness and Ned contemplates his role in the situation, and questions whether or not he fought hard enough. This play is ideal for showing the urgency that the gay community felt to find a cure during the first years of the crisis and how they spent their time in activism. It also makes very visible the issues of representation that AIDS activists faced at the time, which are crucial to Bersani's and Watney's arguments.

The play sets up quite quickly how political the 'unknown' ailment is. In this conversation between Ned Weeks and Emma Brookner, Kramer establishes the enemy of his battle, New York politicians, namely the Mayor who refuse to prioritize any funding towards understanding that would be known as AIDS. In addition to this dialog, it sets up a clear hierarchy between passive and vocal activism styles. Kramer glorifies his aggressive activism in the story while painting his co-leaders in the organization as weak.

The concepts that Leo Bersani theorizes apply nicely to Kramer's play. His idea of self-shattering can be seen through the sexual identity of the average gay man in the play. Bersani opens his essay with a discussion on the censorship of AIDS and focuses on gay men's use of their sexuality as political statement. Kramer, too, shows this very early in his play when Ned Weeks is meeting with a doctor, Emma Brookner, one of the only doctors acknowledging that something was happening to gay me. When she tells him and other gays to stop having so much sex, Ned Weeks says "do you realize that you are talking about millions of men who have singled out promiscuity to be their principal political agenda, the one they'd die before abandoning. How do you deal with that" (Kramer 1985, 12)? Like Bersani, Kramer establishes how crucial abundant sexual encounters are to the gay man's identity in that the sexual deviance exhibited through their hook-up culture is a mode of resistance and a way to fight for the visibility of gay people. In forming this connection, too, sex gains emotional significance. Ned explains "It's more complicated than that. For a lot of guys it's not easy to meet each other in any other way. It's a way of connecting – which becomes an addiction. And then they're caught in the web of peer pressure to perform and perform" (Kramer 1985, 12). In tying their identities, they undergo the process of self shattering when they have sex because they claiming power that is redistributed with the shattering and successfully completes Bersani's cycle.

Heather Love frames the use of negative affects is also important in *The Normal Heart*. The benefit of studying the depressing and dark affects within queer representation is that as Love suggests, is that they invoke a stronger reaction than happy

or peaceful narratives. Kramer uses affects to, if forcing viewers to view things from the perspective of a white gay man allows, the world to see the true horrors of the AIDS crisis. It grants outside readers and viewers the opportunity to see the representation of lived experience for a severely oppressed community. During an argument with his brother, Ben Weeks, Ned voices his struggles with his brother's reluctance to support Ned's activist life. Ned exclaims "I'm beginning to think that you and your straight world are our enemy. I am furious with you, and with myself and with every goddamned doctor who ever told me I'm sick and interfered with my loving a man" (Kramer 1985, 37). This passage is helpful in two ways. First, it shows the battle language that will become more key in the second half of this chapter. It flips the notion of the traditional binary of straight people representing the positive side of the binary and gay people representing the bad by painting straight people as the negative enemy that is oppressing the good gay community. He does this through strong battle language. The straight world is his enemy and he's furious with them for their interference his sexuality. Second, this quote shows strong negative affects that Ned is dealing with the AIDS crisis. Ned shows a surge of negative energy in this where he expresses not only his anger with the enemy, but also his self-hatred for allowing himself to be controlled by the enemy. Displaying this intense emotion allows Kramer to resist the erasure of the hardships of gay existence. He's able to invoke greater empathy from straight communities and shows any gay men who are not participating in the activism that they should be. The negative affects allow him to tell an honest gay past and serve as a political tool for understanding gay men's experiences of the 1980s in New York.

In framing Kramer's play through Bersani and Love, it becomes significant to discuss utilization of failure by Kramer. J. Halberstam's failure theory allows for Ned's failed activism to have multiple readings. While Ned's failure is quite explicit, it does leave room for Kramer to benefit from his loss. In depicting the death of Felix, Ned's lover, Kramer acts as a prophet and offers the gay community as well as the straight communities a view to what will happen if the AIDS crisis is not diverted. For the gay community, this play serves as a note of the importance of the activist identity and a call to volunteerism, so that Ned's failure does become a reality. For the straight viewers, seeing this tragedy humanizes the gay men who are dying of AIDS and helps dismantle the moral stigma that surrounded all of the straight media's portrayal of the AIDS epidemic. A strong example of this in the play is the ending. After Felix's death, Ned cries "why didn't I fight harder! Why didn't I picket the White House, all by myself if nobody would come. Or go on a hunger strike. I forgot to tell him something" (Kramer 1985, 76). With gained sympathy from straight people and increased volunteerism from the gay community, Ned's failure to save his lover Felix is Kramer's main tool for getting the support that he needed to create ACT UP within a small number of months after this play's first performance and publication.

The theorists Bersani, Love, and Halberstam offer great insight to *The Normal Heart* and how negative affects affect the characters and the representations of their gay identities. Larry Kramer writes to voice his politics and he writes *The Normal Heart* largely from his own lived experiences. Through this, the use of activist battle imagery becomes much more prevalent. The battlefield is possibly the most widely used image

utilized by AIDS activists in New York during the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. Gays were going to war and their enemy was none other than the Reagan Administration that sought to silence their activity in order to punish the gay communities not only for their sexual promiscuity but for their sexual deviance in general. While AIDS activists were successfully able to claim the imagery of war for their efforts, it seems inevitable that using this metaphor would conjure heteronormative masculinity. Most of the imagery within the activist community's rhetoric relies on gendered stereotypes to valorize gay men's participation and to demonize any passivity of gay men or the straight communities that oppose their activist efforts. Two helpful historical sources in analyzing this conception of gay men's masculinity are *Bearing Witness: Gay Men's Health Crisis and the Politics of AIDS* by Philip Kayal and the famous *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* by Randy Shilts. These two texts, while not discussing masculinity overtly, both provide clear examples of how this masculinity discourse is present during the 1980s throughout the gay activist community in New York. The image of war is threaded deeply into the actions of the AIDS activists and the one of the goals of this paper is to explore stereotypical masculinity exhibited by AIDS activists through the use of the metaphor of war.

Firstly, the lens that the authors use help explain their approach to their writing about the AIDS crisis. Both authors have largely different writing styles however both rely on historical dictation of events and observations of the present. *And the Band Played On*, the first of to be released of the two books, was published in 1987 and utilizes journalistic writing to chronicle the first six years of the epidemic. Shilts, by trade, is a

journalist and completed much of the work for his book through his work reporting for the San Francisco Chronicle (Shilts xi). The book is formatted in short, location separated sections that recount conversations and current events that Shilts was either present for, reporting on for the San Francisco Chronicle, or researched during the publication process of the book (Shilts xii). The second book, *Bearing Witness,* was published in 1993 and primarily utilizes a sociological lens to analyze aspects of volunteerism, moralism, and societal devices like homophobia. Kayal, an AIDS volunteer himself, shares his experiences with the organization Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) and how he and the people around him united, supported each other, and fought for acknowledgement from the government (Kayal 13). By doing this, while Kayal does explore the experiences of others, it is largely a participant observational study that Kayal completes in an effort to understand AIDS activism and to feel complete again (Kayal xvi). The book is separated into topical sections relating to volunteerism, moralism, and activist accounts of protesting governmental oppression.

The pinnacle of this rendition of AIDS activism exists in the idea of the gay man's duty. Much like the treatment of young men's participation in the war effort in the great wars in the past, the New York gay community promoted a civil responsibility for gay men to stand up for their right to live. Also, much like social response to American wars of the past, one's decision as to whether or not to participate generated a response that either congratulated them or shamed their passivity. After the formation of the organization Gay Men's Health Crisis in 1992 to respond to the rapidly growing number of Kaposi's sarcoma cases among gay men, the founders immediately began seeking

volunteers to lead their various efforts (Shilts 120). While there was some disagreement to the approach of the organization, one of its founders, Larry Kramer, was very direct, vocal, and aggressive about gay men's responsibility in assisting them to be heard. In an interview by Shilts in an article sampled in *And the Band Played On*, Kramer states that "if this [writing about AIDS] doesn't scare the shit out of you, we're in real trouble. If this article doesn't rouse you to anger, fury, rage, and action, gay men may have no future on this earth. Our continued existence depends on just how angry you can get" (Shilts 244). Kramer's approach to recruiting participation within the gay community in New York is heavily reliant on pressing a sense of responsibility onto the gay men to fight for themselves. His aggressive rhetoric implies gay men who do not participate are to blame for the deaths of male homosexuals. This blame system, socially, puts gay men into one of two categories: the ones who are man, or gay, enough to help fix what is happening and those who are not. Kramer's approach, does work to some degree of helping gay men internalize this ideology. This is evident through those who followed Kramer and joined GMHC. Kayal, as an early volunteer, showcases the permanence of this idea in his own work by, in the very beginning of his book explaining that "AIDS volunteerism was becoming central to the physical and social survival of the community and I needed to do something responsible and find an outlet for my rage…Volunteering and being with People with AIDS would give me a chance to do something rewarding, useful, and politically significant, all at the same time" (Kayal 14). Kayal shows his sense of duty by explaining that he needed to do something responsible. He could not help but participate because of a built rage with the government for its silence on the subject. This ideology

led Kayal to dedicate the remainder of his life to the AIDS effort since he participated with GMHC until he was unable to any longer due to his severe decline in health and eventual death due to AIDS related illness (Kayal 227). It seems clear that Shilts, while he may not explicitly specify his alignment with this aggressive view of volunteerism, he is at least enthralled with it by his extensive use of Kramer's voice instead of the other founders of GMHC. In this, it is clear that both Shilts and Kayal's books compliment the hyper-masculine, aggressive approach that ultimately creates a binary not only to differentiate between the good gays and the bad government, but also the good, active gays and the bad gays who are allowing the gay community to perish.

Next, the concept of bearing witness to the chaos of AIDS further links AIDS activism to the battlefield and the masculine characterization of activists as warriors. While both Shilts and Kayal showcase actual examples of the 'terrors' of dying from AIDS as well as governmental and community oppression, the ways in which both authors describe activism are particularly telling to the reliance on masculinity that surrounded the understanding of AIDS activism. There is a built-in notion of honor for those willing to bear witness and exhibit altruism. Kayal describes that "bearing witness is the willingness to take on the suffering of others as if it were one's own, but in a way that brings the carepartners into deep conversation with themselves about their own value or sacredness as a human being" (Kayal 14). His language clearly elevates the volunteer's social standing from citizen to hero in that only a hero, a soldier, has such selflessness to absorb that damage of battle, AIDS, and emerge alive. A specific example shown through both books exists, again, in the case of Larry Kramer. Shilts serializes the differentiations

in approaches within GMHC (Shilts 182) that eventually lead to Kramer's separation from the organization in 1983. Regardless of this separation, at GMHC's fundraiser the organization's President Paul Popham still acknowledged Kramer as a co-founder (Shilts 283). In this, Kramer's sacrifice is honored despite the ideological differences between Kramer and Popham. Kramer's passion, his willingness to bear witness, earns him acknowledgement. Kayal also gives honorable mention to Kramer's work after leaving GMHC in discussing the formation of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, another, more militant AIDS activist organization (Kayal 90). While much of the evidence utilized by Shilts and Kayal is different, all of it, especially the use of Kramer, shows the nature of the masculine honor that is provided to those willing to sacrifice themselves and bear witness to the horrors of AIDS activism. It can be said, too, that if viewing Kramer and Popham as oppositional forces, it is the more active, militant, and masculine person, Larry Kramer, also has been historically portrayed as a having a larger role in AIDS activism. The community rewards Kramer's persistence and essentially preserved his name in LGBTQ history.

Additionally and not surprisingly, the gay community was not the only community that used aggressive language and tactics during the AIDS crisis. Activists were, most commonly, referring to a battle with the government, and this fight was not one sided. While each author approaches viewing 'the enemy' through a different theoretical framework, it is still clear that there are deliberate actions from the government or other communities that aimed to silence the AIDS activist efforts. Randy Shilts, for example, since he writes through many shorter, broader, journals, he reported largely as events happened. Near the end of the time that Shilts examines a clear shift in governmental support to counteract the wellbeing of AIDS victims. Prior to the realization that AIDS was primarily affecting gay men; public or common-purposed research funds were commonly used to research Kaposi's sarcoma (Shilts 282). This use of funding was

quickly apprehended by the government. Shilts explains that "The president's budget called for a $300,000 cut in AIDS funding at funding at the Center for Disease Control for the next year…There still were no federally funded AIDS prevention campaigns, and there was nothing resembling a coordinated plan of attack on the disease" (Shilts 359). The Center for Disease Control took funding cuts as a result of utilizing some of its money to aid in researching AIDS. Shilts uses this reactionary style of writing to get information out to his readers quickly, considering that while he published his work collectively in *And the Band Played On*, he originally published all of his other work through many newspapers during the time. Aggressive actions such as this were common from the government, as the Reagan Administration tried extensively to deny and cover the existence of the AIDS crisis (Shilts 360). This is later uncovered to be mainly due to Reagan's view of morality, and he utilizes hyper-masculine rhetoric to hinder the AIDS activist's efforts. This writing approach differs from Kayal because Kayal is writing in 1993 and has experienced more of the AIDS crisis. Because of this, Kayal is able to offer some insightful analysis as to the opposing forces for the AIDS activists. Kayal says that "AIDS has revealed for gays who the mortal enemy is. To survive the community goes for the jugular vein of homophobia when it attacks the power of religion over personal and sexual identity and behavior" (Kayal 26). Furthermore, "AIDS tells us a lot about the nature of both homophobia and morality, and religion's manipulative, legitimating functions in society. The political majority now uses AIDS to sustain homophobia in new and dramatic ways, It gives homophobia a medical basis in addition to a religious one" (Kayal 29). While Kayal certainly writes on the governmental oppression that AIDS activists face, he does note on the uses of religion and the stigmatization of gay people more extensively than Shilts does because he recognizes that religion and morality were the driving forces behind Reagan's actions (Kayal 86). This differentiation of theoretical framework results in different perspectives for the two books

that lends Shilts' work to focus on the macro picture and Kayal focused on the micro. Shilts focuses on holding the government accountable while Kayal focuses closer to the personal level and challenges moral stigmas.

Finally, while this section looks at pieces of each book, it is still worthwhile to see how these books end in relation to masculinity. There is a thread that ties these books together further by suggesting that they have a similar view of the future. Shilts and Kayal both discuss education, or expanding knowledge on AIDS in their closing chapters and begin to theorize of what is to become of the AIDS crisis. This thought of futurity suggests that Shilts and Kayal believe that they, as a part of a gay community, will in fact succeed in surviving the AIDS crisis in New York. For the uses of this paper, they conclude that at the very least, they do not lose the war. Shilts writes his conclusion in 1987 after the release of AZT, the first medication that proved somewhat effective against the HIV virus (Shilts 597). Shilts explains that due to AZT's many side effects, many accepted a last act of martyrdom and entered experimental testing to help the future improve medicine and testing procedures (Shilts 599). This allows the activists to die as the war heroes that Shilts and Kayal argue that they were. Kayal focuses his attention on the development of new tests that better defined the mode of transmission of HIV that it, to a degree, could help gay people try to rebuild their lives after the AIDS crisis battle (Kayal 232). Additionally, Kayal focuses on the 'de-gaying' of AIDS, and thus the additional support that is becoming available over time (Kayal 234). Both authors end relatively positively in an effort to preserve the masculine demonstration of a battle victory.

The use of battle imagery and hyper-masculinity by AIDS activists in the AIDS crisis in New York was quite evident from the writing of Randy Shilts and Philip Kayal. The adaptation of the metaphor of a battlefield that was used by activists helped the community gain further empathy if not from its direct oppressors, at least from those who passively did not participate in either side of the war. By using this familiar image, it makes the gay community more relatable and easier to identify with. While some, such as Larry Kramer, may have used the hyper-masculinity language too aggressively which caused some conflict, it is very evident throughout these two historical sources that masculinity played a larger role in the AIDS crisis than one may initially assume.

This historical use of altruism and the idea of the 'gay man's duty' is present in *The Normal Heart* as well. Kramer's push for more gay men to participate with the activism of the AIDS crisis is far from discrete. Near the beginning of the play during the first appearance of Felix, Ned questions him from not talking about the new sickness within the New York Times, where Felix worked. He responded with "I wouldn't know about that. I just write about gay designers and gay discos and gay chefs and gay rock stars and gay photographers and gay models and gay celebrities and gay everything. I just don't call them gay. Isn't that enough for doing my bit" (Kramer 1985, 15)? Felix sees his efforts as sufficient whereas Ned (and Kramer) does not. It is not enough to support people from within the safety of the closet. A large part of this ideology was that one had to be a loud, powerful, and visible activist. Kramer also flips the moralistic argument that was prevalent at the time. In response to Felix's hesitance, Ned says "yes, everyone has a million excuses for not getting involved. But aren't there moral obligations, moral commandments to try and do everything possible" (Kramer 1985, 22)? Kramer utilizes the language of the straight

moralist communities against them to reframe activism as the moral choice of the gay community. In doing this, Kramer is clearly setting up his political agenda.

Finally, *The Normal Heart* offers a great insight to the gay activist. The AIDS crisis in New York led to the emergence of this new identity and the authors who developed this role made it their duty to render it within their writing. Larry Kramer depicts the early activism of the AIDS crisis in New York and his experiences with other activists as they struggled for the best way to achieve their goal. Through the lens of a queer methodological framework utilizing Leo Bersani, Heather Love, and J. Halberstam, the goal of this paper was to showcase the ways in which Larry Kramer used negative affects as a tool for political resistance and to attempt an honest preservation of the AIDS crisis. This rendition of the AIDS crisis realistically shows the battle language and masculinity that was prominent in the rhetoric of the AIDS crisis. *The Normal Heart* exists as a narrative that combats the linear, progressive tendencies of gay literature. Ned Weeks shows readers that even among activists with the same goal there are radically different perspectives as to how to get there and that is a powerful tool in analyzing gay history and dismantling its one dimensionality in how it is commonly read and studied.

Chapter Three

REMEMBERING THROUGH CHAOS: DEPICTING THE REMNANTS OF THE AIDS CRISIS IN EDMUND WHITE'S *CHAOS*

Despite the small amount of public coverage, HIV and AIDS still have a particularly strong impact on gay men's communities. Gay authors' renditions of these impacts are particularly insightful of the lasting effects of HIV/AIDS on gay men after the initial AIDS crisis in New York City. The topic of the lasting effects of the AIDS crisis has been popular among gay writers who survived the epidemic in New York, because of the looming idea that AIDS is not a serious issue now that medication has been developed to control it. More recently, gay writers have represented their struggles as a form of resistance that mirrors exactly what they did during the height of the AIDS crisis with their fallen friends. In this chapter, I will analyze Edmund White's *Chao* and its intense depiction of the romantic and social isolation due to the number of deaths from the AIDS crisis and the stigma held against older gay men from the AIDS generation. These social and personal effects ultimately impact the identities of gay men in reality and the gay characters those men create. In addition, I will look closely at the rare

appearance of the main character, Jack's, HIV status and how that plays a role in the underlying but still building feeling of shame associated with HIV/AIDS. The scarce dialog about AIDS in the novella draws connections between Jack's isolation also the gendering of his identity in his post-AIDS gay community. Edmund White writes of the unspoken gay experience in an attempt to alleviate social stigma against those with HIV/AIDS.

Throughout this chapter, I will explore how texts utilize the history of the AIDS crisis as a vehicle to show the similarities between HIV/AIDS in a contemporary setting and in the 1980s. I will look at the parallels between HIV/AIDS positive characters in the present and others with age-related illness shows HIV/AIDS is further erased over time. One difference between the AIDS Crisis in the 1980s and in the 2010s in literature is the sense of community. Unlike for the 1980s AIDS victims, people aging with HIV/AIDS or other illness do not have a strong community to support them like the gay community of the 1980s and 1990s in New York City. Additionally, threads of language used in present AIDS literature reflect back on the gendered battle or war imagery of AIDS activism of the 1980s, but instead of exhibiting masculinized strength, it shows gay shame similar to the shame associated with the loss of failed war efforts. Utilizing Bersani, Love, and Halberstam together to analyze the representation of negative affects helps shed light on the usage of gay history that White draws on to emphasis an unimproved state of gay men's existence.

With Bersani, Love, and Halberstam, I plan to show how gay writers depict the hard affects of gay existence to showcase gay identity and its changes from HIV/AIDS.

The author's political implications are manifested in the failures of the characters of novels and are embedded in the portrayals of gay shame and self-hatred in AIDS narratives. The novella *Chaos* exhibits the previously mentioned concepts of the theorists, such as Bersani's self-shattering, Love's hard affects, and Halberstam's failure, to reveal Edmund White's view on the mistreatment of aging persons with HIV/AIDS and the parallels between the social demonization of queerness in White's contemporary time and in the writing from the 1980s during the height of the AIDS crisis.

Chaos explores aspects of aging with HIV and the social and political implications surrounding HIV/AIDS. The main character, Jack, is HIV positive so he does not have AIDS; however he remains significantly affected by the AIDS crisis in New York. He no longer has close gay male friends his age, because the people he was close to all died AIDS related deaths. The remaining older gay men in New York possess very different ideologies of queerness and lifestyle that render their friendship significantly incompatible with Jack. He responds to this by doing everything within his power to associate with the younger generations of gay men around him. While he finds himself completely undesirable, he seeks out many young gay men and pays them for sex and more importantly affection. Jack spends nearly all of his money on ensuring that young gay men remain interested in him and he questions to himself how much harder his quest for affection will get when he reaches his seventies and eighties. He fears becoming irrelevant and thus hides his HIV status, takes sexual stimuli boosters, and pays his way towards loosely formed companionship. The fear of isolation due to the AIDS crisis completely takes over Jack's life and influences his sense of identity. White

parallels Jack's aging with HIV to Jack's friend, Marie-Helene, aging without HIV but cancer. In looking at these connections, White's representation of the aftermath of the AIDS crisis becomes visible.

To frame White's depiction of gay men's identity, one must study the character of Jack. Jack is an author who lives in New York City as he tries to break through a series of well received but less-than lucrative novels to become established as a gay author in the city. Jack tries to blend in as much as he can within his various communities, whether the literary world or the dismal older gay men's community. Very early in the story, Jack discusses the habits of the few older gay men in the area in order to separate himself from them. He discloses that they have an unhealthy obsession with remaining publicly present, so they do drugs, dine, and play as often and publicly as they can, which often exceeds well beyond their financial limits (White 2010, 5). This, in essence, can be attributed to their lack of established 'private sphere.' Since they do not have monogamous relationships with each other and spend all of their money keeping up with the others and building a public image, their illusion dissolves when they go home to their tiny New York apartments that they barely keep or decorate. Contrary to the other gay men his age, Jack claims to have not drunken alcohol since 1982 and does not use drugs recreationally (White 2010, 2). While he partakes in keeping up with his public image by going out to dinners, he draws the lifestyle distinction between him and the other men of his generation to signify their romantic incompatibility. This disidentification with the generation that survived the AIDS crisis leads to his romantic isolation that Jack tries to remedy by seeking buying the love of the younger generation.

Jack's sexual desire for younger men is arguably the most defining trait of his sexual identity and thus is a major theme of the novella. Jack, a man in his sixties, seeks the companionship of younger people through Craigslist ads and exchanges money for sexual expression with the younger men. The most prominent of these is a twenty-eight year old man named Seth. Jack admits his uncertainty about why he pays young people for sex; however his faux-relationship with Seth develops from purely sexual to Jack also paying Seth just to spend time together. Seth establishes this as non-negotiable and even when Jack's money 'runs out' in between his book royalties payments, he still pays Seth at a reduced rate. Jack describes the evolution of their sex in that "when he first met Seth he'd complain to friends that their sex life was monotonous but by now, a year and a half later, that monotony seemed ecstatically marital…in a similar way awe and gratitude were Jack's main feeling during sex" (White 2010, 23). This shows his desire for a monogamous relationship and his departure from the popular gay view of relationships in comparison to his friends. His fear of failure to achieve this is evident by the latter half of the novella when Seth offers to not have Jack pay for non-sexual time together, but Jack insists despite not being able to afford it. His desperation for contact and his fear that the bond that they have together would end ultimately stand as crucial parts of his sexual identity.

Finally, Jack's HIV status also changes the perspective of his identity. White writes from New York thirty years after the visible beginning of the AIDS crisis in the city and his utilization of HIV in this story has just as much political claim as the inclusion of AIDS in narratives of the 1980s. White explains that Jack had:

> been diagnosed as HIV-Positive in 1995 and feared that now he was – finally! - suffering (as a frighteningly high percentage of people with HIV did) from some sort of dementia, though maybe his wits were clouding over in the same way as his vision was dimming and his hearing was becoming less acute – it was all a normal loss of powers. Since he'd been diagnosed in his forties he'd never been able to separate the effects of aging from those of the virus. (White 2010, 19)

Jack was diagnosed in his forties and the fact that he contracted the virus so late, in 1995, is particularly telling as to why he survived since decent medications were available at this time. As Jack ages into his sixties, he is unable to differentiate his general aging from the side effects of the HIV virus. This can be efficiently read as a masking of his shame associated with his illness, however more on this will be said later in this chapter. Edmund White renders older gay men's sexuality in Jack and shows readers what aging with HIV in a "post-AIDS" world may look like. With its emphasis on self-hatred and gay shame, I look to theorists Bersani, Love, and Halberstam to analyze failure in gay men's lives.

Bersani's concept of self-shattering is helpful for reading *Chaos*. White shows Jack's desperation for affection that falls on the limits of homonormativity. Jack's emotional consumption by negative affects, again such as depression, gay shame and self-hatred, exhibits the hardship of isolation and the internalization of one's 'otherness.' Bersani views the self-shattering of gay men as beneficial for redistributing the power dynamic that penetrative sex constantly exhibits in the glorification of the penetrator and the feminizing, or demonizing, of the penetrated. As Bersani argues: "the self which the

sexual shatters provides the basis on which sexuality is associated with power. It is possible to think of the sexual as, precisely, moving between a hyperbolic sense of self and a loss of all consciousness of self" (Bersani 25). By partaking in sexual penetration, one member of the party ultimately becomes dissociated with their body to find comfort in sex (Bersani 3). *Chaos* certainly portrays this in Jack's sexual encounters outside of his relationship with Seth. For example, during a break with Seth, Jack partakes in copious sexual encounters with straight-identified men from Craigslist. Jack says that "another equally inventive 'regular' was an airline steward who wanted Jack to put on lipstick and a skirt while sucking him. The steward watched 'pussy porn…' while Jack echoed her slutty, high pitched moans" (White 2010, 64-65). White extends Bersani's idea of hyperbolic sense of self to completely take Jack's identity as a gay man and displace it onto the female body. Through this, Jack's vision of the self is shattered and left open for the reclaiming of power. Bersani further explains the redemptive value of self-shattering by saying that "if the rectum is the grave in which the masculine ideal…of proud subjectivity is buried, then it should be celebrated for its very potential for death" (Bersani 29). By embracing the potential of death in anal sex due to AIDS, the bottom is claiming power that traditionally solely belonged to the top of the encounter. This is where White strategically deviates from Bersani's model in that, while Jack participates in this shattering, his constant depiction as isolated, emotionally desperate, and depressed leaves his power in sex unclaimed. Instead, he remains shattered and defeated by his sexual encounters. Bersani suggests that "The dead seriousness of the gay commitment to machismo…means that gay men run the risk of idealizing and feeling inferior to certain

representations of masculinity on the basis of which they are in fact judged and condemned" (Bersani 14). Jack's complete willingness to sacrifice his identity in his sexual encounters with the airline steward shows his feeling of inferiority and explains his unwillingness to claim his power after self-shattering. This can also be seen through his description of Seth early on in the story. In White's description, "Seth was so masculine in a slouching, unselfconscious way that some of Jack's fiends found him scary" (White 2010, 24). Seth's sole depiction as hyper-masculine feeds into Jack's idealizing of heteronormative roles within his gay relationship. Furthermore, his self identification as an 'other' among the other older gay men suggests that he has internalized homonormative ideas that position his desire for monogamous partnership above that of the other gay men. White makes it clear how he constructs the negative affects in Jack's character and the presence of those affects allows for Heather Love's work to show the historical significance of Jack's emotional hardship.

Looking at the historical placement of many of the negative affects, White attempts to parallel the AIDS crisis with the present state of being for gay people. White, much like Love, refuses to write a progressive narrative surrounding AIDS and gay history. Love articulates that, when resisting the forced progression, texts become more honest and that "texts that insist on social negativity underline the gap between aspiration and the actual…These texts do have a lot to tell us, though: they describe what it is like to bear a 'disqualified' identity, which at times can simply mean living with injury – not fixing it" (Love 4). The negative affects surrounding these disqualified identities are present throughout *Chaos*. The interesting piece of this is the concept of not fixing the

damaged identities. White comments on this through both Jack and Seth in the ending of the story. Jack releases a book detailing his experiences with Seth, which causes Seth to sever his ties with Jack. In the closing section of the story, Jack reads an email from Seth that says "all the sex talk, frankly, kind of disgusts me, especially when you talk about shit we've done. I totally don't think that stuff's anyone's business…I don't like the idea of opening the bedroom door and inviting everybody in from the street to watch you sucking my dick" (White 2010, 87). Seth, whose sexuality is not stated in the story, expresses his own gay shame and displaces that onto Jack and shames him on his own actions. Since the story ends with this email, White's narrative refuses to redeem Jack and allows him to exist as an imperfect sexual outcast. The same cannot be said for Seth, because he announces in his email that he will be attending a sex addicts meeting to curb his sexual deviance, and thus, fix his sexuality (White 2010, 88). This refusal to allow Jack to be fixed breaks the linear or progressive idea that gay history has improved and instead makes visible the parallels between Jack's present and the 1980s where AIDS was highly active. White's attentiveness to this is evident in the fact that, as explored earlier, Jack becomes involved with an airline steward. This clearly references the Patient 0 myth of the origins of AIDS and the primary, sole, distributor of AIDS on a global level. In connecting this, one can easily see the similarities between the past and the present. Love explains critics' odd relationship with their work in the past as concludes that

> Given the issues like gay shame and self-hatred are charged with the weight of difficult personal and collective histories, it is understandable that critics are eager

> to turn them to good use. But I am concerned that queer studies, in its haste to refunction such experiences, may not adequately reckoning with their powerful legacies. Turning away from past degradation to a present or future affirmation means ignoring the past as past; it also makes it harder to see the persistence of the past in the present. (Love 18-19).

White's goal is to show the persistence of stigma, shame, and misconceptions from the 1980s that refuse to be corrected. As nothing significant comes from Jack's relationship with the airline steward, White is commenting on the innocence of Gaëtan Dugas in terms of being the originator of AIDS. Heather Love focuses on the preservation of the past as the past, and the discourse associated with bringing the memory of the past to the future is where Halberstam enters the conversation.

Within the frame of the queer theorists, Jack has an interesting role in that he constantly fails and is thus afraid to progress. In this, he primarily looks backward to the pains of the past, only occasionally frightfully glancing forward only to hate what he sees and thus continue his backward glancing. As a piece of his queer failure, Jack does not quite remember the past 'fully.' Aside from queering general failure, Halberstam also turns attention in *The Queer Art of Failure* towards queer uses of memory and forgetfulness. Halberstam suggests that "while most forms of forgetting in mainstream [media] operates according to a simple mapping of memory onto identity and memory loss onto the loss of history, location, and even politics, a few films, often unintentionally, set forgetting in motion in such a way as to undermine dominant modes of historicizing" (Halberstam 74). That is to say, that popular uses of memory focus on

the deteriorating past and the loss of culture associated while a queered forgetfulness focuses on a partial, impaired, or minority perspective on the past. White plays on this concept specifically in relation to the history of the AIDS crisis and with Jack's HIV status. Firstly, Jack's HIV status is mentioned namely twice in the narrative, once as it is introduced and once during an example of Jack emoting intense self-hatred. Jack forgets his HIV status at all other times for the convenience and in an attempt to curb the stigma against him. Seth never comments in Jack's HIV status because he never knew of it; the same can be said for the airline steward and the others as well. This is interesting considering that the AIDS crisis is mentioned quite often. That is to say that, while Jack is comfortable with his gayness, he attempts to pay tribute to his history without particularly identifying with it. Jack essentially masks his HIV status out of what can be assumed is shame. If his internalized acceptance of heteronormative ideals holds true, HIV is undeniable proof that Jack is a deviant. Jack queers forgetfulness as a coping mechanism to better fit into his idea of normalcy. White does this to exhibit the unease of HIV/AIDS in modern times in that there is still an alarming stigma held to people with HIV/AIDS and that stigma forces the virus to go ignored, undetected, and hidden for fear of rejection and a surge of negative affects. Halberstam's analysis of queer memory and failure give helpful insight into the character of Jack and helps the reader see through him. Edmund White depicts complexities of the stigma against HIV/AIDS.

Jack's willingness to forget his HIV status is limited. He is occasionally forced to acknowledge his 'failure' and is overcome by the affect of shame. Gay shame has an incredibly powerful past and White use shame and failure on the level of character to

show the persistence and recreation of ideas. It seems useful to make the connection of shame that Jack has in regards to his HIV status to the shame of veterans that experience societal pushback for their failure in lost war efforts. This connection is far from coincidental, though, for AIDS activism of the 1980s clearly established AIDS as a war between straight and gay people. Larry Kramer, for example, was very direct, vocal, and aggressive about gay men's responsibility in assisting them to be heard. In an interview by Randy Shilts in an article sampled in *And the Band Played On,* Kramer states that "if this [writing about AIDS] doesn't scare the shit out of you, we're in real trouble. If this article doesn't rouse you to anger, fury, rage, and action, gay men may have no future on this earth. Our continued existence depends on just how angry you can get" (Shilts 244). Kramer's approach to recruiting participation within the gay community in New York is heavily reliant on pressing a sense of responsibility onto the gay men to fight for themselves. His aggressive rhetoric implies gay men who do not participate are to blame for the decline of male homosexuals.

If the AIDS crisis in New York was a war, than those with HIV/AIDS that survived are the veterans of the war effort. While the outcome of this war may be interpreted differently, it is clear that those with HIV/AIDS exhibit a sense of shame that tracks most closely that of veterans of failed war efforts. Jack's HIV status is only brought up twice by name. The second mention is when Jack realizes his lack of a positive futurity. White writes that "Jack wasn't winding down. Full of HIV pills and vitamins and juiced up on androgen gels, he had an unremitting energy…but he knew his days were numbered and that the number wasn't a winning one. Soon he'd be seventy. A

dinner and a doze later he'd be eighty. Which wasn't good. There was nothing good about eighty" (White 2010, 38). In terms of affect, Jack is engulfed in self-hatred in this scene of emotional expression and the first thing mentioned was Jack's HIV status. This suggests Jack's inability to forget his failure much as he tries to. Shame associated from a lost war effort is similar in that it haunts the veteran and floods the emotional psyche sporadically and often uncontrollably. Jack realizes that his ability to buy affection is limited and his body is reaching its limits to the amount of modification that it can take without becoming inoperable. His romantic, social, and societal failures are inevitable and yet his shame associated with his failure with his HIV status is at the forefront of his worries in this regard.

Additionally, in conjuring the history of the AIDS crisis in New York, the role of the caregiver is also present within *Chaos*. While White constructs this role differently than its initial formation, he does so to further emphasis the strength of Jack's negative affects. The caregiver identity possessed an emotional hardship that many writers have conceptualized as 'bearing witness.' Philip Kayal in his book *Bearing Witness: Gay Men's Health Crisis and the Politics of AIDS* describes that "bearing witness is the willingness to take on the suffering of others as if it were one's own, but in a way that brings the carepartners into deep conversation with themselves about their own value or sacredness as a human being" (Kayal 14). In refusing to turn away from an AIDS patient, caretakers, both medical aids and supportive aids for patients and others bearing witness, became particularly exposed to depression and other strong affects. The role is viewed socially within the gay community as extremely positive, as altruistic and worthy of

honor. Since this role is not unique to AIDS, it is better to examine its use as through medical discourse broadly. AIDS patients, cancer patients, and others with chronic illness have all required assistance and relied on someone occupying this caretaker role. Jack has experience with this role with his good friend Marie-Helene. White writes that "they had weathered so many storms together (her husband's death from a heart attack, the death of his own French lover from AIDS) that they'd become the Avanti, avanti! team. Now she was letting down her end, as if their lives were a heavy log they had both been carrying" (White 2010, 64). Marie-Helene and Jack had occupied this role in rotation for each other and their partners. He takes her coming death to heart and reflects how much they have been through together, including Jack's only mention of a partner, who died of AIDS. As Marie-Helene's health declines due to a cancer diagnosis, Jack is pressed into this role again and White deviates from the old model of this relationship in that, while Jack and Marie-Helene had a positive emotional support for each other during their partners' deaths, Jack is unable to commit to the caregiver role for Marie-Helene as she becomes ill. Jack's refusal to bear witness to Marie-Helene's dying suggests Jack's uneasiness with being alone without a good friend or partner. This further feeds into his fear of isolation and sheds light on the unseen reality of the emotional hardship of caregiver. White depicts the emotional demand of caregivers. Jack handles his sadness through his sexual encounters and pushes his limits further into sadism / masochism, as evident with his experiences with the airline steward who he performed not only in drag themed role playing with, but also 'mild' abusive role play. Those that bear witness in *Chaos* play on the experiences of those before them during the AIDS crisis.

White lays out many parallels between Marie-Helene and Jack; their relationship forces readers to think about the differences between aging with and without HIV/AIDS. In terms of parallels, Marie-Helene's husband died from a heart attack while Jack's partner died from AIDS. She's dying of cancer while Jack's body is more slowly deteriorating and he is 'losing his powers.' Jack is very quick to draw attention to his HIV/AIDS having similar side effects to his general aging, and thus produces his 'inability' to differentiate them (White 2010, 19). Given Jack's shame associated with his positive HIV status, it seems reasonable to also argue that he makes this connection to write off his HIV as having any significance in his life. Ultimately, he tries to dismantle his shame and failure in contracting the virus. His loss of 'power' was inevitable and therefore his status is irrelevant. This logic, however, erases the experience and seriousness of HIV/AIDS in a historical context and, taking Love's concepts again, create a falsely progressive narrative relating to gay men's lived experiences. Both Jack and Marie-Helene have declining health as a result to their age and related illnesses. However White, in depicting Jack's shame and haste to disidentify with HIV, alludes to the silencing of the gay history associated with AIDS and AIDS activism in the 1980s.

In conclusion, the goal of this paper was to offer a nuanced analysis of age and gay identity as it relates to the AIDS crisis for gay men in New York through gay author's rendition of these factors in literature. It is to combat the oversimplification, or assumption, that HIV/AIDS stopped affecting people and became a 'non-issue' once medication became available to control it. AIDS has continued to trigger shame and other hard affects despite the fact that it is not an immediate death sentence anymore. Edmund

White's *Chaos* is a fine example of the lived experience of a gay man who survived the AIDS crisis.

The character of Jack serves as the site for explaining the theoretical discourse of Bersani, Love, and Halberstam's work. White renders Jack as undergoing an identity crisis that originated from the AIDS crisis and forced Jack to be romantically isolated as the 'other' within his generation of gay people in New York. Jack goes through the process of self-shattering but fails to claim the power that Bersani suggests it invokes due to his sexual passivity and his fear of isolation. This act causes Jack to be stuck in unending negative affects and lead to a growing sense of gay shame. Jack portrays a possible realistic example of a gay men's lived experience and this is only because White refuses to erase the negativity and self-hatred revolving around sexual identity. These affects stem from and help create new failures within gay life. Edmund White allows these failures to remain unfixed and destroys the primary tendency for queer activists to favor progressive queer stories.

White writes in resistance to the linear method of narration that creates a present utopia, or at the very least a present that delegitimizes the pain of queerness by insisting that the present treatment of gay people is better than the past. Negative affects are a crucial aspect of gay men's lived experience and any writer who erases those affects destroys the gay history that struggles to be remembered as it is. AIDS, like other plagues, claimed millions of lives and the bodies of those people, and writing of AIDS as an issue of the past hides those bodies and all that they fought for by forgetting the specifics of the terrors of deaths related to AIDS. White challenges the younger

generations to see this history and to avoid gay plagues in the future by learning from the past. In learning these lessons from past gays, White encourages that readers remember the hardship of the past for what it was.

Conclusion

IT'S NOT EASY FOR ME, EITHER:
INVISIBLE VOICES AND THE OTHER AIDS CRISES

The AIDS crisis, in both the sickness itself and societal response to the sickness, created significant borders that, in many ways, encased gay men. In a revision of the 'survival of the fittest' conception, the AIDS crisis presented gay men with a mentality that only those who came closest embracing heteronormativity are permitted to survive. That is, those who put up the best fight and prove their masculinity in standing up for themselves may survive. Alternatively, gay men are presented with the option of repressing their sexuality until it becomes monogamous – or heterosexual. David Feinberg, Larry Kramer, and Edmund White together show the most readily visible aspects of gay men's identities as they pertain to AIDS. Whether in feminized caretaker, hyper-masculine activism, or depressed HIV/AIDS-positive rejects, these exist as the primary images not only in AIDS literature but also the literary canon of gay men's literature as well.

Along with other feminist and queer literary scholars, I would call for an expansion of what is considered the AIDS literary canon. I have spent some time suggesting that these stories and representations of the AIDS crisis are the visible ones,

but there is a much larger body of work that is nearly invisible because of the white gay male dominance within AIDS activism. For example, the perspectives of white women, lesbians and otherwise, who were equally as involved in the caretaking roles that gay men occupied, black men, both gay and otherwise, and closeted gays and gays opposed to sexual liberation are all hidden within the literary image of Ned Weekes and B.J. Rosenthal.

For the remainder of this conclusion I would like to revisit the dominance that white gay men have in the space of media in respect to AIDS. White gay men maintained a painful supremacy over other communities affected by AIDS in the eighties. It was, not surprisingly, Larry Kramer who declared in a speech that "if all of this had been happening to any other community for two long years, there would have been, long ago, such an outcry from that community and all its members that the government of this city and this country would not know what had hit them" (Kramer 1994, 35). The truth is, also not surprisingly, that many communities were affected by AIDS. The erasure techniques that AIDS activists used on others was figuratively meant to show the specificity of how gay men needed help in funding and support from the government. However, it simply widened the empathy gaps between all of the affected communities. Feminist theory helps illuminate the problems with the primary functioning of AIDS activism.

First, I turn to Audre Lorde to explain the issue with fighting oppression with oppression. AIDS activists honed in on conceptions of anger to propel their motivation and energies towards their cause. Anger turned AIDS activists violent towards their

oppressors and oppressive towards other communities. In her essay "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," Lorde describes her frustration with the single nature of many feminists at the time of her writing, 1984. She says that "without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But the community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist" (Lorde 111). Liberation is difficult, if not impossible, alone and assimilation offers only makeshift mobility. By suggesting that all gay men are exactly the same and everyone should get behind one organization, most dominantly ACT-UP, AIDS activists end up diluting their effectiveness with tactics that only guarantees temporary relief. Directly after Kramer's comments about other communities, he criticizes his own by saying "Why isn't every gay man in this city so scared shitless that he is screaming for action? Does every gay man in New York want to die" (Kramer 1994, 35)? Kramer likens all gay men to himself despite his previous distinct separation from various gay communities. Even before AIDS, Kramer was ostracized for his opposition to the sex-positive liberation of the gay community in the seventies (Shilts 26). As soon as it became politically idealistic he shifted to grouping all gay men together despite clear differences in how those gay men experience AIDS. Kramer's erasure of difference and masking of other minority communities affected by AIDS is the main criticism of Cathy Cohen in her book *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics.* Her book challenges Kramer's erasure of difference by discussing how marginalized communities, primarily black people, combated and were affected by AIDS differently. This includes

black gay men, women, lesbians, bisexuals, children, and drug users. Feminist empathy fills many of the gaps that caused challenges for AIDS activism in the eighties.

Another emphasis of Lorde's essay is the limited success that minorities can have using oppressor's tactics. While slight gains may be made by oppressive activism, it is often retractable and short-lived. Organizations like ACT-UP did succeed to a certain degree in making the public aware of AIDS which led to more visibility, money, and 'success.' The problem lies with who gains from the success. Lorde describes this dilemma in that the patriarchal tools "may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (Lorde 112). Genuine change would suggest the benefit of all involved groups, but if AIDS activists use oppressive tactics, it is difficult for both to gain footing. The temporary relief that ACT-UP won at the time was more funding which lead to the release of AZT, the first AIDS medication. The communities that AIDS activists were silencing experienced no reward for their participation, because while middle-class white gay men could afford the extensive medicine regiments and prices, no one else could. This led to gay men conceptualizing the 'Post-AIDS' identity because the crisis was over for them, regardless of all of the work that still needed to be done for other communities affected by AIDS.

Speaking further to the invisible voices of the AIDS crisis, I would like to turn attention to the black gay community. Cathy Cohen's *The Boundaries of Blackness* breaks open the silencing mechanisms that the Bad Activists used on black communities who were also fighting in various numbers for AIDS relief. Cohen suggests that the AIDS crisis had a unique appeal for black communities in that:

> While we can agree that African Americans suffer disproportionately from most social, medical, economic, and political ills, I would argue that it is specifically because of the inordinate amount of suffering found in African-American communities that we might expect more attention to this crisis. AIDS touches on, or is related to, many other issues confronting, in particular, poor black communities: health care, poverty, drug use, homelessness. (Cohen 34)

Black communities have much weighing on the social support for AIDS. AIDS touches a large number of the structural problems that black communities face, many more structural problems than the gay community alone, one could argue. AIDS has the ability to greatly affect a large portion of the black community and it went largely unrecognized by the government and AIDS activists alike. The ways in which AIDS activists fought their fight often led to the ignoring of black issues for their own benefit.

For that reason, black gay people questioned their participation in the larger AIDS activist movements. Regardless of any gains made by the movements, black people seldom felt any alleviation from the pressure of AIDS. That is why, Cohen explains, the AIDS crisis:

> did not lead to a massive coming out process in black communities. The level of silence among black lesbians and gay men is still an immediate and pressing concern for those organizing in African-American communities. Further, while more individuals choose to organize around their black gay identity…the developing infrastructure in black gay communities did not approach in numbers or resources that found in many white gay communities. (Cohen 94)

Regardless of whether or not black communities joined the AIDS efforts, they were not included in receiving the benefits of the labor. Black people, for that reason, shifted opinions and efforts regularly during the AIDS crisis. While gay black men were more inclined to be present in activist efforts, many other black communities waned their efforts because there was no pay-off for them in the eighties. The black gay men who did get involved, however, also had their voices minimalized and used more to add to the quantity of voices than the quality or diversity of them. In the written arts, I would argue that the AIDS activist silencing of black voices is one of the reasons for the lack of many black authors in the AIDS literary canon.

In the mid-nineties, after AZT's successors began development, a new hope was given to the white gay men who could afford medication. With this light, a sense of Post-AIDS identity was developed. Eric Rofes describes this identity in his book *Dry Bone Breathe: Gay Men Creating Post-AIDS Identities and Cultures.* He says "in the aftermath of decimation, we've heard the bones connecting again, and witnessed muscle and skin again covering the skeleton. The dry bones have had life breathed back into them and now stand as giant tribes, eager to move forward, awaiting the new era…The everyday lives of gay men throughout the nation demonstrate …AIDS-as-crisis, as defined by epicenter gay men in the 1980s, is over" (Rofes 28). The white gay AIDS crisis was over and by the logic of the patriarchal tools that AIDS activists used, which was all that mattered. Despite the trouble that all of the other minorities affected by AIDS faced, gay men stopped participating in activism in mobs because their future was not dependent on it anymore.

The Post-AIDS narrative does spill into literature as well. This is evident in the fact that both Feinberg and Kramer produce sequels to their stories. In *Spontaneous Combustion*, the sequel to *Eighty-Sixed*, B.J. now has AIDS himself. The book was published in 1991, and this distinction between HIV and AIDS has been made as well as AZT's development being readily available for those who could afford it. Feinberg make his novel about balancing the self in response to the positive diagnosis. AIDS does not entirely consume B.J.'s world and he constantly fights to be his own person despite having AIDS. Kramer's sequel, *The Destiny of Me (1993)*, Ned also has found himself with AIDS and, while undergoing experimental treatment methods he reflects on his family relationships. The play's original production, in 1993, places the production at a particular moment in history when more effective medication was mostly available for anyone willing to undergo trials. Both sequels show that, originally, gay writers felt the need to produce their work as quickly as possible because the future was indefinite. Their prolonged life resulted in a regaining of identity outside of AIDS.

Representations of the AIDS crisis do vary in depicting the experiences of white gay men in different roles. Within the limited media time that the AIDS crisis won, nearly all of that time was given to those white gays and therefore the many other experiences with AIDS have been buried deep within eighties. Using queer and feminist theory in conjunction with historical texts, the complexities of the AIDS crisis can be unearthed. The literary and the historical are closely related but regardless of how much an author may try; fiction cannot be as transparent as they hope. The writers from the AIDS crisis may have set out to show the reader all of the horrors of AIDS but they

succeeded only in showing pieces of their own experiences and left an entirely different crisis forgotten in the poorer parts of New York City.

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