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The "Blood Libel" and the Spectator's Eye in Norwich and Toronto

DAVID TOWNSEND

David Townsend (townsend@chass.utoronto.ca) is Associate Professor of Medieval Studies and English as well as Director of the Sexual Diversity Studies Program at the University of Toronto. He is coeditor, with Andrew Taylor, of The Tongue of the Fathers: Gender and Ideology in Twelfth-Century Latin. *This essay grows out of his larger interest in the coexistence of conflicting religious discourses in medieval Norwich. It assesses the similarities in and differences between the oppressive strategies around the murder of innocent children by Jews and homosexual men, respectively.*

A gregarious, plucky twelve-year-old boy appears regularly on the streets, working as he can to supplement the resources of his poor but loving family. His routine puts him in contact with unsavoury elements, against whom his innocence and naiveté are a poor match. A stranger meets him and shortly thereafter lures him to a private place with promises of money to be earned. There the ensnarer and his confederates abuse the boy horribly and eventually kill him in an obsessive, orgiastic frenzy. They dispose of the body, but with insufficient stealth. The corpse is subsequently discovered, and the full horrors of what happened are reconstructed with the assistance of a witness to the tortures the boy endured. Clear traces on the victim's body supplement that testimony to his sufferings. Testimony

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and deduction meet in a narrative that synthesizes the available details, but which also bears, in its repetitions and its speculative tone, the marks of its piecemeal and reconstructive origins. Despite its gaps, the tale apprises an appalled public of the outrage perpetrated by outsiders in their midst. The demands of popular opinion for just retribution are ultimately both heeded and contained by the apparatus of the state. But the child's memory lives on and alerts the public to the dangers of moral contagion presented by the class of social parasites who, if not the boy's actual murderers, are certainly by their very presence the fomenters of all such crimes against the innocent young. The awful but ultimately saving truth is recognized: the boy's death has galvanized the social body into a necessary state of vigilance. His innocent life, it can now be observed, is the price paid to cleanse the social and spiritual life of the community. The child's interment offers a focus in shared ritual for the cleansing recognition of the purity he preserved even unto death, but at the same time it consolidates the memory of the unspeakable and unavenged act that society must never forget.

I have been describing the July 1977 murder of Emanuel Jaques, a shoeshine boy in downtown Toronto, and its aftermath, much as it was described in the voluminous newspaper coverage it received in the weeks after his death and again during the February 1978 trial of four men charged with and subsequently convicted of the crime. But I have also been describing the martyrdom of little William of Norwich in 1144, much as it was described by Thomas of Monmouth, who, beginning in 1149, five years after the boy's death, recorded for posterity the story of his alleged murder at the hands of the Norwich Jews (Jessop and James).

Thomas's biography of William stands not only as the most substantial single hagiographical source of the "blood libel"–the repeated charge that Jews ritually murdered Christian children around Passover–but as its actual point of origin in the West, as Gavin Langmuir has shown (1984). Langmuir and others have intensively scrutinized the text for its witness to conditions in

Norwich at the time of its writing, between 1149 and 1172-73.[1] Langmuir, as a historian, demonstrates great concern not so much to establish what actually happened, and did not happen, to William, as to determine who first invented the charge of ritual murder by crucifixion. His conclusion is that it is the invention of the hagiographer Thomas himself. Langmuir acknowledges the deadly power the myth has had in subsequent European culture, at the same time that he points out that Thomas was himself not primarily motivated by hatred of Jews. Mercifully, the text of Thomas of Monmouth exists only in a single copy. But the blood libel narrative that he created spread throughout Europe, staining the lips of Chaucer's Prioress along its path; over the centuries it has cost thousands, if not millions, of lives. Similarly, it is the use to which the dead Emanuel Jaques was put by the political and journalistic establishment of Ontario that concerns me here.

As I wrote the précis of the opening paragraph, I found myself running a rapid relay of memory between Thomas's text and a file of clippings on the murder trial.[2] How many narrative elements could I include in my initial summary of events without reducing one story to a trope of the other? Could I cast a sentence representing the murder(s) that ventriloquized the lurid sensationalism of both accounts and at the same time did not tip the reference in the exclusive direction of either sociopathic sexual license (the Jaques murder) or imputed religious fanaticism (William's martyrdom)? Could I allude to the funeral of Emanuel Jaques at a Portuguese Catholic church in Toronto in language that did not distort the circumstances of the translation of William's body from the woods outside Norwich, where it was first discovered, to the monks' cemetery at the cathedral? Or distort, for that matter, the fact that in William's case I'm not dealing with a single interment, but with an almost ghoulish obsession, even by medieval Christian standards, with repeated translation ceremonies (four in a decade)? Could I

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[1] See Langmuir for his revision of M. R. James's earlier dating of the entire text to 1172-73 (1984, 838-40).

[2] All citations from periodicals are drawn from the holdings of daily press clippings in the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Toronto, whose staff I wish to thank for their help.

mimic the platitudinous metamorphosis of innocent suffering into salvific necessity, without falling off the line into the secularized moralism of WASP Toronto journalism, on the one hand, or into the more narrowly hagiographical tropes of *imitatio Christi*, on the other? Could I, in short, evoke representations of the 'degeneracy' of both gay men and Jews, without collapsing one into the other?

And moreover, why would I want to indulge in this exercise? Part of the answer to that is, inevitably, a matter of personal history. I first moved to Toronto in 1977, a few weeks after the Jaques murder, when, in my early twenties, I was still far from entirely out of the closet. A few months earlier, Anita Bryant had 'saved' the children of Dade County, Florida from the prospect of growing up in a society which accorded equal protection under the law on grounds of sexual orientation.[3] In Toronto, the first major city in which I had ever lived, the daily press coverage of the killing and trial offered the murderers of Emanuel Jaques as the most pervasively and powerfully represented of all homosexual men. At the time, I perceived the discourse of those representations as almost seamlessly monologic.

Such perceptions were of course skewed by the terror that discourse held for me. Going back to review the documents a generation later, I remember the terror and despair, but it is also clear that the presentation was as characterized by rupture and internal dissent as is any such apparatus of ideology: it is due to those ruptures and their later valorizations that much has changed in the Canadian politics of sexual orientation over the last two decades (Rayside 105-211). At the time of the murder, the Ontario Human Rights Commission was in fact recommending that Ontario incorporate sexual orientation as a protected category under its human rights code. (The actual passage of that amendment would wait until the mid 1980s, when a Liberal minority government was pushed toward the legislation by the New Democrat opposition with which the government had entered into a coalitional agreement

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[3] The referendum, held on June 7, 1977, repealed by a margin of 69 to 31 per cent a Dade County ordinance which had prohibited discrimination on the basis of "affectional or sexual preference" in the areas of housing, public accommodations, and employment (Hamburg 1).

[Rayside 142-43].) But the reportage of dissenting voices to the side, the press's obsessive repetitions of the details of the boy's multiple rape, and of his assailants' repeated botched attempts to kill him, imparted a naturalized energy to a plethora of outraged voices. Those voices called for a clean sweep of the human trash downtown (Grass) and rejected the statutory protection of lifestyles that led to such crimes (Davidson; Hoy; Ross; Shulman; Worthington; "Not so 'Gay'"). The totalizing objectifications of homosexuality and of homosexuals made it clear that I was part of the human trash that needed sweeping up.

The fact is that for the past twenty years, my reading of the blood libel "saints' lives" of murdered little Christian boys has necessarily been a polyphonic one, imbued with intertextual associations not because of the allure of their postmodern vogue, but because those associations are burned into my consciousness. I read the text of Thomas of Monmouth, that opportunistic scum of the twelfth century, much as I read the 1977 and 1978 Toronto *Sun* columns of Claire Hoy.[4] I am not particularly interested in doing justice to the *Weltanschauung* of either.

Of course, I am not the only gay man to make such connections between anti-Semitism and homophobia. In bathhouse raids one Thursday night in Toronto in early February 1981, 150 Toronto police officers swooped down simultaneously with crowbars and sledgehammers on five establishments and arrested some 286 gay men. Immediately thereafter, a local gay activist compared the

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[4] Some of the choicest examples of Hoy's homophobic vitriol were in fact generated not by the story of the Jaques murder, but by the December 1977 raids on the offices of *The Body Politic*, a radical gay liberation journal published in Toronto. But in the peroration of the August 10, 1977 editorial already cited, Hoy can be seen moving toward a wholesale appropriation of homophobia as the substance of his professional output: "They complain they haven't been getting the press they deserve. I agree. Until recently, the coverage they got was far too soft, accepting their line about how wonderful gay life is when in fact it's not. It's unnatural and sick. Period. They want to institutionalize it, to have it taught in the schools, and thanks to lunkhead organizations like the Ontario Human Rights Commission they appeared to be making progress. But not now. Not with public sentiment swinging against them. There's no way [Ontario premier] Billy Davis and his bunch are going to touch the OHRC recommendations giving gays all sorts of rights and privileges they think they deserve."

operation to the *Kristalnacht*.[5] I clearly recall a placard at one of the demonstrations after the raid, though I cannot find any documentation of it now, that read "We are the new Jews." The connection is hardly surprising, given the adoption of the pink triangle from the Nazi death camps as probably the most widespread symbol of the queer liberation movement. To be sure, there are substantial dangers in an untheorized assertion of such connections. Pragmatically, such aphorisms can easily trigger – have repeatedly triggered – divisive games of "More oppressed than thou."[6] And the elision of profound historical differences between the oppressions of Jews and of gay men does nothing to further a politically and culturally useful analysis of either.

The fact of my hermeneutic predicament remains, however, and it is clear from the connections drawn by other gay men between their oppression and anti-Semitism that I am not alone at my peculiar interpretive intersection.[7] That my intersection is large

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[5] The raids took place on February 5 and were followed immediately by protests, which continued with mounting attendance and escalating possibilities of violence through the summer. The protests focused on the trials of the men charged as "found-ins" and "keepers," and on the anniversary of the raids. Coverage of the first of the demonstrations and retrospective coverage of the raids themselves was carried by various regional editions of the *Globe and Mail* on February 7, 1981 (Mulgrew). The comparison to the *Kristalnacht* was reported elsewhere in the *Globe and Mail* on the same day as it was being made by George Hislop, a Toronto gay activist (and bathhouse proprietor). One sign carried in the February 7 protest read "Liars, bigots, Nazis: Toronto cops" (Mulgrew, "1,500 demonstrators," Toronto edition). Comprehensive coverage of the raids and their aftermath appeared in *The Body Politic*, beginning with the March 1981 issue. That coverage included a more direct quotation of George Hislop's remarks: "It was midnight, February 6 – just 24 hours after what George Hislop has called the gay equivalent of the 'Crystal Night in Nazi Germany – when the Jews found out where they were really at'" (Hannon 9). (*Kristalnacht* – usually translated as "The Night of Broken Glass" – is the name given to the anti-Jewish pogrom organized by the Nazis in Germany and Austria on the night of November 9-10, 1938. For specifics, see the Museum of Tolerance's informative webpage at <http://www.wiesenthal.com/mot/moths.htm#kristalnacht>.)

[6] Hislop's comment, for example, produced an outraged refutation of any similarities between the circumstances of German Jews and Canadian gays (Jonas).

[7] In a more directly academic context, John Boswell alludes to the historical parallels between the social status of gays and of Jews and immediately qualifies those parallels (16-17). Boswell's observation leaves me with the impression that he, too,

enough to accommodate others as well is what I wished to demonstrate with my initial fence-sitting simultaneous paraphrase of the two murder stories. And my project in this essay has to do, if not with faith seeking understanding, then with the intuitions of lived experience seeking theory. That search involves two overlapping movements. The first might be thought of as the 'what' of the two narratives' rhetoric – a delineation of the unsettling structural resemblances between them. The second might be seen as the 'how' and 'why' of their rhetoric – a consideration of the cultural work, in radically different milieus, that those parallel narrative trajectories appear to perform.

In pursuing the first of those movements, I confine myself, unlike Langmuir, to issues of discursive formations. Somebody murdered a boy named William and left the body in Thorpe Wood just before Easter of 1144. The four men accused and convicted of Emanuel's murder certainly killed him above a body-rub parlor on Yonge Street in the summer of 1977. But I want to steer clear of the events themselves and their status as facts. I want to focus, rather, on the cultural power of the narratives constructed around the putative givens of the events. That power has been as substantial as it is insidious.

In pursuing the second of my aims, I spend more time than does Langmuir on the 'how' as opposed to the 'what' of the narrative qua narrative. Langmuir adumbrates this question, when he remarks on the unusually scopic quality of the medieval text's rhetoric: "We observe William's disappearance with a stranger who takes him to a Jew's house, we watch him being tortured and crucified by Jews, we listen to the murderers talking among themselves about how to dispose of the body, and we are told how they did dispose of it and how it was found" (1984, 828). But this comment aside, Langmuir passes fairly lightly over the pragmatics of Thomas of Monmouth's rhetoric. It is with such considerations in mind that I read Thomas's text against the newspaper coverage of the Jaques trial. How does each text situate the reader in relation to

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grasped the connection as both palpable and strangely protean – in short, as a matter of intuition.

the chimerical perpetrators of the murder? What relation does the all-seeing eye that witnesses William's, or Emanuel's, torture behind closed doors bear toward the violence the text represents? Is that relation one of passive observation, or of active though vicarious participation in the violence that the text ostensibly deplores? And how, moreover, do the public rituals recounted in, and as, the history of the cult's development provide mechanisms whereby such vicarious experiences can be articulated in a socially visible form?

Some readers might entertain doubts about the commensurability of a medieval saint's life and a file of newspaper clippings. I read the collected coverage of the Jaques trial as a single and very vaguely bounded whole, a text that bled out into the Toronto communities that consumed it and absorbed again the discursive energies those communities fed back into it. If reading such a ragtag file of fragments as a whole is problematic, one should keep in mind that the wholeness of Thomas of Monmouth's text, for its part, is also problematic. Thomas composed it over a period of more than twenty years. The first book is datable to 1149, Books 2-6 to 1154-55, and Book 7 to 1172-73. Book 2 is largely a pointed response to unnamed opponents of William's claims to sanctity. Much of the energy that feeds Thomas's vivid imaginings of childhood innocence and Jewish guilt must surely have been absorbed into the text from the oral circulations of Norwich in the years before Thomas's arrival there in the late 1140s. The impetus for the central five books is clearly drawn in large part from the reception of the text's first book. The intertextual vagaries that blur the boundaries of Thomas's text are more submerged, but no less problematic, than those surrounding the coverage of the Jaques murder and trial, and it is with this in mind that I read the two narratives as comparable documents.

The two stories' shared elements begin with the memories of characteristic good cheer projected back onto the lives of both boys. News of the discovery of Emanuel Jaques's body first broke on August 1, 1977, four days after the boy's disappearance from the Yonge Street "sin strip" opposite a vast, newly erected downtown shopping concourse, the Eaton Centre. The boy had last been seen, the front page story in the Toronto *Star* said, "walking away from Yonge St. with a man who offered to pay him $35 an hour to help

move camera equipment. He had been polishing shoes on the strip for about a month with his brother ... and a friend ... The brothers used to hand over their $35-a-night earnings to their parents. About 5.30 p.m. last Thursday a man dressed in overalls talked to the boys, bought them hamburgers and asked Manuel (*sic*) if he would like to work with him ... 'let me earn the money, let me earn the money,' Manuel cried" (Gwyn Thomas).

Several interesting parallels emerge with the story of William even at this early stage in the ongoing construction of the Jaques narrative. Emanuel's innocence, soon to become a trope of explicitly hagiographical force, is already adumbrated in the explanation that the enterprising young brothers hand their earnings over to their parents every night: Emanuel's rovings in the heart of the downtown core are thus drawn into the cohesive circle of his family life. The trope of Emanuel's innocence builds rapidly in the coverage of the case. The next day in the *Star*, a page 2 article begins, "Emanuel Jaques was an outgoing 12-year-old who loved to make friends and who trusted everyone – and that led him to his death" (Bullock, Dalby, and Norris). The same piece adds later that everyone interviewed agreed that the boy's lack of street smarts had rendered him vulnerable. This innocence was extended, moreover, to Emanuel's entire Portuguese immigrant family: the article suggests they remained unaware – after several years of living in a downtown public housing project – of the true nature of the place they by all accounts allowed a twelve-year-old to roam unsupervised for hours at a time. An interview with the mother of Emanuel's friend and fellow shoeshine boy Shane McLean was reported as follows:

> Mrs. McLean asked the Jaques' 17-year-old daughter, Valdemira, if her mother understood about homosexuals and the possible danger her missing son might be in.
>
> "She tried to tell her mother about it in Portuguese, and she didn't understand. She'd never heard of it, didn't know what the daughter was saying. That explains how Emanuel knew so little. One of the first things Shane said to me when he explained about the man taking Emanuel away was: 'Mom, the guy was queer'." (Bullock et al.)

The same article records testimonies by family and neighbors to the

cheerful obedience of a child who did "all kinds of chores, but never asked for money." The same day, the tabloid Toronto *Sun* began its article with a further paean to his cheerful and family-centered obedience (Scanlon).

The parallels with the representations of little William's precocious virtues are clear: they amount to a shared hagiographical topos. Though of course more secularized – unlike William, for example, Emanuel does not fast Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays – Emanuel's virtues are equally in line with contemporary expectation and serve to heighten the pathos of his death. At the same time, accompanying an innocence that leads directly to vulnerability, is the understated but clearly visible issue of economic pressure in both stories. Dynamics of wealth and poverty in each case justify the innocent's traffic with unsavory elements, resisted though these associations are by his family. In William's case, his apprenticeship as a tanner brings him into repeated contacts with Norwich Jews, who favor him and subsequently mark him out for his death of ritualized anti-Christian mockery. (The stench and proximity to dead flesh involved in the work of tanners adds to the general sense that William belongs to the working poor, much as Emanuel works in conditions his family finds undesirable.) William terminates these transactions with Jews under orders from his uncle Godwin and from one Wulward, with whom the boy resides in Norwich (I.iii). Emanuel, likewise, at least as reported a day or two later in the press coverage, shines shoes on Yonge Street despite familial resistance: the *Globe and Mail*, traditionally the most staid and ostensibly the most respectable of the Toronto dailies, offers the observation on August 2 that "His parents did not entirely approve, but peer pressure encouraged Manuel to spend his summer holidays shining shoes on Yonge Street" (York and Lipovenko). Emanuel's mother is quoted at the beginning of a *Star* article the next day as saying, "'I didn't realize how bad a place it was. Close it down for all mothers to protect their sons'" (Dalby).

In William's story, but not in Emanuel's, we observe a direct confrontation between the boy's family and the stranger who lures him to his death. William is taken off by a man who claims to be in the employ of the archdeacon's cook. William's mother resists the man's requests and William's own entreaties – "Let me earn the

money, let me earn the money," we might well imagine him saying at this point – but she subsequently capitulates, conquered if not convinced both by the boy's entreaties and by the three shillings the ensnarer pays to her (I.iv). William's aunt subsequently meets the ensnarer in William's company when they reach Norwich; she dispatches her daughter to follow them from afar. The daughter sees them turn into a Jew's house. By contrast, Emanuel's brother and friend last see him leave the restaurant where all three have met the ensnarer, after all three have hoped to get in on the lucrative prospect of a few hours' work that he offers.

Compensating for this gap in the Jaques narrative is the increasing emphasis on Emanuel's mother's altogether intelligible regrets. The August 3 *Star* article cited above reports, "'My children have been told not to go anywhere far from home', she said. 'I feel terrible. I made a mistake, a terrible mistake', she said quietly. She said her husband Valdemiro was literally 'sick with grief' in his bedroom" (Dalby).

The dynamics of familial grief are likewise bound up with the communal pity and rage that follow the discoveries of both murders. In both instances, the excessive quality of feminine reactions figures largely. Upon hearing of William's death, his aunt recalls a dream she had had the week before Palm Sunday, in which the Jews tore off her right leg. She then collapses in a swoon, from which she recovers only to fall into protracted, unrestrainable lamentations. William's mother weeps and wails in the streets like a mad woman, denouncing the guilt of the Jews in public places, until the populace at large begins to cry out unanimously that "the Jews ought to be utterly destroyed as constant enemies of the Christian name and the Christian religion" (I.xiv-xv).

A particularly striking image in this regard from the Jaques coverage is the photograph published by the *Sun* in its coverage of Emanuel's funeral (Cosway). The caption reads, "A cousin of Emanuel's, Dianna Correira, is carried from graveside after fainting." In the photograph, a young woman is held chest-high by a sober-faced young man in three-quarters view. She is wearing a dark dress; her head, shown in profile, hangs back limp from his arm, which supports her shoulders; his right hand curves over her breast just under her right arm. Her left shoulder is slightly higher,

making of the modest neckline of her dress a dramatic V that focuses our attention back onto the grim expression of the dark, long-haired, photogenic man who carries her. The background is filled with out-of-focus foliage and the faces of other mourners. Under an accompanying photo on the same page, we are told, "Weeping mother Maria Jaques is helped from the church by family friends." She is viewed from above, her darkened eyes visible under her veil; her left hand is grasped by a man in a plaid jacket. On her right, an older, soberly dressed woman in glasses holds her hand. Each of her supporters has an arm around her shoulder. The gaze of all three is directed at a single object (the coffin?) to their right.

The cries for vengeance against the Jews that are taken up at women's instigation by the people of Norwich are echoed in the protests and petitions organized before and after the Jaques funeral. A photo in the August 4 *Globe and Mail*, the day of the funeral and the day before its coverage, shows protesters from Regent Park, the public housing project where the Jaques family lived, carrying signs that read "Kill Sex Perverts. Jail's Too Good," and less prominently in the background, "Capital Punishment Again! Down with Body Rub Joints!" (Porambo, 4 Aug.). The next day, in the *Globe*'s coverage of the funeral, columnist Dick Beddoes reports a petition being handed around the funeral at St. Agnes's Church by Austin Raymond Miller of the Regent Park Community Improvement Association. "The petition was headed STAMP OUT GAYS AND BODY RUBS and Miller said he had 1,000 names on it. 'I'll get more', he said, 'and send it to Mayor Crombie'."

Beddoes's same column is worth further attention. It contains an uncanny echo of the dream of William's aunt: "Lose a child you've loved and it's like amputating a limb," Beddoes observes with a level of journalistic detachment characteristic of much of the coverage. "You keep going, but there is less of you." Beddoes's column furthermore ends with one of the earliest, and probably the most explicit, assertions of Emanuel's canonization: "So young – 12. Saint Agnes was also young – 13 when she was murdered in Rome in 304 A.D. for rejecting a suitor. Martyrs in death before they knew very much about life." Ron Porambo's *Globe* coverage, carried as well by the Vancouver *Sun* on August 9, ended its account of the funeral with a roster of collapsing mourners

including Emanuel's father, his sister, and finally his mother. Porambo concludes, "Then the funeral that had turned into a virtual public passion play was finally over and done with" (Porambo, 9 Aug.). These point-blank assertions of canonization in fact summed up the impulse toward redemptive teleology that had already been indulged in a statement by Alderman Joseph Piccininni in the August 2 *Star* that "Emanuel's death is a 'terrible price' to have to pay to show that the strip needs cleaning up" (McNenley and Barnes 3). Such impulses had also already informed suggestions by Premier William Davis, Ontario Attorney General Roy McMurtry, and Toronto Mayor David Crombie that Emanuel's death was providing the impetus to deal with the long-standing problem of the Yonge Street strip ("Boy's death prompts government action"; "Toronto boy homosexual orgy victim").

Finally, all coverage of the Jaques murder and trial, virtually without exception, places one man first among the four perpetrators – Saul David Betesh. Betesh was in fact the man who went to the police and shortly thereafter confessed to the murder. He is also the only one among them whose given names distinctly suggest the possibility that he is a Jew, and whose surname sounds distinctly other than Anglo-Germanic.[8]

What to make of these and other narrative parallels between Thomas of Monmouth's text and the Jaques coverage? How conscious can such correspondences have been? Was the Jaques coverage in fact shaped by the broadly diffuse intertextual valences of the blood libel? If it was, did the coverage itself contrive such correspondences, or were the behaviors of the principals themselves shaped in real life by those intertexts? (As a specific example, did Ron Porambo gratuitously construct the funeral as a "virtual public passion play," or was it so lived by those who attended – Emanuel's photogenically fainting cousin and the rest of his family, the Toronto Portuguese community, Auxiliary Bishop Aloysius Ambrozic [now, incidentally, Cardinal Archbishop of Toronto], whom Dick Beddoes

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[8] Betesh was the adopted son of Lillian and James Betesh of Toronto. "The Beteshes ... at the time ran a highly successful linen-importing business ... When a physician they knew and trusted approached them with a Jewish male child who had, he said, a very healthy background, they didn't hesitate [to adopt the child]" (Williams).

quotes praying over the body?) And if one can make a case for the construction of Emanuel as a blood libel saint, can one go even further and establish specific intentional parallels with the life of William? The answer to this latter question is far more likely to be negative – though William's biography is the source of all later blood libel narratives, it exists in only one copy: the breadth of its influence is itself a testimony to the power of texts to proliferate beyond their ostensible boundaries into their cultures at large (Langmuir 1984; Dundes; Hsia). But even so, I do find interesting parallels not only in the narrative substance of the William and Emanuel stories, but in what I can only call the rhetorical pragmatics of the gaze in the two texts. Here I shift to engage principally the second of my inquiry's two movements, the rhetorical 'how' and 'why' of the texts.

I have already touched on one example of these pragmatics, the narrative importance of women's grief in the two accounts. Thomas of Monmouth is particularly striking in this regard. He describes the feminine weakness of William's mother and aunt in terms that the conventions of monastic antifeminism would normally lead us to take as straightforwardly repudiative. In fact, we might be somewhat surprised, coming to the end of his account of William's mother's very publicly displayed grief, that the author is not preparing us for a final comment of censure upon such excesses. Instead, the rage against the Jews incited by her intuitive accusations becomes the horizon of naturalized expectation: it pervades the entire account of how the Jews escaped with relative impunity from the consequences of their crime. Thomas, in other words, maintains the disembodied distance of his own gaze from the feminized excess of mourning. Yet at the same time he incorporates the energy of that irrational and feminized surfeit of emotion into the anti-Semitic ideological apparatus he constructs.[9] No ordinary practitioner of

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[9] I use the term anti-Semitism here, despite the historical gap between the medieval blood libel and the modern secular anti-Semitism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as Langmuir has defined it, as a scapegoating of Jews to compensate for the intolerable contradictions in a dominant belief system (Langmuir 1990, esp. ch. 14).

My understanding of ideology draws on current appropriations and critiques of Althusser's model as outlined in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," notably those by Silverman and Sinfeld. Silverman assimilates Althusser's model to post-Lacanian

misogyny, Thomas manages both to objectify women as hysterics and to appropriate that hysteria into his own ostensibly gender-neutral worldview.

The gaze of the Jaques coverage deploys its representations of grief according to analogous patterns. The familial sorrow and anger described by Dick Beddoes and Ron Porambo is the pathetic object of journalistic scrutiny. Representations of the behavior of an enraged community are likewise held at writerly distance. In a demonstration by 10,000 to 15,000 people covered in the *Star* on August 9, reportage takes the homophobia of the crowd as its object without absorbing that homophobia directly into the writerly voice. Victoria Stevens's article quotes, among others, a woman who demands, "Are the queers and prostitutes more important than these people? Are the perverts running Yonge St.?" But precisely the same sentiments emerge naturalized as they spread from news items to the editorial columns and investigative reporting of all three Toronto dailies. Claire Hoy's *Sun* column of August 10 was particularly noteworthy for its homophobic virulence, as would be his later pieces in the ensuing months, but the two more comfortably middle-brow dailies voiced similar sentiments, albeit in more moderate language – sentiments Upper Canadian respectability might view as more foreign if displayed by fainting, shouting Portuguese mourners or protesters. In the *Star* on August 5, Dennis Braithwaite delivered a lengthy jeremiad, justifying his remarks as a response to an editorial published in the journal *Content*. As a furious Braithwaite summarized, "what is agitating the editor of *Content*, and what he devotes most of the magazine's limited space to, is an outraged attack on Toronto newspapers for their alleged denial of the rights of homosexuals. Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg." Braithwaite goes on to praise Anita Bryant for her crusade against gay rights: "Anita thought she had God on her side, forgetting that liberals long ago buried God and dethroned His teachings with a simple dictum:

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feminist conceptions of the constitution of the subject. Sinfeld, following Raymond Williams over Althusser, is concerned to allow for a literary reading practice that both critiques the ideological imbrication of literature and allows for the possibility of resistant readings: such readings generate potentially counterhegemonic discourses out of the ruptures and gaps in the text's ideological surface.

Every evil to excess." A somewhat more restrained but still clearly exasperated Scott Young began an editorial in the *Globe* on August 8 by reporting a conversation which "tacked around from consideration of last Monday's horror, the shoeshine boy murder, to distantly related subjects – such as whether decloseted gays (publicly declared homosexuals) should be allowed to teach school." He concluded, "The gays should tell the nuts among them – the ones who want to teach their branchline sex to children or youths – to shut up. They will never get the human rights they do deserve, if they insist on the one about taking it into the schools like a bunch of gay Billy Grahams."

It is the comfortable liberalism of Young's piece that in fact strikes me as in some sense closest to the rhetorical double play of Thomas's deployment of reported hysteria. Young casts himself as the exasperated holder of the middle ground, graciously conceding the eventual appropriateness of gay rights, while deferring any positive move toward the justice of immediate enfranchisement. His deferral of justice is implicitly rationalized on the grounds of precisely those connections to Emanuel's murder which he superficially claims are of the most distant sort: it would be immoderate, after all, to ban discrimination in the face of the level of furor surrounding the murder, particularly since militant homosexuals have no better sense than to rub salt into the social wound.

The gaze that operates in the Jaques coverage and in William's biography is most powerfully focused, perhaps, in the central events of the narratives that I leapt over in my comparative reading. I need to backtrack to the accounts of the murders themselves.

William is lodged comfortably with the Jews for a day after his arrival in their company. The next day he is bound and tortured with a teazle placed in his mouth and a knotted cord wrapped around his head and neck. Later his head is shaved and punctured with numerous thorns. Then the Jews crucify him in a peculiarly unstraightforward fashion. This they do, Thomas of Monmouth tells us, in order to leave marks on the body that would point to Christians rather than Jews as the perpetrators. Finally, a deep wound to his heart from the left side kills him. His murderers pour

boiling water over the body to cleanse and close the wounds. The Jews decide that disposing of the body near their own lodgings is dangerous and agree to carry him outside the city to Thorpe Wood. En route, they meet one Aelward Ded, whose suspicions are aroused and who, upon examining the bag they carry over one of their horses, discovers that it contains a human body. The Jews flee into the wood, and Aelward returns home, saying nothing due to the injunctions of the Sheriff, who silences him in order to protect the Jews. (Only on his deathbed, five years later, will he reveal that he had encountered the murderers as they were transporting the little saint's body.) By a complex series of miraculously aided discoveries and rediscoveries, burials and exhumations, William is recovered and a month after his death translated to the monks' cemetery at the cathedral.

For the full details of Emanuel's death, we have to leap from the initial coverage of the murder investigation in August 1977 to the coverage of the trial of Saul David Betesh, Robert Wayne Kribs, Josef Woods, and Werner Gruener in February 1978. Emanuel is taken to an apartment above a body rub parlor. There his ensnarer Betesh and the other three take photographs of Emanuel for about an hour. At first the boy is clothed. He is persuaded gradually to remove his clothing. The men then tell him they want sexually explicit "action shots." According to the testimony reported in some of the accounts (O'Hara), Emanuel is at first reluctant but cooperates for a while after being offered an extra $20. (In most repetitions of the testimony this last detail is omitted.) Later the boy is repeatedly raped, in an orgy that lasts about twelve hours. The men decide that it is impossible to let the boy go and the decision is made to kill him. Betesh tries for several minutes to strangle him with a length of plastic stretch cord. Woods then suggests he place a pillow over his face so that Betesh doesn't have to look at him. Finally, Betesh and Kribs drown Emanuel in a sink. The murderers go out to purchase a shovel and bury the boy, but the ground behind the building is too hard to dig and the corpse is left in a garbage bag on the roof. Several days later, Betesh goes to the police with a story that at first suggests his own innocence. In the course of the interrogation, however, he soon confesses his central role in the murder.

What distinguishes the life of William of Norwich from

most later blood libel accounts is the graphic detail to which the reader is subjected. We do not merely learn that the boy is murdered. We are privy to every detail, with a gruesomeness that puts off a great many modern readers who can by contrast read Chaucer's Prioress's Tale with relatively unruffled sensibilities. And we are privy to the sight of the murder not only in the extended chapter of Book 1 which describes it, but again in its rehearsal in Book 2, where Thomas obsessively accumulates proofs of the guilt of the Jews. Most spectacularly, we are told that a Christian woman serving the Jews beheld through a half-closed door the body of William strung up between beams in the room where he died; but she dared not report the sight to anyone (II.ix). The repetitive detail with which William's ordeal is described is recapitulated, as by a kind of extended montage, in the proofs of his martyrdom in Book 2, and less palpably by memorial association in the repeated translations with which the body is brought out into the sight of men, four times in a decade.

The Jaques coverage is even more obsessive in its repetition of the gory details, both after the murder and during the trial the next winter. One might well expect this, given the commercial exigencies of journalism. I am nevertheless inclined to see the horrified fascination by which the Jaques coverage binds its reader to the text as deploying the abject pleasures of its gaze more insidiously than, say, the coverage of the Jeffrey Dahmer murders.[10] The journalistic rehearsal of Emanuel's multiple rape, his botched strangulation and eventual drowning in a sink are like the "money shots" of film and video pornography, repeated from different angles, sometimes at real speed, sometimes in slow motion. As with pornography, what drives the viewer's fascination is the fact that the visual sequence somehow stands in for an unconscious but altogether crucial narrative pattern.

I propose that the urgency driving these representations is the ability of both Thomas's text and the Jaques coverage to stand as "faultline narratives," to use Alan Sinfeld's term – stories that can

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[10] Jeffrey Dahmer was the Milwaukee man charged and convicted in 1992 for the killing and mutilation of seventeen young – mainly Asian and African-American – men.

elide the contradictions in the cultural dispositions they purport to represent (3-5). Here, finally, I focus more on the 'why' than on the 'what' and 'how' of comparative rhetoric. As to the ideological contradictions that made the blood libel legends culturally useful in the high and late Middle Ages, I find useful the work of Kathleen Biddick and, once again, of Gavin Langmuir.

Biddick has traced some of the cultural predicaments at the heart of medieval Christian piety that may have displaced themselves into accusations of ritual murder against the Jews. Specifically, she suggests that the central importance of the Eucharist for medieval Christendom, and consequent upon that importance, the affective pieties of medieval women around the consumption and refusal of food, and around Christ's body and blood as food, dangerously juxtaposed the normative body with the excessive, in a way that threatened to break down the constitutive distinctions between Self and Other upon which the culture relied. As she puts it:

> The Eucharist was good to think with, and it guaranteed the symbolic order of medieval Europe. It was both a "classical" body in the Bakhtinian sense, elevated, static, and monumental, and a "grotesque" body, broken, bleeding, excessive, maternal, paternal, a body that upset any fixed gender binary, a fluid body that troubled any container. It was a body that was distributed across different – and noncommensurate – textual, material, and visual realms. Christians fantasized intensely both the pollution and the purification of the Eucharist because of its ambivalent position as a border phenomenon. (153)

Biddick argues that the desecration of the bodies of Christian children represented in blood libel narratives constitutes an abjection of precisely those cultural predicaments created by the dominant discourses on the body of Christ in iconography, sacrament, and affective piety. She adduces in support of her argument the fact that noteworthy excrescences of Eucharistic piety frequently cropped up in the same times and places as blood libel accusations and rumors of Jewish desecrations of the Host (147-52).

Langmuir (1990) also addresses the kinds of pressures that lead people to adopt irrational hatred of the other in their midst as

an alleviation of unbearable tension, but in contrast with Biddick's work, his argument proceeds in broader categories of the phenomenology of religion. Langmuir is at pains to establish a taxonomy for the representation of Jewish abjection. He argues for a threefold distinction between confessional opposition to Jewish beliefs, acceptance of negative representations of Jewish practice and identity due to inadequate empirical data, and irrational hostility in discourse and practice as a defence against rational objections to a belief system (or dominant cultural praxis) that one hypothetically could entertain but instead represses: "It can be argued that anti-Judaism is a nonrational reaction to overcome nonrational doubts, while antisemitism is an irrational reaction to repressed rational doubts" (276). By a different path, Langmuir arrives at territory also explored by Biddick:

> "The Jews" had become the great symbol of hidden menaces of all kinds within Christendom. In a rapidly changing Europe suffering from economic depression, social discontent, ecclesiastical divisions, bubonic plague, and endemic and devastating wars, many Europeans were prey to lurking doubts that sapped their self-confidence. They struggled to repress them but remained anxious, and many gave expression to their unease by attributing to Jews evil characteristics that made the goodness of Christians obvious by contrast and attributed their problems to an external source. (303)

As Langmuir suggests, the deployments of the blood libel from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries have embraced and attempted to contain a wide range of tensions. What Langmuir says of the need to expel doubts that might well occur about the cultural and economic dynamics of a society can serve as a starting point for comparing the cultural logic of the Norwich and Toronto narratives.

Among the pressing realities that the canonization of Emanuel Jaques elided was the economic deterioration of downtown Yonge Street in the heart of Toronto during the 1970s. The district had earlier functioned as a viable commercial neighborhood of local businesses selling a range of ordinary wares and servicing residential streets not far distant. Yvonne Chi-Ying Ng has documented the pressures placed on this local community. Yonge Street's emergence

as the sex strip decried in the Jaques coverage had been proceeding for some years. Chief among the economic pressures that destroyed the viability of the street's earlier culture was the speculative rise in land values and rents from 1972 through 1974, as land parcels were assembled for the construction of a hulking shopping mall, the Eaton Centre, in the midst of the city (77-78).

For all the representations of Emanuel's loving family, of the cohesive working-class multiculturalism of his neighborhood, and of the wider but close-knit Portuguese community of Toronto, all those social configurations stood in jeopardy, as did the economic base on which 1970s Toronto had relied. At the same time, Emanuel's work as a shoeshine boy was, ironically, itself an index of the economic shifts that the cooption of the neighborhood for large-scale economic development had effected. He was himself one of those marginalized denizens of the street whose presence representatives of 'respectable' businesses in the area found objectionable. Ng's study traces the deployment of the Jaques coverage as a mechanism to produce public consent in support of a cleanup campaign that such figures, supported by the mayor of Toronto, had periodically advocated for several years.

If homosexual murderers of little boys, and by synecdochic extension all queers, became a widely adopted object of enraged denunciation in late-1970s Toronto, the dynamics of that hatred were surely various. But the Eaton Centre stood – stands – as a palpable coordinate of the social pressures that energized a significant share of that hatred.[11] With that, I come full circle to the shamelessly personal set of associations with which I began, by connecting the landscape of downtown Toronto with that of twelfth-century Norwich. The Norwich Jewry lay in the so-called New Burg, the twelfth-century settlement beyond the Norman castle at the southwest limit of the original Saxon town (Jessop and James, xlv-xlix). Norwich Castle thus stood in the midst of a vastly transformed

[11] The contrast between the Eaton Centre and its surrounding streetscape, incidentally, has not diminished in the past two decades. Complaints about the seediness of the street continue, and a redevelopment project currently underway aims to create a more open (and sanitized) space – dubbed Dundas Square – more or less exactly on the site of the Jaques murder.

and bustling twelfth-century city, perhaps the most palpable coordinate of the pressures that shaped life in that economically and culturally tumultuous time. Anti-Semitism offered Thomas's contemporary readers a way to expel a plethora of intolerable contradictions in their lives. In the twelfth as in the twentieth century, hatred, oppression, and murder were part of the practice of everyday life. But against the vagaries of texts and their uses, some monuments to power stand as givens above our lives, mute and guiltless, beyond the rage of those who read the world as its text is transmitted to them.[12]

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[12] Robin Metcalfe's play "The Civilization of a Shoeshine Boy" treats the connections between the Jaques murder and the pressures of urban redevelopment. It was produced by Buddies in Bad Times Theatre in Toronto in June of 1993. It remains unpublished.

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Imagining Lesbian Citizenship: A Kiss & Tell Affair

B.J. WRAY

B.J. Wray is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at the University of Calgary where she is writing her dissertation, "Imagined Citizenship: Nationalism and Sexuality in English-Canadian Lesbian Texts." Part of that dissertation, this piece reconsiders the relationship between representations and lesbian rights activism through an examination of the citizenship and community models developed in the performance art of Kiss & Tell. Responses may be sent to her via email (bjwray@ucalgary.ca).

> If we proliferate the possibilities on the margin without disrupting the center, then we have unwittingly preserved the distinction between margin and center rather than contributed to a more fatal displacement of heterocentrism.
> – Judith Butler 1998, 227

> I find my marginalization a poor basis for a politic. It feels like my community ends up constantly letting itself be defined by the power centre it is working against. I am more interested in looking for community definitions within our communities. But what would those definitions be?
> – Lizard Jones, Kiss & Tell 1994, 54

Given the already overwrought status of millennial musings, I hesitate to begin this article with my own foray into a retrospective assessment of lesbianism at the present time. But I am tempted to wax fondly on the milestones of this past decade of the dyke: the

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covers of *Newsweek* (January 21, 1993) and *Vanity Fair* (August 1993); the media frenzy surrounding Ellen's coming out;[1] the sudden mainstream visibility of more lesbian musicians than I could possibly enumerate. And, while we are tallying up the lesbian score sheet, who could forget *Claire of the Moon* (Nicole Conn, 1992),*The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love* (Maria Maggenti, 1995), *When Night Is Falling* (Patricia Rozema, 1995), *Bound* (Andy Wachowski, 1996), *Fire* (Deepa Mehta, 1996), *Love and Other Catastrophes* (Emma-Kate Croghan, 1997), *All Over Me* (Alex Sichel, 1997), *The Watermelon Woman* (Cheryl Dunye, 1997), *High Art* (Lisa Cholodenko, 1998), *Better Than Chocolate* (Anne Wheeler, 1999) ... Luxuriating in these late twentieth-century moments, it appears that the state of the (predominately white, upper-middle-class, skinny and stylin') lesbian nation has never been more prominent, nor more fashionable. Our heady fifteen minutes of fame will undoubtedly be recorded in the annals of various rights organizations as a watershed along the trajectory of lesbian liberation. The liberatory power ascribed to these contemporary representations may be traced to the intimate connection between visibility politics and rights discourses in North America. The first section of this paper takes to task this connection and the normative models of citizenship it (re)produces. The second section examines the alternative paradigms of sexual citizenship offered by Kiss & Tell, a Vancouver-based performance collective.

Liberationist movements have always sought to flood the cultural mainstream with positive images in the hopes of displacing the pathological legacy of lesbian deviance, perversion, and unnaturalness. As Arlene Stein reminds us, "Lesbian life is indistinguishable from our images of it" (63). Remaining loyal to the power wielded by the visible realm, Pride discourses of all sorts wholeheartedly embrace a representational logic that promotes the political effectiveness of identity counterimages. We are not surprised, then, that the celebrity status of the aforementioned

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[1] Both comic Ellen DeGeneres and the title character she played on the ABC prime time sitcom *Ellen* publicly came out as lesbians in April, 1997. The character of Ellen Morgan announced her sexuality in a special one-hour episode on April 30, 1997.

lesbian icons is reinforced by gay and lesbian rights organizations desiring to solidify a queer presence within popular culture and, by extension, within society at large.[2] The usage of these figures as counterimages is intimately linked to the stereotypes they are meant to oppose.

As the case of Ellen DeGeneres illustrates, the acceptability of a leading lesbian on prime-time television hinges upon the explicit rejection of deviance in favor of an almost hyperbolized normativity.[3] DeGeneres's sitcom character, Ellen Morgan, an unassuming, white, middle-class girl-next-door who happens to be a lesbian, fulfills enough of the conventional registers of normality to make her palatable to a 'general' audience. *Time* magazine's cover story on Ellen's coming out embodies this drive to secure her normality. Throughout this piece, Ellen is analogously linked to Mary Richards, the lead character of the 1970s sitcom *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and the original girl-next-door: "Like Mary Richards before her, Ellen Morgan functions as her show's center, around whom the rest of the cast revolves – structurally, Ellen Morgan *is* Mary Richards, except she likes girls" (46). The interchangeability of Ellen Morgan and Mary Richards confirms Ellen's normative status by casting her as the reincarnation of a television icon. Even more importantly, Ellen's lesbianism is depicted both as incidental, and as an addition tacked on to an otherwise familiar and recognizable television personality. Ironically, in an attempt to retain her 'universal' appeal, Ellen's coming out initiates a recloseting of her lesbian desire:

> "*Ellen* won't become the lesbian dating show" is the party line one hears again and again. "Ellen Morgan is still in a very heterosexual situation," insists Dava Savel [one of

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[2] The reliance on celebrity status as a means of garnering public support for gays and lesbians is exemplified by the appointment of Chastity Bono (daughter of Sonny and Cher) as the Media Relations Co-Ordinator for America's preeminent gay rights organization, The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

[3] Two excellent essays on the relationship between normativity and lesbian visibility in popular culture are Danae Clark's "Commodity Lesbianism" and Sasha Torres's "Television/Feminism: *Heartbeat* and Prime Time Lesbianism," both found in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (ed. Abelove et al.).

> Ellen's executive producers]. "Almost all her friends are heterosexuals. If one of the other characters has a guy that they're interested in, she's the first to say, 'Omigod, he's hot'. It's just not going to be an option for Ellen to date him." (49)

This explicit rejection of lesbian desire (even dating is out of the question) and the positioning of Ellen squarely within the realm of heterosexuality ensure that deviance is isolated from the operations of the quotidian. Cut off from the lesbian community and apparently overjoyed to comment on the splendor of the opposite sex, DeGeneres's character is made to reinforce the supremacy of heterosexuality and the unnatural, marginal status of lesbianism. The rigorous assertion of normality initiates a split between sexual identity and sexual behavior (Ellen may *be* a lesbian, but she certainly must not *act* like one) and further serves to mark lesbian desire as deviant. Passing as normal *enough* within the visible realm requires that the a priori dichotomies of deviance and normality must clearly remain intact. The markers of normality ascribed to Ellen (Morgan and DeGeneres) bring her into the realm of prime-time acceptability by playing her against stereotypical lesbianism, thereby insidiously reinforcing the deviant status of non-normative sexualities.

This reinforcement has been soundly critiqued by queer cultural theorists such as Judith Butler, Sally Munt, Peggy Phelan, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick for nearly a decade now.[4] These critics, often drawing on the lessons of psychoanalysis, point toward the vast array of limitations that are always already embedded within the visible realm. Peggy Phelan provides (via Lacan) a concise accounting of these restrictions: "Visibility is a trap; it summons surveillance and the law; it provokes voyeurism, fetishism, the colonialist/imperialist appetite for possession. Yet it retains a certain political appeal" (6). Phelan foregrounds the apparent conundrum that visibility poses for activists and theorists alike. A simplistic

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[4] See, for instance, Butler's *Bodies That Matter*, Munt's *Heroic Desire: Lesbian Identity and Cultural Space*, Phelan's *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, and Sedgwick's *Tendencies*.

reliance on strategies of visibility opens a myriad of representational traps and inhibits the effectiveness of counterimages. And yet, in the face of numerous intense, articulate, and vigilant critiques of a visibility politic, I am left to wonder, along with Phelan, why its appeal still holds. Is there no other viable means through which a more diverse cultural imaginary may be fostered? Even the apparently disparate views held by various lesbian communities concerning the types of representational strategies that we should employ are surprisingly alike in their unwavering faith in the manipulability and controllability of the visible realm:

> Some believe we should create only "positive images," which are most palatable to the mainstream. Some think we should represent the full spectrum of our lives – warts and all. Others contend that we should create an alternative lesbian culture that can stand completely outside the mainstream, while others assert that we should struggle to make inroads into mainstream film, music, and the like. (Stein 63-64)

None of these tactics pose any challenge to the system of representation itself, nor do they critically assess their own complicity within that system, whether as assimilationists or opponents. The question remains: if the costs of unproblematically taking up the visible are, as Phelan enumerates, truly significant, then what goal could possibly be worth the risk of inciting these traps?

I want to suggest that this seemingly high-risk scenario still retains its currency primarily because an over-reliance on visibility characterizes both a Western democratic tradition of "rights discourse"[5] and, more importantly, the attendant notion of full and equal citizenship. The lesbian sex art of Vancouver-based performance collective Kiss & Tell provocatively reimagines this nexus of visibility, rights, and citizenship. Kiss & Tell's playful reconceptions of the relationship between citizenship and sexuality

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[5] By 'rights discourse' I mean an appeal to a system of governance based on the legal protection of its subjects from discrimination through a state-approved set of protected identity criteria such as religious beliefs, ethnicity, race, sex, and so on.

provide tantalizing examples of transformative cultural politics at work. Since the late 1980s, Kiss & Tell have dedicated their work to the goal of fostering a rich, and often contentious, lesbian imaginary. Kiss & Tell confront conventional notions of citizenship to fashion a community whose boundaries are permeable and whose citizenry is uncertain. Before analyzing their projects in detail, I contextualize Kiss & Tell's artistic interventions within debates concerning gay and lesbian rights, visibility politics, and community models.

Citizenship and 'rights discourse'exist in a reciprocal relationship to one another: to attain citizenship means that one has a specific claim to certain inalienable rights under national laws while, conversely, these rights are only conferred when one is marked as a citizen. A liberationist insistence on visibility is very much tied to an insatiable longing for one's rightful *place* within the national body, one's citizenship papers, and the only way in which that territory may be delineated is by marking and remarking one's claim to certain rights. As Alan Sinfield explains, the agency assumed by rights advocates is inherently problematic: "For it is not that existing categories of gay men and lesbians have come forward to claim their rights, but that we have become constituted *as gay* in terms of a discourse of ethnicity and rights" (271). A rights discourse works to the extent that it both constitutes *and* articulates the existence of an identifiable, marginalized group of people.

The multiple traps accompanying heightened visibility are intimately bound to the foundational paradox inherent in rights claims: one becomes a citizen equal to other citizens under national law at the moment one's position of 'otherness' is marked within the body politic. This conception of citizenship hinges upon the simultaneous declaration and display of difference and sameness. In other words, in order to be constituted as a group in need of rights protection and, therefore, entitled to full benefits under the law, the group must prove its disadvantaged or stigmatized status: that it is basically the same as any mainstream group, but not treated the same. Gays and lesbians cannot be naturalized as citizens until our relatively 'unnatural' status is reconfirmed.

Similarly, a liberationist appeal to rights legislation often overlooks the ways in which the power attached to a normative conception of citizenship is unwittingly reinforced by these rights

claims. Borrowing from Judith Butler's arguments concerning the process of identity formation, it becomes tenable that the unmarked norms which regulate the very concept of citizenship (white, heterosexual, male, and so on) require the boundary-shoring actions of a constitutive outside in order to conceal their own nonoriginary, inauthentic status. Butler remarks: "This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects," but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject" (1993, 3). The "not yet" status of these subjects must be reiterated over and over again in order to stabilize and delineate the domain of subjectivity. At this point, Sinfield's insistence on the *illusory* nature of gay and lesbian agency within a rights discourse rings very true, indeed.

The late-twentieth-century employment of a rights discourse reiterates a normative citizen through a tacit reinforcement of the margin/center dichotomy that stresses the 'not yet' status of citizenship for homosexuals and, inadvertently, reproduces a domain of abject beings. More often than not, attempts to overcome this abject positioning involve, as I have suggested, the reassertion of normality through a distinct valorization both of mainstream gay and lesbian celebrities, as well as of the notion of nationhood itself. Writer Sarah Schulman astutely discerns this compulsion in her 1995 novel *Rat Behemia*. Troy Ruby, a central character in the text, reflects on the New York City chapter of Queer Nation:

> Queer did get old very fast, nowadays only academics take it seriously. But *Nation* managed to live on in many fond conversations. Transgender Nation, Alien Nation, Reincar Nation. And all along the line no one noticed how much that word echoed with the secret store of nostalgic desire for normalcy, normalcy, normalcy. (111)

Even the so-called radical facets within liberationist organizing have frequently clung to the stability and privilege that discourses of national citizenship provide. Schulman makes her readers aware of the fact that organizations seeking a recognition of difference and diversity are unable and unwilling to critique the operations of national discourse, precisely because those operations hold the promise of sameness and equality for a community in need of

validation.

The "nostalgic desire for normalcy" bespeaks an investment in the psychic maintenance of traditional narratives of belonging and placement, and gestures toward the ways in which liberationist discourses of all kinds are haunted by the specter of their own outsider positioning. A rights discourse, seeking to produce a domain of intelligible and legitimate homosexual bodies, tends to replicate the mechanisms of exclusion by which the subject/citizen is formed. Again, in the words of Butler, "every oppositional discourse will produce its outside" (1993, 52). The result is a cyclical replaying of how normative categorizations are constructed, rather than the intended expansion of what full and equal citizenship might mean. Creating our own rules for citizenship – as emblematized in the call for distinct geographical locations, or in the uncritical engagement with a rights discourse – falsely ascribes liberatory power to outsider positioning. Although useful to visions of a lesbian utopia in which safety and community are secured through real or imaginary sites, the notion of "outsiderness" remains bound up with dominant discursive constructions of proper placement. The transformation of citizenship requires that we are highly cognizant of "the exclusions by which we proceed" (Butler 1993, 53). The politics espoused by a rights discourse are most frequently *additive* rather than transformative of the categories at hand.

The potential for transformation is not to be found within a full-scale abandonment or disavowal of the apparently overwhelming desire by gays, lesbians, and queers to secure a territory of their own within the national body politic. Indeed, as I have alluded to, the longing for full citizenship – and the stabilization of identity that it affords – is most often figured as an acute longing for place. In their introduction to the recent *Queers in Space* anthology, the editors remark upon the crucial role that space-making plays in minority communities: "Although in the late twentieth century space has become recognized as a signifier of a group's status in society, this realization has not yet transformed society or yielded real inclusion" (6). In a similar vein, Sally Munt observes that "the lesbian's movement through time and space is an act of her professed belief in an imagined community, one in which there is full *citizenship* for her" (173, my emphasis). This place may

be conceptualized as an actual geographical location in which our own rules of citizenship apply (lesbian bars/clubs, lesbian ghettos, lesbian land, etc.), or place may be understood, more abstractly, as sites within the cultural, social, and political imaginary (lesbian films/books/plays/performances, lesbian politicians, lesbian mothers, etc.). Whether conceptualized as literal or abstract–or, more accurately, both–the allure of place-making and space-taking as a guarantor of citizenship is fundamental to the making of lesbian identity itself. In fact, as the quotation from Munt suggests, an almost seamless relationship between the quotidian and the imaginary defines the parameters of lesbian existence.

Much of this recent queer commentary on the interlining of the real and the imaginary in place-making, citizenship, and identity politics is indebted to Benedict Anderson's seminal text, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Although Anderson does not address sexuality in any detail, his writing "furnishes a series of terms that have proven exceedingly useful for us" (Parker et al 5). Among those terms is, of course, the notion of the imaginary status of the nation. According to Anderson, the nation is imagined "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (15). Anderson's description powerfully resonates with Munt's aforementioned articulations of the "lesbian belief in an *imagined community*." As a queer culture we are not rooted in a particular geographical location, nor can we lay claim to territorial borders or other conventional markers of nation status. These conditions require that our paradigms of citizenship seriously account for the complicated and wonderfully playful operations of the imagination in queer community making. Similarly, the constraints that a heterocentric culture places on daily living can, in many ways, be countered only through a recourse to the imagination.[6] Anderson's musings on the foundational role of the imagination in the constitution of *all* nations provides an obvious

[6] In the words of Sally Munt, "The imagination is of paramount importance in a heterosexual world which effaces our experience, by rendering us absent" (174).

theoretical framework for queer speculations on community and citizenship.

Our models of belonging (national or otherwise) must, however, foreground more than the use-value of the imagination as an identity-constituting force. In addition, an attentiveness to the inseparable nature of the actual *and* the imagined will be necessary in order to highlight both the historically-grounded power of discourse to materialize identities and the bodies attached to those identities, as well as the influence wielded over social and political realms by a cultural imaginary. In his recent essay "Queer Space," Jean-Ulrick Desert insists that "Queer space is in large part the function of wishful thinking or desires that become solidified" (21). Desert's description of queer space resists the impulse to stabilize boundaries or to concretize the abstractness attached to such a definition. In this way, a much more fluid, provisional, and nuanced version of space and, by extension, the citizens producing and produced by that space are made possible. Anderson's notion of the very real, yet very precarious, foundation of the nation, coupled with current examinations of the tenuousness of queer space, may serve as a rich paradigm for restrategizing the ways in which lesbian citizenship is pursued. Instead of relying on the inherently unreliable structures of visibility politics and rights discourses to make the lesbian subject culturally intelligible, a conception of citizenship that locates its existence somewhere in the interstice of reality and imagination can engender a more critical engagement with some of the foundational binaries of sexual identity: center/margin; homosexual/ heterosexual; and normal/deviant.

By way of illustration, I now turn to the artistic projects of lesbian performance collective Kiss & Tell. They locate their roots in a 1984 megameeting of Vancouver feminists on the topic of sexual representation. From this meeting, a much smaller group of artists came together on a regular basis to make art that explored female and lesbian sexuality. Eventually, the group evolved into the current collective of Persimmon Blackbridge, Lizard Jones, and Susan Stewart. Their productions include *Drawing the Line* (1988), a photographic exhibit with an accompanying video and postcard book, numerous performance pieces such as *True Inversions* (1992) and the forthcoming *That Long Distance Feeling*, and a genre-

crossing book, *Her Tongue on My Theory* (1994), filled with images, theoretical essays, and fictional fantasies. Each of these texts initiates a sexy invasion of both heteronormative and lesbian-centered cultural imaginaries that takes to task the "nostalgic desire for normalcy."

Kiss & Tell most often refigure this normative desire through tactics of "aggressive re-territorialization" (Butler 1993, 86). They inhabit literal representational spaces (galleries, art institutions, books, videos) in order to inhibit the ways in which these sites contribute to the normative reiteration of identities within psychic/imaginary spaces. In other words, Kiss & Tell put into artistic practice the aforementioned theoretical speculations on the intimate relationship between imagined and actual spaces and their involvement in the production of identities. Through intimate explorations of diverse bodies, sexualities, and sex, their images and performance pieces open representational spaces for lesbian desire within traditional artistic venues. Even more importantly, Kiss & Tell question the configuration of that desire through self-reflective, parodic expositions of the ways in which a lesbian imaginary remains bound by normative representations. Their exhibits challenge conventional notions of citizenship (lesbian and otherwise) to suggest a community whose territory is unstable and whose membership is never certain. And yet, it is these seemingly disempowering qualities that enable the production of vibrant, erotic, passionate, questioning, and complicated citizens in Kiss & Tell's work.

Kiss & Tell embarked upon their reimagination of the relationship between normative cultural imaginaries and citizenship models with *Drawing the Line*, an exhibition of 100 photographs by Susan Stewart of lesbian sex acts between Persimmon Blackbridge and Lizard Jones. It has traveled the globe from Canada to Australia and has been shown sixteen times in fifteen cities since 1988. The images in *Drawing the Line* are hung on white walls, with a copious amount of white space left surrounding each photograph to be filled in with writing/graffiti (Figure 1: the exhibit on tour). They are also arranged from the least controversial (kissing, cuddling) to the more explicit (cunnilingus) and the most challenging (fisting, sadomasochism, male voyeurism, bondage). *Drawing the Line* is not

an accounting of the facts, nor an homage to the diversity of the lesbian nation. Nor are Kiss & Tell interested in testifying to the authenticity of the images, or to the 'realness' of the sexual acts they portray. Rather, they take up the crucial political task of revealing how "lesbian" has come to signify a sexual citizen within a heteronormative matrix of representation. As Judith Roof comments, "Politically and critically, understanding these configurations [of lesbian sexuality] may help us identify the oppressive sources of ideology that tend to delimit the cultural possibilities of individuals" (6). *Drawing the Line* does the deconstructive work of making viewers (lesbian or not) aware of their own delimiting actions. We are compelled literally to draw on the wall our lines of acceptance or rejection of particular images. Through these actions, Kiss & Tell hopes that lesbians may become attuned to their own psychic processes of expulsion. The images lesbians deem unacceptable become the abject others who are exiled in order to remark a culturally imbued sense of what stable, normative citizenship entails.

Drawing the Line, in its spatial configuration of photographs, asks viewers to confront our often unacknowledged complicity with dominant, and highly exclusive, registers of acceptability. The white wall space found at the edges of these photographs provides room to scribble and thereby reveal and/or deface regulated cultural perceptions. The apparent emptiness and innocence of the white walls offers a seemingly liberating space in which to articulate one's views. Yet, as my earlier argument concerning the limitations of visibility politics outlines, an attentiveness to the cultural and social scripts that regulate representations and our reactions to them, even in these apparently "free" spaces, is crucial. The liberation associated with "positive images" becomes an untenable aspiration when we unravel the normalization processes embedded within mainstream systems of representation. As the case of Ellen DeGeneres illustrates, though, positive images are always already limited by the visual economy in which they appear and, more often than not, unwittingly reinforce a normal/deviant dichotomy. So too, the scrawls on the wall repudiate or validate the images at hand in accordance with dominant ideals concerning sex and sexuality. The writing in the white spaces of *Drawing the Line* actualizes the process of

constructing 'acceptable' representations. Kiss & Tell's exhibition, in its very structure, encourages viewers to reflect upon their own investments in normality and the extent to which these investments encroach upon *all* sexual representations. At the same time, the photographs themselves are shown to be embedded within the narratives lurking on the white walls.

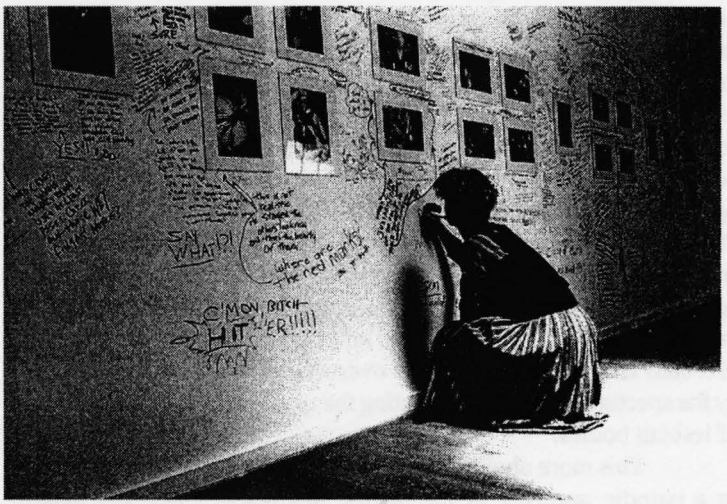

Figure 1: The exhibit on tour
© Kiss & Tell, Isa Massu 1991

Significantly, only women were permitted to write on the walls, while men were encouraged to place their observations in the conventional form of a book left for visitors' comments. With this gesture, Kiss & Tell laid bare another aspect of the traditional operations of dominant culture in which art concerning women, especially lesbians, is subject to a critical exoticization based upon patriarchal principles of critique. Such opinions in the exclusive interests of men are now destandardized in the concession of the visitors' book, an object usually shelved away or entirely discarded after an exhibit. But far from simply endorsing the lesbian-feminist adage of 'art by, for and about women', *Drawing the Line* ultimately succeeds in revealing to what extent such a utopian stance is illusory. The responses written on the gallery walls foreground the

ways in which a lesbian sexual imaginary remains intimately tied to normative discourses of sexual identity.

One manifestation of this connection may be seen in viewer responses to the shot of two women passionately kissing, framed by trees, rocks, and a waterfall (Figure 2). Echoing conventional depictions of (hetero)sexual love and commitment – wedding photos, for example, are frequently taken in gardens or parks – this photograph uses the geography of sexual acceptance to authenticate and naturalize desire between the two women. Lizard Jones knowingly comments on the impulse to recuperate sexual expression from its inherently 'dirty' status: "sex has to be redeemed by something. When it's done with the appropriately redeeming love, politics, or artistic merit, then sex becomes beautiful and important again, things it apparently can't be on its own" (Kiss & Tell 1994, 48). Certainly, the natural beauty depicted in the photograph envelopes lesbian sex within a clichéd narrative of romanticized splendor. That one member of the audience at any rate finds this image comforting–"I love sex and nature. Too bad I have allergies" (Toronto show) – testifies to the overwhelming power still wielded by the specters of deviance haunting the representational appearance of lesbian bodies.

This more obvious reading of what could have been viewed as a parodic queering of the natural landscape, especially in the playful context of the entire exhibit, indicates the extent to which lesbian sex in public spaces remains bound by discourses of normality. In this reading, the beauty of the landscape fuses with public lesbian sex to ensure that illicit desire is recuperated as part of the natural order.[7] The titillation offered by the dangers of kissing in public provokes one viewer to comment tentatively, "Feels dangerous – kissing outside – but maybe that's sexy too" (1991). The hesitation expressed in these sentiments again points toward the inescapable logic of dominant public/private discourses of space. It becomes clear that lesbian identity and desire are securely fastened

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[7] The fusion of lesbian sex with natural landscapes commonly appears in lesbian-feminist photography as a means of highlighting the natural beauty of women's desire/anatomy. See, especially, Tee A. Corinne's images of female genitalia transposed onto seascapes and forests.

to a notion of private and proper placement within national landscapes.

Figure 2: "I love sex and nature..."

Regardless of whether viewers find in the exhibit a convincing portrait of True Lesbian Love[8] or, after reading the artists' statement, are appalled by the fakery of it all, these photographs, embedded within viewer commentary, succeed in creating a deeper understanding of the arbitrariness of such viewing practices. The comments are frequently contradictory and hint at the ability of the lesbian imaginary to sustain radically diverse readings. One viewer comments on one photo: "This touches me the most intensely because it looks like my experience of real live lesbian sex" (San Francisco show). And yet the same photo elicits quite another response from another viewer: "Looks like straight women in porn movies" (1991; San Francisco show). Which reading more accurately interprets the image at hand is not the point. These

[8] In her review of *Drawing the Line* and, more particularly, of the viewers' comments on the walls, Mary Louise Adams astutely remarks, "Women seemed to be searching for an elusive, essential, unencumbered lesbian sexuality. Love, it seems, is high on the natural, while props, jewelry, and even clothes are not" (43).

responses demonstrate the limited scope of lesbian sexual representation; either the image can be discussed as mimetic of personal experience, *or* it can be dismissed as politically complicit. Such reactions are emblematic of the complex dialogue "drawing the line" initiates. In this instance, the line is meant to separate lesbian from straight, but the line does not hold. The project of differentiating 'real' lesbian sex from straight fakery is revealed as a fraught and ultimately futile endeavor because the line between the two is simultaneously a marker of difference and a site of commonality. In other words, the line must be drawn over and over again in order to reinforce a stable, bounded sense of sexual identity. Identification remains dependent upon that which it excludes, and this unending process exposes the fallacy of drawing the line.[9] Cognizant of the paradoxes attached to drawing the line, a refigured lesbian imaginary highlights the inside/outside status of lesbian representation.

The ideological properties of the gallery space are similarly exploited by Kiss & Tell's inside/outside playfulness. *Drawing the Line* turns the often government-funded public space of the traditional gallery into a truly interactive site: "Those polite and pristine gallery walls are soon scrawled over with writing. The photos float in a sea of text; not 'fine art objects' but part of a loud, rowdy community argument and celebration" (Kiss & Tell 1994, 17). In this way, Kiss & Tell fashion a precarious queer space that noisily invades gallery norms. Lesbian images, however briefly, stimulate a "loud, rowdy community" and point toward the artistic activism Kiss & Tell engender.

Drawing the Line does not propose an alternative or oppositional imaginary but, instead, invades already existing narratives to expose their assumptions and limitations. This clears a space for a lesbian-specific discourse which is, in turn, exposed as

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[9] Judith Butler explains the process of identity differentiation as ultimately untenable: "The line is supposed to differentiate straight from lesbian, but the line is contaminated by precisely that which it seeks to ward off: it bounds identity through the very same gesture by which it differentiates itself; the gesture by which it differentiates itself becomes the border through which contamination travels, undermining differentiation itself" (1998, 228).

another constructed narrative replete with its own assumptions and limitations. The writing on the walls does not tell the story of a community hopelessly morally divided. Rather, it narrates the adventures of a citizenry actively engaged with its own representational dilemmas.

Kiss & Tell's preoccupation with representation and the influence that this wields on citizenship paradigms continues to take center stage in their recent performance art. In November, 1992, Kiss & Tell brought their performance piece *True Inversions* to the Banff Centre for the Arts, a publicly funded, internationally recognized arts institute located in the Canadian Rockies resort town. Their performance included a sexually graphic 30-minute video, filmed and directed by Lorna Boschman, in which members of the collective act out sexual fantasies. The video begins with a close-up of cunnilingus. Almost immediately, this tantalizing image is covered over by an official-looking "censored" stamp citing Canada's Criminal Code. Throughout *True Inversions*, viewing pleasure is disrupted by such intrusive regulatory markers. Kiss & Tell strategically display the emblem of Canadian censorship before national laws enact it for them and, in the process, explore the ways in which dominant representational rules tend to permeate even lesbian-centered sex art.

The infiltration of censorship regulations in the video is both a commentary on the federal regulation of lesbian images and, more complexly, also a gesture toward the constitutive power of normative representations within lesbian fantasies. The censorship marker makes visible the usually tacit operations of a heteronormative cultural imaginary. The pauses, the stamp of censorship across the screen, and the appearance of the Canadian Criminal Code legislation all underscore the tenuous relationship between sexuality and visibility; the moment that lesbians are marked within the field of vision is simultaneously the moment that they are displaced as equal citizens. The tactics of representation, which Kiss & Tell employ in *True Inversions*, shift the lesbian imaginary out of its traditionally oppositional positioning and, instead, examine how it is possible to create lesbian art by making use of institutional constraints.

Kiss & Tell's video deliberately calls attention to its own

production and apparatus – boom mikes, cameras angling for shots, the crew – in an effort to undermine the longing for simplistic realness often expressed by lesbian audiences like those noted above. Susan Stewart explains that, "the means of production carry their own weight of ideological baggage that must be both identified and subverted. That is why we like to show our crew, our untidy closets, our complicated histories" (1994, 112). If the viewer is not savvy enough to pick up on this resistance to realism, the director Boschman ensures that there will be no misrecognition of the realness of this video sex when she asks, "Is it real sex if you have to stop and start when the director tells you to?" And yet it looks real enough with real cunts and real lips and real asses sweating and moving together. The intrusiveness of the director, along with the use of gauzy curtains to obscure some of the images, blurs the line between representation and real sex, just as it undoes private/public dichotomies through its commentary on censorship.

Kiss & Tell's Banff performance and, in particular, the video element of the production, ignited a flurry of controversy in the politically conservative province of Alberta. Right-wing magazines, local newspapers, and provincial radio talk shows had a field day with this lurid material. Headlines appeared across the Prairies with such delightful phrasing as "Tax-Funded Gay Sex Play 'God-awful'" (*Edmonton Sun* 24), "Tax Dollars Funding Smut" (Avram, *West-Central Crossroads* 2), and "Even Lesbianism is Government Funded" (Avram, *The Watson Witness* 4). As if that vehemence were not enough, Ken Kowalski, the Deputy Premier of the Province, never having seen the show, called a press conference to denounce "this abhorrent lesbian show" (*Edmonton Sun* 24) and to ask his fellow cabinet members to help him put an end to homosexual shows at government-funded institutions. This was followed by many months of governmental wrangling over whether or not a standard of decency should be implemented as a prerequisite for obtaining arts funding in Alberta.

This rather reactionary, yet all too common, sequence of events began with the appearance of an article in the *Alberta Report,* an extreme right-wing weekly magazine. Reporter Rick Bell attended Kiss & Tell's Banff show and subsequently wrote an inflammatory review entitled "Kissing and Telling in Balmy Banff."

Since only about 150 people were actually present at the Banff performance, Bell's article formed the basis of the majority of both oppositional and supportive commentaries on their production. At the heart of these debates is a territorial battle over public space. The force of Bell's argument centers on his unrelenting discussion of the Banff Centre as a publicly-funded institution: "As usual, the money for this free-admission spectacle came from the empty coffers of indebted governments" (33). Ostensibly, Bell's invocation of "empty coffers" anchors his inflammatory rhetoric to a discourse of sound financial management. More accurately, Bell's comments belie his own investment in the distribution of Alberta's wealth. Bell's discussion of the state of the provincial treasury is a facade that covers over the more urgent issue of Kiss & Tell's (for Bell) unacceptable traversal of public space with private acts.

It is no accident that critiques of Kiss & Tell's performance figured along the lines of keeping lesbianism out of official public places. This reaction demonstrates not only the extent to which public spaces are tacitly designated as heterosexual or, in the words of Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, "the boundedness of heterosexual spaces is also contingent upon the (enforced) willingness of gays to remain invisible" (162). The frenzied denunciation of Kiss & Tell's show, particularly in the *Alberta Report* article, also exposes how the maintenance of these places as markers of 'decency' and cultural acceptability hinges upon the continual expulsion of the abject. According to Munt, "Spaces are not only gendered, and sexed, they are also moralized. Spatial boundaries are moral boundaries which expel the abject, due to the perception of difference as defilement" (166). The expulsion of the abject, as psychoanalytic discourse suggests, is a foundational and ongoing activity in the constitution of subjectivity. Hence, it is possible to read territorial battles, and conflicts over who has the right to representational space, for the ways in which they reveal the precariousness of identity categories. Often, the preoccupation with winning these spatial wars does not allow for an arms-length assessment of the rhetoric surrounding such debates, but such an analysis is crucial to the deconstruction of public/private dichotomies and the 'proper' placement of subjects that these binaries engender.

Apparently unnerved by the fact that "the audience loved it

all, bestowing overwhelming applause at the end and two curtain calls" (33), Bell redeploys a heterocentric narrative of the event that constructs it as the purview of 'special interest' groups. To this end, he describes the audience as "leather-clad art *aficionados* with spiky short haircuts searching for the ultimate meaning of lesbian sex" and "mainly female of the military crewcut variety. Black leather jacket, black miniskirt, black tights or black fishnet stockings, and black army boots or runners in orange or green were the prevalent fashion statement" (33). Constructing the crowd as this supposedly other-than-normal way for women designates this event as a deviant lesbian happening, enabling Bell to reinforce inhibiting notions of normative heterosexual femininity. In his ruminations on clothing, Bell neatly manages to heighten lesbian perversion by linking it to images of illicit sexuality (leather, miniskirts, and stockings) and rebellion (commando haircuts and army boots). Clearly, for Bell, a 'proper' woman was not to be found among this audience.

The anxiety surrounding Kiss & Tell's Banff production speaks very loudly on the topic of heterosexuality. In the words of Butler, "It is crucial to remember that heterosexuality is itself beset by its own constitutive homosexual anxieties; it is not as separate or separable from the sexual minorities from which it tenaciously tries to distance itself" (1998, 227). The Banff controversy reveals exactly how tenuous the category of normal really is, and how dependent it is upon its excluded 'others'. As a political act, Kiss & Tell's performance lays bare the spatial operations of a heterocentric cultural imaginary and in so doing opens the possibility of a more self-reflexive occupation of location. Kiss & Tell's performance, then, traverses both literal *and* imaginary sites of identity production to expose the interlocking nature of these territories. It is precisely their refusal to inhabit properly this nexus of identification that initiates the critical process of reconfiguring citizenship paradigms, be they national or sexual.

A politics of dissent, even disidentification, permeates the work of Kiss & Tell. These lesbian sex artists are less interested in resolving representational dilemmas than in returning contentious issues to their viewers. As Susan Stewart explains: "One of Kiss & Tell's strategies has been to begin making images, despite the contradictions. Images that start to articulate a kind of lesbian

imaginary, even when it seems an act of pure invention" (Kiss & Tell 1994, 112). Of course, this is not a simple process. It may be, as Stewart continues, "inconclusive and unresolved" with "more questions than answers" but, crucially, it is "a place to work." A place located amidst the censors and the ghosts of lesbian representation, but a place, nonetheless.

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Mon sida de Jean-Paul Aron : l'*auto*censure ou le jugement du miroir

JORGE CALDERON

Etudiant au doctorat au Departement de langue et littérature françaises de l'Université McGill, Jorge Calderon (jcalderon11@hotmail.com) s'interesse à Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, le Nouveau Roman et les érivains du sida. Son article est la mise en lumière et l'interpretation du premier temoignage public d'un intellectuel français sur le sida et il se veut aussi une contribution à la critique et à la théorie du texte gay.

La peur de la différence est inhérente à nos sociétés. Nul ne peut revendiquer son identité sans mettre en péril le fragile équilibre de la structure sociale que l'*autre* a construite. Ce fut le cas pour les mouvements ouvriers, les groupes de libération des noirs en Amérique et en Afrique, la vague féministe. Ce qui est intéressant, c'est de remarquer que ces luttes se sont inscrites aussi bien dans la réalité concrète que sur le papier. Pensons simplement à tous ces manifestes, ces romans, ces poèmes, ces pièces de théâtre, qui revendiquaient une nouvelle interprétation de la *vérité* sociale, une remise en question des valeurs religieuses et nationalistes, une relecture des *différences*. Ces prises de parole ont été sévèrement critiquées : par exemple le blâme et la condamnation a été le lot, pendant longtemps, de l'œuvre de Simone de Beauvoir. Sans aucun examen préalable, certains condamnaient toute production émanant de ces nouvelles formes de pensée : le pouvoir logocentrique ne

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tolérant aucune œuvre, aucun spectacle, aucune prise de position et de parole, qui le remette en question – rien n'est pensable, rien n'est dicible, rien n'est scriptible, hors de lui-même. Néanmoins, certaines personnes osent parler et écrire à partir des *marges* et ainsi elles redéfinissent le *centre*. Pourtant ce n'est pas parce que j'ai le *droit* de parler que j'ai la *possibilité* de le faire – ou au moins de le faire conformément à mon *intention* première. Celui qui prend la parole ne se trouve plus face à la censure de l'autre, mais bien face à lui-même : il s'*auto*censure, il se condamne au silence ou bien à une certaine distorsion de son propos. En se privant de sa liberté, le sujet exerce la plus terrible des censures : celle qui interdit à *soi-même* de penser, de dire et d'écrire sa vérité. Ce phénomène est lisible dans les textes gays et lesbiens. Il n'est pas nécessaire de rappeler l'opprobre que les *préférences* sexuelles ont soulevé et soulèvent toujours. Dans ce contexte social revendiquer une *identité marginale* n'est pas un acte simple, et les meilleures *intentions* n'y peuvent rien. Se dire l'idem de celui qui est stigmatisé n'est pas facile. Accepter le caractère de l'identité gaie et lesbienne comme une *unité* ne va pas de soi. Ce sont ces problèmes de relationnement entre une identité personnelle et une identité culturelle qui sont difficiles à formuler et à envisager. Ainsi, accepter qu'on appartient à un groupe marginal et marginalisé – parce que minoritaire –, accepter de reconnaître un ensemble de traits propres à la communauté des *bannis* et s'y reconnaître soi-même n'est pas chose facile. Il y a donc pour moi un refoulement évident dans l'inconscient du texte gay et lesbien des éléments de la pensée de *soi-même* et du désir de *se dire* en s'*identifiant* au groupe auquel on appartient – sans avoir voulu *en être*. Celui qui parle ou écrit se retrouve ainsi face à une société, ou plutôt à l'image qu'il connaît de celle-ci, qui lui est hostile et qui ne tolère d'aucune manière ce qu'il à dire, ce qu'il a à *lui* dire. Et ce n'est pas parce qu'à un premier degré de sens on fait l'apologie, l'éloge et la louange de son identité (culturelle), qu'à un deuxième degré de sens on ne sent pas le poids de la *faute* qu'on croit être en train de commettre. C'est à partir de ces données, la prise de parole, l'homosexualité, le sida et la censure/autocensure, que j'analyserai le texte de Jean-Paul Aron, *Mon sida.*

Avant de passer à l'analyse textuelle en tant que telle, j'aimerais rappeler le contexte socio-historique qui a vu éclore la littérature du sida. Ainsi, depuis 1981, la société occidentale, et plus particulièrement la communauté homosexuelle, a été confrontée à l'apparition d'un nouveau fléau : le sida. Une importante documentation en sciences de la santé, sociales et humaines a été produite afin de mieux comprendre le phénomène et dans l'espoir d'arrêter la progression du sida ou du moins de réduire sa vitesse de propagation. Il est indéniable que le sida a créé une nouvelle division sociale entre les séro-négatifs et les séro-positifs, simples porteurs du virus ou personnes gravement atteintes des suites du développement du syndrome. Appartenir au second groupe est une calamité pour plusieurs raisons : le sida est une condamnation à une mort précoce et douloureuse, l'individu se trouve du jour au lendemain face à une réalité qui le force à réévaluer son identité et son mode de vie, et surtout le séro-positif est la victime d'une angoisse sociale qui le marginalise doublement en faisant peser sur lui le soupçon de l'homosexualité et la peur de la contamination dont il serait la source. Le sida, après une période relative de "Révolution sexuelle", qu'on peut d'ores et déjà juger comme ayant été timide et superficielle, réveille les pires tabous sociaux à l'encontre de ce que les médecins et les sociologues ont appelé "le groupe à risque" : les homosexuels. Ce groupe a été des plus touchés et des plus stigmatisés par le sida. L'homosexualité est redevenue le signe d'une maladie se présentant comme une épidémie, comme un danger de perturbation sociale et de mort. Cependant, ce que des journalistes ont appelé au tout début "le cancer des homosexuels" est rapidement devenu "une peste fin de siècle" touchant toutes les couches de la société, aussi bien les "homos" que les "hétéros". Même si les données ont changé, il n'en reste pas moins que le sida est largement associé à des pratiques sexuelles marginales et clandestines, ainsi qu'à la toxicomanie. Ajoutons que les préjugés sociaux ont bénéficié du symbolisme de deux vecteurs principaux dans la transmission du sida : le sang et le sperme – ayant tous les deux de lourdes connotations de "pureté" et de "faute". Et même si aujourd'hui, contrairement au début des années 80, la médecine a démontré que le virus est uniquement transmis par des vecteurs biologiques, certaines personnes continuent de croire que des facteurs

psychologiques, spirituels et autres balivernes entrent dans la contamination par le sida. Comme le rappelle Michael Pollak : "Cette confusion a donc créé chez beaucoup d'homosexuels le sentiment qu'ils étaient dénoncés moins pour ce qu'ils faisaient que pour ce qu'ils étaient" (12). Pour ces personnes, ce ne sont pas les pratiques sexuelles à risque qui sont mises en cause, mais uniquement la préférence sexuelle. Les tenants de cette pensée magique prétendent encore aujourd'hui que les hétérosexuels ne sont pas à risque. Ainsi, le discours sur le sida est devenu un révélateur des valeurs, des préjugés, de la morale et avant tout des tensions qui existent dans notre société. Il a aussi été un catalyseur de l'identité gaie et lesbienne – termes dénotant l'existence d'un groupe social culturel sans connoter une relation univoque, directe et réductrice à la sexualité.

Dans un tel contexte se dire gay et sidatique devenait très problématique. Le premier intellectuel français à avoir avoué publiquement sa maladie est Jean-Paul Aron. *Mon sida* a été un témoignage choc qui s'est inscrit dans l'horizon du discours social de l'époque. Dans ce texte, le dévoilement de l'auteur est aussi une révélation (voilée) d'une profonde culpabilité. Jean-Paul Aron se dit *homosexuel* et *fier de l'être*. Toutefois son discours révèle autre chose – je rappelle la notion d'*intentionnalité* : la langue *dit* toujours quelque chose, et ce qu'elle dit ne correspond pas forcément à l'*intention* manifeste de celui qui parle et/ou écrit. Dans mon analyse je m'efforcerai de montrer l'enjeu d'une herméneutique de la révélation – en prenant la parole, le témoin du sida se révèle autrement à lui-même tout en nous révélant une expérience nouvelle – qui instaure une subtile relation entre une poétique de l'implicite et de l'explicite. À mon avis, le témoignage de Jean-Paul Aron est une auto-justification fonctionnant sur un profond sentiment de culpabilité : tout d'abord parce qu'il doit avouer une homosexualité problématique et puis, bien sûr, parce qu'il est atteint du sida. Son discours fonctionne sur le mode de l'aveu, mais aussi de la délation : l'auteur rappelle que Michel Foucault est mort du sida. En révélant le silence, et par conséquent une prétendue faute éthique concomitante au sida, Jean-Paul Aron fait œuvre de transparence tout en instaurant une problématique complexe du *dit* et du *non-dit*.

Un témoignage sous forme d'entretien

Mon sida, publié en 1988 aux éditions Christian Bourgois, est paru tout d'abord dans *le Nouvel Observateur* du 30 octobre et du 5 novembre 1987. Les propos de Jean-Paul Aron ont été recueillis par Élisabeth Schemla. Aussi, le témoignage prend la forme d'un entretien. Le texte est donc à deux voix . C'est la deuxième voix qui commence le texte en restituant l'apparence physique de l'auteur : "Très amaigri, sans que sa silhouette ait perdu de son élégance un peu voûtée" (7) ; sa voix : "régulièrement interrompu[e] par une toux sèche ou un bâillement de fatigue" (7) ; mais aussi la qualité du commentaire et de l'esprit : "le cours implacable d'un propos maîtrisé" (7). La voix d'Élisabeth Schemla est donc le prologue du texte, mais aussi le contrepoint. Dans ce premier passage, Jean-Paul Aron est là : vieilli, malade, parlant avec une voix entrecoupée, mais présent. Et comme s'il fallait toujours être deux pour mieux se comprendre, elle écrit : "son regard d'urgence ne lâche pas une seconde le regard qui lui fait face, comme s'il était à l'affût du reflet enfin fidèle de son être" (7). Ce passage est à mettre en rapport avec la pensée de Mikhaïl Bakhtine qui, dans un tout autre contexte, écrivait qu'une voix seule n'est et ne peut rien : "Tout n'est que moyen, le dialogue est le but. Une voix seule ne finit rien, ne résout rien. Deux voix sont un minimum de vie, d'existence" (344). Ainsi, *soi* n'existe pas sans/hors relation, car il se définit et il est défini par ce qui est *autre*. Ce qui est important, c'est de plonger la pensée dans une relativité de l'existence en devenir et de ne pas la laisser se figer en un raidissement abstrait et dogmatique. Ce qui compte avant tout, c'est l'*angle dialogique* sous lequel tout s'oppose ou se juxtapose dans le texte. Pour Bakhtine, le dialogue est la seule vérité intrinsèque de tout discours. Par conséquent, il me semble que ce premier témoignage public d'un intellectuel français atteint du sida marque bien la nécessité de son existence par la forme choisie : l'entretien. Jean-Paul Aron se place immédiatement en situation de communication directe par le dialogue. Ses propos, même s'ils ont été profondément médités, sont rapidement reçus par son interlocutrice et ils sont par la suite rapidement publiés dans un journal à grand tirage. Touchant par le fait même un large public, et ce dans un délai plutôt bref. Le premier but du texte est donc d'informer le public en démystifiant la réalité du sida. La forme du

texte et son lieu de publication témoignent donc de l'urgence du propos transmis. Il y a plus : le discours de Jean-Paul Aron est aussi une quête ontologique qui ne peut avoir lieu qu'à travers, par et dans le langage. Ce n'est que par l'expression de ce qu'il *dit* que l'auteur prend conscience de ce qu'il *est*. Ce discours se veut un miroir fidèle. Toutefois, le miroir révèle une image beaucoup plus vaste que ce que Jean-Paul Aron aurait peut-être voulu laisser voir : le miroir a deux faces, et l'une peut refléter l'autre à l'infini.

Auto-justification et culpabilité

Cette remarque nous amène à notre deuxième point : le discours de l'auteur se veut le témoignage privilégié d'un intellectuel français sur une situation nouvelle à travers son expérience vécue. Il se voudrait donc l'illustration et la démystification du sida. Toutefois, le discours véhicule un autre sens : il prend aussi la forme d'une auto-justification. Ainsi, parler dans un entretien à l'autre, c'est parfois, sinon souvent, se parler à soi-même à haute voix. Justifier la condition d'un groupe stigmatisé, c'est aussi auto-justifier son propre état. Jean-Paul Aron dit : "Soudainement, une certaine façon de tourner autour du pot, le silence en somme, s'est mise à me gêner" (8). Il y a eu silence de la part de l'auteur autour du sida dans sa vie publique, ainsi que dans sa vie privée et jusque dans sa profonde intériorité. Pourtant, être porteur du sida n'a pas été une information suffisante pour justifier une nouvelle perception de son rapport à lui-même et aux autres. Il a fallu une pneumocystose qui l'a emmené très près de la mort pour que Jean-Paul Aron arrête de "tourner autour du pot" et qu'il prenne conscience de sa nouvelle réalité. Les signes évidents de la dégradation de son état ne lui permettaient plus de garder le silence pour lui-même et pour les autres : il était atteint du sida, une maladie mortelle, et aucun médicament, aucun vaccin ne viendrait à sa rescousse. Cette conscience lui donne l'occasion de dire : "je ne vois pas pourquoi je continuerais à me dissimuler. Notre rencontre et la mise au point de ce texte, au fond, me permettent d'avancer sur la voie d'une partielle libération de moi-même" (9). *Mon sida* devient donc l'aveu de sa double dissimulation : l'homosexualité et la maladie. Une autre question se pose : quelle est la relation que l'auteur voit entre son orientation sexuelle et le sida? Tout me permet de croire que Jean-

Paul Aron voyait son homosexualité comme une faute ; et le sida comme un châtiment – même s'il prétend le contraire. Premièrement, il essaie de s'identifier avant tout au dandysme qui dénote une élégance, un raffinement, une attitude morale tout en connotant un détachement face aux valeurs dominantes dans la société et un esthétisme non conformiste. L'auteur le définit quant à lui comme "la différence absolue" (9). Qui dit différence dit souvent marginalité, clandestinité et dissimulation – quand cela est possible. Rappelons que Jean-Paul Aron a donné dès le début des années 80 des interviews à des journaux publiant officiellement pour un public gay et il a participé à des manifestations. Cependant, il parlait de l'homosexualité de manière indirecte, ou du moins il ne parlait pas explicitement de son expérience : "C'est à cette époque, vers 1982-1983, que je me suis montré dans des manifestations d'homosexuels pour défendre leurs droits et leurs libertés. Je savais qu'on prendrait des photos de moi : j'acceptais cet aveu implicite" (15). Je souligne l'utilisation de "leurs droits et leurs libertés" qui exclut du groupe visé celui qui parle. Et ce qu'il accepte, c'est un aveu implicite de son homosexualité. "Aveu", comme il le qualifie, qui peut être interprété comme l'ouverture d'un homme hétérosexuel à la situation des homosexuels marginalisés. L'auteur continue à réfléchir à son rapport à l'homosexualité : "C'était sans doute folie, peut-être inauthenticité, mais je ne me suis jamais senti homosexuel. La maladie seule m'oblige à convenir que j'appartiens existentiellement et socialement à cette catégorie. J'ai nié ma spécificité, non parce qu'elle me répugnait mais parce que je n'avais pas le désir d''en' être" (28). Dans ce passage, il y a une ambivalence qui vaut le commentaire. Tout d'abord, il pose la question d'être homosexuel et de se sentir homosexuel. C'est tout un rapport à la perception de son identité qui se dessine : suis-je ce que je suis sans le percevoir ? ou bien suis-je seulement ce que je crois être ? Puis, il déplace la question vers l'existentialisme : l'individu se définit par ses *actes* et non par ce qu'il *est* avant même d'exister concrètement. Nous voyons rapidement des contradictions dans ce passage : premièrement Jean-Paul Aron a eu des relations sexuelles avec des hommes, mais il ne se sentait pas homosexuel. Pour un individu qui veut se définir en fonction de ses actes, il y a là un aveuglement. Cependant, ses actes sexuels ont eu comme

conséquence sa contamination par le VIH. Par la suite le syndrome s'est développé et il a dû être hospitalisé. C'est à ce moment qu'il se définit enfin comme homosexuel, appartenant donc au "groupe à risque". Un peu comme le bouton qui dévoile la peste, le sida a obligé l'auteur à dévoiler et à se dévoiler son homosexualité. Désirant les hommes, il n'avait pourtant pas envie de se cataloguer dans le groupe communément étiqueté "Homosexuels". Il reniait donc ce qu'il était, afin d'éviter, non pas d'être socialement marginalisé, mais bien de s'auto-marginaliser. C'est pour cette raison que je parle d'une profonde culpabilité qui habite l'auto-justification de Jean-Paul Aron.

Aveu et délation

Cette auto-justification prend la forme d'un aveu public. Mais, elle n'est pas seulement un aveu de soi, c'est aussi une forme de délation. Jean-Paul Aron rappelle qu'il a écrit un ouvrage, *les Modernes*, dont il relisait les épreuves quand Michel Foucault est mort. Dans ce livre, il démolissait les théories et les structures proposées par le philosophe. Il continue : "Foucault était l'homme du langage, du savoir et de la vérité, point du vécu et du sens. Il était aussi homosexuel. Il en avait honte, tout en le vivant parfois de façon insensée. Son silence devant la maladie m'a indisposé parce que c'était un silence de honte, pas un silence d'intellectuel. C'était tellement contraire à tout ce qu'il avait défendu ! Ça m'a paru ridicule !" (27). La première question qui me vient à l'esprit en lisant ce passage est la suivante : de qui parle Jean-Paul Aron ? de qui est-il entrain de commenter le comportement? J'aurais tendance à croire que la figure de Michel Foucault devient un miroir herméneutique qui renvoie son propre discours à celui qui parle. Le grand philosophe aurait caché et son homosexualité et sa maladie parce qu'il avait honte de son expérience vécue et du sens que ce vécu aurait produit. Lui, l'homme du langage, du savoir et de la vérité, aurait dissimulé sa situation par honte. (Remarquons que le terme "honte" revient dans deux phrases, l'une à la suite de l'autre.) Sans vouloir disculper Michel Foucault, il faut préciser sa situation en 1984. Le sida était apparu sur la scène publique depuis moins de trois ans. Michel Foucault se sachant atteint n'avait pas à l'époque les informations que Jean-Paul Aron connaissait en 1987. Sans

oublier que le philosophe avait informé son entourage immédiat de sa nouvelle condition, comme l'a affirmé Hervé Guibert dans des entrevues et dans son best-seller *À l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie*. De plus, comme l'indique Michael Pollak en 1988 : "Les caractéristiques [sociologiques] principales de l'expérience de la maladie sont le secret et le silence, et le maintien dans la mesure du possible d'une continuité de la vie : tout change dans la vision que le malade a de lui-même, mais rien ne doit changer dans l'image que les autres ont de lui" (104-05). Cette inadéquation entre la perception que le malade a de lui-même et celle qu'il souhaite que les autres continuent d'avoir de sa personne est un facteur inhérent à ceux qui sont atteints du sida. Cette maladie instaure une relation tragique entre l'individu et la société, relation fondée sur le non-dit. Le silence devient un bouclier qui permet au malade d'éviter le jugement et le rejet – ce qui serait déjà une première mort sociale de la personne. Cependant, le sidatique ne peut pas dissimuler sa condition très longtemps : dès que les signes physiques apparaissent, la présence du sida est indéniable. Et dans le cas de Michel Foucault, fils d'une famille bourgeoise de province, il faut souligner, comme l'écrit si bien Michael Pollak, que "parfois s'installe une complicité bienveillante entre l'homosexuel et ses proches qui, tout en lui évitant de s'auto-justifier, le protègent contre l'extérieur par un mur du silence" (111). Et j'ajoute que cette situation peut se prolonger au-delà de la mort du malade.

Implicite et explicite

Après cette mise au point, je veux montrer que Jean-Paul Aron en jugeant Michel Foucault se juge lui-même. Par la délation de l'homosexualité et de la maladie du philosophe, l'auteur dénonce sa propre dissimulation et ses mensonges passés. Ainsi, il nous apprend que son frère aîné et sa mère étaient au courant de son orientation sexuelle. Qu'en est-il de son père ? Quant à la honte, comment celui qui ne voulait pas "en être" peut-il condamner un homme qui a vécu intensément, comme le rapportent ses proches. Quant aux prétendues contradictions entre les théories de Michel Foucault et ses pratiques sociales, Jean-Paul Aron lui-même n'arrête pas de se contredire dans *Mon sida*. Les médisances de l'auteur n'auraient aucun intérêt si elles ne nous apprenaient pas quelque chose qui peut

peut-être servir à l'élaboration d'une théorie du texte gay : cet effet miroir entre l'implicite et l'explicite, entre ce que l'auteur semble dire, veut dire et ce qu'il dit. Ainsi, parler gay a longtemps été un danger politique et social grave qui, à l'heure de la libération sexuelle, de la liberté d'expression, de la revendication de l'égalité entre les humains, échoue sur une plage de séquelles. Jean-Paul Aron avait la liberté politique et sociale de parler de sa condition, pourtant il semblerait à la lecture de son texte que le passé était trop lourd à porter et que les mots ne concordaient pas toujours entre son *intention* d'auteur et l'*intentionalité* de son texte. Il y a donc quelque chose de l'ordre d'une conscience marginale qui se considère toujours et encore comme fautive et cherche à se disculper de manière implicite.

Un autre facteur joue aussi dans la démarche de Jean-Paul Aron : la jalousie doublée du désir de réussite intellectuelle : "je me suis attaqué à lui par allergie philosophique, mais aussi pour une autre raison, à moitié illégitime : j'étais jaloux de sa gloire" (27). Jean-Paul Aron s'oppose donc existentiellement, dans la *praxis*, à Michel Foucault ; il se définit comme l'homme du vécu et du sens, et par conséquent contre la théorie et les structures de son ancien camarade. En rappelant la très grande gloire intellectuelle de Michel Foucault, il avoue aussi sa jalousie. Toutefois, cette expression "à moitié illégitime" vient encore ajouter une ambivalence, car il continue de voir sa démarche comme "à moitié légitime" : lui aussi aurait dû avoir droit à une plus grande reconnaissance sociale. Et d'une certaine manière, le texte de Jean-Paul Aron est une machine rhétorique qui lui permet de dépasser le maître sur un certain champ de vérité. Nous pourrions lire le texte de la manière suivante : Michel Foucault, le grand maître de la théorie, du langage, du savoir et de la vérité, a menti en dissimulant sa condition ; moi, Jean-Paul Aron, l'homme du vécu et du sens, je dis toute la vérité. Je dépasse donc le maître dans la pratique.

Mon sida est un texte qui soulève plusieurs problématiques comme nous avons pu le voir. Maintenant, j'aimerais revenir plus précisément sur le rapport à l'implicite et à l'explicite. Soulignons que dans *les Écrivains sacrifiés des années sida*, Jean-Luc Maxence soutient que le thème du sida occupe une place privilégiée dans les derniers écrits de Michel Foucault, mais d'une manière implicite :

le philosophe aurait écrit sur le sida de manière détournée, en omettant d'utiliser le mot directement. Dans ce cas, Michel Foucault n'aurait pas gardé un silence intellectuel absolu comme le prétend Jean-Paul Aron. Et ce dernier écrivait, en faisant référence au *Pénis et la démoralisation de l'Occident* : "Même si je ne m'y dévoilais pas et si le thème de l'homosexualité restait périphérique, il n'en restait pas moins bien présent" (16). Reconnaître la pratique d'une écriture gaie de l'implicite pour se disculper d'un très long silence, c'est, je le souhaite, reconnaître cette même pratique dans les oeuvres d'autres intellectuels gays. Il y aurait donc à mon avis cette dualité herméneutique de la révélation qui joue sur une poétique de l'implicite et de l'explicite dans l'écriture gaie et lesbienne. Le problème, c'est de théoriser une méthodologie qui permettra de déchiffrer cet implicite dans les différentes littératures (française, anglaise, espagnole, russe, japonaise, etc.), les différentes époques (de l'Antiquité gréco-romaine en passant par la tradition judéo-chrétienne et ce jusqu'à notre post-modernité) et les différentes sociétés (écrire gay en Amérique du Nord ne se fait pas de la même manière qu'en Afrique).

Lisible, scriptible et recevable

Comme nous l'avons vu au début de ma réflexion, il peut y avoir une censure imposée par le pouvoir politique et social interdisant de produire tout discours allant à l'encontre des règles établies, de l'hégémonie des valeurs choisies, de l'identité prônée pour chaque individu par le logocentrisme de ceux qui ont le droit de parler au nom de tous. Cette censure peut être jouée et déjouée à partir des marges, de ces lieux qui permettent d'attaquer le centre afin de le redéfinir : ce fut la stratégie des mouvements ethniques et féministes en occident. Mais pour cela il faut prendre sa liberté de parole en mains et être prêt à tout pour défendre son identité et sa vérité. Plusieurs n'ont pas le courage ou la force de le faire, alors ils préfèrent s'interdire de penser, de dire et d'écrire leur réalité. En évitant le blâme et la marginalisation, ils se condamnent au silence et à l'immobilité. En s'autocensurant ces êtres sont au monde sans exister ; fantômes sans vie ils vivent déjà la mort. Entre ces deux pôles, nous retrouvons des manifestations plus incertaines, plus difficiles à classer. C'est le cas de *Mon sida* de Jean-Paul Aron ; il

prend la liberté de parler de son homosexualité et de sa maladie au moment où il n'a plus rien à perdre. L'auteur, conscient de sa situation sociale et des ressources à sa disposition, reconnaît que son comportement a été longtemps inconséquent : "mes réactions vis-à-vis du sida jusqu'à ces dernières semaines, et ma gêne à me reconnaître tel que je suis, prouvent que j'ai été moi-même victime du cliché, du fantasme collectif face à une maladie innommable" (28). Comme je l'ai montré auparavant, le discours de Jean-Paul Aron qui se veut le témoignage de son vécu à travers un langage de vérité, oscille entre ce que l'auteur voudrait dire et ce qu'il se permet de dire, entre ce qu'il communique et ce qu'il voudrait communiquer. Il n'y a pas d'adéquation entre l'intention de l'auteur et l'intentionalité du texte, parce que ce qui est dit de manière explicite renvoie immédiatement à un sens implicite qui révèle une toute autre interprétation du texte. Et, malgré le fait que Jean-Paul Aron essaie de désamorcer les préjugés sociaux face à l'homosexualité et au sida, ses propres idées et valeurs sont en contradiction avec ce qu'il voudrait dire. Parfois il fait l'illustration et la défense de l'homosexualité, et d'autres fois une toute autre image de ce phénomène apparaît au fil du discours. Il écrit : "L'homosexualité est une forme de déviation, de marginalité que le corps social peut supporter sans l'avaliser jusqu'au bout. Le sida réintroduit la condamnation" (30). Ceci m'amène à souligner que Jean-Paul Aron est un homme d'avant la Révolution sexuelle des années 70 qui aimerait tenir à 62 ans (en 1987) les propos d'un gay complètement émancipé ; malheureusement ce n'est pas ce qui se produit. Nous sentons tout au long de son plaidoyer une profonde influence de la culture judéo-chrétienne occidentale. Rappelons simplement le paradigme de la confession, de la faute, de la *Loi* et de la condamnation qui se dégage du texte en général et du passage que je viens de citer en particulier.

Finalement ce qui a lieu dans ce texte peut être expliqué par les notions de *lisibilité*, de *scriptibilité* et de *recevabilité* développées par Roland Barthes. Ce qui est *lisible* dans *Mon sida* de Jean-Paul Aron, c'est le niveau textuel de ce qui a déjà été écrit par d'autres et que n'importe qui peut réécrire sans aucune innovation ; c'est tout ce qui dans les propos de l'auteur est explicite. Tout lecteur comprend immédiatement l'appel à l'ouverture d'esprit, à

l'acceptation et à l'aide des malades. Ce qui est *scriptible*, c'est ce que je perçois dans le texte mais en le lisant avec peine. Je dois changer un peu mon régime de lecture pour comprendre ce qui se passe entre ce que le texte communique de manière explicite et ce qu'il veut dire implicitement. Dans *Mon sida*, ce phénomène touche le système de la signification entre les notions de justification, de culpabilité, d'homosexualité, de sida, d'identité, d'appartenance, d'épanouissement, etc., idées extrêmement problématiques pour l'auteur. Et puis, il y aurait un autre lieu du sens, où je peux recevoir le texte sans tout à fait comprendre ce qui se passe, sans saisir ce que ce texte apporte d'*inouï*. Roland Barthes expliquait ce phénomène par la remarque suivante : "je ne puis lire ni écrire ce que vous produisez, mais je le *reçois*, comme un feu, une drogue, une désorganisation énigmatique" (109). C'est encore un peu cela le texte gay et lesbien. Nous n'avons qu'à penser à l'écriture d'Hervé Guibert : son oeuvre est recevable, mais sur bien des côtés illisibles et inescriptible – ce fut le cas aussi pour toute la production du Nouveau Roman, il n'y a pas si longtemps –, de là tout son *intérêt* et l'importance de continuer à réfléchir sur la littérature gaie et lesbienne.

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The Romans in Britain and the Effect of Male/Male Sexual Iconography at London's National Theatre

PIET DEFRAEYE

Piet Defraeye (defraeye@ualberta.ca) is Associate Professor of Drama at the University of Alberta. *In this article, he examines the phenomenology and rhetorical potential and pitfalls of male/male sexual iconography in mainstream theater. This essay is part of a book entitled* Shocking the Audience, *which investigates the rhetoric of stage provocation.*

When reading popular as well as scholarly criticism of contemporary gay and/or lesbian theater, I am always struck by how much of this theater is still, whether we like it or not, mostly a fringe phenomenon, staged in specific theatrical venues for a specific public. The immediate concern resulting from an observation like this is how far gay/lesbian theater is culturally relevant within the larger economy of stage production, and how far and where has it claimed a position within that apparatus. There are strong indications that gay/lesbian theater has become a genre that is recognized and acquires specific signification as a result of this recognition. There are also clear indications that its rhetoric and imagery influence more mainstream poetics and cultural production. However, there are also obviously moments of clashes, in which elements are attacked as illegitimate. Ironically, as Pierre Bourdieu

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points out, these attacks can serve as "consecrating" moments through which illegitimate iconography and discourse are ultimately absorbed and assimilated, or plainly used or exploited, in the dominant cultural production that initially censored it (42).

On the topic of the structures within the field of cultural production, Bourdieu warns us that "what can be constituted as a *system* for the sake of analysis is not the product of a coherence-seeking intention or an objective consensus (even if it presupposes unconscious agreement on common principles) but the product and prize of permanent conflict" (34). If there is a unifying principle, it can only be the struggle itself in which the various contradictions and opposing interests claim territory and play themselves out against one another. In the theater, this is manifest mostly in the differences of programming and production policies between the big houses, or the established mainstream theater, and the more experimentally oriented and less rigidly structured small and fringe theaters.

This essay offers a critique of one of those moments of "objective collusion" when the artistic value and aptness of an artist's work is put into question (Bourdieu 80). I will do this using the tempestuous reaction to the first and only professional production so far of Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* in 1980 at the National Theatre in London.[1] In this particular case it was the sexual male/male iconography, as part of the dramatic vehicle of a mainstream dramaturgy, that was problematically received by its audience. The controversy surrounding the National Theatre's production is particularly interesting since the staged iconography was devoid of any homosocial or homosexual context while being nonetheless very explicit in its male/male polarity. While I am aware that all kinds of variables play an important role in the generation of specific audience reactions, and that these reactions can differ from one night to the other, or from one production to the next, I will

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[1] A subsequent amateur production of the play at Swansea's Dylan Thomas Memorial Theatre (1983) was cancelled under threat of prosecution. The only amateur production, so far, that opened to the public (Cambridge's ADC Theatre, 1989) was left undisturbed despite police interviews with those responsible for its organization (Roberts 69).

theorize what happened at the National Theatre in order to come to a more general understanding of the position of male/male sexual iconography within the larger field of cultural production. I will start my argument by analyzing Brenton's use of violent imagery as a rhetorical strategy. Subsequently, I will problematize the literalizing effect of this strategy, which is particularly evident when it comes to the contentious male/male rape. Finally, I will show how the rape scene was divested of its figurative meaning and turned into an instance of "homosexual rape," as part of an opportunistic reaction aimed at reconfirming an established identity vis-à-vis a dissenting (and threatening) otherness.

The Romans in Britain is an epic play that deals with issues of invasion, imperialism, and colonialism, and uses the Roman and Saxon invasions of England as historical analogies of British rule – Brenton would call it 'occupation' – of Northern Ireland. The play consists of two parts. Part One tells the story of the Roman invasion of Britain and the unsuccessful resistance of the Celts. Paradigmatic reflections of the main theme are contained within this general narrative of colonization. The play opens with two Irish criminals in flight. One of them is captured and ritually slaughtered as a sacrifice by a local Celtic druid named Marban, while the other one continues his flight with a Celtic slave. The news of the approaching Romans impels the matriarch of the local tribe to strike a deal with the neighboring rivals. At the center of the first part is the confrontation between the young druid Marban, his two brothers, and a trio of Roman soldiers. The two brothers are brutally murdered while the druid is violently raped by one of the soldiers.[2] The first part ends with an unmatched standoff between a stone-throwing Celtic slave

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[2] There is a slight difference between the 1982 Methuen edition of the script (which I refer to throughout since it is the closest to the text of the 1980 National Theatre production) and the stage directions of the original publication of the play (1980). While the original reads, "*The* THIRD SOLDIER *holds* MARBAN*'s thighs and begins to bugger him*" (1.3, 42), the Methuen edition says, "*The* THIRD SOLDIER *holds* MARBAN*'s thighs and attempts to bugger him*" (1.3, 41). I agree with critic Meenakshi Ponnuswami (86) that the distinction makes little difference, and I will refer to "Marban's rape" and "Marban's attempted rape" interchangeably. In judicial terms, rape is rape, whether it is attempted or executed. Making a distinction between the two is critically suspect.

and a more modern version of Roman invaders in British Army uniforms, wielding machine guns.

Part Two alternates between scenes from the Saxon invasion of England in the early sixth century and a contemporary incident set in Northern Ireland in 1980. Here, too, images of invasion and violent oppression reflect one another. The Saxon scenes follow two groups of people: a Celtic peasant named Cai, his two daughters Morgana and Corda, and a Roman matron who is dying of the plague, and is attended by her steward and two cooks. Cai, insistent in his defiance of the invading Saxons, is killed by his anguished daughter, while, similarly, the steward kills and robs his Roman mistress. The survivors of the two storylines from the time of the Saxon invasion meet and combine their energy and mythological resources to escape the tyranny of the Saxons. The contemporary story, meanwhile, interspersed with the historical narrative, tells the story of Thomas Chichester, an undercover British agent assigned to assassinate an IRA leader. Tormented with guilt, however, he reveals his true identity to the local IRA band who, unmoved by the liberal sentimentality of what they see as the oppressor, decide to shoot him. The play ends with the two Celtic cooks and the two daughters who, seated in the middle of human carnage, invent the redemptive myth of King Arthur.

It is obvious from the above that Brenton's play presents a dystopian view of history, moments of which are thematically and formally juxtaposed and parallelled on the stage. The presence of (simulated) violence on the stage is crucial in this project. If the subject of the play, in its broadest sense, is a study of history seen as a struggle for power, I would argue that Brenton decided to make the violence of this struggle appear real, individualized, and singularized on the stage in order to show the violent nature of any form of colonization or imperialism. We are witness to a number of specific interactions between individuals that are graphically laid out in front of us in a visual dramatic figure of the nature of imperialism. It is remarkable that reviewers and spectators of the 1980 production have criticized this violence, in the language as

well as in the action of the play, as unnecessary and ahistorical.[3]

The play presents history as a constant narrative of oppression. It confronts its audience with images of violent oppression, not in the poetic language or imagery of heroic historiography or monumental commemoration, but in their primary reality as bloody, cruel and deadly tyranny. In the course of the play, nine people – Daui, Brac, Viridio, Marban (suicide), Conlag, a Saxon soldier, Cai, Adona, and Chichester – and one dog are killed in full view of the audience. This amounts to ten fatal casualties – not counting the few Celts killed off stage – out of a total cast of 61. Obviously, the motif of death is central to the development of the play's argument and generates a gruesome effect, which is potentially very shocking. It is the gratuitousness and the sense of pleasure conveyed in the killing of Brac and Viridio by three Roman soldiers and the attempted rape of Marban that results in his suicide that makes this scene the single most shocking moment of the play. Three naked young men getting ready for a swim are attacked by three heavily armed soldiers. It is these three assaults that reviewers refer to in their criticism of the abundance of violence in *The Romans*. The *Daily Express*, for instance, blockbusted the play as a "Sadism Play" (qtd. in Boon, *Brenton* 74).

A close analysis of the reception of *The Romans* sheds light on the fascinating and complex effect of Brenton's dramatic choices in regard to his representation of violence and history. After the play's opening night in London at the National Theatre on October 16, 1980, the public debate about what was considered a spectacular public provocation soon hit an all-time high. London daily and evening newspapers ran bold headlines playing on the production's more sensational aspects. The *Evening Standard* blacklisted the

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[3] Robert Gross, for one, isolates the rape scene as standing "apart from the rest of the play in its presentation of violence" (76). Since I am concerned with male/male iconography, I would agree to the extent that this scene stands out from the other violent interactions, but not for Gross's ill-founded reason that "All of the other violent acts in *The Romans in Britain* either take place offstage ... or take place quickly" (76). Gross's analysis is based on an incomplete tally of fatalities and a refusal to recognize that some of the death scenes, like the killing of Brac (1.3, 38-43) and of the Saxon soldier (2.4, 81-82) are equally gruesome and protracted in their representation on the stage.

production as a "Nude Play Shocker," while the *Daily Express* cried foul with "Fury over New Sex Play" and "Police Move over Sadism Play" (qtd. in Boon, *Brenton* 73-74). For weeks, the controversy generated radio, television, and newspaper coverage, accompanied by an intense debate in the form of letters to the editor from readers and professional writers. The scandal also formed part of the agenda of politicians and policy makers. Sir Horace Cutler, the chairman of the then Greater London Council, walked out during one production and threatened to withdraw the Council's £630,000 grant and within a year, in March 1981, London's governing body decided not to increase its grant to the National Theatre. The controversy even reached the floor of the British House of Commons, where debates only added to the play's notoriety, thus further stimulating people's curiosity to go and see it.

The spectacle of controversy spiralled into serious complications when Mrs. Mary Whitehouse of the conservative media watchdog the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association decided to initiate a private lawsuit under the 1956 Sexual Offenses Law – which is normally only invoked for cases like indecency in public washrooms. The production's director Michael Bogdanov was charged with occasioning an act of gross indecency between two actors.[4] The charges that were laid referred only and exclusively to the attempted male rape in Part One, Scene Three of the play. From this brief synopsis of the play's popular reception, one conclusion jumps out: few critics or spectators took outspoken issue with the political implications of Brenton's analysis and his ostensible simplification of the historical and political struggles that still determine the Northern Irish question. Throughout the play, the issue of Ulster Protestant claims and rights, for instance, is never adequately addressed, and it never seems to be a major source of irritation for its mostly British audience. What transpires, at least on the surface, is that the immediate and popular reaction to the play has less to do with matters of historical interpretation and much more to do with male nudity and aspects of male-male sexual iconography.

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[4] For an extensive review of the trial, see Roberts.

Most of the reviewers of *The Romans* criticize the production's abundance of violence, but in the same breath they critique the representation of this violence as not being explicit or accurate enough. In other words, they want more or, at least, want better violence, that is, more real, less structured and more turbulent violence. One critic, for instance, James Fenton of *The Sunday Times* attacks the play as lacking in realism, not only in its use of language – "a ludicrous pseudo-poetic yob-talk," he calls it – but also in its representation of violence. He writes about the sacrificial cutting of a Celt's throat in the second scene of Part One, which for his taste did not draw enough blood: "in real life, the supply would be less manageable and more plenteous." He continues in the same fashion on the enactment of the rape of Marban by the Roman soldier: "I have not seen that much anal rape in real life, but I imagine it to be rather more messy than what we are shown"; and the review goes on with similar objections. Fenton's remarks are particularly revealing because he uses only the actors' real-life names, without any reference to their function as characters in the play: "the blood must gush from James Carter's throat ... while Peter Sproule must appear to get it up Greg Hicks, in full view of the audience and with the pair of them bollock-naked." Fenton's report delivers a testimony of the kind of action for which the police are to be called in to lay charges. Something rather extraordinary has happened in the critic's mind in this instance – something like a poetic eclipse in which the representation is reduced to a presentation.

A closer look at Brenton's use of violence, however, reveals a strategy with a certain purpose within the dramatic reality of the play, in contrast to what many reviewers of the production seem to suggest (Chaillet; Fenton; Murray; Nightingale; Oakes; Shulman; Young). Most of the violent scenes are logical or even necessary outcomes of the dramatic conflict. Three of the ten onstage killings are done out of a sense of protection and in a sacrificial way. The Irish drifter Daui, the Saxon soldier, and the English agent Chichester are perceived as trespassers in a closed community and they are sacrificially slaughtered by community members who believe they will obtain protection against the dangers of oppression and invasion that each of the trespassers represents. Cai and Adona are perceived as tyrants and are executed out of a desire for freedom.

Corda, Cai's murderer, and Adona's steward find themselves in a state of slavery and hope to terminate their serfdom by exterminating their master. And Marban's suicide is obviously a regressive resolve to his being raped and captured by the Romans.

There is, in other words, at least some sense of system and purpose to the aggression in the play: Brenton's use of violent rhetoric and imagery in the play is an essential part of his dramatic strategy. In *The Romans*, he wants to convey his conviction that the British presence in Northern Ireland is yet another manifestation of British colonial aggression. The fact that he chose a scene of male/male interaction as the very core of his deconstruction of historiography is no coincidence. Whereas colonization is more familiarly rendered as representations of male conquest of the female body, eroticized or not, I would argue that colonization is a narrative fundamentally characterized by male/male power struggles. With *The Romans*, Brenton opted for a short-circuiting of these more conventional representations and, instead, chose an iconography that exhibited the sexual conquest of one male over another, thus exemplifying the homosocial dynamics of the conflict.

The fact that the violence is compelling and confrontational reflects Brenton's aim and strategy. But the potential effect of this equation on a largely British audience may lie somewhere between alienation and rejection, on the one hand, or recognition and guilt, on the other hand. In the play, both are shown to be mere denials of or inadequate responses to this legacy of aggression. One of Chichester's final comments, seconds before he is shot, reveals his discomfort with his imperial heritage:

> I keep on seeing the dead. A field in Ireland, a field in England. And faces like wood. Charred wood, set in the ground. Staring at me. The faces of our forefathers.
> Their eyes are sockets of rain-water, flickering with gnats. They stare at me in terror.
> Because in my hand there's a Roman spear. A Saxon axe. A British Army machine-gun.
> The weapons of Rome, invaders, Empire. (2.7, 97)

But this recognition cannot rescue him from his imminent execution. What happens on the stage seems to be a reflection of what is meant to happen in the auditorium: Brenton is not looking for relief in the

play's outcome nor is he offering any alleviation in the (British) audience's reaction to a representation of their own past. His mistrust of language in general and historiography and so-called historical consciousness in particular is reflected in his eagerness to show the violence and aggression that have been objectified and made palatable by history itself.

In his critical reflection on violent theatricality, David Graver asks to what extent the stage can "embody aggression and pain without becoming something else or without the aggression and pain becoming (uneasily) their own simulacra" (43). In the spectator's eye, the performative character of the rape scene is undercut and divested of its theatrical phenomenology. In its place, another level of reality is divulged and the focus is now on the action itself as it is literally done and not performed–the action is no longer done by characters, performed by players, but by actors engaging in a deed. Consequently, as in the case of Fenton, the focus of perception is to be located in the *how?* of the action rather than the *why?*: "The only interest [of the spectator] ... is technical" (Fenton). The engulfing effect of what is shown leads to a certain degree of *spectacularization* of the representation in the process of which fragments can easily be isolated and assessed on technical or practical – as opposed to hermeneutic – grounds.

Spectacular elements characterize the play and its production in a fundamental way. The story itself, in its conflation of history, is of an epic nature which is most readily representable in a spectacular fashion. It is also significant that at the most intense moments in the play, this spectacular disposition is written into the script, almost as a means to deflate and counteract the tension. The emergence of the Roman army in modern British uniforms and with army equipment is a spectacular *coup de théâtre*; the search of the British soldiers in a cornfield occupying the entire stage, the spectacular merging of two temporal frameworks on the one stage and the abundance of visible violence work in similar ways, especially as they were enhanced by Michael Bogdanov's direction and Martin John's expressionistic production design (Boon, *Brenton*

184-85).[5] This tendency toward spectacle is clearest in the most controversial scene; there are some remarkable stage directions, which can help us in reconstructing the event. While the third soldier is preparing the attempted rape, the first soldier starts cartwheeling over the stage until he "*cartwheels off, into the river, out of sight*" (1.3, 41). After he disgruntledly aborts his rape of Brac, the third soldier "*runs into a handstand. He jack-knifes out of it*" and dives out of sight into the river (1.3, 42). The effect of these gambols on the perception of the action must necessarily be very complex. While the attempted rape, in all its crude literalness, clearly has a figurative or metonymic function, this function is immediately neutralized by the frolicking and frivolity of the three soldiers in a gambol routine which belongs more in the spectacle of the circus than in the representation of conquest. The effect of this digression is, of course, that the hideous cruelty of the invaders is reinforced by placing it in a frivolous context. This is to say that the focus is the immediacy of the violation, which is truly perceived as a violent transgression or penetration in more than one sense of the word. However, in this focus on the immediacy of the scene, and because of its spectacular placement, the meaning of rape and penetration is narrowed down to what is actually being done on the stage; it is, in other words, literalized in line with the literal gambols of the assailants. This is, of course, the intended effect: the violence is shown as a real violation and not just an image. However, this literalization also sets another effect in motion which may not have been so intended: what is shown is ultimately dehistoricized and depoliticized in the shocked gaze of the spectator. In this way, and largely because of the blending of a spectacular and a theatrical mode, the provocation is intensified but, eventually, stands in its own way and eclipses its own meaning.

The debate in the courtroom on *The Romans* was, in a way, characteristic of this literalizing reception by the press and its audience in general. A major concern for the lawyers during the

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[5] This fusion of historical references and dramatic exploitation of violent scenes on the stage has since become a trademark of director Michael Bogdanov's dramaturgy and was particularly noticeable in his production of *The Henrys* (1987), based on Shakespeare's Henriad (see Rissik).

committal proceedings, as well as during the trial itself was whether or not the tumescent body part that was seen protruding from the actor's body was his penis or his thumb.[6] The reduction then, within the judicial argument, of the play's contextual landscape and of its dramatic reality to the one scene of male/male rape is, in fact, characteristic of what happened to its reception by the press. This process of reduction to the practicalities of representing anal sex reaches beyond its obvious strategic use for the lawyers in the court case. It is a typical condition of and reaction to provocative theater, where the reduction goes hand in hand with a process of amplification. That which is perceived to provoke is taken out of its dramatic context. The context is thus reduced to the provocative element itself which now gets all the attention and, consequently, acquires a more important function within the play. This phenomenon allows for an even greater spiralling effect of shock which is fed upon by this reductionist reception. Isolated from its dramatic context, the provocative scene loses its potential for figurative signification and is subsequently recontextualized by the spectator in another reference system. In this case, the original dramatic context of imperialism and military, ethnic and or cultural aggression is lost to a curious and perhaps perverse concern with the action itself. Brenton's deliberate choice of violent, sexual, and transgressive imagery is thus appropriated by a new, more literal context in the service of predominant moral codes and social norms. A significant section of the fairly middle-class patrons of the National Theatre[7] categorized the language or actions in question as

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[6] Peter Sproule, who played the Third Soldier, took the prosecution witness's testimony that what he had seen was a man's penis entering another man's anus as a great tribute. Not only did he thus compliment the actor's virile image, seeing him capable of ordering his erections at will, even in front of an audience, but he also commended his convincing and apparently verisimilar acting talent. Still, in the courtroom, the irony was missed; in the lawyer's mind this was beside the point. As John Sutherland puts it: "For the law, it was *either* a penis ... *or* a thumb" (190).

[7] One must not forget that 1980 was the nexus of Thatcherite conservatism in England. To my knowledge, there are no sociological studies available linking theater audiences of the National – or any other theater – to contemporary sociopolitical stratifications. The fact that the Thatcher government, in the person of its Minister for the Arts Norman St. John-Stevas, pursued the matter in Parliament indicates its ambition for

not only real, but also inappropriate and unacceptable, thus preventing the possibility of metaphorical or metonymic meaning. Subsequently, *The Romans in Britain* became a story of buggery in the public's perception. David Graver's postulation that "violence generally destroys theatricality"(46) seems particularly valid when violence is a product of and/or results in male/male buggery.

Defining the rape as "homosexual," as so many critics do,[8] is problematic for various reasons. The use of the term "homosexual" in the critical discourse on the play clouds the issue of the scene's figurative meaning. A considerable segment of those who took issue with the play in general or with the rape scene in particular undoubtedly consider homosexuality itself as a transgression or an abomination, which suggests the ease with which "homosexual" as a descriptive term can consolidate homophobia.[9] Even apart from these homophobic reactions, the epithet "homosexual" puts the focus on the sexual dynamics between the two persons involved and draws attention away from the aggression and transgression involved in rape. Nowadays, it is generally accepted that rape has little to do with sexual gratification and must primarily be understood as a violent assault; hence it would be problematic to use the term "heterosexual rape" to denote the more familiar occurrence of rape. Richie J. McMullen, in his groundbreaking study on what he calls "male rape," goes even further and calls "homosexual rape" a "misleading" term when it "is used to mean male rape." For him, homosexual rape is an activity that "involves one or more homosexuals raping another homosexual" (52). Clearly this is not the kind of scene Brenton envisions in *The Romans*. In the dramatic reality of the scene in

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political gain from the scandal.

[8] See Beacham (36); Boon, *Brenton* (173); Chaillet; Gross (76); Hobson (29); Itzin, "Sex" (11); Judd; Lahr (173); Ponnuswami (69); Roberts (59); Weiner (58).

[9] A particularly useful example of this attitude, in the context of the reception of *The Romans*, is an unrelated, but contemporaneous remark by Lord Chief Justice Lane who criticized the fact that society "deliberately blurs these boundaries which ought above all to be clearly defined ... The men who, by today's jargon are described as gay, are not gay, they are homosexual and/or buggers and it is a pity that they are not called that" (qtd. in Rayside 138).

question or of the play in general, there is no referential framework present that even remotely refers to homosexuality. And yet, as the above examples show, the outrage that was generated by this scene was very much of a homophobic nature.[10]

Some critics take this homosexualizing reading of the play even further. Toward the end of the rape scene, the second Roman soldier, in an emollient gesture, kisses the stricken Marban. The priest/rape victim reacts indignantly with a passionate denunciation of the Romans in Latin, the aggressors' own language. Robert Gross sees an act of "homoerotic tenderness" (78) in this scene, which contrasts with the violent nature of the rest of the play. This contrast, Gross goes on, is so abrupt and "weakly motivated that it strains the sense of psychological verisimilitude otherwise adhered to in the play" (78). Gross relates this ambivalence to "Brenton's uneasiness about the loss of phallic power" and the subsequent "loss of traditional male identity" (79). The problem with Gross's view is that he explicitly sees the rape as "Homosexual violence," which then becomes "the act of male dominance par excellence, because it is an act of conquest and domination" (77). Apart from a few minor inaccuracies in his argument, Gross fails to incorporate the problem of language in his reasoning – Latin, Celtic and English are each used as part of a particular rhetorical strategy, as I will show – and he overlooks the fact that women in the play – the Celtic Matriarch and the Roman matron Adona, to name only two – are also portrayed in positions of power, albeit in a threatened state. I concur with Ponnuswami that the Celtic and Irish resistance in *The Romans* is characterized by a degree of "feminization" (87), though I question the critical usage of the term in this context as it camouflages its own bias and point of view. Brenton's apparent reversal of gender and sexual roles may not be the result of a problem in the author's personal sexual politics, as Gross suggests,

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[10] Ironically, the homophobic nature of the court case itself is mostly evident in the mere fact that there probably would have been no legislation to fall on, if the rape scene had been staged between two characters of the opposite sex. The relevant passages of the 1956 Sexual Offences Act apply exclusively and explicitly to homosexual sexual activity. I am not aware of contemporary legal challenges in the U.K. concerning stage representations of male/female sexual iconography.

but part of a strategy to problematize his own narration of colonization in which typically the topography is male-centered.

The controversial rape scene, as part of a historical chronicle, seems to fit in the contemporary historical background of sex, sexuality, and the sexual mores of the early Roman period. In ancient Greece and Rome, sex was not divided along exclusive gender lines, as in hetero- and homosexuality, but along an active/passive axis. Sex, in other words, was not a declaration of sexual identity but rather of sociopolitical identity. Referring to Athens and Rome, David Halperin remarks, "The relation between the 'active' and the 'passive' sexual partner is thought of as the same kind of relation as that obtaining between social superior and social inferior, between master and servant. 'Active' and 'passive' sexual roles are therefore necessarily isomorphic with superordinate and subordinate social status" (49). Paul Veyne concurs with this opinion by concluding that the decisive factor in sexual activity was the question of whether one was active or passive: "To take one's pleasure was virile, to accept it servile" (30).

It is obvious that the phallus, not only as a specific item of male anatomy but also as a symbolic vehicle of sociocultural signification, plays a crucial role in the construction of this identity. In this respect, it can be argued that it makes sense to refer to ancient Greek and Roman sexual experience as, in Halperin's words, "a single, undifferentiated phallic 'sexuality' of penetration and domination, a sociosexual discourse whose terms are phallus and non-phallus" (51). During war campaigns, it was far from uncommon for Roman soldiers to molest their prisoners and use them as sexual outlets or sexual *impudicus*.[11]

The rape scene must be situated within this historical context of phallus versus nonphallus. At no point in the

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[11] In *The Romans* there is one apparent exception to this categorization of phallus versus nonphallus within the group of colonizers in the person of the Roman matron Adona. However, it is significant that Brenton chooses a woman as a representative of disintegrating Roman political power, since women in Rome were without real power in the first place. Adona's repeated orders to whip the two insolent cooks during Scene Seven of Part Two, are consistently left unanswered by her steward/paramour. He is the one who exercises the real power, and ultimately decides to kill her.

confrontation between Marban and the third soldier is there any reference to or interest in the genitalia of Marban; Marban is effectively desexed by his assailant. The only thing that counts here is the receptive position and potential of Marban, regardless of his gender, a reduction which is made abundantly clear in the third soldier's comment on the state of Marban's "arse" and the aggressor's apparent shame in his unsuccessful attempt at penetration. His concern is that nobody back home learns of his "not getting it up a British arseful of piles," whatever gender it belongs to (1.3, 42). The emphasis on phallic penetration in sexual release is also reflected in Caesar's comment on the Legate's sister. As a final humiliation of his commander, now fallen into disfavor, Caesar offers a knife as a gift to his sister: "Look, send this knife to your sister, as a present from me. Tell her – (*He toys with the knife.*) to guard with this knife, what I would enter as a knife" (54). Again, the genitalia of the recipient play no role; what is important is the presence of a passive, receptive vessel for the phallus. Its semantic significance of transgression lies not only in the literal penetration of the other without any sense of consensuality, but also in the ensuing metonymic figure of domination and appropriation. Hence, the rape scene appears to make perfect sense within the political project of *The Romans*.

The fact that Brenton chose a druid or priest as the victim of his rape scene makes the transgressive act all the more violent. It also allows the author to establish a subtle irony in his use of language. While Ponnuswami critiques the authenticity of the voice of Brenton's Celtic characters and questions his linguistic representation of Celtic identity which she suggests is "little more than versions of an imperial fantasy" (73), in the rape scene, his use of language is meticulously strategized for a particular rhetorical effect. This effect is the result of Brenton's use of a dramatic convention, in which characters who belong to different linguistic groups can be understood by one and the same audience. In *The Romans,* this effect proves particularly manipulative and brings about a situation where the audience is complicit in an aggressive act and is, thus, found to be in a belligerent or colonizing position. It is important not to forget that the two opposing parties in this scene do not understand each other, which means that the Romans' verbal

abuse is not received as such by the three Celtic brothers. Indeed, it is exactly the fact that the Celts speak another language, categorized as primitive by the conquering Romans, that gives the latter licence to conquer, empower, and kill. It is their language, perceived as animalistic gibberish, which forms the basis for them to be othered by the conquering Romans. It is this sort of rationalization that has acted historically as a justification for imperialistic conduct based on a sense of superiority. The fallacious and arbitrary character of this rationale is suggested dramatically by the fact that both parties *do* speak the same language – which is English – not for each other, but for the audience, as part of a theatrical convention (Itzin, "Sex" 5). For the spectators, the two opposing parties are linguistically on equal footing. However, the realization that the verbal abuse of one party directed at the other registers as such only for a third party, the audience, makes the latter linguistically complicit in the act of violence.

This effect of complicity is intensified by the fact that the Celts remain silent throughout most of the rape scene. True, verbal opposition would be of little avail since their opponents, who are trained and armed soldiers, can easily ignore sounds which do not make sense to them. Yet, at the end of the scene, it becomes clear that Marban, with his training as a druid, can speak some basic Latin, the *Lingua Franca* at the time – something which he has kept to himself even while he was being sexually assaulted. In view of the agonizing circumstances, this suggests a curious sort of self-control which intensifies the shocking quality of the scene.[12] The momentary absence of any communication between the Roman

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[12] Gross compares Marban's ability to speak Latin with a miracle which "snaps" the verisimilitude of the play (78). Marban's knowledge of at least some Latin, however, is referred to in the beginning of the rape scene when Marban translates for his two brothers the Romans' murderous intentions: "BRAC. Jabber jabber./ MARBAN. They're talking about how to kill us" (*The Romans* 1.3, 37). Marban's knowledge of Latin is supported by historical research on the Celtic druids. There was extensive contact between Britain and the continent, even before the first Roman invasion of Britain in 54 BC; especially the Druids on either side of the Channel had established extensive rapports (Chadwick 41). There is evidence that the Druids used the Greek alphabet and also knew the language (Chadwick 102). Nora Chadwick, one of the most authoritative scholars of druidism, concludes that they also knew Latin, or at least the basics of it (9 and 106).

soldiers and their victims allows the first to objectify the latter even more. In fact, the only effort to communicate their fear and anger – or humanness – on the part of the Celts, comes from Viridio, just before he is about to be killed. In a long-winded but poetic speech, full of bloody and violent imagery, Viridio forewarns of a violent revenge on his assailants: "Foreigners, I will hold your heads in my hands. With my fingers in the sockets of your eyes, I will hold up your skulls, wet with the flesh of your eyes and your blood! I will know you as a killer!" (1.3, 38). It is hard to resist the impression that the "foreigners" Viridio is addressing, by implication, include the present audience. This becomes quite evident toward the end of Part One, when, in a spectacular *coup de théâtre*, Julius Caesar and his army appear "*in British army uniforms and with the equipment of the late 1970s*" (1.7, 62). At this stage, the analogy has lost its subtlety and the point that the British themselves are, in fact, the foreign invaders of the play's title is driven home forcefully. The most likely reaction of a British audience would be an immediate self-distancing from what is perceived as an accusation.

During the rape scene, however, the dramatic signals that are used in the analogy, with the notable exception of the moment of rape itself, are more discreet and thus, perhaps, more manipulative. Situated in the middle of a rather realistic and rapidly evolving dialogue, Viridio's sudden interruption of the verbal pace and of the action functions as a soliloquy directly aimed at the audience. Moreover, as already indicated, the whole passage is not supposed to be understood by the assailants, and the first soldier's echo of Brac's initial reaction to the Romans' language, "Jabber jabber" (1.3, 39), reminds the audience of the Romans' insusceptibility to the suffering and foreboding of the Celts, while the spectators are pushed into a position of complicity. This complexity is intensified by means of a long silence on the part of the Celts throughout most of the rest of the violent rape. Viridio's soliloquy is thus a last effort to retain their pride and integrity at the hands and mercy of the Roman invaders. The effect renders a bleak contrast between two different kind of rhetoric, or two different uses of what for the audience is one and the same language. The casual, short-sentenced, ungrammatical, and nonsensual speech of the soldiers contrasts with Viridio's ritualistic, elaborate, and expressive malediction. What

follows is silence on the part of the Celts, a universal language, which needs no translation for either the Romans or the audience; its effect is reinforced by the the screaming and moaning of Brac, the first slain Celt, through most of the scene, as the stage directions indicate (1.3, 38; 39; 43) and the occasional moan by Marban while he is being worked on by his molesters. When Marban breaks the silence at the end of the scene, and denounces his assailants in their own language, their reaction is one of confusion and shock: "A nig nog? Talking Latin? ... This nig nog talks Latin!" (1.3, 43-44).

The effect of Marban's Latin denunciation is unsettling for the Romans because it humanizes their victims and creates a disturbing dichotomy between the brutal actions and the unexpected rapport that is established. It is ironical that this humanizing effect vis-à-vis their assailants happens in a language which now is not normally understood by the audience; consequently, the spectators are in a no-win situation. They are aligned once more with the invading foreigners that feature in the play. It becomes clear that the audience's reaction of shock to what amounted to be a provocation was exacerbated by Brenton's rhetorical strategies, which reflect the violent imagery of transgression.

The focus of much of the audience, however, was not so much on the violent appropriation that is implied in the scene, but rather on the so-called homosexuality of the rape of one male by another. Apart from the epithet "homosexual," other terms that were often used in reviews and letters to newspapers in reference to the rape scene were "buggery" and "sodomy" (Cutler; Grecco; Milligan; Osborne; Ottoway; Young).[13] The usage of these terms, rather than the more neutral "rape" or more clinical "anal rape" (Edgar; Fenton; Levin), is a further indication of the disparaging response of some of these spectators. It is, of course, difficult to determine whether their usage in this context is simply a consequence of the more

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[13] For a list of reviewers who call the rape "homosexual," see footnote 6. It is interesting to know that for English law, anal rape, whether the victim is male or female, does not have the same gravity as (female) vaginal rape (McMullen 21). There is, consequently, a remarkable legal discrepancy between male rape and female rape. While the maximum sentence for female rape is life imprisonment, for "indecent assault on a male" it is ten years imprisonment (McMullen 15).

homely and colloquial nature of these terms – as in "what a silly bugger" – or whether it is a deliberate choice in function of the persistent pejorative connotations that are connected with them.

In Brenton's economy of theatrical images, the rape scene is not only crucial in conveying his convictions of imperialism and colonialism, it also serves as a provocation to his audience's economy of imagery. By opting for a male/male rape rather than a male/female rape Brenton avoided the kind of scenario that is dreaded by feminist criticism which points out that, often, representations of rape will be received in a convoluted critical language because of our difficulty "to establish difference through the opposition of rape to seduction" (Rooney 1271). Reading sexual violence is a hazardous occupation because of the persistence of "the very patriarchal dichotomies we seek to disentangle ourselves from" (Rooney 1271). This is particularly so in the case of conflicts that are specifically set in a male/female context.[14] Ironically, *The Romans*' reception is an example of this acquiescent attitude towards the motif of male/female rape, which *is* present in the play, but was completely disregarded not only by the protesting audience, but also by the critical apparatus that developed around the controversial play.

When, at the end of Part one, the runaway Irish criminal, Conlag, reemerges with his captive Celtic slave, she laments, as in a stupor: "He did rape me in the forest" (1.6 - 61). Subsequently, she picks up a stone and dispassionately kills her delirious companion and assailant. Evidently, this rape did not take place on the stage, and, therefore, cannot be compared with the rape in scene three. Its absence from the stage may well be an intentional choice so as to avoid imagery that, because of its consuetudinary character, would cause a reaction of complacency in the audience, especially in

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[14] It is tempting to compare the reception of *The Romans* with that of contemporary plays or productions in which a female character is raped by a male. Such comparisons are questionable due to the different circumstances and different semantic contexts of the rape scenes. One such example is Marisha Chamberlain's *Scheherazade* (1984). Its numerous productions across North America occurred without much protest against the graphic representation of the multiple rape in the play, although critics were quasi-unanimous in calling the play "harrowing in the extreme, almost unbearable to watch at times" (Chapman). The play's subject is sexual assault of females by males. In Chamberlain's play, the rape refers quite literally to sexual aggression itself.

combination with the effect of intimacy and epic remoteness on the Olivier stage.[15] In spite of its potentially shocking quality, an image of a female raped by a male, at some level, fits into a structure of expectations, which is a result of what has been called our "rape culture" (Buchwald). The occurrence of a male/female rape in the play was never brought up throughout the public debate, and virtually no critic mentions it in any critical appraisal of *The Romans*. This blatant absence is perhaps one of the single most outstanding aspects in the reception history of the play. While Brenton's play, in its gender-reversals of power and in the rape scene, problematizes a phallocentric narration of colonization, the public outcry over *The Romans* and the resulting homosexualization of the play fits quite comfortably into a male-centered discourse.

Brenton's rape scene obviously provides an occasion in which a more conservative audience is confronted with a fragmentation of their rigidly structured desires.[16] The mechanisms of this projected perception are undoubtedly of a complex nature. The principal causes lie, most likely, in a tradition of both psychological and sociopolitical forms of homophobia and –, connected with or because of this tradition – in negative attitudes to

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[15] The Olivier is the main stage of the National Theatre, a combination of proscenium and thrust stage, with the sharply tiered seating area snugged around it. Numerous theater artists, like Michael Gambon and Peter Wood to name but two (Lewis 123-24), have referred to the sense of intimacy that can be created on this open stage, in spite of its size. It may well be argued that the provocative dramatics embedded in the production of *The Romans* were encouraged by a combination of this effect of intimacy and the epic dimensions both of the stage and of the play itself.

[16] A similar, though by far less intense uproar was caused by Joe Orton's *What the Butler Saw* eleven years earlier, when audience members barracked the opening night at London's Queen's Theatre. In this play too, the penis plays a crucial role, be it more as a farcical prop. A penis from Winston Churchill's statue gets accidentally embedded in one of the female characters, causing her death. Towards the end of the play, Sir Winston is reunited with his penis, to the audience's great delight and/or relief. Martin Esslin's critical response to the scene is memorable. In his words, it brings about the "Restoration of the nation's fertility symbol to its rightful place" (106). *The Romans*, unlike Orton's play, does not offer any comic freedom or release, and when that rightful place for the nation's symbol must be looked for between the buttocks of a naked male priest, obviously no restoration of any kind comes forth.

anal intercourse, especially in a male/male context.[17] More than anything else, however, this perception of perversion was the result of the generally conservative climate of the sexual sociopolitical debate that was going on in England at the time of the production. Dollimore's observation on cathexis seems quite applicable to what happened during *The Romans* controversy:

> The culturally negated other becomes the focus of the very desire which is being policed within the dominant culture: the other, in the very process of being identified, displaced and negated, becomes the object of – indeed may actually incite – desire. Such desire for the other may be less the result of a desublimation of repressed desire than a consequence of desire itself being structured by social repression generally: thus the other may be cathected as (an)other beyond repression. (244)

The rape on the stage is thus cathected into an altogether different thing, away from its metonymic image of oppression, and provides an occasion to demand the restoration of familiar and unyielding structures, including those, ironically, of colonization.[18]

There is a strong sense that Brenton expected or even hoped for what was inevitably coming. Howard Brenton was not an unknown to the National's audience. Two months before the premiere of *The Romans*, his translation of Brecht's *The Life of Galileo* opened for a successful run at the Olivier, and in 1976 *Weapons of Happiness* was performed on the Lyttleton Stage as the first of what was called "the new generation" of plays. Although Brenton had clearly gained legitimacy as a playwright, he believed that "the theatre belongs to the centre of public life – and should be as loud as parliament. That is what a big theatre should be ... big in order for large numbers of people to see it and for it to begin to reverberate, for it to be discussed, for it to be a national event, for it

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[17] See Dollimore (233-34). On homophobia in England, see Rayside (121-49).

[18] Mary Whitehouse's loud concern to protect men and "young boys" is a clear example of this perverse colonization: "One is concerned about protecting the citizens, and in particular young people. I'm talking about men being so stimulated by the play that they will commit attacks on young boys" (qtd. in Weiner 59).

to be news" (qtd. in Itzin, *Stages* 192). The aspiration to see theater spilling into the streets was, of course, not new: many playwrights sought inspiration in Guy Debord's Situationism and reintegrated onto the stage his concept of life as a public and orchestrated spectacle.[19] Brenton had a similar project in mind when embarking on *The Romans*.

When he was offered a chance to write a play for the main stage of the National Theatre, the provocative quality of Brenton's project was, in a certain sense, to dissociate himself from the establishment for which he was writing while reaching an audience that went beyond what he was used to in the fringe theater circuits.[20] Once Peter Hall had commissioned him to write *The Romans*, Brenton was careful not to allow earlier infringements on his creativity to be repeated. On the contrary, he exploited the licence given to him by Hall and his director Bogdanov and exploited the aura of respectability and authority by the mere fact of staging a play on the Olivier stage. Had the play been performed at, say, the small experimentally oriented Cottesloe stage, the outrage among the public might have been totally absent or, at the very least, much more subdued (Weiner 67). Instead Brenton, with the legitimacy he had gained in the years before, brought his theatrical bomb on sacred ground, to a stage which functions as the high altar of British theater and culture. In this context, it is important to note the curious dialectic dynamics of establishment rejection and support. The

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[19] See Guy Debord. For a more extensive analysis of the connections between Situationism and Brenton's theater, see Boon, *Brenton* (54-56); Boon, "Politics;" and especially O'Connor.

[20] It was also a way of getting back at British institutionalized theater for the inhibiting effects it may have on the writing of plays. One particularly sour experience for Brenton was his 1972 adaptation of *Measure for Measure* for the Exeter Northcott Theatre. In the play, Angelo is modeled on the right-wing extremist Enoch Powell and the Duke on the more moderate Tory Harold Macmillan. Under the threat of a lawsuit from Powell, the Board of the Northcott Theatre ordered Brenton to alter his playscript. Not having gained an established reputation, the playwright had to yield under pressure. He later commented: "It was the first time I had ever worked inside a big theatre in England. I got an inch inside the door and they had me by the balls" ("Disrupting" 23). That establishment got back with a vengeance, not so much at Howard Brenton but at the National Theatre. Within a year, the Greater London Council decided not to increase its grant to the National, which effectively meant a 15% cut in subsidy (Itzin, "Sex" 6).

establishment rejection came by way of legal interventions, censorship threats, financial pressures, political and journalistic questioning and rejection by such celebrities as Pinter and Osborne.[21] On the other hand, establishment support came in the form of the public forum and respectability, provided by the Olivier stage, the National Theatre's endorsement, and the defence of various established writers and actors like Edward Bond and Laurence Olivier (Bond, Edgar, Hampton and Olivier).

Looking back on the controversy, Bernard Weiner sums up the impact of the play's venue accurately by noting that "Bluenoses rarely make their objections public unless the art in question invades their turf. As long as it remains in some out-of-the-way fringe theatre or gallery, nothing much is said; if and when that art enters the bourgeois mainstream, implying the imprimatur of middle-class acceptance, then the *merde* begins its inexorable movement toward the fan"(67). Brenton's play became an active artistic presence within a cultural field, and the field in which he chose to operate was part of a mainstream and established system of cultural production. His strategy proved successful for the box office. *The Romans* drew large numbers of people to the twenty-four scheduled performances at the National, with an average occupancy of 75%, which was 15% higher than anticipated (Lewis 146). As Pierre Bourdieu points out, the "production of discourse (critical, historical, etc.) about the work of art is one of the conditions of production of the work" (35).

In other words, the controversy became part and parcel of the play's production and, in a ironic way, paralleled the motifs of power and colonization that were at the center of the play's theme. Brenton's economy of imagery was clearly not valorized as a very legitimate cultural exchange by a significant and controlling section of the apparatus of cultural production. What happened to *The Romans* is a classic example of Bourdieu's theory of cultural dominance within a field of cultural production, which he describes as "the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to

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[21] See their respective letters to the *Guardian*. Osborne's letter was characteristically short and sharp: "Sir, I don't go to the theatre to see a lot of buggery. We get quite enough of that at home. Yours faithfully ..."

impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer" (42). The fact that the National Theatre's staging of *The Romans* remains the only professional production of the playscript so far is at least one indication of who was or is doing the defining and on what basis it is done. The ongoing debate whether the controversy surrounding *The Romans* was inspired mostly by the implied politics of Brenton's play or the perceived homosexuality may not be all that relevant in the understanding of the playscript. What is clear, however, is that the conservative establishment in Britain at the time saw homosexuality where it was not to be found in order to maintain its grip on the economy of cultural production.

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Parody of the Gay Games: Gender Performativity in Sport

DEBRA SHOGAN AND JUDY DAVIDSON

In this article, the authors suggest that within the confines of conventional sporting contexts (including the Gay Games), politicized gender parody is difficult to achieve. They ruminate on the possibilities of queering sport and gender within a new, hypothetical sporting event for the Gay Games: drag. *Debra Shogan (debra.shogan@ualberta.ca) and Judy Davidson (judy.davison@ualberta.ca) are with the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta. When Debra and Judy are not loudly disrupting certain cherished notions within sport studies, they live quietly with their girlfriends, pets, and gardens.*

Sport, like most cultural practices and institutions, continues to be organized according to a male-female classification. Even the Gay Games, while transgressive in many ways, organizes its events into men's and women's competitions. In this paper we consider whether it is possible to disrupt conventional gender classification in competitive sport and we focus on the Gay Games as a site where this kind of disruption might be expected to happen.

Despite the myth of the 'natural athlete', there is nothing 'natural' about sport skills. Sport, like other cultural endeavors, is wholly contrived. "Sports are institutionalized competitive activities that involve vigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by individuals whose participation is motivated by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors"

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(Coakley 21). Sport skills materialize in an athlete's body as particular movements, gestures, and comportment as a result of controlled and monitored repetition. Highly skilled athletes repeat sport skills over and over again until they are embodied. When skills of any kind are embodied, they acquire the feeling and appearance of being natural.

Like sport skills, gestures and comportment of femininity and masculinity in a given culture are naturalized as a result of a "*regulated process of repetition*" (Butler 1990, 145). As Iris Young notes in her essay, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment and Spatiality," "many of the observed differences between men and women in the performance of tasks requiring coordinated strength are due ... to the way each sex *uses* the body in approaching tasks" (142). Young cites the 1966 work of Erwin Straus who commented on the "'remarkable difference in the manner of throwing of the two sexes'" (137). Straus observed that "girls do not bring their whole bodies into the motion as much as the boys. They do not reach back, twist, move backward, step, and lean forward. Rather, the girls tend to remain relatively immobile except for their arms, and even the arm is not extended as far as it could be" (142).

Boys, as David Whitson points out, "are encouraged to experience their bodies, and therefore themselves, in forceful, space-occupying, even dominating ways ... assertiveness and confidence, as ways of relating to others, become embodied through the development of strength and skill and through prevailing over opponents in competitive situations" (23). "Boys are taught that to endure pain is courageous, to survive pain is manly" (Sabo 86); that their bodies are weapons (Messner 1992, 64); that "to be an adult male is distinctly to occupy space, to have a physical presence in the world" (Connell 14).

These accounts of feminine and masculine comportment are not accounts of 'natural' differences. Indeed, as Michael Messner comments, "throwing like a girl" is actually a more anatomically correct motion for the human arm. Throwing "'like a man' is a learned action ... an act that ... must be learned" (1994, 30). To say that someone throws like a girl is to critique his or her poor throwing technique while to say that someone (always a girl or

woman) throws like a boy is intended to compliment her. A girl or woman who throws like a boy has properly practiced the skill, while a girl or boy, woman or man who throws like a girl has not had this practice. Throwing like a boy does not, however, mean only that the thrower throws correctly. Throwing like a boy also means that the thrower throws in a way that is consistent with bodily comportment and movement disciplined through repetition of conventional masculinity. Since this is the case, a girl in sport must not only practice sport skills, she must practice conventionally masculine skills.

While many females have not had opportunities to practice and then embody gross muscular play and sport skills, feminine gestures and movements are not merely the result of a lack of practice of forceful space-occupying movement. There is also a "specific positive style of feminine body comportment and movement which is learned as the girl comes to understand that she is a girl" (Young 153). 'Throwing like a girl', then, is not merely the result of not practicing to throw 'like a boy'. Throwing, walking, sitting, standing, and gesturing like a girl are produced by repetition of techniques which discipline femininity and make femininity feel 'natural' and 'normal'. In "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," Sandra Bartky details some of the disciplinary practices or technologies which go into producing femininity: practices that produce a body which in gesture and appearance is recognizably feminine" (65). Practices familiar in North American culture are those which produce particular ways of walking, standing, sitting, getting in and out of vehicles and which over time produce particular facial expressions. Practicing femininity requires an "investment of time, the use of a wide variety of preparations, the mastery of a set of techniques and ... the acquisition of a specialized knowledge" (Bartky 71). Much of this specialized knowledge is an embodied knowledge about the manipulation of a variety of cosmetic tools including "the blow dryer, styling brush, curling iron, hot curlers, wire curlers, eye-liner, lipliner, lipstick brush, eyelash curler, mascara brush" (Bartky 71). These gestures, movements, and expressions are embodied as a result of daily, disciplined repetition. And, like the embodiment of sport skills, improper or inadequate performance of required

feminine skills feels 'wrong' or 'unnatural' to the performer.

While most girls and women are not formally trained in conventional femininity unless enrolled in, say, charm schools, organized sport is a central context within which conventional masculine gestures and movements are practiced and normalized. According to Whitson, "sport has become ... one of the central sites in the social production of masculinity" in societies with longer schooling and a decline in value attached to other manifestations of physical prowess (19).

Conventionally feminine girls and women are ill equipped for sport because they have not practiced sport skills *and* because they *have* practiced feminine skills. Boys who have practiced conventional masculinity but who have not practiced sport skills will do better than girls who have practiced 'femininity' and not practiced sport skills because to practice masculinity is to practice "forceful, space-occupying" movements – movements which are also important for sport participation. A boy who is not skilled at conventional masculinity may have similar difficulties in a sport environment to those of a feminine girl, while a girl who has practiced sport skills and also practiced feminine skills is faced with a situation with which a masculine boy in sport is not. She must contend with a conflict between the requisite skills of conventional femininity and the requisite skills of sport.

At this point we wish to acknowledge that our discussion has taken for granted that there are two sexes, male and female, that are knowable apart from gender. Not only does this ignore medical evidence of the existence of at least five sexes – what Anne Fausto-Sterling in her *Myths of Gender* refers to as male, intersexed male, true intersexed male, intersexed female, and female – it does not account for Judith Butler's argument that what counts as a male or female body in the first place arises from repeated gender performances that establish the boundaries of what are regarded as "stable bodily contours" (1990, 132) for women and men. These performances produce particular notions of sexed bodies – permeable, penetrable females and impermeable, penetrating males – and notions of what counts as sexual practice linked to these notions of sexed bodies. One is either heterosexually male or female.

Commenting on the photographs of masculine and feminine

body posture by photographer Marianne Wex, Sandra Bartky notes that:

> Women sit waiting for trains with arms close to the body, hands folded together in their laps, toes pointing straight ahead and turned inward, and legs pressed together. The women in these photographs make themselves small and narrow, harmless; they seem tense; they take up little space. Men, on the other hand, expand into the available space; they sit with legs far apart and arms flung out at some distance from the body. Most common in these sitting male figures is ... the "proffering position": the men sit with legs thrown wide apart, crotch visible, feet pointing outward, often with an arm and casually dangling hand resting comfortably on an open, spread thigh. (68)

Even though all human bodies have permeable orifices and appendages which can penetrate these orifices, the repetitive practice of openness and forcefulness of conventionally masculine comportment suggests a body that is impermeable, forceful, and strong. This is the case not only for the masculine straight man, but for the masculine gay man and the stone butch lesbian. Repetitive practice of the closed, passivity of conventionally feminine comportment suggests a body that is permeable and penetrable and produces what is understood as the body of the effeminate straight woman and the effeminate receptive gay man.

Parody of Gender

We take seriously Judith Butler's claim that gender is a "*corporeal style*, an 'act' ... which is both intentional and performative, where performative suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning" (1990, 139). Because gender is the effect of repetitive performance of a gendered script, it is possible to subvert the script by parodying gender. In particular, drag, as a type of parody, has the potential to expose the artifice of gender because it "plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed ... the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance but sex and gender and gender and performance" (Butler 1990, 137). Not all parody is subversive, however. In Butler's terms, "successful" parody, that which is

"effectively disruptive [and] truly troubling" (1990, 139), not only reveals the original to be a derivation, but reconfigures that derivation. Indeed, as the examples that follow illustrate, parody of gender can serve to consolidate firmly held beliefs about the naturalness of gender, rather than disrupt them.

In order to inquire whether conventional gender classification used at the Gay Games might be disrupted by parody of these classifications, we take as a starting point a recent parody of the Gay Games by students from the Faculty with which we are affiliated.[1] Each fall, students in our Faculty spend a weekend together to learn more about program offerings and to foster comradery. New students are involved in various activities including impromptu skits with themes provided by senior students. At a recent orientation, one of the themes offered to a group of new students was "The Gay Games." What ensued was a parody of the Gay Games – an imitation for comic effect or ridicule of what some thought an athletic competition involving gay men might look like. This parody of the Gay Games was amusing to many because of a shared notion that gay men are effeminate and that they could not possibly engage in or take seriously constitutive skills of 'masculine' sport requiring aggression, contact, speed, and strength. The parody occurred in a context in which confusions about gender could be fostered (Butler 1990). The confusions did not subvert gender, sexuality, or athletic identity, however, because the actors in the skit assumed themselves to be 'real' or 'normal' men engaged in a parody of 'abnormal' men attempting sport skills. That the undergraduate students read this skit as parodic exemplifies that playing with identity does not necessarily create new ways of understanding or taking up gender. Indeed, in this case, because conventionally masculine and athletic identities were assumed to be 'real' or 'natural', playing with identity by the actors in the skit confirmed the perversity or deviance of those who do not get identity 'right'. Therefore, in Butler's terms, the parody was not necessarily successful.

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[1] Debra Shogan (1999) took up this example in a previous work. Here, we elaborate the gender and racial effects of this parody.

This parody of the Gay Games has triggered questions not only about parody of gay athletes assumed to be 'feminine' males but also about the possibility of parodies of 'masculine' males and 'masculine' and 'feminine' females in sport, and parody of the Gay Games by athletic women and/or lesbian athletes. In addition, this parody of the Gay Games in skit form allows us to consider later in the paper whether parodies by 'queer' performers of gender might disrupt the actual Gay Games. As we take up these questions, we struggle to find ways to foreground the contingency of bodies as we discuss the parody of gender. There is no other option but to refer to female and male bodies even as we agree that what counts as sexed bodies would be different in the context of a range of gender performatives.

Parody of Feminine Males in Sport

Presumably the purpose of the skit theme "The Gay Games" and its enactment was the impersonation of the stereotype of a gay man – 'feminine', unfamiliar and uncomfortable with attempting 'masculine' sport activities. This skit induced laughter because it occurred in a context in which confusion about gender could be fostered. However, it was not subversive "parodic laughter" (Butler 1990, 139). By juxtaposing a stereotype of gay men with 'masculine' sport skills, masculinity, femininity, and sexuality were confused, but in a manner that consolidated rather than subverted the assumed naturalness of these categories. This is because participants considered the actors to be 'real' men engaged in a parody of those pretending to be masculine. The queer scholar in attendance also enjoyed a parodic laugh but for her it was because the 'real' man was revealed as a parody of himself. By assuming his own identity to be original while impersonating a gay man who he believed to be a copy of original femininity, the 'real' man was revealed as "an inevitably failed [copy] ... [and] laughter emerge[d] in the realization that all along the original was derived" (Butler 1990, 139).

Would the effects of a parody of a 'feminine' man participating in sport be different if performed by a gay man in drag while engaged in a 'serious' athletic competition? A picture from our local newspaper (*The Edmonton Journal*) shows a man in drag competing in the 'wild drag race' event at the Gay Rodeo. He is

dragging what appears to be a full-grown steer while wearing a chiffon dress, gloves, a crown, and sneakers. Is this a 'feminine' man participating in sport, a parody of a 'feminine' man in sport, or a "casual and cynical mockery of women" (Frye 137)?[2] Perhaps it is a spoof on 'masculine' men. Since the subversiveness of parody depends upon a context in which subversive confusions can be fostered (Butler 1990), it is possible for the man in drag participating in the gay rodeo to be 'read' as a spoof on rodeo, an insult to women, a spoof on the artifice of gender, or as a consolidation of gayness as perverse and what rodeo 'really' looks like when 'real' men participate.

Parody of Feminine Females in Sport

It is also possible that the drag queen at the gay rodeo might be read as a parody of women in sport, although such a parody is likely to be subversive only if it is clear that women's sport is what is spoofed – something like the representation of a women's baseball game which appeared on the cover of the *Harvard Lampoon* (1975) in which the female catcher had her baseball cap on backwards to accommodate her catcher's mask and her breasts on backwards to accommodate her chest pad (Figure 1).

When conventionally masculine men or athletic women parody feminine women performing sport skills, it is unlikely that this parody will create new ways of understanding or performing established identity categories. When a feminine woman is represented as throwing, running, climbing, swinging, or hitting 'like a girl' by masculine men or athletic women, this parody consolidates the notion of the physically limited (in terms of traditional sports skills) feminine woman. Moreover, when athletic women have some investment in their own femininity, at least outside athletic performance, a parody of feminine women performing sport skills is more like a joke on themselves because it draws attention to inconsistencies in their femininity. This is

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[2] Butler writes that a feminist analysis which "diagnoses male homosexuality as rooted in misogyny ... is a way for feminist women to make themselves into the center of male homosexual activity (and thus to reinscribe the heterosexual matrix)" (Butler 1993, 127).

particularly the case if a dark-skinned female athlete parodies a white feminine woman attempting sport skills since included in constitutive characteristics of conventional femininity in this culture is light-colored skin. As bell hooks notes, "dark skin is stereotypically coded in the racist, sexist, or colonized imagination as masculine. Hence a male's power is enhanced by dark looks while a female's dark looks diminish her femininity" (180). While parody of white female athletes by dark-skinned athletes might expose the artifice of femininity and the racist assumptions configured in femininity, the parody also runs the risk of reconfiguring the dark-skinned woman as 'deficient' as a woman, that is, as conventionally masculine.

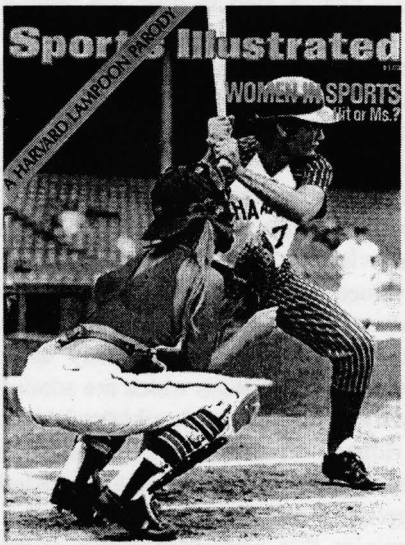

Figure 1: Parody of women in sport?
© *The Harvard Lampoon*

A parody of conventionally feminine women in sport by athletic women might open up the possibility for a subversion of femininity and masculinity. Members of the Beehives, a women's hockey team with "big hair" (Roxxie 14), parody both 'feminine' and 'masculine' sport by representing themselves as hyperfeminine in appearance while performing a sport which requires skills of conventional masculinity. As one player reported, "the big hair thing flies in the face of how hockey players usually define themselves – macho, virile, all of that. Beehives are a contradiction in terms: we are ... women with a femmy icon who can REALLY play hockey" (Roxxie 15).

Parody of Masculine Males in Sport

Parody of conventional masculinity by a male who takes his

masculinity seriously is not subversive of gender because, in imitating himself, a masculine male is indistinguishable from himself. This is because it is difficult to recognize the repetitive performances which go into solidifying identity as performance when someone's identity matches the expectations for that identity. The performance does not look like a performance because it "effects realness, to the extent that it *cannot* be read ... where what appears and what it means coincide" (Butler 1993, 129).

Men in drag and conventionally feminine women *are* in a position to subvert the perceived naturalness of masculine men and create new ways of understanding and participating in sport because the "artifice of the performance can be read as artifice" (Butler 1993, 129). Since in most contexts neither men in drag nor feminine women are perceived to be able to perform sport skills, when they exaggerate the masculinity of men in sport, it is possible to disrupt the assumption that masculinity 'naturally' coheres to male bodies.

White masculine males and black masculine males might parody each other, making it possible that some might notice that masculinity is racialized. As Richard Majors argues in "Cool Pose" (1990), black 'cool pose' is a performance which white males are likely to fail to copy. Because virtuoso performances cultivated by black male athletes are valued widely by sport enthusiasts, impersonations of black male athletes by white men, unlike other stereotypical impersonations of blacks by whites, may appear respectful – like any attempt at modeling skills which are admired. On the other hand, impersonations of white male athletes by black males are open to a kind of ridicule captured by the phrase, "white men can't jump." Since jumping is a skill that females are thought incapable of, there is the potential for a black male parodying a white male athlete to effeminize this performance and perhaps induce a subversive confusion of white masculinity with conventional femininity.

Parody of Masculine Females in Sport

The parody of gay men in the Gay Games prompted us to wonder what might have happened if the theme "Gay Games" had been given to athletic women with the expectation that they parody lesbians in sport. Like conventionally masculine men attempting to

parody masculine men, an athletic woman looks 'real' as she attempts her parody of the lesbian or dyke in sport. An athletic woman looks like an athletic woman as she attempts a parody of 'the dyke in sport' because the assumed characteristics of a lesbian in sport – aggressive, strong, skilled – are also characteristics of an athletic woman.

While a gay man in drag can use sport as a context to parody gender and sport and create new possibilities for understanding and participating in sport, it is much more difficult for a lesbian to use sport as a context to subvert gender. Typically, since 'drag' on a female body is thought to consist of 'masculine' attire and bodily comportment, a lesbian in drag is indistinguishable from a lesbian in sport and from the more general category, the athletic woman in sport. A lesbian athlete may, however, consider herself to be in drag when wearing 'feminine' apparel. She might wear a pink tutu while running and winning the 200 meter sprint event, something which occurred at the 1994 New York Gay Games. By doing so, stereotypes of masculine lesbians in sport may be subverted.

Parody by athletic women of other athletic women might, however, expose the racialization of femininity. A white female athlete impersonating a black female athlete may attribute athletic skills, for example, jumping ability and exaggerated physical strength (and hence masculinity), to the black athlete which she might not attribute in the same measure to herself as a white athlete, thus underlining her own ambivalent relationship to the constitutive demands both of sport and of femininity. An impersonation of a white female athlete by a black female athlete, on the other hand, might attribute a 'femininity as incompetence' to the white athlete, thus distancing her from conventional (white) femininity and exposing a break in the presumed continuity between female sexed bodies and conventional femininity. For those who equate white femininity with femininity, the parody is likely to reconfigure popular cultural notions that, as a black woman, she is not 'really' feminine.

The Context for Sport Parody

There are numerous examples from popular culture of celebrities

troubling gender. For instance, Dennis Rodman, bad boy of the National Basketball Association, displays multiple tattoos, dyed hair, and manicured and polished nails while he is competing. Off the court, Rodman cross-dresses or wears flamboyant clothes. He talks openly about going to gay bars and his fantasies about sex with men. Shortly after the release of his book *Bad As I Wanna Be* in the spring of 1996, Rodman appeared for a book signing in Chicago dressed in a silver halter, neon pink boa, large silver earrings, and wearing pink lipstick, pink fingernail polish, and silver hair. Later that summer for a book signing in New York, Rodman arrived in a horse-drawn carriage escorted by four women in tuxedos. He was wearing a blond wig, a white wedding gown, a nose piercing, and bright red lipstick.

It is quite a different thing for Dennis Rodman than it is for noncelebrities to play with gender while they are competing. Pushing limits of identity is open to athletes like Rodman, whose worth as a professional athlete makes it possible for him to engage in practices disruptive to established identity categories without losing his spot on the team. The Beehives, the cowboy in the Gay Rodeo, and the sprinter at the Gay Games are in a position to parody gendered, sexual, and possibly athletic identity while they are competing because pushing the limits of identity is in part what the team or the competition is fostering. Most athletes, however, must comply with more than the sport skill requirements of 'the athlete'; they must also comply with expectations associated with their gender and race or not be regarded as good teammates. Moreover, disruption of some identity categories is very difficult to accomplish by parody. For athletes with disabilities, for example, the limitations imposed by impairment may make it difficult to parody able-bodied athletes in or out of competition.[3]

Earlier we said that we struggle with how to talk about parody of gender where gender is understood to include sexed bodies. We indicated that it was necessary for us to presume female

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[3] We are grateful to Kathleen Rockhill (1996) for this point from her presentation, "On the Matter of Bodies: Thinking through Judith Butler's Theory of Performativity in Relation to Sexuality, Race and Dis/ability."

and male bodies in order to write about parody as a subversive disruption of masculinity and femininity and what comes to count as male and female bodies. This paradox is central to parody as well since parody also must take up and hence legitimize the very terms it attempts to subvert (Hutcheon 1989, 101). As Linda Hutcheon indicates, transgression is authorized by the norm it seeks to subvert and "even in mocking, parody reinforces ... it inscribes the mocked conventions onto itself, thereby guaranteeing their continued existence" (1985, 75). In this instance, conventional notions of dimorphic sexed bodies remain authorized by the transgressions of masculinity and femininity we describe.

We are interested in pursuing the possibilities for the disruption of what counts as sexed bodies in this discussion about the effectiveness of parody. We have been using parody of the Gay Games in skit form to notice how possibilities for subverting gender may or may not work. We now wish to consider the effectiveness of parody to disrupt the acceptance of male and female competitive categories and hence male and female bodies at the Gay Games.

Parody at Lesbian and Gay Athletic Events: Queering the Gay Games

Disruptions or parodic reconfigurations of gender and/or sexuality often rely on a reading by a straight audience, or the coded reading by a lesbian/gay audience within a heteronormative context. The success of these parodies depends on where the parody is taking place and who is reading it in what context. We think the Gay Games provides an interesting homosexualized context where exposing sex as a discursive effect is difficult, even within a supposedly "queer" (read: lesbian and gay) event. We are not trying to configure the Gay Games context as outside of discourse, nor are we suggesting that it could be free from heteronormative imperatives. It is, however, a public time and space where homo is expected, not hetero, and we think this may add a twist to how a gender parody might work.

Disrupting gender within a homosexual context, as opposed to a heterosexual context, might transgress the reliance (or lay bare the power function it serves) of the homosexual on the gendered heterosexual. A conventional notion of gay or lesbian still needs the

heteronormative function of the traditional gender dyad of male and female. Even though homosexuality operates as heterosexuality's constitutive Other, the construction of male and female as discrete categories locks an understanding of homosexuality (as same-sexed) into the heteronormative logic of reified ideas of male and female difference. For this reason, the Gay Games' strategy to replace "straight" athletes with "gay" athletes does not always shift naturalized dominant gender discourses.

We want to suggest, though, that a *queer* disruption to gender and sport within a specifically lesbigaytran context is possible and desirable (even though it may be fraught with several tensions that could be politically troubling as sex/gender discourses do not operate indistinguishably from race, class, and/or physical ability). For the subject to be queer, it cannot be purely oppositional, which effectively reinscribes the dominant notion (in this case, straight athletes) in its reversal: "The subject who is 'queered' into public discourse through homophobic interpellations of various kinds *takes up* or *cites* that very term as the discursive basis for an opposition. This kind of citation will emerge as *theatrical* to the extent that it *mimes and renders hyperbolic* the discursive convention that it also *reverses*. The hyperbolic gesture is crucial to the exposure of the homophobic 'law' that can no longer control the terms of its own abjecting strategies" (Butler 1993, 232).

One of the reasons the parodies of gender outlined in the earlier part of the paper may fail is that the sporting context itself was not problematized. In the rodeo, baseball, hockey, and track examples in which gender was spoofed, the logic of sport as a masculinist enterprise stayed intact. The examples take for granted the immediate and apparently 'natural' associations of sport with conventional masculinity. Perhaps one of the reasons that it is difficult to conceive of a masculine female (the lesbian) parodying gender within an unproblematized sporting context is that sport colludes to produce and prop up those typically masculine attributes of overt aggressive physicality and demonstrations of brute strength and skill. Even though gay athletic events may be gender-bending to some extent, the structure of sport itself remains untouched by these parodic moments.

To the extent that sport is used as the medium with which

participants play with gender, parodies of gender will be limited. One exception to this might be the flamingo races which have become a gay swim meet tradition:

> The earnestness of the gay swim meets is usually given its antidote in the camp of the pink flamingo relay, now a standard event at these competitions. The point is for two swimmers from each team to don plastic pink flamingo hats; while one swims the arm pull of the breast stroke, the other does the kick while grasping the legs of the first; at the other end of the pool, they exchange hats and another two complete the race. Over the years this relay has grown into a camp extravaganza, with teams in radical drag making grand entrances. (Pronger 275)

This swimming event, while 'bastardizing' the breast stroke to some extent, feminizes the activity (maybe akin to "swimming like a girl"), relegating it to the trivial, whereas serious, 'proper' swimming happens in the actual tournament. We know not to take the athletic aspect of the flamingo race seriously, perhaps just the campy drag aspect. The 'real' swimming competition comes later, proving that fags can be as 'manly' as 'real' straight boys. Because gender parody must be read within the confines of a traditional and conventional frame of masculinity (sport), the space to maneuver subversively within gender performatives is restricted and circumscribed. Consequently, it is our contention that sport might have to be called into question alongside gender and sexuality for drag to work as a disruptive parody in sport.

The masculinities produced through sport participation have been extensively studied and theorized (Messner 1992; Sabo; Whitson). However, sport analysis and criticism does not necessarily problematize the constitutive values and constructs of sport (such as aggressive, violent, muscular prowess, and physical skills) or how conventional masculinity is constitutive of sport. This is demonstrated in the types of sports which are considered 'truly' masculine: violent sports such as football, hockey, and rugby are considered more virile than gymnastics, diving, or figure skating. Consistent with heterosexist masculinity, male athletes in 'feminized' sports are often represented as and perhaps are even expected 'to be' homosexuals. This representation is affirmed when

considering media coverage of the announcements of the HIV-positive status of certain elite athletes. For example, basketball player Magic Johnson was constructed as hyper(hetero)sexual, whereas diver Greg Louganis was assumed to be homosexual. Or as one gay male athlete suggested, "Swimming is not a butch enough sport to discredit accusations that you're queer" (Pronger 32).

In his discussion of understanding how Australian pro rugby player Ian Roberts was able to come out and maintain his star status and success, Toby Miller suggests that perhaps 'being' gay (and male) can be assimilated as long as conventional masculinity is not threatened:

> The 'buff-bodied' gay man became so powerful a stereotype by the 1980s that having bulging huge muscles, a classic 'V-torso', 'washboard' abdominal musculature, and bulging biceps actually suggested to some that a man was homosexual. Of course, this new stereotype led to ... an over-compensation, by men, against older categorisations of effeminacy and physical weakness. Hence many gay men bought into aspects of dominant masculinity, appropriating conventional signifiers of male power and so destabilising its 'straight' monopoly, but also typifying such forms of life as the 'acme' of maleness. This hypermasculinity hardened emotions and bodies – a tribute to the very models that had traditionally excluded and brutalised gays. We could view this development either as countering prevailing ways of seeing gay men or as a gruesome throwback to racist and fascist imagery (a particular affront to gay black men). (198)[4]

Perhaps in certain contexts, it is not 'being' gay that is troublesome. It is the disruption of the heteronormative gender discourse which cannot be tolerated. Ian Roberts does not threaten the very basis of rugby or rugby culture as he maintains the norms of brute strength

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[4] David Halperin does an interesting alternative reading of the gay male bodybuilding imperative. He suggests, interpreting Foucault, that it is a form of ascesis, an ethical self-fashioning that is distinctly queer, in that gay men bodybuild "differently," eroticizing certain body areas, making muscle as desire, using the body as queer erotic image. He argues it is different from 'straight' working out (115-18).

and physical violence inherent to the sport. If athletic women did not contradict the codes for heteronormative femininity which serious sporting participation demands they do, perhaps the lesbian specter would not loom over women's sport as it does. Or, perhaps if sport did not demand such masculinized skills and performances, might things look different?

The Queering of Sport – Drag Races

Figure 2: The Drag Races
© Darrin Hagen

The Drag Races did not involve high-speed cars. They were more like a Crossdresser's Olympics. Every May long weekend, Flashback prepared for the onslaught of madness. Before the Step-down, before the Crowning, before the queens painted, the staff would arrive, clean the club, warm up the barbecue, and fill up the dunk tank. The alley was blocked off at both ends. The beer cooler was stuffed with wading pools full of lime jello, and I was going over the list of events for the day: Tug of War, Wet T-Shirt, Wet Jockstrap, Skiing for Five, Run Like a Girl/Boy, Waitress Races, Pie Eating Contests, Condom Blowup, Jello Wrestling (later it became Creamed Corn Wrestling), The Foxy Lady Rhinestone Turkey Baster Relay Marathon, The Squeeze-a-Snack Relay Marathon, The DQ Dunk Tank, The Lady Di Faint-A-Like Contest, and of course, The Drag Races, which involved running back and forth in the deep gravel in the alley, gradually layering on women's clothing from the Drag Pit. Naturally, maximum liquor intake was mandatory.
–Hagen 69-70; Figure 2

We propose drag as a new Gay Games athletic activity which consists of how well each athlete performs the complex physical skills of a gender arbitrarily chosen. The drag event would be a contest of feminized or masculinized physical skills, from walking to dressing to talking to dancing to lip sync to hair management. This would subvert the masculinized sport mantra of faster, stronger, higher (except perhaps when it comes to hair!) and underline Butler's assertion that while sex and gender may appear to cohere, it can be demonstrated that these categories are arbitrary and that masculine males and feminine females are unstable constructions (1990).

In this drag contest there would be no male and female categories. There would only be representations of the hyperreal status of masculinities and femininities, performed by drag athletes, judged for their parodic successes and technical prowess. Whether those kings/queens[5] would be caught in variously sexed male or female or transitioning bodies would be irrelevant and immaterial to the judges. The skill with which various bodies and accouterments could perform highly stylized femininities and/or masculinities would be the relevant and very material focus of this event, which could be camped up, ironized, played with, and performed to a heightened and over-the-top best. Body size and type would not comprise the coveted edge, but rather how the diva employs the body in "perfected" gendered comportment. If all gender performance necessarily fails so as to prop up and reproduce the mythic ideal gender imperative, this athletic site could sever gender from its sexed anchor while the rules and objectives of the game could make space for a variety of gendered performances (Butler 1990; 1993).

One of the expressed aims of the Gay Games is to reconfigure sport and make it more participatory (Markwell). Part of the drag event evaluation protocol might involve audience

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[5] This is an example of how we continue to struggle with the difficulty of writing about bodies without sexing them. Even invoking the terms king and queen, although reversing the typical coherence of gendered comportment to sexed body, still primarily leaves the binary relation intact. This does little to push the discourse of gender in disruptive ways. Rather, it reinscribes the norm through its reversal.

approval and judgment. Given that in the Gay Games context, a homoerotic sensibility would likely prevail, certain butch and femme aesthetics might come to the fore, supplanting the more staid and contrived male/female distinctions of other more mundane ("straight") athletic events. This queer event, held in the lesbigaytran context of the Gay Games, may also help resist the heteronormative impulse of some takes on drag in mainstream popular culture such as the films *Tootsie* or *Victor/Victoria*. Here, the threat of the homosexual plot is welcomed (Butler 1993).

Unlike the current configuration of the Gay Games' athletic events, there are no men's and women's competitions here, and drug testing takes on a whole new meaning and is limited to being able to stand up and perform on the day. There are no sex testing procedures, and transitioning athletes do not need documentation 'proving' their sex from presiding physicians and psychiatrists (cf. *Gay Games Amsterdam 1998*). There are no rules about what level of hormones an athlete is currently taking. What matters is what you look like and how you move: "'Realness' is not exactly a category in which one competes; it is a standard that is used to judge any given performance within the established categories. And yet what determines the effect of realness is the ability to compel belief, to produce the naturalized effect" (Butler 1993, 129).

The name of the game is to take gender and sex to new places, to 'do' girls better than women, and boys better than men. No matter what morphological form you inhabit, camp it up *boyz* and *grrrls*! The only restrictions are on the wattage of your curling iron and perhaps, to discourage hypercommodification and globalization impulses, a very modest cap on the gender campaign budget.

Is "parodying the dominant norms enough to displace them? Indeed, [it calls into question] whether the denaturalization of gender cannot be the very vehicle for a reconsolidation of hegemonic norms" (Butler 1993, 125). We think this speculative enterprise can be critically queer. Gender is unhinged from a sexed body. It is performed as a constructed ideal which is complicated, difficult, and requires meticulous and repetitive practice. The performances would be read by a queer audience,

many of whom would still ascribe to and believe in a naturalness for sex, gender, and, probably, sexuality, but who would likely be literate to some extent in the camp, mime, and parody that gays and lesbians have used for years to identify one another and create cultures for themselves. The performances would be bound to fail, yet would have to be believable. And the rules of the game would not restrict the performances to a dominant set of masculine attributes and ideals, thereby allowing space for athletes to be read outside of those traditional sporting constraints.

Earlier in this section we alluded to some of the troubling aspects of this idea. How race, class, and physical ability get played out at a mythic event like this could easily reinforce hegemonic norms. Opportunities might exist for race to be parodied and reconfigured by drawing attention to racialization processes and effects without knowing necessarily how the actual body underneath is raced. But this runs the risk of reinscribing dominant racial discourses, perhaps unwittingly, while concentrating on gender. Additionally, we are concerned about the effects of codifying drag outside of its subaltern culture/practice. Darrin Hagen felt that one of his triumphs in Edmonton was to bring drag to the daylight, creating and performing drag in plays at the Fringe Festival held there each summer. We wonder what the effects of institutionalizing drag events at the Gay Games might be? Would drag become an "authorized transgression," losing its subversive edge (Markwell 117)? And what class configurations will be lauded in these drag performatives, and at whose expense (pun intended)? How many very skilled drag kings and queens can afford to fly to exotic destinations around the world to strut their stuff?

Whatever the outcome of this speculation about drag as a serious athletic event at the Gay Games, for "successful" gender parody to occur, the hegemonic understandings of the cultural practice of sport must be queered. The conventional masculine frame of sport restricts the critical force of most attempts of gender parody within an athletic or sporting context. For conventional gender classification to be disrupted in competitive sport, all aspects of gendered discourses must be up for grabs, including sport itself.

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Morning After the Rodeo

(Calgary, 1988)

NORM SACUTA

Norm Sacuta (nsacuta@oznewmedia.com) works as a writer and editor for an educational on-line publishing company in Edmonton. His work has recently appeared in The New Quarterly, Grain, *and the anthology* Threshold, *and he is currently at work on a short story cycle. He says of "Morning After the Rodeo," which comments on the gay rodeo held in Calgary each Canada Day weekend, "if people find a poem like 'Morning After the Rodeo' politically problematic, that's a good thing: the whole event is problematic."*

No tent is without an open invitation,
every open shirt is a pale imitation,
just what's expected, so expected
these parents newly arrived, awaiting the exodus of buggers
tell their children to stay arm's-length from those
boys who step a bit too gingerly into the morning.
These real men, real cowboys, real ones
except the children know now not to come close
just like real ones except,
flowers bloom inside those big men's jeans
when flaps flip open and boots, a bit too pointy,
point into the morning –
real enough, but not really
convincing anyone.
The children keep their distance.

But it's their voices wake us
and we drown back into syrup, two-stepping, stuck,
convincing ourselves, excepting ourselves
from all these children
who have been warned
keep your distance. The distance between convincing
and a convincing cowboy. Yesterday
one stepped out of the camp shower, tossed back
the wet curtain where a half-dozen men waited
to wake up, and woke up suddenly
his immense body a chest beyond any gym and we all
thought *this is it, this is real*
but faggot-none-the-less! We were proud of
his accomplishment. He left quickly
blushed the same embarrassment as Marilyn
seeking some acceptance of his other skills.

But who's here for that? A bull-rider, sure
except we watch not the event but how it feels.
So much animal jabbing skyward one moment
his loaded jeans push down on the back, rising. Imagine
ourselves not the cowboy but between him
and the Brahma. We are ground
into nothing but him, and dream of it.

(He knows it, too. Would not fuck anyone like us.
Wants a mirror without what goes on in his head.
Someone to hate what he is
and love, watch, oh, and blow him
while he rides.)

You see, cowboy, there is this one tragedy above all:
that love, falling hard, head-over-tail,
a great love need not be returned to be great.

Last night a tall, thin queen with eyes
so mascara thick they were Miss Kitty's,
crossed the dance floor in cowboy boots

fit for a concubine, a pink blouse and red wranglers –
her black hat correct except a wig
shot out its sides like Rod Stewart.
And the panic spread too easy
cowboys two-stepped wide around her
as she wriggled to the patio,
disgust following like a snake's hiss –
exposed, exposed, hear them
not a real cowboy
but even the Marlboro man has his toes
up around his ears, here.

Ride home to this morning.
The children keep, keeping their distance and
their parents wait for the fakes to rise
so the campsite will be safe.
Of a Sunday morning, ruined
by this rodeo's last, late ride.
They miss their morning paper by the campfire,
the photographs of car crashes, real captions
full of empathy.
They've cried over these
for want of fame, a need – some tragedy not too close
to befall them.
The world is full
of victory banquets, great big buckles
and purses almost big enough to make a living.

Athabasca Falls

NORM SACUTA

> Tay John hadn't gone over the pass at all. He had just walked down,
> the toboggan behind him, under the snow and into the ground.
> – Howard O'Hagan, *Tay John*

I stand on former paths of least resistance,
where the falls spread thin and fell gently
before today – not the knotted sheet ripped
between stones, untying before an infinite end
is reached. Then, the water was without voice,
the elk steps like thunder in the Yellowhead.

Understand the author of these signs, his voice
panicky with adjectives: "infinite," "ripped,"
the sandy battle between rock's resistance
and water's disinterest in shape. But see how gently
the current circles at fall's base, an end
mistakenly soft, like diamonds drilling. A yellow head

floats in the pool's centre, spins gently
where the sandstone narrows. Impossible resistance!
All other foam refuses shape, is ripped
miles to a widening channel where the Yellowhead
Highway runs beside the river (the waterfall's voice
is distant there, like someone lost at trail's end).

Turning, the yellow head
glides forward through mist, against resistance.
In the haze at falls' end

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faintly heard through white noise. A hand gently
grasps a tree, fallen, roots ripped.

Yellow hair darkens submerged, a trout jig ripped
upstream. Beating arms meet no resistance
(the air-filled falls without end).
He ascends! Smacks the water gently
through to stones and climbs. A voice
thunders at last above the falls: *I am Yellowhead!*

Stand there. The mist kisses your eyes, gently.
On the slippery rocks the water ripped
smooth so many centuries ago, your beautiful voice
Yellowhead,
brings an end
to my resistance.

Why I Hate Wrestling (the Sport, Not the Foreplay!)

DARRIN HAGEN

A version of this article by award-winning writer, composer, journalist, TV host, and all-around Queen Darrin Hagen was first published in the June 1999 (Pride) issue of Outlooks Newspaper *under the title "Wrestling With A Double Standard." It was originally written as a warm-up research exercise for Hagen's fringe-theater play* PileDriver! *Hagen reports, "The story caused quite a commotion ... it was linked to* Xwrestling.com, *which connects to all news about wrestling, and it received an astonishing – to me – 6,000 hits a day. Then,* Outlooks *received a few nasty letters to the editor taking me to task for 'hetero-bashing', claiming they – as gay men – had been watching wrestling for years and had never seen anything like the stuff I mentioned."* Outlooks *submitted the article to the Gay Press Association, where Hagen won second place in the Best Opinion / Editorial / News Analysis category in the regional division of the Vice Versa Awards. On his achievement, Hagen declares, "Caught me very much by surprise. I didn't even know I had been entered ... Wait, I should probably rephrase that!" Hagen's first book,* The Edmonton Queen: Not a Riverboat Story, *is in its second printing. His email address is edmontonqueen@hotmail.com.*

When Tony Kushner's play *Angels In America* was produced in Alberta two seasons ago, the public outcry was enormous. Politicians stepped on each other to criticize a play that, even though it won the Pulitzer Prize, 'questioned the validity of a belief in God', promoted

a homosexual, antifamily agenda, and featured more than one scene involving gay sexual situations. The *Alberta Report* featured a cover that had poster boy Mark Bellamy, dressed as a studly, buffed angel, covered in painted-on Kaposi's sarcoma.[1] The right-wing called (again) for an end to arts funding (when the art in question reflects same-sex issues). When the dust cleared, *Angels In America* – Parts One and Two – outsold almost every other theatrical production in Edmonton and Calgary.

When singer and performer Marilyn Manson toured his dog and pony show through Alberta last year, the Calgary business community (fueled and encouraged by religious groups) canceled his one Cowtown performance, citing unsubstantiated rumors of onstage sacrifices, devil worship, and antestablishment lyrical content. The scandal was front-page news in Edmonton, where Manson played to far more people than he would have had the scandal in Cowtown not made him more notoriously infamous than he already was.

Two pieces of high-profile entertainment were challenged in this province strictly based on content (or rumors of that content). The amount of negative press *Angels* and Manson received was frightening: journalists wringing their hands in mock horror at the decay of our Albertan society.

The funny thing is, a show just traveled through both Calgary and Edmonton that featured onstage man/man sexual situations, an obsession with the Dark Forces, an open challenge to the authority of God, mock rape, and, dare I say it, necrophilia, symbolic dismemberment of women, nudity, foul language, and – gasp! – really loud rock and roll. And it got nothing in the way of religious outcry, moralizing, or political comment.

Is Marilyn Manson starring in *Angels In America*? Is the Jim Rose Freak Circus back on the road?

No. Last Sunday I went to see WWF (the World Wrestling Federation).

I, three friends (my partner and a straight couple), and

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[1] Mark Bellamy is the Calgary-based actor who posed for the *Angels in America* poster. *Alberta Report* used the photograph from the poster as the basis for its offensive cover.

thousands of screaming families converged on Edmonton's Skyreach Centre to watch Stone Cold Steve Austin, The Undertaker, The Brood, New Age Outlaws, Val Venus, Mankind and Golddust 'wrestle' in front of a sold-out crowd of children and ladies and gentlemen of all ages. Let me tell you, until you've heard eight-year-old girls screaming things like "Break his leg!" and "Finish him off!" you haven't really witnessed how low society can scrape.

First off, I have to say this: the show is actually quite entertaining, for about fifteen minutes. WWF shows have a lot more in common with the big annual Drag Ball than with any 'sporting' event. In fact, the reams of media coverage the WWF received while it was in the province (almost all positive, or, at least, tongue-in-cheek) was in the entertainment section of the newspaper. The 'show' consists of lots of introductions, lots of big entrances, lots of swaggering with an exaggerated sense of self-importance, lots of cheesy music cues, lots of larger-than-life personas, and the occasional prop. 'Titles' are read as the stars enter the room and stroll down a long ramp to their pounding music, a spotlight on them the whole way.

Once the actual 'wrestling' starts, it becomes even more like an overlong drag show: the numbers all start to sound and look the same after a while. Every match is almost identical in execution, utilizing the same pallet of moves and choreography, with occasional 'personality' variations. The Undertaker, for instance, generally relies on the pile driver move to stun his opponents into pretend unconsciousness. Val Venus enters to vampy burlesque sax music, wearing a towel, wiggling his derriere like a stripper at a stag party. The opponents generally insult each other, attacking such important topics as whose appendage is larger, the quality of a female partner's breasts, etc., until one is driven mad by the teasing and attacks. The audience cheers, then grows distracted as the 'fight' progresses. The success – entertainment-wise – of each match depends entirely on how skilled the performers are in making the violence look real. If I can tell from the nosebleed section of the Skyreach Centre that kicks or punches aren't connecting, I'm not going to care much about who wins. What keeps people watching is when the gimmicks start.

Every wrestler has a gimmick tied to their character's

history or plot line. Al Snow carries a female mannequin head by the hair (AL: "What do we want?" CROWD: "Head!"). 'Head' talks to him and tells him who to take down. The Brood, consisting of pretty-boy heart-throb Edge and his also pretty Goth-vampire buddies Christian and Gangrelle, wear sexy pirate shirts and PVC pants, and flip their luxurious blond hair around more than a babe in a Bon Jovi video. Val Venus's striptease entrance relates to his history as a porn star. The New Age Outlaws (with Team De-Generation X) consist of Outlaw Jesse James (a.k.a. Road Dogg, "'cause he likes it doggy-style") and Badass Billy Gunn (who likes flashing his bum to get the other team fightin' mad). Every time Jesse James gets a male opponent into a hard-to-get-out-of hold, he humps him from behind, or pretends to eat him out. The crowd goes wild at every sexual suggestion. Somehow, watching two boys having fake anal intercourse on stage is fine, as long as one of the men is being held in that position against his will. Or Jesse and Badass, in a perfectly choreographed oral gang rape, place two pseudounconscious opponents in opposing corners, then climb up on the ropes, pretend to fuck their faces, then pummel their heads with punches (all timed) while the audience counts the toll.

Of course, there are the women: Sable, Tori, Ivory, Jacqueline, all dressed for success in string bikinis, silver jumpsuits, and hair that flies around as they fight. Implant versus implant in this fight to the finish.

Who won? Does it matter? A half billion people (including three million Canadians) tune in each week to see the televised version of this road show. There is a recording studio being built to issue the release of WWF CDs, which are mostly "themed" collections of dinosaur heavy metal bands. There are theme hotels and amusement parks in the works. Stone Cold Steve Austin, the current smash fave (whose motto is on banners and t-shirts all over the Coliseum: "AUSTIN 3:16 Do Unto Others Before They Do Unto You"), is the merchandising king, selling 25,000 t-shirts a month. The ticket sales, the pay-per-view rights, the videos, the action figures all add up to an unstoppable commercial enterprise. Wrestling is huge business.

Supporters call it "a mock-violent soap opera that interacts with its crazed audience" and "escapist entertainment." And I

suppose, on one level, that's true. The success of the WWF or of the tv show *Jerry Springer* prove that there is a rabid audience for the stuff that you can scrape out of the gutter. But when escapist entertainment is built on a bunch of thugs exhibiting Grade 8 locker room bullying, waving dicks in each other's faces to prove their masculinity, I have a problem with that. When an audience cheers they want 'Head' and they're talking about a symbolic decapitated female on stage, I have a problem with that. When the crowd goes wild while the New Age Outlaws pretend to assault the two men they just finished raping, the message is loud and clear: As long as you're the one doing the poking, you're not a fag. But make sure you beat up the fag you just fucked, so that you'll still be a man. People will cheer.

I have a serious problem with that.

And the worst part of all is that this sideshow is marketed mainly at children. I watched little boys and girls, supported by their parents, cheering the *demasculinization* of men who were held in positions in which they couldn't defend themselves against their rapists. As a gay man, I sat and listened as tens of thousands of people (mostly families) cheered simulated forced man-on-man anal sex and the subsequent beating of the victim.

Adults can watch what they want. But children all over the world are consuming this product. Forget the Backstreet Boys, The Spice Girls. When an ACCESS reporter asked a bunch of ten-year-old boys in Calgary what they wanted to see at the show, they screamed "We want to see the sluts!" In Edmonton, the hottest selling item at the merchandise stand was a baseball cap bearing the New Age Outlaws' motto: "SUCK IT!"

The media wasn't silent. Many are concerned with the effect wrestling has on the younger fans. But most of the press coverage the WWF received in Alberta was about its popularity. Not one journalist mentioned the homophobia or the sexism within the show. 'Everyone knows it's not real.' Yet when *Angels in America* was produced in Alberta, did the fact that everyone knows it's not real save it from being skewered as immoral? No. The image of two men in a gay relationship kissing was enough to draw fire from extremists all over the province. It was labeled as "perverted," or "anti-God."

Where is the WWF headed? Is there any line it won't cross? Rumor has it that partial nudity (female, I assume) will play a big role. A little T&A will send viewing figures through the stratosphere. But ultimately, the WWF and the hysteria that makes it so popular rely on one thing: the preservation of the myth of straight white male power. And in that context, it's perfectly correct. Its symbols of masculinity – brute force, fake violence, bravado, posturing, drawing your power from the *disempowerment* of others – are tried and traditional. It's a brilliant symbol of the last bastion of the old guard clinging to the tattered shreds of its former glory and power. That's why the claims of escapist entertainment are so disturbing. It's not escapist entertainment to the people who have to face that attitude in their lives on a daily basis. It's real. There's no escape. And there's nothing entertaining about it.

BOOKS RECEIVED

OUVRAGES REÇUS

John Barton. *Sweet Ellipsis*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1998. 173pp. ISBN 1-55022-354-2.

Jim Egan. *Challenging the Conspiracy of Silence: My Life as a Canadian Gay Activist*. Compiled and edited by Donald W. McLeod. Toronto: Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives and Homewood Books, 1998. 159pp. Includes bibliographical references, index. ISBN 0-9683829-0-8.

Susan Hawthorn and Renate Klein, eds. *CyberFeminism: Connectivity, Critique and Creativity*. North Melbourne, Vic.: Spinifex Press, 1999. 434pp. ISBN 1-875559-68-X.

Readers who wish to review these or other books should contact John L. Plews, Editor, *torquere*, at torquere@ualberta.ca. Unfortunately, we cannot accept unsolicited reviews.

CLGSA Annual Meeting

This year's Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association meetings at the Congress will be held May 26 and 27, 2000 at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. As part of the proceedings, we will hold a reception to launch the inaugural issue of *torquere*.

The CLGSA/SCELG sessions provide an invaluable space for queer researchers to disseminate their work and make connections with other researchers from across the country. The 2000 CLGSA/SCELG meeting will include sessions on lesbians and sports, lesbian writing, gay drama, lesbigay health issues, pedagogy, politics, queer theory, discourses on same-sex domestic violence and abuse, and queer film in Canada, among other topics. There will also be a presentation by Youth Understanding Youth, an outreach program for at-risk queer youth in Edmonton.

Les reunions de la SCELG de 2000

Cette année les réunions de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies auront lieu au Congrès des Sciences Sociales et des Humanités du Canada le 26 et 27 mai, 2000, à l'Université d'Alberta à Edmonton. Dans le cadre du Congrès, il y aura une réception pour fêter la publication du premier numéro de la nouvelle revue *torquere*.

Les séances de la SCELG/CLGSA offrent un espace indispensable aux chercheur(e)s universitaires et non-universitaires travaillant dans le domaine des études lesbiennes, gaies et/ou *queer*. Ces séances leur permettent de disséminer leurs recherches et de former des liens avec d'autres chercheur(e)s de toutes les régions du Canada. Lors des réunions de la SCELG/CLGSA de 2000 on pourra assister à des séances portant sur les lesbiennes et les sports; l'écriture des lesbiennes; le théâtre gai; les questions de santé particulières aux lesbiennes, aux gais, et aux intersexuel(le)s; la pédagogie *queer*; la politique actuelle; la théorie *queer*; les discours de l'abus chez les couples du même sexe; et le cinéma *queer* au Canada, parmi d'autres sujets. Il y aura également une présentation spéciale organisée par le groupe "Youth Understanding Youth" d'Edmonton.

torquere

Journal of the Canadian and Lesbian Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies

torquere is published by the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / *torquere* est l'organe officielle de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies.

Aims and Scope

torquere seeks to publicize scholarly and creative work on topics concerning queer aspects of Canada and its social, political, material, and textual culture, or on queer topics outside Canadian Studies by scholars conducting queer research in Canada. We welcome a diversity of approaches from a wide spectrum of areas – from Sociology, History, Political Science, Anthropology, Education, the Sciences, Business, Law, English, French, Modern Language Studies, Cultural Studies, Native Studies, Women's Studies, Philosophy, Drama, Film and Media Studies, Religious Studies, Religion, Music and the Fine Arts. *torquere* also welcomes previously unpublished creative writing and visual art by and about Canadian queer, lesbian, gay, and transgendered people. We are particularly interested in work that seeks to play with conventional forms and genres in ways that are innovative and challenging.

Objectifs

torquere se propose de publier des articles scolaires, des nouvelles, des poèmes et des dessins et photos portant sur les dimensions sociales, politiques et textuelles de la culture *queer* au Canada. On publiera également des articles écrits par des chercheur(e)s en études lesbiennes et gaies aux universités canadiennes mais qui

travaillent dans des domaines de spécialisation autres que les études canadiennes. On est ouverts à des approches diverses venant de toute une gamme de champs, tels que la sociologie, l'histoire, la science politique, l'anthropologie, la pédagogie, les sciences, le commerce, le droit, les études culturelles, les études autochtones, les études féministes, la philosophie, le théâtre, le cinéma et les média, les sciences religieuses, la musique et les beaux arts. On aimerait recevoir aussi des textes de création et des photos et dessins qui n'ont pas encore été publiés ailleurs et qui présentent un point de vue *queer*, lesbien, gai, bisexuel ou *transgender*. On s'intéresse surtout à des oeuvres innovatrices.

Information for Contributors

Submissions may be written in English or French. Please send scholarly submissions in triplicate to the editor (John L. Plews, Editor, *torquere*, Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, 200 Arts, University of Alberta, Edmonton AB, Canada T6G 2E6 / e-mail: torquere@ualberta.ca). Essays should follow the format outlined in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Fifth Edition). We require footnotes, not endnotes. Preference will be given to manuscripts between 15 and 25 pages. Please send creative submissions – poetry, short prose, photography, cartoons – in triplicate to the Editor (John L. Plews, Editor, *torquere*, Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, 200 Arts, University of Alberta, Edmonton AB, Canada T6G 2E6 / e-mail: torquere@ualberta.ca). Creative submissions must not exceed 12 pages. Manuscripts should not have been published previously. Authors of accepted manuscripts will be expected to forward a copy of their work saved to disk (IBM-formatted WordPerfect 8) along with one hard copy. Because all submissions are refereed blind, please include a cover note giving your name, address, telephone and fax numbers, email address, and the title of your work. Please include an SASE.

Note aux auteur(e)s

Les articles et les oeuvres de création soumis à la revue *torquere* doivent être rédigés en anglais ou en français. Les articles scolaires doivent être envoyés au directeur (John L. Plews, Editor, *torquere*, Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, 200 Arts, University of Alberta, Edmonton AB, Canada T6G 2E6 / couriel: torquere@ualberta.ca) en trois exemplaires. Tout article doit suivre le modèle MLA décrit dans le *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Fifth Edition). Les notes seront placées en bas de page. On publiera de préférence des textes et articles de 15 à 25 pages. Prière d'envoyer les textes de création – poésie, nouvelles, photos, dessins – au directeur (John L. Plews, Editor, *torquere*, Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, 200 Arts, University of Alberta, Edmonton AB, Canada T6G 2E6 / couriel: torquere@ualberta.ca) en trois exemplaires. Les textes de création ne doivent pas dépasser 12 pages. Seuls les textes qui n'ont pas été publiés ailleurs seront acceptés. Si la revue accepte l'article soumis, l'auteur(e) devra fournir une copie sur disquette (IBM formatée, WordPerfect 8) et une copie imprimée du texte. Tous les articles et les autres textes seront lus par un lectur/une lectrice anonyme. On vous prie de faire parvenir vos documents en y joignant une lettre de présentation qui indique vos coordonnés : nom, adresse, numéros de téléphone et de télécopieur, couriel. On vous prie d'envoyer sous le même pli une enveloppe pré-affranchie.

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