torquere

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

vol 3
2001

torquere

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

Volume 3
2001

http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~torquere

Volume 3 **torquere** 2001

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

Table of Contents *Table de matières*

Scholarly Articles — Les Articles scolaires

Queer Apocalypse: Attila Richard Lukacs at the End *Eric Savoy* 1
"Boys Do Cry" *Jean Noble* 27
Astaire's Feet and Travolta's Pelvis: Maintaining the Boy Code *Darcey Callison* 55
Middle-Eastern Body-Building: The Construction of Dana International *Oren Meyers* 76
Communicating Queerness in the Communications Classroom *Dawn Johnston* 98

Creative Writing — Les Oeuvres de création

Mementoes *Blaine Marchand* 111
New York '98 *Aidan Lyncaro* 120
Suitable for Children *Ruth Dyck Fehderau* 124

Photography — La Photographie

Show-Room Mannequins *Terry Malanchuk* 131

Local Knowledge — Le Savoir local

Getting an Education in Edmonton, Alberta: The Case of Queer Youth *André P. Grace and Kristopher Wells* 137
Pussies Bite Back *Chanelle Gallant and Loralee Gillis* 152

Book Reviews — Les Comptes rendus

Thomas Waugh. *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema (Jim Ellis)* 168
bill bissett. *b leev abul char ak trs*
Mark Cockrane. *Change Room*
Daphne Marlatt. *This Tremor Love Is*
Erin Mouré. *Pillage Land*
Erin Mouré *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person*

nathalie stephens. *Somewhere Running*
Rachel Zolf. *Her absence, this wanderer*
Charles Watts and Edward Byrne, eds. *The Recover of the Public World: Essays on Poetics in Honour of Robin Blaser (John C. Stout)* 171
Peter Dickinson. *Here is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Literatures of Canada (B.J. Wray)* 181
Christoph Lorey and John L. Plews, eds. *Queering the Canon: Defying Sights in German Literature and Culture (Bruce Plouffe)* 187
Michael Riordan. *Eating Fire: Family Life, on the Queer Side (Dawn Johnston)* 190

Information Les Renseignements 195

Queer Apocalypse: Attila Richard Lukacs at the End

ERIC SAVOY

Eric Savoy is associate professor of English at the Université de Montréal. He has published widely in American Literature and queer theory; more recently, he is interested in what he conceptualizes as "queer formalism." This is his first foray into art criticism. His e-mail is eric.savoy@umontreal.ca

> The present study is an analysis of what painting can become in the hands of those who both fear and desire that the meaning of a painting is, always, another painting.
>
> – Norman Bryson (xix)

> His skins are now like Botticelli's St. Sebastian: beatific, but still meaning business.
>
> – Bruce Headlam (84)

> And always, in the background, was Berlin ... Already I had begun to teach myself German, by one of those learn-it-in-three-months methods. While riding on the buses, I recited irregular verbs. To me they were like those incantations in *The Arabian Nights* which will make you a master of a paradise of pleasures.
>
> – Christopher Isherwood (132-33)

No contemporary Canadian artist is more highly acclaimed, both at home and abroad, than Attila Richard Lukacs: this is incontrovertible, but it is not news. From his first exhibition – *Prime Cuts*, in 1983 – to the avid promotion of his high-realist images of soldiers and soccer boys by the Diane Farris Gallery, to the enormous 'historical' canvases produced in Berlin in the early 1990s, Lukacs has attracted the attention of audiences high and low – very high, very low. In the notes to the exhibition catalogue for *Patriotism/Leadership/Discipline*, Lukacs's 1990 show organized

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 3 (2001) © CLGSA / SCELG

by Farris, Thomas Sokolowski observes that "Yet again, Lukacs has given us a lot to think about and it's frightening as hell" (iv). Lukacs's work is "frightening" to some audiences because it analyzes, in highly formal terms, not simply the encroachment of the homoerotic into the cultural places of male power, but indeed the complete interlinearity of the homoerotic and the homosocial. This is especially true of Lukacs's Berlin canvases, a series entitled *E-Werk*. Consisting of six enormous paintings whose images richly interfuse tough male bodies at work (in the public square, in the steelworks, in the abattoir) with the fetish objects of gay culture, the collection is evidently but obliquely concerned with history, with the painter's historical moment, and with the implications of this moment for bodies, nations, sexualities, desires.

Most striking, though, is the self-absorption and self-reflexivity of Lukacs's work: his exploration of the relevance of art that comes late in time, and that knows its own lateness, strikes me as the *primary query* that organizes Lukacs's other historicisms. In the argument that follows, I interrogate the various ways in which Lukacs's compositional methods produce particular kinds of 'meaning': what I mean by 'meaning' is the opportunity for the viewer to recognize something about the relation between the past and the present, something that seems distinct and important. It is tempting to separate the various semiotic gestures of Lukacs's work, to argue that his gay-iconic bodies are laminated onto other schemes of reference, having to do with national politics or art history. But the matrix of his painting is more complex than that. I shall attempt to demonstrate that Lukacs's work is properly understood as allegorical rather than realistic (or indeed, as straightforward 'history' or 'narrative' painting at all), and that the relation to history sustained by his best work is a refractory one, arising from the ironies of camp. We are accustomed to thinking of certain performances, or certain objects, as 'camp' in a way that combines comedy with a specifically gay approach to recycling the detritus of history and popular culture. But is it possible that camp has its entirely serious side? What might camp signify as a critical term in relation to painting that is, in several senses, monumental?

*

In this discourse, which will be very much concerned with the representation of endings or culminations in the work of Attila Lukacs, my point of departure is the endpoint of *Globe and Mail* critic John

Bentley Mays's address that opened the exhibition of Lukacs's *E-Werk* series at the University of Calgary's Nickle Art Museum on September 22, 1995: according to Mays, Lukacs achieves "historical painting of the first importance" because it locates "'Europe' in its last *fin-de-siècle* period," and as such constitutes "the painting of rupture." I am struck by two implications that arise from Mays's observations, both of which I view ironically. First of all, the rhetoric assigns primacy to history painting as a genre, particularly to history painting that articulates its continuity in the grand tradition rather paradoxically, in the semiotics of rupture. This provides a vantage point on the uses of 'art history' for the ends, and endings, of the postmodern that is rich in conceptual potential, and which I shall take up in due course. Secondly, Mays's attempt to locate the 'meaning' of Lukacs's *E-Werk* ironically elides the matter of *painting* in 'history painting.' It tends – and intends – to look *through* representation, as though painting were a transparent record of historical sensibility. This rather naïve will-to-transparency limits the ground and meaning of visual art solely to its political engagements, or to its social realism at a momentous turn in recent history, perhaps indeed the brink of secular apocalypse. Under such an ideology of art, the painter's role is to articulate the melancholia associated with end-times, not least with the seemingly last *fin* of Europe's long tradition of *fins-de-siècle*. In privileging the referent over the sign, Mays's observations are characteristic of an art-historical discourse that I shall call the tactics of postponement, by which any explanation of the semiotics of painting is deferred through a tactics of referral to the historical thematics of the work. Mays's tendentious conclusion that "the rupture is in ourselves" begs a return to the work of Lukacs's *E-Werk*, its economy of signs.

In what follows, I diverge rather sharply from a particular kind of art criticism that attempts to purchase mainstream approval (or at least tolerance) for aggressive, shocking, or bewildering painting by purporting to explain its 'urgent social message.' If I have little to say about the reunited Germany, and even less about the fearful fascination of skinhead culture that confirms a prior narrative, ideologically necessary in North America, about what we have always 'known' about German nihilism, then my silence arises from my conviction that Lukacs's painting is not properly understood as directly and transparently historical. Its historicism is allegorical

rather than realistic, and the referent of Lukacs's allegorical narratives is, broadly speaking, desire: desire, that most recessive object of representation, is in some sense *always* what allegory is about, for first and foremost it encodes in its obscure signs the uneasiness it prompts in the reader or viewer – the desire to interpret, to master this evasive representation, to know. This hermeneutic desire is not, I suggest, fundamentally different from the highly conflicted *eros* that strikes us – first, violently, unforgettably – in this series of canvases, with their diverse images of male beauty that hover tensely between the homoerotic look they invite and the homophobic abjection of that look. Both erotically and interpretively, the immediate function of Lukacs's work is to disorient the viewer, to leave us wondering where we are in the realm of visual culture, and to disable any quick or instinctive recourse to a convenient semiotic template.

This is not to suggest that the allegorical mode of Lukacs's work is ahistorical, but that in Lukacs's most complex and memorable work, he sustains (I hesitate to say 'represents') a particular mode of desire, routed and relayed through a circuit of highly connotative images, that constitutes his relationship with the history of painting. Yet such images are highly dissonant in their allusive gestures: Lukacs ransacks and plunders the historical archive, treats classic painting with irony, yet seizes upon it with an odd kind of tenderness as well. His relation with the history of the medium is too playful and capricious to be called 'iconoclastic,' for Lukacs is a breaker of images only as part of the contract of borrowing, appropriating, and recirculating; it is perhaps an ironic iconism, a queer[1] relation that may be understood as reconstituting the visual field of that painting. Yet, art history itself is neither an ultimate referent nor a self-contained object of

---

[1] "Queer" is the most overused adjective in recent gender studies scholarship; its circulation in a wide range of contexts has blunted its critical edge. In the field of academic criticism, I understand "queer" to signify a formalist attention to all modes of cultural representation – a curiosity about how textual, visual, filmic media communicate – that is informed by the artist's *aberrant* relation to traditional artistic conventions and heteronormative sexualities. I am guided by Ellis Hanson's observation that "in the past decade, queer theory, *the deconstruction of sexual rhetoric*, has revolutionized the field simply by conceiving sexuality as a story we tell about ourselves, a story that changes with every telling, that is written as much by the audience as by the ostensible author" (2072, my emphasis).

representation: rather, it provides a body of signs – and a rich lexicon of signs of the body – that is cited connotatively rather than directly, and deployed for revisionist purposes. As such, prior painting becomes not a gestural end, but a place of beginning, a site of overwriting. The connotative play of art historical allusions in Lukacs's work permits a figurative moment – a turn, a troping – of the historical source. Such appropriations are pulled into the spiral of allegory by Lukacs's queer deployment of, his work upon, the borrowed image, which becomes a site at which the history of that image – the visual economy in which it has been received – is revised, reconfigured.

Allegory is a queer mode of narrative in that it can never say directly that which it sets out to demonstrate obliquely; it vehemently resists being read at the first degree, at the level of the denotative. Lukacs's narratives allegorize a belated intervention in the economy of the gaze, a revisionist desire to read 'desire' in the field of pictorial representation. Therefore, as representations of representation – motivated by the desire to reconfigure desire – they focus on, and cite, images of the male body that are simultaneously redeployed for a homoerotic gaze in the present and shown to be, in their long history, always already implicated in that gaze. This is precisely the cultural field in which multiple meanings of queerness intersect: to look back with homoerotic desire is *simply* queer, but to set up a circuitous remapping of art history – that is, to historicize the future of the painter's moment – is a complexly queer intervention in the coherences to which art history has been made to conform. Given the long association of homoerotic desire with end times (Burton's version of the fall of the Roman Empire, Oscar Wilde's personification of the *fin-de-siècle*, AIDS and the apocalyptic 'end' of gay culture), as well as the various senses of ending in which Lukacs situates himself, his retrospective embodiment of queer desires – erotic, painterly, political, historical – constitute a definitive moment in the postmodern that I call "queer apocalypse."[2]

The circuit of desire that I understand as operating in Lukacs's

---

[2] My use of this term, and indeed my entire project, is deeply indebted to Richard Dellamora's lucid mapping of apocalyptic discourses in a range of cultural fields in *Apocalyptic Overtures*. Dellamora argues that, in cases where a narrative of group history is blocked or occluded by the overwhelming nature of present circumstance,

work can be clarified, perhaps, by exploring the resonances, the overlaps, among the epigraphs that I have chosen for this essay. Norman Bryson's insistence that "the meaning of a painting is, always, another painting" (xix) outlines a hermeneutic that is generally useful, though it requires some qualification: Bryson seems to suggest that the later work is oddly evacuated, that it serves as a sort of translucent screen whose function is to gesture toward its antecedent, where the plenitude of meaning will be located. I argue that in Lukacs's work, the allusive gesture is an ironically playful performative; it is less a path of affiliation – by which the later painter works under the sign of the former – than a queer appropriation, by which the later painter works over the borrowed sign. To revise Bryson, then, the historical antecedent provides neither a coherent meaning nor the ground of coherence as such, but rather a field in which meaning is contingent and coalesces uneasily in the tension between repetition and difference.

The critical problem, it seems to me, is to conceptualize the particular dynamics of this ironic performative, this play of tension at work in citation. This problem has a long history in modernism. Walter Pater, for example, who like Henry James and Gustave Flaubert refocused criticism on questions of aesthetics rather than 'content,' crudely conceived, insisted upon a transhistorical sensibility between antiquity and the Renaissance in a discourse that is poetic rather than expository: "in the subordination of mere subject to pictorial design, [Giorgione] is typical of that aspiration of all the arts towards music ... towards the perfect identification of matter and form" (111). I would argue that, for the postmodern, art aspires to the condition not of music, but of language. In other words, painting in postmodernity embodies not a fluid or transparent relation between the sign and the referent, what an earlier formalism imagined as "the condition of music," but rather the gaps and fissures that problematize the work of signification and may be said to shape a tactics of dislocation.

---

the "resistance to narrative coherence impels an attempt to return through art to an earlier history, which, if recovered, promises to explain and thereby remedy the inadequacies of identity and consciousness in the present" (1). If the apocalyptic approach to structuring time is "analytic," it is also, he insists, "affirmative" (26). Apocalypse is a thoroughly ironic, protodeconstructive approach to the temporality of the subject, for "to speak of historicizing the future is to speak of apocalypse" (31).

Christopher Isherwood's account of his fascination with 'Berlin' is presented as a problem of language that places the individual on the margins of a culture, outside belonging, in an ironic space between obsure signs and impossible referents (very much like Lukacs, who tells Bruce Headlam of his move to Berlin with only "*Hogan's Heroes* German" [84]). The textures of this difficult language, Isherwood claims, "were like those incantations in *The Arabian Nights* which will make you a master of a paradise of pleasures" (133). The seduction of the other is a linguistic eroticism, predicated on alienation. But whereas Isherwood's double metaphor (the sounds of the German language as erotic incantation or spell, the erotic itself as Orientalist) seems highly attenuated, Lukacs's eroticism seems strikingly punctual. My concern, however, is not with the bodies imaged in his work as much as with their provenance, their painterly language. If 'Berlin' may be understood as signifying for Lukacs a place of proximity to the art historical, then the desire for mastery over "a paradise of pleasures" required the taking-up of another grammar, a painterly language, a semiotic field in which he would remain paradoxically outside while appropriating its signs for his own uses. His work is to queer those signs in a composition whose value inheres precisely in their lack of fluency, in their stumbling, hesitating gestures. Isherwood speaks of reciting "irregular verbs"; I see Lukacs's queer historical language as a will-to-the-irregular,[3] a fracturing of the coherences of the transitives in art history.

More precisely, I understand Lukacs's play with art history as deploying the performative of camp. Notoriously difficult to define, camp is a matrix of gestures that is resolutely queer, both in its historical association with gay men and in its double-talk of parodic or ironic allusion. It signifies, but it also signifies *upon*[4] the historical

---

[3] As John Plews observed in reading this essay, what is so curious about irregular verbs is that they are often the most frequently used verbs. That is how we remember their irregularity. This irony has its resonance with artistic parody in general, and with Lukacs's painterly 'grammar' in particular: his appropriated images tend to be familiar, and his reproduction of them tends to emphasize their sexual 'irregularity' and thus to fracture their 'regular' iconic status.

[4] "To signify upon" is both to play a trick upon and to announce the trick in a sassy way. The term comes from African-American popular culture, but has its resonances in gay culture, as I demonstrate in my article about Bugs Bunny and gender insubordination, "The Signifying Rabbit."

residue that it redeploys; it locates meaning usually in the incongruous relation, the tension, between the reference or antecedent, and the present conditions in which the antecedent is invoked. Camp – like all forms of irony – is a supremely knowing performative, and what it knows is its own power to disrupt the coherence of the icon, the gender, the often ineffable 'thing' with which it plays. A camp utterance never brings forward the past object, or the Other, as meaningful in itself, but rather as a field in which the connotative properties of the object may be dispersed and appropriated for revisionist reading of the past, or for ironic insight into the conditions of the present.[5]

It is helpful to approach Lukacs's sophisticated and often tortuous deployment of the tactics of camp by way of analogy, an illustrative example in another medium that will, I hope, frame the ironic uses of the past at work in the queer postmodern. This analogy arises from my conviction that, as subjects of visuality, we are more skilled at recognizing camp in film – a medium that supplements the visual field with the linguistic performance – than in what we are inclined to understand as the static opacity of painting. There exists a profound affinity between the ways in which Attila Lukacs and Derek Jarman construct themselves as artists and inscribe themselves into the field of the postmodern through a queer apprehension of the connotative uses of the artistic icons in the historical field. Jarman's *Caravaggio*, released in 1986, narrates the painter's studio practice: his erotic relations with the models who became, on canvas, his St. Matthew and John the Baptist, and his dealings with the Vatican officials who commissioned the work and whose own homoeroticism

---

[5]Camp, like apocalypse, is a particular and highly ritualistic approach to history, the uses of the historical artifact, and the temporality of subject-object relations. Moe Meyers shrewdly defines camp as "the homosexual gestuary" that "*un*writes the ontological basis of dominance (the heterosexual imperative)," that serves as a marker for "the queer subject's *uncanny* experience of the impossibility of representing his/her desire within the parameters [of dominant culture]" (18-19, second emphasis mine). I am struck by Meyer's description of the camp performative as uncanny: if the uncanny refers to that which was once familiar but has been repressed, only to emerge belatedly in the shock of recognition, then Lukacs's pictorial citations go well beyond conventional notions of parody. Indeed, the 'Lukacs effect' might be understood as a transfiguration of the cited/sighted object, the historical referent, by which we grasp its meaning for the first time.

accommodated the deployment of beautiful bodies for the ideological work of the Counter-Reformation. The film is less a biography of the painter's Roman period in the early seventeenth century than an experimentally and politically queer revision of desire in the production and reception of art, in which the powerful attractions of violence, masochism, and abjection are situated in the look that generates, and is represented within, religious painting. The high sacred, the film explains, arises from "a conspiracy between church and gutter," and it is precisely this ironic fusion of the erotic with the sacred that permits Jarman's play with camp. My object of scrutiny here is not the biographical resemblances among Caravaggio, Jarman, and Lukacs as much as it is the affinities of sensibility that are realized in the campy deployment of art historical sources. To put the matter another way, why does their work look alike, apart from their collective preference for the color black?

Framed by the spectacle of the dying artist attended by his mute assistant, Jerusaleme, *Caravaggio* is organized as a series of flashbacks. The narrative point of view arises from Caravaggio's position within the nexus of artistic production, power, money, and sexuality: eschewing any romantic construction of the interlinearity of homoerotic desire and artistic genius, Jarman shows how the Church pays the artist and the artist pays the models. As Michael O'Pray suggests, only Caravaggio's acts of painting carry any narrative impact, for "around him swirls the history of the final years of the Italian Renaissance and he stands at its still centre, in the eye of the storm which is the darkness of his studio" (151). Yet the film is attentive to the cultural circuits by which bodies are requisitioned for the game of power: Caravaggio's paintings – despite, or perhaps because of their sensuality – are part of the Catholic Church's apparatus for disciplining the faithful, but these bodies emerge from and return to the underclass as objects of representational and literal eros, remaining quite remote from the regime that has drafted them so fleetingly.

Jarman's exposure of the hypocrisy that sustains repressive institutions like the Catholic Church depends upon his juxtaposition of dissonant images and highly incongruent desires and motives. In what is perhaps the most brilliant scenic example of this compositional matrix, a minor official named Giovanne Baglione – who has sneered and minced his way through the film – sits in a bathtub and composes

a vitriolic attack on the painter on a 1920s-era Royal typewriter (Figure 1). Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit describe the scene as one of "comic relief" (37), but the full implications of camp will emerge from an analysis of the relation between Baglione's discourse and visual image. Baglione reads what he has just typed:

> "...with the support of [revises: 'with the *connivance* of'] his Cardinal, this second Michelangelo stole the commission for the paintings of St. Matthew: a conspiracy between church and gutter." Good! "Those who love art must be alerted to the poison which seeps into the body of our Renaissance like a pernicious drug. The shadows which permeate his paintings are no less insidious than those which cloak his ignorance and depravity." Hmm... [begins to type again] "a ... sad ... reflection ... of ...our ... TIME ..." [Baglione falls back from the typewriter.]

A cluster of specific images – the subject in the bathtub, the bathtub itself as a scene of vituperative and vitriolic writing, the pallor of Baglione's skin, the odd turban on his head – gesture emphatically to David's *Marat Assassiné* (Figure 2), and in so doing may be

Figure 1: Still from Derek Jarman's *Caravaggio*, courtesy of the British Film Institute.

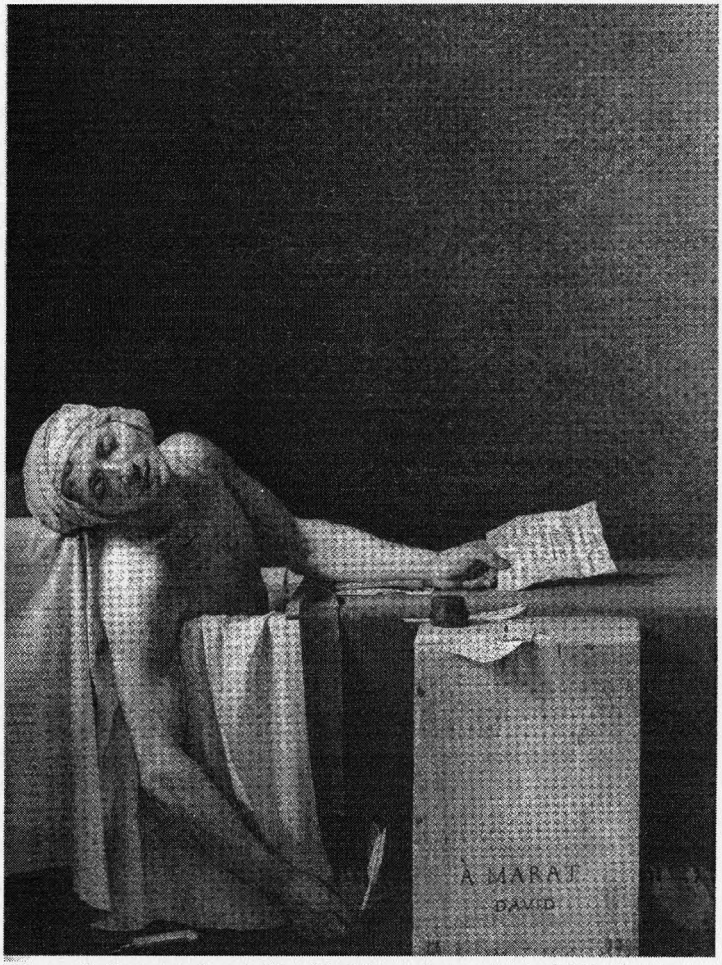


Figure 2: Jacques-Louis David, *Marat Assassinated*, Musées royaux des Deaux-Arts, Brussels.

understood to engage in an entirely camp relationship with that painting and its historical moment. It is an ironic moment in the film's narrative that signifies in multiple directions. Questions of parody are usually framed in terms of whether the later work intends homage or burlesque, that is, whether the work is a reverential affiliation or a satire. Such an approach will not help us here, because Jarman's invocation of David queers the dynamics of parody itself

precisely through the performative of camp allusion to iconic objects. At one level, the filmic moment works like really bad drag: the viewer is invited to bring forward David's gaze upon the spectacle of noble self-sacrifice in the service of the state, which clarifies Baglione's pettiness through the incongruity of the juxtaposition; in this way, the cleric 'becomes' the bad copy of an original to which he can never aspire. Yet, the circuits of parody extend in a kind of reverse discourse back to David's subject, to undermine the nobility of that subject. When situated within, and not against Jarman's spectacle, Marat – who was simultaneously *l'ami du peuple* and the very embodiment of the Terror – is seen as essentially like the small-minded, hypocritical, and jealous Baglione in the Vatican, and by implication, both David's reverential gaze and the politics of icon-making are called into question.

My point is that the queerness of Jarman's camp gesture accrues precisely in its ability to signify upon, and thus to disrupt the coherence of, the narratives of masculine desire that are vested with nobility by the official discourses of the state. The point of camp is less comic than ironic: it invites not so much the lucidity of laughter as the casting of a shadow upon the prior icon, which becomes not a site of meaning, but a site in which received meaning is to be problematized. Moreover, the queerness of such a political deployment of camp depends crucially upon the draglike, the cross-dressing, strategy of the cluster of specific images that can only connote the prior painting and its historical circumstances. Therefore, these fragmentary or synecdochic images open the space not only of resemblance to earlier painting, but to radically different historical moments, narratives, and political agendas: Jarman's narrative is *not* David's narrative; there is no Charlotte Corday to dash in and murder the nasty Baglione. The point of camp is not repetition, but to show the seams between the iconic moments, and it is the seams, perhaps, that convey the seamy. It is this disconcerting use of the connotative sign in the camp performative, I suggest, that not only consolidates the ironic relation to the past image and its attendant ideology, but that also pulls the postmodern into an allegorical mode of discourse rather than a mere parody, a mere repetition. By "allegorical mode," I mean the deployment of a sign (in this case, David's painting) that cannot be read at the first degree of signification, that compels recognition, but not in a simple or direct way; consequently, the 'quotation' of the

painting opens the challenge of interpretation – a kind of hermeneutic puzzle – the burden of which is to integrate the visual image into Jarman's narrative point. It is by no means straightforward. The shift into allegory marks, and constitutes, the shift into a register of the sign – a politics of evocation – that queers as it queries. And as allegory, this discourse of Jarman's – which I see as entirely typical of the queer postmodern – embraces a confluence of shadows whose articulation remains oblique, a matter of gesture.

*

In his 1993 article for *Saturday Night* on the 'real' Attila Lukacs, Bruce Headlam sustains art historical comparisons not, as I have done, at the level of the sign, but rather at what he understands (correctly, I presume) as the level of the referent. "Caravaggio," he writes, "dragged his haloed saints back into the shadowy Italian streets he knew. Lukacs plucks his sweet and tender hooligans off the corners and out of the basement thrash-bars and puts them on the stage of high tragedy" (84). While I am uncomfortable with this will-to-transparency – this strategy of locating the 'real' referent in the desires that motivate the painter's compositional process – I admire the knowledge effect generated by Headlam's juxtaposition: I can no longer see Caravaggio's work except through the frame of artistic production like Jarman's and Lukacs's, and vice versa. This too is an aspect of the shifts in perception facilitated by the uses of camp, insofar as the juxtaposition intervenes in the linear, chronological narratives that constitute the academic discipline of art history to suspend not only the question of priority, but also the site of authenticity.

It is tempting to refer questions of authenticity to fictions of intentionality; however, just as the meaning of Jarman's scene lies in the allegorical circuits, the connotative play of the sign, that invoke David without deferring to his work, so too the real Attila Lukacs – by which Headlam means the biographical fiction – is inseparable from his discursive performances, nearly all of which contest the real through the incongruities of camp. His observations are an odd fusion of glamourina and garbage: he told *Saturday Night* (perhaps alluding to Jarman) that his paintings "raise [skinheads] out of the gutter," but his next comment – "buy 'em a case of beer, and they're yours" (84) – deconstructs the transcendent moment. The English word "camp" comes, I think, from the French verb *se camper* meaning

"to take a stand," with the connotation of "to pose"; Lukacs's mastery of striking a pose simultaneously titillates and horrifies his audience, while the rapid shifts of pose are a queer dislocation of 'authentic' subjectivity. There is, for example, the effeminate autobiographical pose of 'Ricky,' his childhood nickname: "My younger brother used to play hockey, and my older brother used to work out at my dad's hobby ranch. I stayed at home and did needlepoint" (57). Ricky approaches the ironic Attila in the narrative of his summer job as a window-dresser at The Bay: "The big blow-up came when I was supposed to do this set of ladies' fashion windows, and they wanted ethnic ... I started cutting clothes up, destroying thousands of dollars of merchandise. They freaked. Their idea of ethnic was Eskimo" (58). And later in Berlin, Attila, the analyst of media culture, makes ironic use of the 'Ricky' pose: "*Married with Children* may be garbage in English, but dubbed into German it's brilliant" (84). Perhaps most intriguingly, Lukacs's discourses on his own artistic production seem to begin in one voice but to slide, almost imperceptibly, into another voice that unsettles, comments ironically upon, the pose of the first. For instance, he explains the art of National Socialism, his primary field of play in the *E-Werk* series, as follows: "even though it was controlled by governments that were actually very homophobic, there's a lot of elements within it that give it a very homoerotic – although I hate that word - homoerotic kind of ... well, you know." This is used to set up his last word on the subject of sources: "They don't all have to be skinheads, you know," he claims irately; "Did it ever occur to anybody that I may simply have trouble drawing hair?" (87). It seems to me that the end of Lukacs's posing, the camp effect of his rhetoric, is a fairly conclusive rupture in the discursive performances and the categories of knowledge that organize conventional art criticism. Here, his slide from one voice into another deconstructs not only the academic tendency to locate desire in intention, but also the illusion that the 'authentic,' the 'real,' is locatable anywhere outside the circuitous play of discursive signs.[6] This, I suggest, is the discourse of the end, the queer apocalyptic.

---

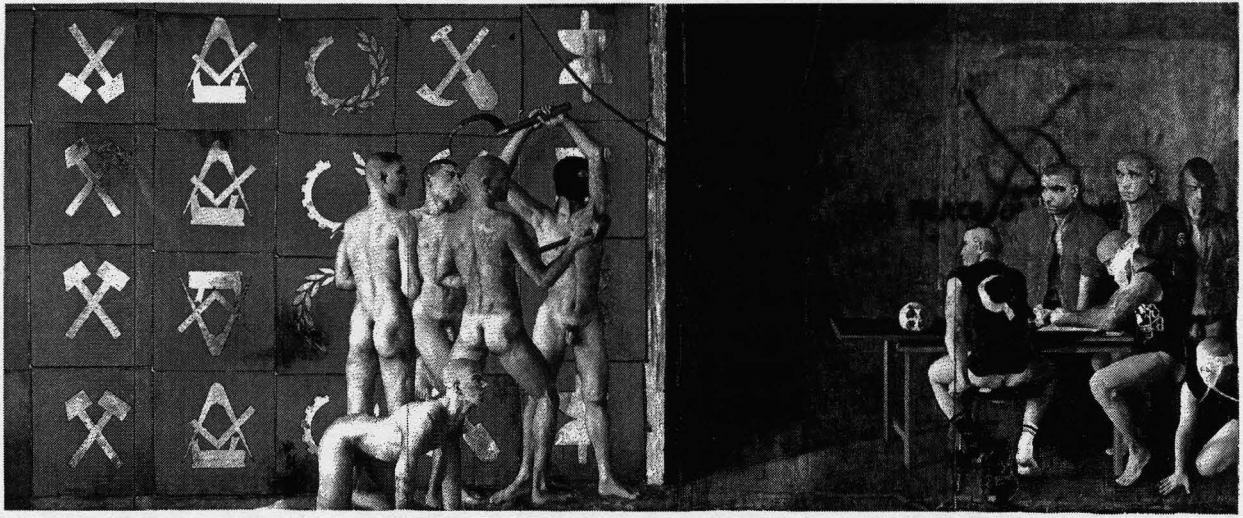
[6]I am not the first critic to argue that Lukacs's representations might be read as camp. Piet Defraeye suggests that "Lukacs flirts with Nazi and fascist propaganda imagery ... but his Teutonic imagery often borders on camp" (424). Defraeye does not pursue the subject, perhaps because his project is not concerned with the historical

This deconstructive potential of camp is precisely what I want to bring forward as a conceptual frame in which to approach Lukacs's painting. Lukacs's delight in the collision of incongruous poses has its painterly qualities as well as its discursive ones: like his enunciations, his painting, particularly when it moves into allegory, distances and problematizes questions of reference and intent. The effect of camp's appropriation of 'art history' is to diffuse the language of the look, the visual field in which we are 'taught' to view the history of painting as a linear, progressive narrative.

It should by now be obvious that my propositions about the queer postmodern, the apocalyptic moment, depend upon the fairly precise location of ironized retrospection in the exchange of looks that I understand as enacted within a painting. In situating Lukacs's work within this paradigm, I am struck by his rapid development, by both the continuities and the complex shifts in his deployment of allegory between the work of his early maturity and his *E-Werk* series. To provide an example of the former, I want to glance at his 1988 painting, *The Young Spartans Challenge the Boys to Fight* (Figure 3), owned by the London Regional Art and Historical Museum. Here, it is tempting to read the painting as achieving allegory through the superimposition of one plane (the bodies) upon another (the red wall of Stalinist work symbols), by which the background would provide a semiotic toolkit that pushes the foreground narrative toward the historical referent. Such a reading might conclude that the painting is about the political collision between the Soviet empire and the imperatives of German reunification. As such, it is guided by the episteme of historical painting that resolves the work into a simple syntax of narrative and a coherent political binary opposition, both

---

register in which camp finds its ludic ironies. Defraeye understands Lukacs's canvases as bodies in performance, and not surprisingly, his overarching critical metaphor is that of "Lukacs's theater" (422). Both theater and camp as critical terms impose a temporal dimension on the signifying gestures of spatial art like painting, but theater, at least in Defraeye's work, limits Lukacs's frame of reference to contemporary gay culture and thus understands 'performance' along one temporal axis only, and that axis is horizontal, not retrospectively vertical. "We know these people on the canvas" (422), he claims; "Lukacs's gym bodies are part of a fashion-stimulated, code-driven culture of simulation and imitation ... [his] figures look like butch clones" (425). I take Defraeye's point, but I suggest that the practices in visual culture by which "we know these people" are considerably more complex.



Junge Spartaner Fordern Knaben zum Kampf Heraus: 1988. Oil, tar, enamel, and varnish on canvas: 110" x 264"

Figure 3: Attila Richard Lukacs, *The Young Spartans Challenge the boys to Fight*, London Regional Art and Historical Museums, London, Canada.

of which require reading from the old 'left' to the new 'right.' Yet, this hermeneutic, while not at all incorrect, aspires to a clarity – a merging into the historically real – that the play of allusion will problematize through ironic retrospection.

The temporal linearity of a simplistic left-to-right allegorical reading is reversed by the circuits of Lukacs's retrospective look: the figures on the left strike a pose that is borrowed from Degas's *Young Spartans Exercising* of 1863. In Degas's painting, the look is the address of a challenge between the women and the boys; Lukacs's use of the source involves a turning-around of the figures away from the heterosocial toward the homosocial, as well as a turning of the look in a defiant gesture toward political adversaries within the male homosocial continuum. This ironic 'turning' has important implications for the ways in which Lukacs imagines the past to gesture toward the present, which I shall take up shortly. The figures on the right are grouped according to Caravaggio's *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, and participate in Caravaggio's representation of the abjection that in itself is spiritually transcendent, a condition of knowing. Lukacs brings forward too the signs of the game, which Headlam describes as "a card game of humiliation, a kind of sadomasochistic strip-poker" (86). At one level, the juxtaposition of icons from the past corroborates the political allegory that I outlined above, in the collision between the purity of socialist masculinity and the dangerous erotic play, the squalid fascination, of the new queer right. However, Lukacs's ironic retrospection – his queer version of 'back to the future' – dislocates the meaning of Degas and Caravaggio by the camp appropriation into allegory, the incongruity between the somatic or spiritual calls to purity in the historical sources and the erotic economy of the present. It also allegorizes allegorical painting *itself* in the field of the look that is exchanged between right and left. By this manoeuver, the allegorical spirals cannot be contained by a referential reading that gestures only to recent political events in eastern Europe.[7] Rather, the fearful fascination that shapes the look

[7]Previous attention to this painting's allegorical dimension tends to interpret allegory either too literally or too fancifully. As an example of the former, Ken Johnson writes in *Art in America* that "there's something compelling abut Lukacs's allegory of the notion that conflict between nations is driven by a primal, masculine urge for combat" (204). As an example of the latter, Mays suggests that "the skinheads become

between the groups on the canvas is framed by Lukacs's ironic look at the history of figure painting: and the point of that look, and the point of the allegory, is the demonstration of the homoerotic that invests, and may be understood to constitute, the great icons of the homosocial.

This ironic reconfiguration of history to produce what might be called the contemporary past depends upon troping the antecedent paintings within the dislocations of queerly postmodern camp. Finally, the multiple narratives, the multiple interventions in the economy of the gaze engineered by Lukacs, exceed any single story, any single referent. And the resonance among these critical fictions – themselves demonstrations of the basic deconstructive tenet that any text is the allegory of its own reading – achieves a precisely queer dislocation, a complex politicization of the erotic, and an eroticization of the political. I intend this analysis of Lukacs's queer turn toward the historical as a supplement to Norman Bryson'sconception of the uses of citation as a paradoxical disruption within the logic of continuity. Lukacs, to borrow Bryson's terms from another context, "is not simply continuing a tradition. Normal analysis of sources cannot easily penetrate this subtle terrain, for in its attachment to the idea that a source is simply a block of imagery transported from image x into image y, it is unable to comprehend the deployment of sources where there is no clear image y, and where the painter's work on sources has been carried out in terms of configuration, rather than straight importation" (37). Building on Bryson's conceptual platform, I argue, using his words, that *The Young Spartans* "is essentially a patterning, a re-ordering, a turning of sources; and perhaps the most accurate word to describe this activity is the rhetorical term *trope*, from the Greek *tropos*, to turn" (37).

*

I turn now to Lukacs's *E-Werk*: if the six enormous canvases of this series constitute a narrative, it is surely a highly fragmented and

---

allegorical figures in a much broader spiritual drama of modernity itself, in which we all are implicated" (Skinhead Paintings), and again, that both Caravaggio and Lukacs "depict events that are easily read as allegories for art's call to both play and devotion" (Male Body). I quote these examples not to argue that they are in any sense misdirected: such latitude of interpretation is precisely the attraction – and the trap! – of allegorical reading, dangers from which I am hardly immune.

opportunities for understanding Lukacs's queer troping of historical sources, and as such, it becomes a site from which to work outward to the others. I mentioned earlier the shift toward greater complexity in Lukacs's deployment of sources within an allegorical register from a work like *The Young Spartans* to the work of his maturity. By greater complexity, I mean that, despite the sophisticated turning and resituation of the borrowed image in *The Young Spartans*, the citations retain a striking recognizability, even a kind of transparency; we know right away that we are 'seeing' Degas and Carravagio through the postmodern frame. It is this call to immediate recognition, and its attendant recall, that makes Lukacs's ironies available. But the art-historical allusions in *Glamour Crew* are closer, I think, to the connotative play with parts of the image, a kind of queer synecdoche, that I demonstrated in Jarman's cinematography. The trio of male figures in the center of the painting constitutes not only the compositional point of focalization, but also the clearest site of the retrospective look, the place in which queer historicity is grounded: these figures recall, though only connotatively, David's *The Oath of the Horatii* (Figure 5).

Like Jarman's invocation of David's *Marat Assassiné*, Lukacs's point is not that his narrative will coincide with that of the *Horatii*, but rather will redeploy its signs and, in so doing, provide a revisionist supplement – an ironic commentary upon the ideologies of gender – along the seam of its overlap. This is still an essentially camp negotation with the historical antecedent, but the queerness of Lukacs's image turns toward camp's shadowy underside, its tragic potentiality. David's *Oath* – perhaps the best-known example of French neoclassicism and, as Anita Brookner points out, a pre-Revolutionary republican manifesto (69) – narrates the interpellation of the patriarchal subject within the painting's specific story of the dedication of the male body to the nation-state. The painting's historical referent is a dispute between the rival states of Rome and Alba in the fifth century BC, a dispute that would be settled by a battle between the Roman Horatii and the Alban Curiatii. However, one of the Curatii was betrothed to Camilla, sister to the Horatii (David's woman in white). The battle was won by the Horatii; when the oldest brother announced the victory his sister Camilla cursed him for the loss of her lover, whereupon he drew his sword and killed her. The drama, in short, is one of conflict between love and violence

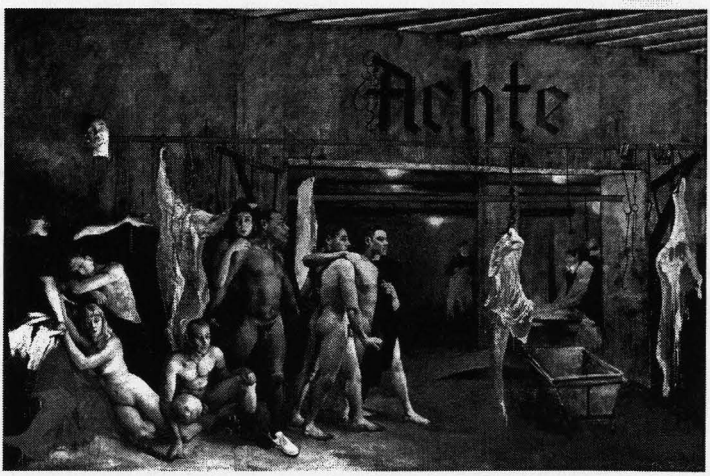


Figure 4: Attila Richard Lukacs, *Glamour Crew*, artist's collection.

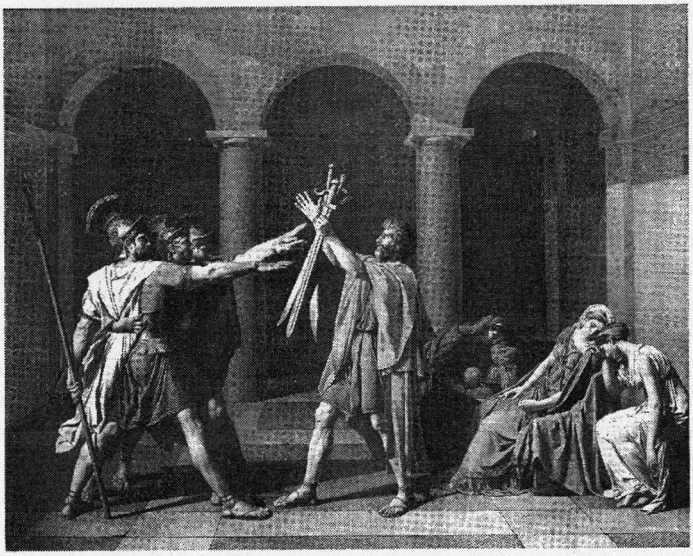


Figure 5: Jacques-Louis Davide, *Oath of the Horatii*, Musée du Louvre.

of nationalist masculinities. According to Bryson, David's painting "traces the negative consequences of the subject's insertion into language and gender, for the visuality of the males is dominated by the outward projection of heroically gendered self-imagery" (71); moreover, in a circuit of substitutions, the oath of national allegiance becomes embodied in the sword, itself a sign of the father who administers and bestows. If national masculinity is an epidemic of substitutions, then the men cannot halt the ideological processes of heroic projection and destructive substitution, while the women do not speak, but themselves are signs, outside the register of speech.

In one dimension of Lukacs's painting, I would argue that he plays with the temporality of the narrative: he cites the Davidian moment through the connotative reach of the male trio, yet he brings it further along the temporal continuum and redeploys David's figures. The women become bearers of the look, their oblique glances directed beyond the frame of the narrative moments toward something – some tragic consequence? some historical event? – that eludes the gaze of the men and marks their ironic distance from the central trio. Yet *Glamour Crew* deploys other semiotic registers as well, registers that – unlike the layered planes of *The Young Spartans* – are not detachable. The images of meat I see as self-referential gestures to the beginnings of Lukacs's career: while still a student at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design, he mounted an installation of a butcher shop, with such images as a world map reconfigured as cuts of meat, under such titles as "How Do You Know You're Not Already Dead?" The setting hovers uneasily between terror and desire: if, on the one hand, it is reminiscent of 1980s gay cruising in the meat-packing district of New York's west side, on the other, it invokes the concentration camp. Both referents are suspended under the sign of "Achte." Oddly, I find that I can go no further with this painting; I do not feel the pull toward the loquacious that I experienced with *The Young Spartans*. Yet I cling tenaciously to the connotative play with David's *Oath* as grounding the allegorical import of this narrative; and despite the murkiness of Lukacs's signs, I read the allegory as an allegory of reading: a reaching-back to David's revolutionary moment, and further back to republican Rome, and then back in turn to the future (represented in the next canvas, perhaps – that is, in the desolation of *Everybody Wants the Same Thing*), which is imagined negatively, in apocalyptic terms. Lukacs is unwilling to separate the destructiveness

of violence from its erotic power. This is surely the essential point of his queer formalism. And yet this painting suggests, through its connotative play with David, both the ironies that attend that unwillingness, and the possibility of a homoerotics that refuses investment in national masculinities.

And it is precisely from this political ground that I can move forward and backward in the series. To move forward, to the depopulated world of *Everybody Wants the Same Thing* (Figure 6), is to encounter the end, to look it in its single face. To move backward is, ironically, to carry forward what Lukacs learned in the atelier of David: the ideologies of gender that mobilize male-male libidinal energies in the service of the nation-state. The sequence of paintings – *In My Father's House*, *This Town*, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* – are not, as I suggested at the outset, fundamentally 'about' Germany under reunification or the skinheads who provide the most persistently disturbing image of what we 'know' about German xenophobia. These are occasions or bodies whose banal uniformity permits their installation in a spectacle that pulls away from historical particularity toward an overarching historicity, the detached, ironical field of allegory. All three of these paintings explore not so much the implication of the homosocial in the homoerotic – the hard fact of the always already queer – but rather the ways in which male

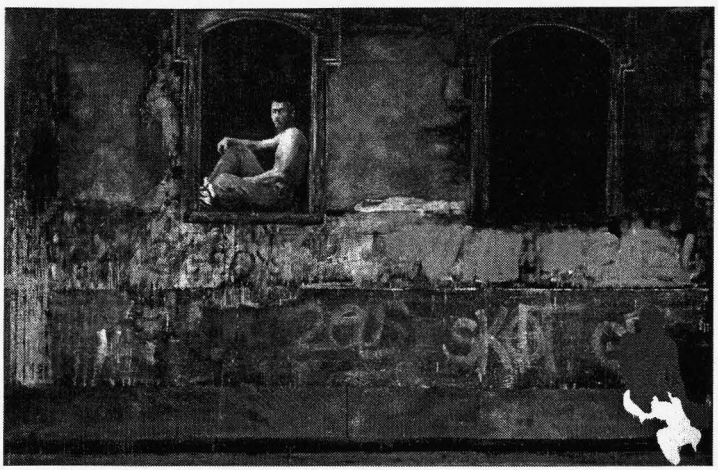


Figure 6: Attila Richard Lukacs, *Everybody Wants the Same Thing*, artist's collection.

homosocial desire is constructed in terms of nationalist ambitions. These paintings recognize that desire between men is praiseworthy only when merged in nationalist fraternity, yet their collective intervention is to bring that desire to the surface in an economy of erotic signs. The erotic spectacle of the male body at work has a long history of national, and capitalist, exploitation: I think in particular of Ford Madox Brown's *Work*, as well as such American icons as the Chrysler Building and the frieze on the ceiling of its lobby, a triangular construction that culminates in a male torso wielding a wrench. To read Lukacs, though, I have to return to David.

At the outset of the Napoleonic campaign, David celebrated a mode of homosocial bonding that Richard Dellamora identifies as "Dorianism," the institution of pederasty as it existed in the army of ancient Sparta – the practice of love and friendship between an adult male citizen/soldier and one preparing to achieve the same status. David's *Leonidas at Thermopylae* provides a paradigmatic example of the aesthetic inscription of Spartan pederasty within the rhetoric of the nation-state in crisis. The evident homoeroticism of David's painting provides at once a demonstration and an analysis of the inscription of desire in the public order. The look pertains to male homosocial culture, by which the visual address fixes in place the idealized figure of Leonidas, the king of Sparta killed by the Persians at Thermopylae in 480 BC. If the look inscribes male homosocial relations of power, the process of inscription is figured in literal fashion in the soldier at the upper left who incises into the wall the epitaph "Passerby, go tell Sparta that her children have died for her." As Dellamora concludes, "the implicit apocalyptic narrative of the painting, the setting at Thermopylae where these men are about to be sacrificed, endows devotion with the sublime value of dying for the sake of civilization itself" (49).

I do not claim that Lukacs invokes *Leonidas at Thermopylae* in any direct way, although the troping of David's *Oath of the Horatii* in *Glamour Crew* may indeed set in motion a spiral of connotative play that, once started, is difficult to restrain. I do argue, however, that Lukacs's work intervenes in the homosocial economy as envisioned by David. In David's version of Dorianism – itself, perhaps, suspended between mourning the collapse of the republic and celebrating the rise of empire – the homoerotic is the ground that must be overwritten, overdetermined by the nationalist imperative in

order to render it usable. In the politically queer moment of Lukacs's apocalypse, the separation of the homoerotic from the homosocial is contested, deconstructed: the cultural sites of most virulent homophobia are reconfigured under the signifying economy of the 'always already.' It is this recurring allegorical import that positions Lukacs at the end, on the brink of a secular apocalypse which is, queerly (that is, uncannily) retrospective and proleptic: the sign of his belatedness is his ironic, campy reconfiguration of male iconography, a sign that may exhaust itself in the ironic pose without hope that is *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*. Allegories promise the apocalypse of unveiling, the revelation of a new order, but that promise cannot be kept by the allegorical mode, trapped as it is within the abbatoir of the signifier and its long, long history. Finally, the emotion that emanates from Lukacs's multiple ironies is, queerly, not a delight in virtuosity but what Bryson calls "an unfocussed melancholy" (38): Lukacs knows – as the campy queen, the ironist always knows – that his work comes at the end, that his troping and reconfiguration of tradition entail a termination that is necessary, but sorrowful. And what of Lukacs himself? At the opening of this show in Montreal, he announced his plans to relocate to New York, and his discourse, characteristically, serves as a sort of motto for Queer Theory and as the sign of postmodern historicity: "I'm sick of being Euro-trash," he says. "I just want to be trash" (Bell 61).

Works Cited

Bell, Celina. "Skinhead Esthetics." *Maclean's* 28 Feb. 1994: 61.

Bersani, Leo and Ulysse Dutoit. *Caravaggio*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.

Brookner, Anita. *Jacques-Louis David*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1980.

Bryson, Norman. *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Defraeye, Piet. "Performances of Masculinity in Attila Richard Lukacs's *E-Werk*. *Queering the Canon: Defying Sights in German Literature and Culture*. Ed. Christoph Lorey and John L. Plews. Columbia, SC: Camden, 1998. 420-33.

Dellamora, Richard. *Apocalyptic Overtures: Sexual Politics and the Sense of an Ending*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University

Press, 1994.
Hanson, Ellis. Letter. "Looking Backward, Looking Forward: MLA Members Speak." *PMLA* 115 (2000): 2071-72.
Headlam, Bruce. "Attila Up Against the Wall." *Saturday Night* Dec. 1994: 53-59, 84-88.
Isherwood, Christopher. "Mr. Lancaster." *The Faber Book of Gay Short Fiction*. Ed. Edmund White. London: Faber, 1991. 89-135.
Jarman, Derek, dir. *Caravaggio*. London: British Film Institute and Channel Four Television, 1986.
Johnson, Ken. "Attila Richard Lukacs at 49th Parallel." *Art in America* Sept. 1989: 204.
Mays, John Bentley. "Attila Richard Lukacs." Public Lecture. The Nickle Arts Museum, University of Calgary. 22 Sept. 1995.
——. "Male Body Supplants Feminist Concerns in Art of the '90s." *The Globe and Mail* 17 Mar. 1990: C15.
——. "Skinhead Paintings Transcend the Erotic." *The Globe and Mail* 8 July 1989.
Meyers, Moe, ed. *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
O'Pray, Michael. *Derek Jarman: Dreams of England*. London: British Film Institute, 1996.
Pater, Walter. *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. Ed. Donald L. Hill. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
Savoy, Eric. "The Signifying Rabbit." *Narrative* 3 (1995): 189-209.
Sokolowski, Thomas W. Preface. *Patriotism/Leadership/Discipline: An Exhibition Catalogue*. Vancouver: Diane Farris Gallery, 1990.

Boys Do Cry: Epistemologies of a Pronoun

JEAN NOBLE

Jean (Bobby) Noble is an Assistant Professor at York University, Toronto, where s/he teaches English and Cultural Studies.

In his review of *Boys Don't Cry*, J. Hoberman writes:

> Coproduced by the tireless Christine Vachon, *Boys Don't Cry* has a family resemblance to *I Shot Andy Warhol*, which she produced in 1996. Like the *Warhol* film, *Boys Don't Cry* is a polished first feature, ripped from the headlines and constructed around a stellar stunt performance. More crucially, both movies are intelligently glamorous evocations of sexual insurrection. But where Valerie Solanas the antiheroine of *I Shot Andy Warhol* was her own ideologue, the surreal being at the heart of *Boys Don't Cry* left no text behind.[1]

The understated but very successful film *Boys Don't Cry* – by first-time director and Columbia University film student Kimberly Peirce – won not only critical acclaim but mass media attention when lead actress Hilary Swank won an Academy Award. In an instant Swank became "a household name ... and the toast of the town as one of the most acclaimed actresses of the year" (Hoberman, n.p.). On the night of the 2000 Academy Awards, female masculinity, the events of December 31, 1993, in Falls City, Nebraska, and the dynamic duo of Swank and Peirce took center stage. "We have arrived!" was the

[1]Both *I Shot Andy Warhol* and *Boys Don't Cry* were produced by the production company Killer Films Productions.

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 3 (2001) © CLGSA / SCELG

banner email on one transgender / transsexual listserv the next morning.

Such an arrival makes Hoberman's assertion that "the surreal being at the heart of this film left no text behind" even more ironic. Disregarding the adjective "surreal," there is not an absence of text about this being but rather a wild proliferation of discourse, an excess of texts. In fact, there are so many competing, contradictory, and sometimes acrimonious texts that they confound my attempts to avoid those discourses by – at least temporarily – not naming the subject. To name this subject is to hail it into subjectivity and discourse. But naming can also enable closure and summary. To refer to our subject as "he, Brandon Teena" is surely to evoke one text: Brandon as a boy, as a heterosexual boy. This assignation is dramatically different from "she, Teena Brandon" – lesbian passing as a boy – or "s/he, Teena Brandon" – butch dyke – or "he, Billy Teena" – the "trailer-park Romeo" – all actual names that this subject used at different times in his and/or her short life. Each of these names and accompanying pronouns traces knowledge production and discursive operations that invest gendered subjectivities with contradictory currency. In this essay, I explore Swank's performance as Brandon as well as the dialogic utterances in the film, which locate Brandon in what critics have called the borderland between butch masculinity and transsexual masculinity. Arguing that the film itself is a formal transfiction, where fiction and documentary have been blurred, I similarly argue that the trans subjectivities in the film, that is, the fictionalized Brandon and Lana, exist in a no man's land between butch/femme, heterosexuality, and transidentities, and remain productively *nonrepresentable* through conventional pronouns. Moreover, I also argue that the identities of both characters shift dramatically in this film, which is as much about working-class whiteness as it is about gender subjectivity. Finally, I conclude that the shifting subjectivities in *Boys Don't Cry* reflect the articulated *lesbian* desires of its filmmaker.

In her acceptance speech at the Academy Awards, Hilary Swank made an important intervention in these operations by eulogizing the political text and subjectivity she thinks our subject left behind: "And last, but certainly not least, I want to thank Brandon Teena for being

---

[2]72nd Academy Awards, 26 March 2000. Complete text of acceptance speech available at www.oscars.org.

such an inspiration to us all. His legacy lives on through our movie to remind us to always be ourselves, to follow our hearts, to not conform. I pray for the day when we not only accept our differences, but we actually celebrate our diversity."[2] Swank was, of course, acknowledging the price Brandon paid for bequeathing that legacy. By the end of the week immediately following the Academy Awards, Swank was sharply criticized by Brandon's mother for using male pronouns to refer to Brandon. Swank quickly responded to her criticism by issuing a public apology to Brandon's family for supposedly "misrepresenting" him by using a masculine pronoun ("Entertainment").

Confusions over Brandon also emerge elsewhere. A recent A&E American Justice minidocumentary titled *The Life and Death of Teena Brandon* includes an interview with one member of the jury that convicted Tom Nissen and John Lotter for murdering Brandon. The juror talked about the profound confusions caused by the lack of stable referent. To be specific, that juror discussed the ways that the shifting pronouns in the courtroom almost resulted in a "hung jury." Many times the jury had to stop the proceedings to ask for clarification about who was actually being referenced by the pronouns. In the film *Boys Don't Cry*, this kind of heteroglossia plays out in different ways.[3] In an early scene, for example, Brandon, who is already passing as male, defends a potential love interest against the unwanted advances of a very large man in a bar. Seconds before he throws the first punch at Brandon, the man yells, "you got to be kidding you little fag." The confused and confusing epithet marks Brandon as a site where queer identities, unbeknownst to the characters in the narrative, come full circle seemingly back to a dialogic heterosexuality and its perceived failures: that is, it marks Brandon's success at creating a verisimilitude of soft heterosexual masculinity, an identity overdetermined as failed masculinity.

The destabilized and destabilizing pronoun referents of any conversation about Brandon reveal the complexities of the texts that Brandon left behind and the challenges that those texts create for the relationships between language, subjectivities, and bodies. As border wars, they demonstrate the overdetermined link between narrative

[3]Heteroglossia is the term created by Mikhail Bakhtin to describe 'different tongues,' or the presence of more than one voice in any given narrative. See Bakhtin's essay "Discourses in the Novel."

and truth. Numerous filmmakers are seeking to present different versions of Brandon's narrative. These versions compete not only for ownership of the dead but also for the means of reproducing the so-called truth about Brandon (Hale). The makers of the video *The Brandon Teena Story* – Susan Muska and Greta Olafsdottir – fight with Peirce in *The Advocate* over who has told the 'real' story of Brandon. Muska and Olafsdottir claim the rival *Boys Don't Cry* lacks a moral point of view and a political critique of what happened to Brandon. As it turns out, Muska and Olafsdottir themselves had sold the rights to their documentary to Hollywood producer Don Murphy, a project also eclipsed by Peirce's film. Apparently they are not pleased with the success of *Boys Don't Cry* (Glitz).

Similarly, Peirce is not without controversy. Currently her work is drawing legal protests both from people whose lives and real names she uses in the film and from Aphrodite Jones, a journalist who wrote a nonfiction book about Brandon's life and death and who claims she owns the "life rights" of the major characters in the narrative. Jones *owns* the legal right to tell the working-class stories of the Brandon family, the Tisdel sisters and the other major players in the story of Brandon's life and death. If Jones does not get paid first, no one can be paid, including not only the actors in *Boys Don't Cry* but also, for instance, the Tisdel sisters, who signed story rights over to Jones. Despite the class-based glaze of this story evident in descriptors like "Romeo and Juliet in a trailer-park," the ownership of these life stories inflects this situation with class politics right from the start (Ebert). While Jones's book was the first, she paid for her rights in an economy where it seemed no one would be concerned about what happened in Falls City, where working-class lives are measured in dollar-values all the time. The former sentiment proved wrong, but, as I discuss later and in more detail, the latter remains profoundly and ironically accurate.

The recent disputes over Brandon Teena's textuality situate Brandon and female masculinity discursively within no man's land where authentic masculinity is under dispute and where the supposedly self-evident relation between male subjectivity, physicality, and power is contested. Moreover, the no man's land of this film is one where identities change: Brandon is *boy*, *transsexual boy*, and *lesbian boy* all at the same time. Such slippage between these identities is not one I necessarily endorse nor am I arguing that

such indeterminacy is prescriptively always the case. Rather, this slippage is the effect of indeterminate signifiers as well as of the filmmaker's articulated *lesbian* desires. I shall articulate a number of ideas with the concept of no man's land in this essay. First, in no man's land the relation between lesbian masculinity, transsexual masculinity, and male masculinity is discursive and each subject only temporarily secures meaning by evoking and then repudiating one of the others. Second, I explore a relation between whiteness and class by recalling that three people were killed in a farmhouse on December 31, 1993: Brandon Teena, Candace Lambert, and Phillip DeVine, a young black man who was a lover of Lana Tisdel's sister Leslie. DeVine's death is not depicted in *Boys Don't Cry*. While the film is a semifictional account of the events, it remains important to theorize this racial occlusion in no man's land and secure it within the operations of white supremacy. Finally, I shall return briefly to the question that haunts any investigation of female masculinity – that is, the ways in which questions of ontology are always already overdetermined by a definitional anxiety around femininity and, in the case of female masculinity, with femme. Where female masculinity is supposedly self-evident based on visual signifiers, femininity or fem(me)ininity is supposedly indeterminate in terms of sexual orientation.[4] *Boys Don't Cry* inverts that arrangement and how we read Brandon's masculinity – either as lesbian or transsexual – is overdetermined by the ways in which we read the character Lana (see Duggan/McHugh). During the course of Lana Tisdel's metaphorical stay in the no man's land of *Boys Don't Cry*, her own identity slides from heterosexual teenager to queer femme and finally to lesbian, a trajectory mapped through productive (mis)readings of Brandon's body. To name the film's subjects with even the smallest and apparently most self-evident signifiers available in language – that is, with a pronoun – is to overdetermine that subject as text, as subjectivity, in discourse.

Operations of language both rely on, yet resist, and claim, yet refuse, subjectivity at the moment of its most profound, yet most

---

[4]In their manifesto, Lisa Duggan and Kathleen McHugh write "fem(me)ininity" instead of *femme* or *femininity* to show lines of alliance across femininities, to centralize *femme* in femininity, and to foreground the pronoun "me" in femininity in order to refuse the stereotypically self-negating feminine subject presumed to be at the core of femininity.

productive, derisions – something that began with late nineteenth-century sexology. Hoberman's assertion notwithstanding, Brandon functions as a metatext, always already overdetermined as text but, at the same time, putting that text into crisis. Once named, each pronoun-as-signifier (that is, "he, Brandon Teena" or "she, Teena Brandon") does at least two kinds of cultural work. Each functions as the fruition and limit of the discourses underwriting the sex/gender system. But each also radically interrupts those discourses – an interruption that signals the entry into the mainstream of subcultural identities and categories. This entrance is marked by a nonlinear temporality and by a parasitic deconstructive series of operations that illustrate Bakhtin's assertion that "when one finds a word, one finds it already inhabited ... every thought, feeling, and experience must be refracted through the medium of someone else's discourse, someone else's style, someone else's manner [so much so that] almost no word is without its intense sideward glance at someone else's" ("Discourse in Dostoevsky" 202-03). While that occupation of language in no man's land proved fatal for Brandon, it provides important texts both to think and to unthink.

But let me *up the ante* on these discursive battles. If, in no man's land, we can no longer use the body as a foundational guarantor of gender, and if we can no longer measure the former by the latter, or vice versa, then what secures the other performances of gender that are the secondary effects of that supposed foundation – identities such as lesbian, butch, femme, heterosexual? What is it that might distinguish lesbian from woman, transsexual masculinity from butch masculinity, transsexual man from biologically born boy, lesbian femininity from heterosexual femininity? Performances of masculinity in *Boys Don't Cry* – femme and otherwise – foreground its many registers. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick names these registers threshold effects, places where incremental movement along one dimension (say, for instance, Brandon as a butch lesbian) suddenly appears as a variable on an entirely different dimension (Brandon as a heterosexual boy) (16). In terms of gender, Sedgwick advises, it is sometimes necessary to cross over the threshold of one thing (lesbian masculinity), or flip its switch from on to off, in order to register on another scale completely (heterosexual masculinity). In her performance of female masculinity in *Boys Don't Cry*, Swank accomplishes 'realness effects' akin to those of the drag kings who

create an illusion or simulacrum of a reality that is better or more real than the so-called original (see Butler). Part of the surprise of her performance is that it accomplishes this without the 'layering' that often helps drag kings to achieve verisimilitude. Judith Halberstam suggests drag king performances are particularly effective because, while performing, the persona of the king is layered on top of an already existing offstage masculinity that adds depth and texture to the performance.[5] Unlike many – but not all – drag kings, Swank seems to identify as female and feminine. She had to find her way onto a map of masculinity,[6] then enter a portal to female masculinity, and then 'switch off' in order to register as simply masculine. In other words, the rheostat that might adjust the seamless gradations from femininity to female masculinity to – in this case – heterosexual masculinity ("man") seemingly had to be interrupted by the on/off switch of woman first, lesbian second (see Sedgwick 18).

If, as I have been arguing, the body is not the stabilizer of gender, then what is? Bakhtin, Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Stuart Hall, and many others might agree that one of the most frequently used stabilizers of gender is discourse and, specifically, narrative. Subjects either recognize or misrecognize themselves in femininities and masculinities that constitute them and that they, in turn, rearticulate (Sedgwick 19). In an undergraduate English course at York University called "Recent Women's Fiction," I taught Rose Tremain's novel Sacred Country, which like *Boys Don't Cry* also deals with a subject on the "*f*" between lesbian masculinity and transsexual masculinity. In the class on Tremain's text, I posed two questions to my students: 1. "Would you be able to recognize yourself if you were not your

---

[5]For instance, Dirk Diggler, one of Toronto's most talented drag kings, also does a skilful parody of the Canadian singer Anne Murray. What makes "M/ann Murray" so textured is Dirk's hypermasculine gender persona that clearly leaks through when Dirk is wearing a dress and performing as M/ann Murray, foregrounding and exaggerating the hint of masculinity that has always haunted Anne Murray's gender performance.

[6]One of the things that marks Swank's performance of masculinity as realistic but that confuses "Hilary" and "Brandon" in the service of antitransphobic and antihomophobic agenda is the fact that she prepared for the role by passing as a boy in her personal life. Interviews with Swank focus on how she borrowed her husband's clothing and accompanied him to social events as Hilary's brother. Swank also talks about losing weight to make her body seem more boyish but she also recalls how difficult it was to find a hairstylist who would cut her apparently long hair into a boyish style, something that a number simply refused to do (BeatboxBetty).

gender?" and 2. "How do you know you are your gender?" One of the more insightful answers was: "Identity is like an image of yourself that you want to move towards ... My immediate response to the question was, well, I know I'm a girl 'cause I know that I want to be a girl, and it's constant working towards that image of what I want to be, while recognizing it as a desire, not a stable core."[7] Clearly this particular answer is informed by the work of Butler who argues that a morphological imaginary overdetermines and mediates gendered subjectivity. In both *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, Butler contests the self-evidence of the "sex" that supposedly underlies the social constructedness of gender, arguing that the materiality of the body is formed through its triangulations with the social and discursive world via the psyche. In fact, Butler goes on to suggest that it is "important to think about how and to what end bodies are constructed ... and ... [which] bodies are not constructed and, further, to ask after how bodies which fail to materialize provide the necessary outside, if not the necessary support, for the bodies which, in materializing the norm, qualify as bodies that matter" (Bodies 16). In *Boys Don't Cry*, an imaginary construction of the boy mediates Brandon's relationship to his identity; while he cannot fully materialize as that boy, he most certainly reiterates and qualifies that discursive construction of masculinity. Brandon recognizes himself as a boy through a productive set of negations that allow that necessary outside to materialize, albeit very contingently: "I'm not a dyke," which also means "I am not a woman." As we proceed to watch him watch himself (and that morphological imaginary) in mirrors, combing his hair in a more masculine way, binding his breasts and stuffing his pants on two different occasions with a pair of socks, we read him moving toward that image he has of himself and his paradoxical and unthinkable gender. Not only does a dynamic of self-recognition or misrecognition articulate the meeting place of discourse, subjectivity, and physicality, but that dynamic is only knowable as and through those articulations. One of the heady pleasures of *Boys Don't Cry* lies in watching Brandon elaborate that fantasy of himself as a boy; that pleasure is equaled later by devastation as the camera's gaze is complicit with the shattering of that fantasy.

---

[7]Shauna Lancit. "Recent Women's Fiction." York University, Toronto. 29 March 1999. Used with permission.

One of the most telling and nonverbal articulations in *Boys Don't Cry* occurs in and around the stylization and recognition of Brandon's hair as masculine. The necessity of a masculine haircut resonates from the opening words of the movie to the final murder scene; in many ways, the style of Brandon's hair constructs part of the newly emerging cultural identity of 'boy.' While there tends to be a somewhat disturbing uniformity among the subjects of femininity in the film (Candace, Kate, the character Lana, and Lana's mother), masculinity ranges from the stereotypical constructions of working-class men as drunken truckers (the first trucker Brandon fights with), as rough, violent rednecks such as Nissen, Lotter, and the boys who chase Brandon through the trailerpark yelling "dyke" and "faggot," or as inept law enforcement officers such as Sheriff Laux, to Brandon, the teenage, nonphallic, sweet, good-looking, charming 'boy' with small hands, good hair, a tidy appearance, one who, above all, treats women with respect. In his essay "Why Boys are Not Men," Steven Cohan theorizes the distinction between "men" and "boys" through a genealogy of Hollywood male stars. Tracing the emergence of what John Wayne dubbed the "trembling, torn T-shirt types" – Marlon Brandon, Montgomery Clift, James Dean, Sal Mineo, the young Paul Newman, etc. – through the postwar era, Cohan posits that Hollywood crystallized a new male subjectivity. "One has only to recall," argues Cohan, "the galvanizing early screen appearances of the young Brando and Clift to see how readily imagery of a youthful male body, not only beautiful to behold but also highly theatricalized, marked out the erotic appeal of these new young actors within the star system, underscoring their alienation from the screen's more traditional representations of masculinity" (203). What appealed to mainstream American culture was precisely the trope of boyishness. Such a new look challenged the conflation of sexuality and gender that underwrites a symbolic economy in which 'boys' were made legible opposites of 'men.' The result of this open rejection of hegemonic norms, according to Cohan, was an erotic performance or impersonation that productively fell short of the original.

Moreover, what was particularly compelling about the boy was signaled by Wayne's adjective "trembling." The term rightly suggested a conflation of that 'new look' with an emotionality and vulnerability. Where old-guard actors like John Wayne embodied virility and hypermasculine hegemony, stars like Brando and Dean

interiorized masculinity, converting social nonconformity and rebelliousness into inner torment and emotional excess (Cohan 203). Where Wayne-esqe Hollywood he-men wore masculinity on the outside as action, phallic power, and mobility, the Brando and Dean types resisted such exteriorization of masculinity in favor of a look synonymous with failed manhood: perpetual boyhood. The boy, then, is a dialogic and gender-conflicted concept that at once signifies and exceeds masculinity. Citing cultural critic Marjorie Garber, Cohan likens the effect of the boy to that of a transvestite, that subject who crosses gender boundaries and calls categories into question. Elaborating upon this so-called "feminization" of the virile Hollywood star, Cohan argues that the boy similarly passes between binarized categories, disturbing the ease with which Hollywood's men equated sexual potency with hypermasculine gender performances (260).

Peirce and Swank's portrayal of Brandon in *Boys Don't Cry* both relies on and outs the queerness of the dialogic Hollywood boy. Rather than suggest that the boy is comparable to the transvestite in effect, it is much more productive to query the signifiers of sexuality investing the boy instead. Part of the appeal of boyishness, as Kevin Studlar and Gaylyn Sandler posit, is that feminization (9). Boyishness both holds the promise of phallic power and resists its hegemonic and teleological imperatives. In other words, the appeal of the boy is not necessarily a confusion of gender, but the potential for actualization of that gender. Boys paradoxically threaten to become men while categorically rarely materializing that identity. Peirce herself locates Brandon as a boy within this noisy dialogism of Hollywood's no man's land:

> in addition to representing a queer archetype, Brandon actually embodied many traits of the traditional Hollywood hero. He had the innocence and the tenderness of Montgomery Clift in *Red River* or a young Henry Fonda, the naive determination of Jimmy Stewart. He was a rebellious outsider like James Dean, a shy, courtly gentleman like Gary Cooper ... Bringing Brandon to Hollywood was like bringing him home. (Glitz)

Such a precise reading of Brandon situates him within the realms of those historical performances and within contemporary dialogic reiterations of that genealogy, evident in the 'new' new boys of culture: Leonardo DiCaprio or the numerous boy bands. These objects of

teenage girl fandom and consumption are sexualized through a feminizing gaze that is seductively threatened by the very thing boys lack: phallic power (Studlar/Sandler 9).

In *Boys Don't Cry*, we first encounter Brandon as a voice-over saying "shorter" at the beginning of the film. When the credits stop rolling, we realize that Brandon is instructing his cousin to cut his hair even shorter. As he looks into the mirror, he continues to style his hair until he is satisfied that it looks convincingly masculine. The scene then cuts to a roller rink where Brandon, who will eventually introduce himself as Billy, is to meet a young girl named Nicole. Brandon is wearing a curious outfit as he approaches the rink doors – a western shirt and a very large cowboy hat that his cousin eventually pulls off his head. Brandon attempts to pass as a country and western cowboy.[8] As "Billy" walks toward Nicole, who is standing with a group of her girlfriends talking about the qualities that make up her 'dream boy,' we overhear her conversation: "Yeah, that's okay," she says, "As long as he's sweet and has good hair. That's important."

We see Brandon looking at himself repeatedly in mirrors throughout the film, continually combing and recombing his hair into a more masculine style to achieve "good hair." Brandon's sense of himself as an object of (adolescent) desire is evident in these looking relations where the camera feminizes him as a subject of nonphallic masculinity through its gaze as we watch him watching himself be watched (see Berger 46). But Brandon also possesses a masculine gaze himself. Brandon seduces Lana by watching her perform on a karaoke stage, then by chasing her around the yard of her mother's house taking Polaroid pictures of her. The film's gaze also focuses exclusively on Lana's face and breasts during their first sex scene to show the effects of the very thing Brandon is not supposed to possess – phallic power. During that scene we see Brandon have oral sex with Lana but we also see him reach into his pants just before the

[8]The cowboy image surrounds Brandon. Local Falls City and Lincoln newspapers reported that Brandon was buried in "men's clothing, wearing her [*sic*] favorite cowboy shirt and black cowboy hat." The next day a relative of Brandon's insisted that the papers print a retraction stating that Brandon was buried in "a black and white striped shirt purchased in a women's section of a local store" (Minkowitz 24). Again, such proliferating and competing narratives remind us that definitions and self-definitions are not secondary to discourse and power. They are, as Stuart Hall suggests, the sites where this struggle is engaged ("Notes" 239). They are the stakes to be won or lost in that struggle.

camera cuts to Lana's face while Brandon presumably fucks her with a penis/dildo. These contradictory looking relations further the gender instabilities already present both in the film and in Brandon's identity. In the end, it is his hairstyle that most disturbs Lana, even after she has made love to him. As Lana and Brandon are planning to leave Falls City, Lana is packing her things and Brandon sneaks in through her bedroom window to help her pack. He attempts to kiss her and Lana turns away, asking, "Did you do something to your hair?" Brandon answers, "I don't know ... but I'll try to put it back," and proceeds to correct his hair in the mirror. Hairstyles in this film, especially Brandon's, function to demarcate the space of 'boy' relative to other masculinities.

Such gender instabilities are further evident in two dialogic utterances in the film: "I'm not a dyke" and "I have a sexual identity crisis." These function as double-voicing articulations, sites where stabilizing (centripetal, moving toward center) and destabilizing (centrifugal, out from center) conceptualizing impulses collide. These utterances substantiate Michel Foucault's assertion that language as discourse is productive, and Bakhtin's primary axiom that the utterance always evokes its present, past, and possible future contexts. Butler demonstrates the performative and interpellative nature of language in the forceful but almost annoying disavowal for which she is most famous: "Who or what is it that is out, made manifest and fully disclosed, when and if I reveal myself as lesbian ... To claim that this is what I am is to suggest a provisional totalization of this 'I' ... such a statement presupposes that the I exceeds its determination, and even produces that very excess in and by the act which seeks to exhaust the semantic field of the 'I'" ("Imitation" 18). Butler's remarks reveal that the constitutive nature of the word signifies multiple meanings and traces of its past usages, refuting yet affirming those echoes, traces, and reverberations as it inevitably relies on them. If language is the space of confrontation of differently oriented accents, then by rearticulating and 'relanguaging,' subjects reconfigure both the social context in which speech occurs and themselves as well. To repeat: these transformations are what constitute language as dialogic.

The contestation and rearticulation in language of gender variant subjectivities who exist outside of supposedly referential epistemology and linguistic systems function as touchstones for what can be identified as the noisy and dialogic condition, if not crisis, of

language and bodies in postmodernity. That crisis of language is particularly evident in the deployment of gendered pronouns. Like Hilary Swank in her acceptance speech, I use pronouns strategically to identify tactical rearticulations of counterdiscursive subjectivities and practices that have produced new social formations. That is, if subjects are in dialogue with discourse and speak it as often as they are spoken by it, then the processes of self-articulation, which have been the object of this study and of Peirce's film, are themselves already metadiscursive. If, as S. Hall suggests, those articulations produce arbitrary unities out of contradictory elements, then the linkages between those unities can be broken ("On Postmodernism" 141). Hall's theory of articulation seeks to break the links between concepts that are the residue of opinion and custom.

Reading for articulations and disarticulations in *Boys Don't Cry* or any text of female masculinity can only lead inevitably to the question of how the event of this movie occurred when it did. How is it that this film and its narrative are intelligible at all? What are the discursive and articular relations between Brandon's deferral "I'm not a dyke" and Brandon's confession to Sheriff Laux that he has a "sexual identity crisis"? Does one of these utterances secure the other and how can that summary be secured, especially in no man's land? Are butch and female-to-male transsexuality as much at odds with each other in no man's land as transsexual boy and biologically born masculinity? Does 'butch' capitalize on the failed successes of 'lesbian' as performative, disavowed, and repudiated masculinity so thoroughly as to constitute it as a necessary absence?

Barbara Johnson anticipated such paradoxical questions when she wrote on the failure of success:

> If the deconstructive impulse [of female masculinity or queer theory or transsexual theory or performativity] is to retain its vital and subversive edge, we must become ignorant of it again and again. It is only by forgetting what we know how to do, by setting aside the thoughts that have most changed us, that those thoughts and that knowledge can go on doing what a surprise encounter with otherness should do, that is, lay bare some hint of an ignorance one never knew one had. (16)

Boys Don't Cry performs the imperative – both pedagogical and political – of reading for productive ignorance and surprise, or reading

for both the radical instabilities and yet political imperatives of the body and, in this case, its death, as an object of ignorance. By 'ignorance' I refer again to Johnson who argues that to read for ignorance means to read to 'unknow,' "to become conscious of the fact that what one thinks is knowledge is really an array of received ideas, prejudices and opinions – a way of not knowing that one does not know. Thus, the question is not of how to transmit but of how to suspend knowledge" (84-85). *Boys Don't Cry* shows us that these identities do not preexist knowledge and truth regimes but, rather, are occlusions that are also coextensive and simultaneous with and as their means of articulation.

To articulate or attempt to know the subjects at the heart of *Boys Don't Cry* – that is, subjects who are off the gender map – is to theorize how they are mostly dysfunctional elements of the sex/gender systems and knowledge regimes. But it also means to read not what appears in or as a representation, but to read for the "space-off," for the blinds spots of those representations. The "space-off" is a concept borrowed from Teresa de Lauretis who poses a problem that is central to my work, that is, how to discern subjectivity in representational practices that occlude that which cannot be discerned? To frame this problematic in de Lauretis's terms: "Most of the available theories of reading, writing, sexuality, ideology, or any other cultural production are built on ... narrative of gender ... bound by the heterosexual contract" (25). The solution de Lauretis suggests is to read for the unthinkable "elsewhere."

> That elsewhere is not some mythic distant past or some utopian future history: it is the elsewhere of discourse here and now, the blind spots, or the space-off, of its representations. I think of it as spaces in the margins of hegemonic discourses, social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparati. (25)

That space-off or elsewhere is the productive place within representation, especially in dialogic image-making, that is not visible in the frame but inferable from what the frame can register (26). As Peirce puts it in *Boys Don't Cry*, Brandon dies in Falls City, a working-class town that Brandon's cousin tells us "isn't even on a map." Brandon dies in the space-off of American class geography and, while Peirce puts Brandon on the map by introducing this new subject into

the field of vision of American popular culture, the costs of cartographic intelligibility are high.

As I have been suggesting, the space of identity is one site where power-knowledge regimes work. As such, it can also be a site of *unknowing*; a site not of the absence of knowledge but of contradictory and unstable ambiguities that render knowledge-regimes dysfunctional. The subjects of these spaces in no man's land cite and articulate authoritative sex/gender discourses to enable resistant countercitational disarticulations at the same time. To create something new, an identity or a gender supposedly not thinkable inside the sex/gender system, Brandon at once evokes and repudiates that new identity (transgender boy) onto identities (butch nonphallic masculinity and heterosexual boy) that are thinkable. Laura Doan theorizes the trope of 'grafting' in her readings of the deconstructive strategies in Jeanette Winterson's novels. Grafting is a replication process "whereby a plant, perhaps tender or uncertain, is fused into a hardier member of its strain, and so the two take advantage of each other and produce a third kind, without seed or parent" (152). The literal process of grafting is an organic reproductive process where organic matter is modified by human intervention and where a new shoot might be inserted into healthy stock from which it receives enough nourishment to generate a new entity, produced by but not reducible to either of the two constitutive elements. As a figurative trope, to graft means to insert something into, on, upon, or together, to insert or fix in or on so as to produce a vital or indissoluble union; to sew together; to attach to make a 'new' thing out of the two. As Doan suggests, this is a much more useful conceptual trope, one which allows us to acknowledge the dependence of the new thing on the other two, as it is made out of those two but is not reducible to either. As Doan puts it:

> The transnatural practice of grafting does not circumvent, eliminate, or destroy the ... biological matter that produces a hybrid, and as a result the process that makes an 'other' ultimately registers the inceptive binarism as excess, as redundancy. The hybrid presupposes a biological precursor (as opposed to spontaneous regeneration), but cultural (in this case, scientific) intervention bears the responsibility for the act of creation. By becoming 'something else' in a complex interplay of interdependence from and dependence

> on its biological precursors, the hybrid denatures dominant oppositional paradigms that set one against the other and subsequently accommodates more options. (152)

I use the trope of grafting to signify two processes. The first is that identified by Doan, although I will use it as a way of thinking the manifestation of transgendered (read: differently gendered) bodies as effects of the sex/gender system in crisis and transition. The process of grafting, not as an artificial, scientific reproductive mechanism, but as self-making and reproduction simultaneously within and in excess of a heteronormative model, spawns a third hybrid sex. But this is not androgyny, a mix or blending or both so-called 'natural' genders. As Doan puts it, "the notion of hybridity resonates with doing violence to nature, which results ... in the scientific equivalent of freaks, mongrels, half-breeds and cross-breeds" (153). This is a strategy of naturally denaturalizing biological essentialisms with a "sexual politics of heterogeneity and a vision of hybridized gender constructions outside an either/or proposition" in order to naturalize "cultural oddities, monstrosities, abnormalities, and [what appear to be] conformities" (154). The trope of grafting thus allows me to argue that the gender differences and distinctions are still produced in these spaces but are deployed in transsexual and transgender discourses to entirely different ends.

The notion of grafting as opposed to crossing also allows me to think the imbrications and radical dependencies that these identities – gay, lesbian, bisexual, as well as transsexual and transgender – have with each other both historically (the invert + the lesbian + the transsexual) and in the current moment when the differences between them often appear as the effect of productive and performative speech acts. "I am a boy" or "I am not a lesbian" have particular effects that may not be immediate but emerge over time. One of these productive effects is the materialization or externalization of a body normally relegated to the space-off. This differential process, which produces the fantasy of positivity, occurs through practices of self-articulation and oppositionality. Thus, the object of my project here is not only the way in which *Boys Don't Cry* contests the alignment of bodies, identities, and power but also the ways they contest discursive practices and force a crisis by grafting articulations and speech acts onto each other. The effect of such articular speech acts is to graft what that gender looks like by 'dysarticulating' itself through

subjectivities similar but ultimately not reducible to those intelligible in the sex/gender system. Peirce makes Brandon intelligible by having him performatively cite authoritative discourses ("I'm not a dyke") to enable an articulation (Brandon as a man and boy) that severely incites and destabilizes masculinity, showing it as a category in crisis. But Peirce also forces this subject back into an economy where the penis is the ground of identity when she depicts Brandon's exposure with such verisimilitude.

Brandon also articulates himself through another utterance in the film, confirming S. Hall's assertion that "almost every fixed inventory will betray us" ("Notes" 235). This citation also signals the ambivalences at the core of those performatives. After the rape scene, Brandon is interviewed by Sheriff Laux, who repudiates and reiterates the violence of the rape by blaming Brandon and berating him with questions about his gender. Brandon knows that he will not be taken seriously if he cannot make himself intelligible. This ritualized and coerced self-accounting is where the production of the unrepresentable, the unspeakable, and the unintelligible is most articulated with and as social abjection. At this point, Brandon says, "I have a sexual identity crisis," drawing on the clinical language and taxonomies of psychiatry to give an accounting of himself as abject. This scene is handled with great skill by Peirce for Sheriff Laux is not depicted without his own share of abjection. Yet, at the same time, Brandon's articulations are precisely the stakes to be won or lost. Once again, clinical assessment provides intelligibility, definition, and an alibi. That alibi reworks emotional and conceptual contradictions in order to clear a space of recognition and enable articulation. Hence the importance of this film and its mainstream recognition – or misrecognition – is the double-stake of containment and resistance that it makes inevitable. To recall S. Hall: popular culture is more than just one of the sites where that ambivalent struggle for and against definition is engaged; it is, in fact, the very thing to be won or lost in that struggle ("Notes" 259). In many ways, the movie's popularity suggests Brandon's admittedly contingent 'success' in that moment.[9]

More troubling are two other articulations that also occur in the film. In December 1993, three people were murdered in a Nebraska

[9]That success was compromised by the most recent legal decision on Brandon's case. In a truly bizarre ruling, on December 6, 1999, Nebraska District Judge Orville

farmhouse: Brandon, Candace, and Phillip DeVine. Pierce's version of these events depicts only the deaths of Candace and Brandon. Peirce's occlusion of DeVine's death is a troubling whitewashing of the events. If, as I suggested earlier, gender functions as a threshold effect where movement along one axis can suddenly register on another, and that, in order to read for masculinity, we have to shut off the switch of femininity, then to read for race, and for whiteness as a race, the opposite is true. When reading whiteness as a race, it is necessary to flip the switch from off to on. That is, it becomes necessary to invert a racializing gaze, to invert what is normally hypervisible (people of color), in order to read what is everywhere but invisible: whiteness.

As a racialized identity, whiteness operates best when it cloaks itself to function not as a *particular* race, but as *the* human race, as universal mankind (see Dyer). As a 'race,' whiteness works by cloaking itself as the universal norm around which all other races, especially those marked by color, circulate and are defined. On the one hand, white domination is reproduced by the way that white subjects colonize the definitions of normal. In this regard, Brandon's death stands in as a tragedy that can signify many other tragedies, including DeVine's. To have depicted DeVine's death in *Boys Don't*

Coady ruled that Richardson County authorities were 14% responsible for Brandon's wrongful death by passing on the information they did to Nissen and Lotter and by not arresting them. Brandon's mother JoAnn Brandon had sought $350,000 in a wrongful death suit against the Richardson County officials, charging that then Richardson County Sheriff Charles Laux had allowed the two men who raped Brandon on December 25, 1993, to remain at large and to go on to kill Brandon with his two friends on December 31. The suit also charges Laux with deliberately inflicting emotional distress on Brandon while interviewing him when he reported the rape. Judge Coady awarded $86,224 in damages and found Lotter and Nissen 85% liable for Brandon's death. Coady also ordered Laux to apologize to Brandon's family, "her" friends, and his own community for continually referring to Brandon as an "it." Brandon's "forced confession" functioned to pathologize him in front of an "expert" in order to report the crime committed against him and to be taken and treated seriously. In many ways, Brandon was unable successfully to mobilize a reverse-discourse by using the same discourses that had hailed him into subjectivity in the first place. While Leslie Feinberg, Radclyffe Hall, and Rose Tremain all allow their characters to work within and then transform the discourses that have produced them, Peirce does not. Brandon was, and remains, permanently fixed and languaged by those discourses. He is so permanently bound by these contradictions that Judge Orville Coady divided up responsibility for Brandon's death as follows: Nissen and Lotter were 85% responsible, County Sheriff Laux was 14% and Brandon himself was 1% responsible for his own death ("Brandon Teena Update" 19).

Cry would require an explanation of the perceived intrusion of race into a film about gender and transsexuality. On the other hand, if the invisibility of whiteness colonizes the definitions of other norms, it also marks itself as a category so that the representational power of whiteness comes precisely from its belief in itself so thoroughly everywhere and everything that it fails to visually register at all. Hence, the assertion that this film is not about race, but about gender. Yet, if the house in which the murders occurred is figured as a discursive and oppositional site, DeVine's death was as much the effect of masculine rage as Brandon's was about white rage. If Peirce chose to read through one lens at a time, then it possibly makes sense not to show DeVine's death. But a multiaccentuated dialogic lens that can read for complexity will show that the subjects of that site – a white working-class single mother, a black man dating a white woman, and a white transsexual man dating a white working-class girl – are all at one time or another Others that are necessary to a white masculinity that responds with rage to these apparently dysfunctional realignments of power. The fact that DeVine's death is not depicted can only be read as yet another articulation of whiteness where one identity (gender) trumps another (race) to leave whiteness invisible and naturalized.

Peirce's occlusions in the production of the film are entirely different from the kind of white class-based identities – that is, white-trash identities – visible within the film's narrative. "White trash" refers to a hybrid intertwining of racial and class identities and foregrounds the contradictory and conflicting relations of power between those two sites. As Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz argue, white trash is a complex cultural category that both refers to actually existing white people living in (often rural) poverty and also designates a set of stereotypes and myths about poor whites (4). The expression functions to identify that which seems unnameable: a (white) race that is used to code an economic class coupled with an insult that signifies excess (trash). Race functions then to explain that which is much harder to discern: class (Wray and Newitz 8).

If race vis-à-vis DeVine's death lurks in the space-off of this film, then the symbolic location inside the film functions as a geographic and class space-off where white trash is the form of whiteness that is most visible. The class-based culture of Falls City naturalizes class differences. Most of the interior scenes in *Boys Don't Cry* take place

either inside bars or in Lana's mother's house. The first time we meet the character Lana, she is in a bar, drinking, unable to stand without the help of her friends. Candace works in the bar and both girls seem to spend their leisure time drinking and singing karaoke. Lana's dream is to become a famous karaoke singer. Later in the film, the girls find employment in the canning factory, working the nightshift and continuing to drink on their days off. The viewer's first encounter with Lana's mother shows her passed out from too much alcohol. To be working-class, according to this film, means to spend a great deal of time consuming alcohol. This seems to commence with the onset of adolescence.

White masculinity in the text does not fare any better. Annalee Newitz argues that whiteness often emerges as a distinct racial identity when it can be identified as somehow primitive or inhuman. To see white as white rather than just as "another person," that white needs to be marked out as different from those whites who observe them (134). Newitz cites, for example, *Hillybillyland*, T. W. Williamson's study of representations of "mountain people" in Hollywood film, to argue that the figure of white-trash man is a spectacle not just because he is poor, but because he is sometimes monstrously inhuman. In *Boys Don't Cry* Lotter explodes into homicidal rage seemingly over nothing. Nissen lifts his pant leg to reveal self-inflicted scars from knife games that he and Lotter play. The men who are stock features in the bars of the film either aggressively harass the girls or start bar brawls. None of them are employed. Most seem single or otherwise unattached. And Nissen and Lotter come across as savagely white. After being accused of raping Brandon, Lotter replies: "If I wanted to rape someone, I have Mallory" – a female friend. The only working-class men who have jobs in *Boys Don't Cry* are the law enforcement officers. Sheriff Laux's treatment of Brandon easily situates him as savage and excessively brutal. The working-class whites in this film are racialized and demeaned because they fit all too easily into the primitive/civilized binary as nihilistic primitives (see Newitz 134).

One of the class-based 'characters' who, as I suggested earlier, no longer owns the right to her own story is Brandon's real-life lover Lana Tisdel. She has also filed suit against Peirce. Her chief complaints about Peirce's movie are that it puts her at the scene of the murders and shows her doing little to help afterward. Tisdel also

claims that the final love scene in the film between the characters Lana and Brandon is a fiction that implies that she (Tisdel) is a lesbian – something she continues to deny (Beaird). Curiously, the proper name "Lana Tisdel" is a highly unstable signifier, referencing both a character in the film and the actual off-screen person. Peirce's film unwittingly follows in the same footsteps as many other twentieth-century prose narratives about female masculinity in the sense that a reading of their work suffers from a blurring of reality and fiction, in so far as these can be separated.[10] While the genre of film is different from prose narrative in terms of its articular machineries, formal properties, and contexts of consumption, Peirce's film depicts how (trans)gendered subjectivities are actualized through discourses of race and class, a materialization that foregrounds the function of the gaze in mediating bodies, subjectivities, and narratives.

In the film, Lana appears as young white trash and also as a subject of fem(me)ininity. Moreover, the film's fictionalized postrape love scene between the characters Lana and Brandon risks reconfiguring offscreen Lana as a lesbian. Despite Tisdel's objections, in the two love scenes between Brandon and Lana in the film, both subjects *become* their gender, not *transcend* it. Through these dialogic sex scenes, *Boys Don't Cry* severs the overdetermined linkage between queerness and masculinity by bringing fem(me)ininity into focus. The result is that Brandon's identity as "he" – transsexual boy – is not completely stable in the film. Indeed, his proximity to the character Lana and her embodiment of "she" overdetermines how we might read him as "him." However, the camera also is complicit in de- and reconstructing Brandon's identity and works against the dialogism of these scenes to contain how he should be viewed.

The first love scene between Lana and Brandon shows him operating with the very thing he is supposed to lack – that is, phallic power. The characters Brandon and Lana have sex for the first time outside, at night, on a blanket, in the dim margin of the lights from the factory. The sex scene is choreographed around Lana's pleasure so that the camera focuses on her face from above. Lana's (not

[10]For instance, both Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) were published to a great deal of critical attention, much of which collapsed distinctions between author and main character(s), fiction and memoir. Feinberg noted as much in a recent interview when s/he said, "I still receive letters addressed to Jess Goldberg, the fictional protagonist of my novel" (Lee 31).

Brandon's) top and bra are off and, as mentioned above, the camera lingers on her face while Brandon performs oral sex. When Brandon enters the scene again, he is still fully clothed and remains dressed even when he fucks Lana with what is presumably a dildo. Curiously, the camera quickly flashes down Brandon's shirt, from what we are to perceive as Lana's viewpoint, to reveal a very slight cleavage. Lana seems from this point on to have an idea that Brandon's body is female, even though she later runs her hand over the bulge in his pants. However, her narration to Candace and Kate about the event tells a different story, one that reveals Lana's participation in the adolescent fantasy that Brandon builds and that she shares: "Afterward, we took our clothes off and went swimming," she tells them, infusing the narrative and its setting with a kind of pastoral and adolescent innocence.

The bulge in Brandon's pants poses an interesting epistemological and representational quandary, not unlike that of earlier twentieth-century fiction that similarly grappled with articulating female masculinity. The invert, that creature of discursive origins who is the forebearer of both transsexual masculinity as well as lesbian masculinity, has always been and remains most productively troubling to the sex/gender system when it cannot be named with pronouns and secured within epistemological truth-regimes. Because the invert's body is not representable in language, it remains imaginable in that space just outside the frame. Since the invert's body is delegated as a body that cannot matter, what *Boys Don't Cry* offers is the efficacy of representational possibility. If the invert's body is not, in a productive way, a body that matters other than for what it otherwise allows to matter (i.e., conventionally gendered bodies), then Brandon's body as constructed in this film matters a great deal in and of itself. *Boys Don't Cry* shows the very painful way that knowledge regimes are authenticated as Brandon's phallic power is exposed and refuted. The film confirms paradoxical subject positions, especially in the disrobing scene. The fantasy gender that Brandon builds and that Lana eventually desires and shares is materialized. But that same fantasy is violently shattered when Lana and the viewer are forced to witness Brandon's body. Brandon's penis – both the simulacrum with which he fucks Lana but also the presumed one that emerges when he is passing – "works," as he says in the film, but is revealed and therefore *known* and *recognized* as fantasy.

The second love scene occurs much later in *Boys Don't Cry* after Brandon has been exposed and raped and his fantasy of his body is traumatically truncated. Nissen and Lotter corner Brandon in the bathroom and tear his pants off. When Lana is forced to look at Brandon with his pants pulled down, no penis in sight, the film action stops to show what Brandon sees as he looks away from Lana: another Brandon, not harmed, standing behind Candace and Kate. This second Brandon is wearing a blue shirt and is shown as if in a mirror from the waist up. The camera then cuts to the second Brandon's gaze and shows us what he sees: the first Brandon with his pants down and his arms being held by Nissen and Lotter. The second Brandon cannot bear what he sees – his exposure – and walks away. In this intense moment, the dialogic split in Brandon between the enforced reality of his body competes and wins over the fantasy of his identity as a boy. From this moment on, his lack of penis and his rape overdetermine him as female, allowing the other characters and viewers alike to read him this way, and forcing the supposed self-evidence of matter to signify over identifactory subjectivity. The perception of Brandon's lack of an obvious penis signifies the failure of and so severely compromises his phallic articulation of himself as a (transsexual) boy. Whereas Peirce previously had the character Brandon occupy a productive place in no man's land, she now forces his subject back into an economy where the penis is the grounds of identity by depicting his exposure with such brutal verisimilitude. The second love scene attempts to assuage that violation but the events of the narrative refuse that assuagement.

After Brandon has been exposed and raped, Lana visits Brandon in the middle of the night in the shed near Candace's house where he has taken refuge. Brandon moves to rest his head on her breasts while Lana asks him, "What were you like before all this? I mean, were you like me, a girl girl?" Brandon answers, "Yeah, like a long time ago and then I guess I was just like a boy girl, and then I was just a jerk." It is curious here that both subjects can only circumvent matter and materiality in language, productively refusing to fix gender and sex. Neither can fully locate Brandon within existing pronouns and the repetition "girl girl" suggests that, by this point, Lana too is elsewhere and in excess of that signified in the sex/gender system by the singular "girl." Lana's hands continue to caress Brandon's hair and face tenderly as he confesses that many of the things he had told

Lana were lies. Lana leans in and kisses Brandon, then they move as if to have sex. Lana then hesitates and says, "I don't know if I'm gonna know how to do it." Brandon replies: "I'm sure you'll figure it out."

At this point, the camera moves behind Brandon's back and Lana takes Brandon's shirt off, exposing his back to the camera. We see only his back; Lana looks at his chest. This love scene is less an attempt to reassert Brandon as female and more an attempt to construct Lana as femme. The direct suggestion of the film is that this time Lana fucks Brandon. What the viewer sees is Lana looking, touching Brandon's head and back with very fem(me)inine hands decorated with rings and long nails with bright red nail polish. Brandon as a *boy* is gone, that identity departing during the exposure scene where Brandon looks at a version of himself leaving. But Brandon as an oxymoronic *lesbian boy* nevertheless remains, still unrepresentable with pronouns and yet still signifying both masculinity and a kind of vulnerability and woundedness that requires that Lana take care of him both emotionally and sexually. Lana nurses him back into yet another version of himself. The surprise of Peirce's film is that it unwittingly brings fem(me)ininity into focus and transforms a previously unreadable image into one that is, at least contingently, visible.

This reconstruction is made possible partly because of the last twenty years of writing that has emerged out of lesbian butch-femme cultures. One of the reasons for the border war between butch and female-to-male transsexualtiy is that within the twentieth century, lesbianism has been articulated with masculinity vis-à-vis gender inversion. What we are beginning to see now is resistance to the apparent fixity of essentialist capitulation articulated through the pronoun "she." Among others, Biddy Martin has suggested that while female masculinity has been viewed as *the* social constructionist subject, queer femininity has always been viewed as the suspect subjectivity, "a capitulation, a swamp, something maternal, ensnared and ensnaring" (73). In fact, Martin argues that adding "femmeness" to queer theory's equations multiplies the currently *unknowable* permutations of sexual aims, objects, and – more specifically for my purposes here – productive heterosexual betrayals (78). Both in the film proper and apparently in its origins and production, femmeness articulates itself as a betrayal of essentialist and heteronormative

imperatives. The character Lana chooses Brandon out of the possible range of masculine lovers available to her. And in interview after interview, Peirce herself repeatedly states that she was drawn to this story because she "fell in love with a girl who was living in a trailer park, who didn't have much money, who didn't have any role models, and yet who successfully transformed herself into a fantasy of a boy" (Glitz). In attempting to remain true to those desires, Peirce argues that the film is "an emotional artefact" of the love between the real-life Brandon and Lana. While the film is being hailed as the arrival of female-to-male transsexuality in mainstream culture, I read it as an attempt to queer Lana in order to render her more precisely an artefact of the filmmaker's investments.

Such hyperreal reiterations of the so-called facts of Brandon's death confirm that *Boys Don't Cry* suffers from formal confusion as a film genre. It is not a documentary, yet Peirce claims to have been true to other emotional relationships between the real-life Lana Tisdel and Brandon. Tisdel's lawsuit betrays her own anxiety and frustration over the film's verisimilitude, claiming Peirce misrepresented basic facts. But Peirce relied on many textual accounts of Brandon's death in the media – many of them sensational – to graft this hybrid film narrative from those accounts and her own interviews with the main characters in the story. As a trans- or even intergeneric, intertextual event, *Boys Don't Cry* is the product both of a formal and of an epistemological grafting, where one text is a hybrid of another. A new form is produced from a meeting point of two things where the new entity is not reducible to either. If gender identities are *(un)knowable* through a trope of grafting, then both form and content here are simulacra that stand in as the 'truth' of the events in that Nebraskan farmhouse and of the supposedly 'real-life' story of Brandon and Lana.

Peirce, Swank, and Chloë Sevigny (the actor who plays Lana) graft a seemingly new Brandon and Lana from the textual accounts of their lives, each produced from but not reducible to the media representations. Each is *trans*formed from and through the other. That is, each is a hybrid form that does not transcend the so-called original but rather hails from and moves between its parts. Brandon's life, it seems, is entirely about text. It is a text knowable in relation to other gendered, racialized, and class-based scripts and in conversation with a history of discourses, textual practices, and their

many articulations. Transsubjectivity emerges in the space-offs not only of discursive formations but also of pronouns. Pronouns are the washrooms of language; the practice of choosing is overdetermined by which gender one is perceived to be in any given moment. As this film makes more than apparent, the attempted precisions of language can only circumvent the no man's land between genders, narratives, discourses, and, indeed, texts and their readers. What is produced in that elsewhere is the impossible: bodies that defy matter.

Works Cited

72nd Academy Awards. NBC-TV, Toronto, 26 Mar. 2000.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. "Discourse in Dostoevsky." *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984. 181-269.

———. "Discourse in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. 259-422.

Beaird, Joe. "Film About Famed Murder Sparks Controversy and Lawsuits." *APB Celebrity News*. 1 Nov. 1999. <http://www.APBnews.com>.

BeatboxBetty. "Interview with Hilary Swank." <http://www.beatboxbetty.com>.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin, 1972.

"Brandon Teena Update." *FTM International Newsletter* 46 (2000): 19.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

———. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. Ed. Diana Fuss. New York: Routledge, 1991. 1-31.

Cohan, Steven. *Masked Men*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

De Lauretis, Teresa. "The Technology of Gender." *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. 1-30.

Doan, Laura. "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern." *The Lesbian Postmodern*. Ed. Laura Doan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. 137-55.

Duggan, Lisa and Kathleen McHugh. "A Fem(me)inist Manifesto." *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8 (1996): 153-59.

Dyer, Richard. "White." *Screen* 29 (1988): 44-64.

Ebert, Roger. *Chicago Sun-Times* 15 Sept. 1999: n.p.

"Entertainment." *Toronto Star* 2 April 2000: n.p.

Feinberg, Leslie. *Stone Butch Blues: A Novel.* Ithaca, New York: Firebrand, 1993.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1.* Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1978.

Glitz, Michael. "Brandon Goes to Hollywood." *The Advocate.* 28 Mar. 2000. <http://www.theeadvocate.com>.

Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.

Hale, C. Jacob. "Consuming the Living, Dis(re)remembering the Dead in the Butch/FTM Borderlands." *GLQ* (1998): 311-48.

Hall, Radclyffe. *The Well of Loneliness.* New York: Avon, 1928.

Hall, Stuart. "On Postmodernism and Articulation." *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies.* Eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. London: Routledge, 1996. 131-50.

———. "Notes of Deconstruction 'The Popular.'" *People's History and Socialist Theory.* Ed. Raphael Samuel. London: Routledge, 1981. 227-40.

Hoberman, J. "Oscars!" *Hollywood.com.* 1999 <http://www.hollywood.com>.

Johnson, Barbara. *A World of Difference.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Jones, Aphrodite. *All She Ever Wanted.* New York: Pocket, 1996.

Lee, Gretchen. "Pink and Blue: Interview with Leslie Feinberg." *Curve* 8 (1998): 31.

The Life and Death of Teena Brandon. [Videorecording for A & E American Justice.] New York: A & E Television Networks, 1996.

Martin, Biddy. *Femininity Played Straight: The Significance of Being Lesbian.* New York: Routledge, 1996.

Minkowitz, Donna. "Love Hurts." *Village Voice* 19 Apr. 1994: 24-30.

Muska, Susan and Greta Olafsdottir. "Reel Nebraska." *The Advocate.* 28 Mar. 2000. <http://www.theadvocate.com>.

———. *Brandon Teena Story.* Videorecording. Zeitgeist Film, 1998.

Newitz, Annalee. "White Savagery and Humiliation, or A New Racial Consciousness in the Media." *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. Eds. Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz. New York: Routledge, 1997. 131-54.

Peirce, Kimberly, dir. *Boys Don't Cry*. Videorecording. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1999.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Gosh, Boy George, You Must Be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity!" *Constructing Masculinity*. Eds. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson. New York: Routledge, 1995. 11-20.

Studlar, Kevin S. and Gaylyn Sandler. "Introduction: The Seductive Waters of James Cameron's Film Phenomenon." *Titanic: Anatomy of a Blockbuster*. Eds. Kevin S. Studlar and Gaylyn Sandler. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999. 1-13.

Tremain, Rose. *Sacred Country*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992.

Williamson, J. W. *Hillybillyland*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

Wray, Matt and Annalee Newitz, eds. *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Astaire's Feet and Travolta's Pelvis: Maintaining the Boy Code

DARCEY CALLISON

Darcey Callison (callison@yorku.ca) is a choreographer known for his eclectic fusion of pure dance and theatrical invention. Critics have referred to him as a 'dance daredevil'. His current creative project, based on images of the nuclear family and consumerism, is titled "Revisiting the Sandbox" and will be presented at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre in December 2002. As a professor in the Department of Dance at York University he teaches a wide range of studio courses and lectures on dance. His research explores Authentic Movement as a base for training the expressive body, improvisation in early Western theatrical dance (Renaissance and Baroque), and representations of masculinity in Hollywood's male dancers.

Through cinematic images, text, and narratives, Hollywood films create and disseminate codes of behavior in North America and around the world. By examining the films *Top Hat* (1935, Sandrich) starring Fred Astaire and *Saturday Night Fever* (1977, Badham) with John Travolta, this paper explores the impact that these two actors' solo dancing roles had on reinforcing the expected ideals of masculinity in Western culture as comparative journeys from the dancing male as subject to object. Often Astaire's and Travolta's dancing appeared to occur spontaneously in social situations but, in fact, these dances were completely contrived, rehearsed endlessly, and edited specifically for a North American audience. By focusing on the dancing body of Fred Astaire as a representation of masculinity in 1935 and then contrasting it with the demonstration of maleness in the dancing body of John Travolta in 1977, the evolution of the image of the cinematic male dancer I will discuss.

For well over two centuries female performers have dominated Western theatrical dancing. Only in the last century have women

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 3 (2001) © CLGSA / SCELG

choreographed and developed their own movement as a form of self-expression. Dancing has primarily been an entertainment performed by women for the pleasure of men. This is particularly true of the early Broadway and Vaudeville shows that were the foundation of Hollywood's first musical entertainments, of which Astaire was a part.

Ted Shawn, an early modern dance pioneer, spent much of his career dancing with Ruth St. Denis on the Vaudeville circuit in the early 1900s. He also choreographed for such films as D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916). In his autobiography *One Thousand and One Night Stands* Shawn recalls telling one of his colleagues that he was thinking of becoming a dancer and was told that "men don't dance." Shawn reminded his colleague that men do, in fact, dance in other cultures, like in the Russian dances they had seen performed together. Shawn's colleague responded, "Oh those people, he dismissed them with a shrug. He admitted, though grudgingly, that dancing might be all right for aborigines and Russians, but he contended vehemently that it was hardly a suitable career for a red-blooded American male" (Shawn 11).

Within every culture there is one set of accepted behaviors for men and another for women. In North America all movements, gestures, reactions, and spacial relationships carry with them meanings that are learned and understood automatically as being correct behavior for men or for women. In Western culture if the expected image of maleness as active is challenged, the performer runs the risk of being seen as being different, objectified, and thus, shamed.

Objectification in dance occurs when a dancing body fulfills the viewer's fantasy, as either something to possess or as something that reflects the viewer's own ego. In her seminal article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey defines these two objective viewpoints. Mulvey calls the first form of objectivation "active scopophilia," and defines it as the "pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight" that happens because of the "separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen" (271). Mulvey regards identifying with the image being viewed as the second category of objectification and describes this as the ego's identification "with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like. Thus: The first (active scopophilia) is the function of sexual instincts, the

second (identification) of ego libido" (271). The challenge of overcoming or subverting objectification while dancing is complex and arguably impossible. How does one dance for another's entertainment and not emphasize the separation between performer and audience that allows objectification to occur?

The fear of being seen as different, objectified, and shamed is one of the primary reasons why North American boys and young men choose not to dance. Instead, they choose other physical activities that fit with the social expectations of their masculinity, like contact sports such as soccer or hockey. William Pollack in his popular book *Real Boys* writes extensively about the fear boys and men have of being shamed and the lengths they will go to in order to fit in. He writes:

> Perhaps the most traumatizing and dangerous injunction thrust on boys and men is the literal gender straightjacket that prohibits boys from feelings or urges seen (mistakenly) as 'feminine'... According to the ideal of 'no sissy stuff' such feeling and behaviors are taboo ... And when boys start to break under the strain ... they are usually greeted not with empathy but with ridicule, with taunts and threats that shame them for their failure to act and feel in stereotypically 'masculine' ways. And so boys become determined never to act that way again. (24)

Pollack refers to the gender straightjacket as part of the "boy code" inflicted on males in the West. The primary objective of the boy code is to assure the perception of man's heterosexuality through demonstrations that distinguish him as being different from females or homosexuals. Pollack writes that in his research throughout America he was "surprised to find that even in the most progressive schools and most politically correct communities in every part of the country and in families of all types, the boy code continues to affect the behavior of all of us – the boys themselves, their parents, their teachers, and society as a whole. None of us is immune – it is so ingrained" (6). Although Pollack points out other requirements of the boy code, the gender straitjacket and the shame of challenging it are the most pertinent to this study.

This paper maintains that the male dancer subverts objectification on the screen by successfully fulfilling the boy code requirements as understood in Western culture; by maintaining control over both the

activity of dancing and the perception of that activity, the male dancer is able to sustain the subjective, active image expected of the so-called red-blooded American male.

The majority of both Astaire's and Travolta's dancing for films occurs in duet form and mostly as simulated courtship rituals with their female partners: literally, at times, sweeping the woman off her feet. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers are American dance icons, appearing together in ten films including *Top Hat, Swing Time* (1936, Stevens), and *Shall We Dance?* (1937, Sandrich). Astaire also danced with other starlets of the period, Rita Hayworth in *You Were Never Lovelier* (1942, Seiter) and Cyd Charisse *Silk Stockings* (1957, Mamoulian) among them. In the three successful films that featured John Travolta's dancing he was paired with Karen Gorney in *Saturday Night Fever*, Oliva Newton John in *Grease* (1978, Kleiser) and Debra Winger in *Urban Cowboy* (1980, Bridges). Only *Grease* is considered a musical; both *Saturday Night Fever* and *Urban Cowboy* are coming-of-age soap operas. Travolta also made a sequel to *Saturday Night Fever* called *Staying Alive* (1983), written and directed by Sylvester Stallone. This picture was a box-office failure and the last picture to feature Travolta's dancing.

In many ways the duets performed by Astaire and by Travolta with their respective female costars demonstrate a preoccupation with the opposite sex and easily establish their character's heterosexuality. Maintaining the expected image of masculinity in the solo dance form proves to be trickier. Because the body, the site of the star's sexuality, is put on display in a solo dance performance, his gestures, his posture, his focus, and his use of space are open for interpretation and, more dangerously, misinterpretation. Focusing on Astaire's signature solo in *Top Hat*, and on the solo Travolta danced at the disco club in *Saturday Night Fever*, I will examine how each star maintained his masculine identity by using dance as a language to fulfill the boy code requirements even in an objectified feminine activity like solo dancing.

In his paper "Feminizing the Song and Dance Man" Steven Cohan argues that by making Astaire's talent as a dancer a spectacle that stops the show's narrative, the star's masculinity is feminized in the same way spectacle objectifies women by putting them on display (47). He goes on to point out that Astaire's masculinity comes through the complexity that binds the use of spectacle as a device for "to-be-

looked-at-ness" as Mulvey defines it (Cohan 47). One way Astaire is able to maintain his masculine identity is by performing his danced sequences as elements of instruction, for his female costars, in his varied roles of teacher, director, lover, and, eventually, as himself, Fred Astaire, the patriarch, the dancer, the star. Cohan primarily focuses on Astaire's integrated musicals of the 50s and only occasionally refers to his early years in the 30s, when Astaire's male persona was first constructed and established in Hollywood.

In 1934 Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were given star billing for the first time in the film *The Gay Divorcee* (1934, Sandrich), which became a runaway box-office success. This was followed in 1935 with *Top Hat*, the first film that Astaire was credited with choreographing. In many ways *Top Hat* was a breakthrough film for Astaire. He was given some creative control and the film was critically applauded, receiving four Academy Award nominations including one for Best Picture. Regarded as one of Astaire's very best films, *Top Hat* was the first film to feature his solo dancing in a lavish production number as part of the film's primary entertainment. This dance number highlighted Astaire's talent as a dancer and helped to solidify his male image on the screen. All of his previous dance solos had been short spurts of virtuosity that occurred in living spaces not on performance stages, and had, up to that point, presented his character as the easy-go-lucky guy-about-town who could also, incidentally, tap up a storm. Astaire's *Top Hat* character, Jerry Travers, is a Broadway star appearing for the first time in London. About twenty minutes into the film he is in his dressing room preparing to dance an opening night sequence at the theater on a Broadway-type set. Just before his call time a telegram arrives telling him of the whereabouts of Ginger Rogers's character. As we hear the overture for his solo, he leaves his dressing room while arranging to have a plane made ready for him to fly off to join her.

When we first see the stage it is filled with three lines of men dressed in top hats and tails and carrying canes. They dance a short unison introduction moving from side to side and then parting down the middle to create a path for Astaire to walk down, like Moses parting the Red Sea. Astaire takes center stage to sing "Top Hat and Tails" while miming primping actions like putting in his shirt stubs and fixing his tie. Astaire's mimed gestures are an unmistakable part of the male dressing ritual, and identify him as the man-about-town

readying himself for a night out, for adventure and action. The chorus of men emphasizes his lyrics with unison gestures or a few tap steps or beats with their canes. The chorus's movement is minimal and their faces are expressionless; it seems that they are afraid of showing any emotion for fear of expressing the wrong one. After watching the chorus several times, it seemed clear this lack of expression was a directorial instruction. A director's device that delivers the message that there is no emotion or physical bond between members of the chorus, and that their role is purely functional: they are there to support Astaire's star persona. Once the song ends, Astaire and the chorus walk in unison to one side of the stage stepping in time to the music and then emphasizing the melody with a few swaying changes of weight as they change direction and walk to the other side. They cross back again to center stage, turn and begin to walk upstage. Suddenly Astaire breaks into a short tapping sequence. The chorus faces him and responds in unison with their own sequence. Astaire tilts his head toward them as if listening and then answers them with an even more demanding sequence. The chorus admits defeat as they take three steps back and then leave the stage in symmetrical patterns. Pollack refers to the "cult of competition" as an accepted and expected characteristic in relationships between boys or young men: "the goal of winning at any cost, a quest for narcissistic glory at the expense of others" (273). The choreographed competitive motif sets Astaire apart from the chorus, demonstrates his supremacy as a dancer and justifies his dominance of the stage.

As the chorus exits, in defeat, on either side of the screen, Astaire is left alone to do what he does best: spectacular dancing. His solo is an inventive, playful mix of skill, timing, easy grace, and tapping virtuosity. About two minutes into the solo the stage lights dim and his body is almost silhouetted against a backdrop of a night sky. It seems that even Astaire's substantial dancing talent is not allowed more than a brief interlude of abstract expression before the choreography takes Astaire's body off display by giving him a recognizable activity. Now the choreography suggests a narrative of someone leaving a party and being followed home. Returning to the miming gestures first introduced during the song, Astaire mimes such events as shaking a hand, hearing something, casually walking away, suddenly turning to check something else, crouching low and tipping his top hat to say goodbye. The movement is interspersed with a few

tap steps; he then turns suddenly and holds his body in complete stillness or anticipation, as if he were being followed. In this moment Astaire appears to be both the hunter and the hunted: a familiar image of man as the soldier, the fighter.

At this point the chorus reappears from the back and Astaire turns toward them, remaining low and still, like a creature ready for attack. Once the chorus stands silhouetted in a straight line across the back, Astaire uses his cane as a pretend gun, his tapping to create the sound of a gun going off, and proceeds to shoot each of the men in the line. Referred to as "the machine gun number" (Thomas 109), Astaire was able to execute a series of very difficult tapping riffs while subverting the audience's attention with an acceptable male activity: shooting the chorus. Once the last chorus member has fallen down, shot dead, the dance ends and Astaire is left alone to bow for his enthusiastic audience, now he is clearly the victorious hunter and master of his staged world. The camera reveals an audience made up entirely of men dressed exactly like Astaire and the dead chorus, in white ties and tails. In this closing image Astaire's overwhelming approval by men, who obviously share a bond with him as represented in their identical costumes, implies that his dancing is not only acceptable but also, perhaps, a desirable activity for a man.

In 1935 Astaire was still working to establish his Hollywood identity as a leading man. The choreographed sequence, the chorus, the song, Astaire's dancing and mime in *Top Hat* all contribute to solidifying the desired image of being overtly heterosexual, smart, aggressive, and, ultimately, dominant. For instance, Astaire's song "Top Hat and Tails" is about getting ready for a night out on the town, and suggests his male prowess and lust for adventure. Knowing he has just arranged for a plane to fly off to find Ginger Rogers, we can imagine what that adventure might be: sex. The chorus of men has the subliminal effect of saying that many men do, in fact, dance. The fact that the chorus remains mostly expressionless and dances very little may, in part, have been a solution to the problematic issue of seeing men dance with other men; an image that can easily be interpreted with homosexual connotations. It is not possible to know exactly what the filmmakers intended when they placed Astaire on stage with a chorus of men, but in 1935 the filmmakers certainly knew that dancing was dominated by female performers and that this fact would need to be addressed if Astaire was going to become the

money-making star they wanted him to be. When highlighting Astaire's dancing for the first time in lavish cinematic production, it would be important to establish his heterosexuality and the impression that red-blooded American men dance. Astaire's interest in Ginger Rogers demonstrates his heterosexuality and the male chorus tells the audience that men do dance. Astaire's interaction with the chorus is almost adversarial. Initially he does not acknowledge the chorus and he never really dances with them; the most they do together is walk across the stage. When Astaire does burst into dance it is meant to be perceived as his challenge to others. The chorus responds by mimicking him. Astaire ups the ante and the chorus backs down and leaves defeated. The competition is over; the boys give up and Astaire, the winner, is left alone, victorious. Once it has been demonstrated that men do dance, and once Astaire is superior, the chorus exits and their dance imagery and choreographic potential is explored no further.

The chorus's return for the finale, to be shot down like ducks in a shooting gallery, is an image automatically associated with boys at play or men at war. This reminds us that under all the elegance and suave performance veneer Astaire is really just one of the guys. The approving male audience members assure us that Astaire's performance is acceptable. The fact that Astaire, the chorus, and the audience are mirror images of each other, dressed identically in top hats and tails, speaks to the conformity of Astaire and his performance. Astaire remains one of the guys, not only because the choreography says so, but also because the identical costumes say that all the men involved in this choreographed spectacle share a common bond: the boy code.

The virtuosity of Astaire's solo helps us see his dancing as a physical achievement: the trick or skill of being able to tap complex rhythms with his feet. The few times Astaire does acknowledge his audience is with an expression implying that what he just did was difficult, or a lot of fun. For the most part his smile seems pasted on and because he is an accomplished performer, we accept it. When the dancing becomes more difficult his smile disappears. Even through his easy grace it is possible to see that he is working at something that requires his full concentration. This effort is shown, in part, by his performance focus.

Choreographer and dancer Phyllis Lamhut uses the term "graining" to refer to the dancer's ability to focus inward on the body's

kinesthetic experience. This is done, in part, by pretending to look inside at oneself and by not focusing directly on the stage space, audience, or a dancing partner. In this way a dancer can use his focus to draw attention to the inward kinetic of his dancing, like cutting into a fine piece of wood to reveal the beauty of the wood's grain. One of the effects of graining is to guide the viewer's attention to the task being performed and, in Astaire's case, our attention is drawn to his feet and their accomplished tapping. Graining is aided by the fact that the rest his body moves only minimally and when it does move either it takes a literal mimed shape or emphasizes the rhythms he is creating with his feet. If he were suddenly to start emphasizing movement of his torso in space, or to flow in indirect floor patterns across the stage it would have suggested something personal or abstract. This would open the door for the audience to question the meaning of his movement and leave his dancing open to personal interpretation and, most importantly, question. It is hard to imagine that Astaire would have had the same remarkable success he achieved as a popular tap dancer, if he had been a modern or ballet dancer, no matter how talented. His ability to grain and take the audience's focus toward the rhythmic activity he performed presented his dancing as the task of tapping; an accomplishment or a difficult feat. By presenting dance as a task Astaire followed a prescribed code that maintained the established values of the day and was, thus, easily accepted by a mass audience.

The accumulation of these choreographed events, movement choices, and the male symbolism of top hats, guns, and competition motifs results in our viewing Astaire's dancing as an example of the acceptable male attributes of virtuosity, humor, ingenuity, and glamor or spectacle as Steven Cohan writes in the above mentioned article on Astaire. These acceptable male attributes dominated Hollywood entertainment between the World Wars. The masculine qualities of virtuosity and ingenuity that the Hollywood musical of the 1930s glamorized helped distinguish and distract America from the opposing forces of fascism and communism in Europe. America was more concerned with its own national economic and political problems. Hollywood counterbalanced these national fears by presenting American audiences with images of a strong America through its male identity, men who were capable, inventive, and, most importantly, unique. The choice to produce this first spectacle in

Astaire's career with both chorus and audience made up entirely of men highlighted Astaire's and America/Hollywood's adherence to the boy code: the male club that emphasizes the differences between American men and men of other nations or cultures; between men and women; between heterosexual and homosexual. Astaire's boy-code persona in *Top Hat* exemplified the American ideal of the red-blooded American male, idealistically bringing with him the suggestion of freedom from political concerns and abandonment to the carefree capitalist ideal of wealth and prosperity.

In the film *Top Hat* one does not objectify Astaire's body as if it were something to possess; instead one recalls the suave manners he achieves with such ease and the confidence he exudes. Fred Astaire is not the object of our desire. Instead, much like the approving male audience in the film, one longs for the ideals he represents. Such ideals include an adherence to the boy-code requirements and that Astaire reiterates with imagery, gestures, and relationships that fulfilled Western concepts of masculinity. This same adherence to the boy code requirements was also utilized by John Travolta in the 1977 film *Saturday Night Fever*, but with a very different outcome. John Travolta received an Academy Award nomination for his breakthrough role playing Tony Manero and was idolized by young American males who imitated him in the popular discos of the time. Travolta's performance is remembered now with nostalgic interest for all things 70s, a campy archive of discomania. Most people I have asked find it difficult to remember much about the plot or characters of *Saturday Night Fever*. But one has only to strike the pose Travolta strikes on the movie poster (Travolta in a white suit, left arm raised in the air with his finger pointing up, and his pelvis tilted back ready for action) to recall that Travolta's dancing was and is the film's enduring attraction. Watching the 1977 film *Saturday Night Fever*, we do notice Travolta's great body, and we lust after the character not his social circumstance, which is exactly what the filmmakers wanted and expected.

Saturday Night Fever could have been a 1970s version of a *Rebel Without a Cause*, (1955, Ray) were it not that Tony does have a cause: dancing. This working-class Joe is a great dancer and it is the one thing he can do that gives him the sense of purpose and satisfaction he has not found in the rest of his life. In this film, dancing works as a transformational vehicle through which Tony is able to see his life

more clearly. In turn, the audience is able to empathize with Tony, his need to fulfill his role in his community, and his desire to free himself from the dull predictability of his life. By 1977 the Woman's Movement and Gay Liberation were established and both questioned the traditional roles that men and women fulfilled in society. In the late 70s audiences recognized – and some even empathized with – the strain Tony was under in maintaining a 'traditional' masculine identity.

In her book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler points out the problem of viewing male or female characteristics as the inevitable consequence of the body. Sexual identity, she argues, is fluid and complex and characteristics of maleness or femaleness are learned and performed "normative ideals rather than a descriptive feature of experience" (23). In *Saturday Night Fever* we can see that Tony has learned to play his role successfully and that his dancing is a means of reaching outside his learned behavior of tough, working-class, straight guy to something that gives him a feeling of freedom, something that he longs for. But he is stuck with a job at the hardware store and a girlfriend whose need to please him is oppressive. When he finally meets a female partner who dances with a talent equal to his, he begins to see that the role he performs with his family, friends, and girlfriends may not be the one he would choose if he were truly free to make a choice.

It follows that if sexual identity is a learned normative practice then expression outside this norm has the potential for being seen as different and thus shamed by society. In Tony's macho environment, solo show dancing could easily have caused him shame. Yet Tony is free to dance with the female partners he chooses at the disco without being questioned. Travolta's masculine image is set up throughout the film, but when his dance solo draws near, the film goes out of its way to assure the Western audience that he is a red-blooded American male. The film emphasizes that he is a heterosexual and a popular male stud on the prowl. This nearly neurotic overstatement begins when Travolta and his friends enter the disco.

About half way into the film Travolta takes his older brother, who has just rejected the priesthood, to a disco with his friends. As they enter the disco we see a nearly nude woman go-go dancer on a platform, letting us know immediately that we are in heterosexual bar. Once the camera has left this dancer she is never seen again in

the film, not even in the background. As I combed through the rest of the scene I was unable to fathom where this woman would have danced. It seems as if she was edited in later, perhaps as an afterthought.

The guys enter. They are familiar and popular. Women approach them and they are all ready to party. Travolta's need to fight off the attention he receives from the women in the disco informs us of how successful he is at fulfilling his masculine role, and his obvious popularity creates a context that most young heterosexual men would find desirable, even fantastical. Travolta and his gang sit down at a table and a woman comes over and asks Travolta to dance. He accepts but reminds his brother that this woman is not his usual partner. While dancing, Tony and the woman engage in some verbal sparring that is meant to be amusing, but is misogynist. The woman lets Travolta know she is interested in him and that she is sexually available. However the boy code requires that the male remain dominant and Travolta's verbal abuse and rejection of this sexually 'liberated' woman shows us that his character is really the one in control. This woman and her so-called liberation are not a threat to his macho image and his adherence to the boy code. Put in the context of the Women's Movement in 1977, the subtext of this interaction is very revealing of the difficulties men and women experienced in the late 70s when new values of social codes were busy throwing into question their established sex roles.

It is also obvious that this woman is not a great dancer and we think Travolta is going to walk away frustrated, but then he turns around and walks past this woman, ignoring her, and crosses the floor with the confidence of a thoroughbred stallion. Leading with his pelvis, and spiraling his chest from one side to the other, he swaggers through the crowd on the dance floor, taking up more personal space than would be allowed if the moment had not been choreographed.

The camera cuts to the table of his male friends (reminiscent of the male audience in Astaire's film) who pause, notice him, and recognize that he is about to break loose and dance. Then it cuts back to an empty dance floor. All the other dancers have moved to the sides: like in Astaire's entrance in *Top Hat*, Moses has parted the Red Sea. Now Travolta faces the audience and takes a couple of steps forward, stops, and makes an asymmetrical shape with his whole body, left arm and leg turned in, right arm extended to the side. Then

he quickly does a catch step to the backside and walks forward again turning his gesture leg to exaggerate the movement of his pelvis – thus emphasizing the location of his male prowess. At the same time he makes quick and casual gestures with his forearms similar to a hitchhiker thumbing for a ride: these gestures begin near his body and travel outward toward the sides and emphasize the rhythmic movement of his pelvis. At this point Travolta's body posture resembles that of other Hollywood male icons, such as John Wayne or James Cagney, and like them Travolta's torso is held and exposed with little or no movement: creating a shield that tells us he is in control and that keeps others at a distance. Crowds on both sides of the screen frame the picture and cheer Travolta on with clapping and shouting, "Yeah, right on." He stops center front, keeps the pulse of the music with his body and looks from side to side and mimes checking his cufflinks, left then right: similar to Astaire's mime and primping in *Top Hat* and with the same effect of identifying a man getting ready for action. Next Travolta places his hands on his belt buckle and pulls his pants up slightly, advertising the location of his penetrating potential, and then does shoulder rolls as he bends his legs into a deep parallel plié. At the bottom there is a short pause, he shifts his pelvis to the side and does a sequential movement up his body into a pointing shape. The camera cuts low to angle up, giving him a powerful towering appearance and showing his upper torso and arm pointing and scanning across the screen: both the angle of this shot and the long stable shape suggest his ability to stay firmly in control. He turns to profile as the camera cuts front again to show his whole body. This time he makes quick circles with and around his forearms while keeping time with his feet (touch step, touch step) and leading with his pelvis, moves to the side of the dance floor. He turns to place his body on a slight diagonal, bends his knees a little to allow his pelvis to move easily as he rocks it forward and back to the beat of the music. By advertising his pelvis in this cross over and pose he invites the audience to view his body and to imagine his sexual potential.

This opening sequence and everything in Travolta's disco solo is danced to a four four beat creating a very predictable choreography, but the point of Travolta's dancing is neither the artistry of the choreography nor the inventiveness of the movement, as it is in Astaire's solo in *Top Hat.* Travolta's solo dance in *Saturday Night*

Fever is part of a character study of a young working class Italian-American male; choreographed and edited specifically to demonstrate the character's male confidence. Within this sequence, the setup and choreography never lets the audience forget that he is a macho heterosexual.

Travolta begins his solo in reaction to the 'liberated' woman who initially asked him to dance, she was immediately shown to be both sexually aggressive and an inept dancer. His frustration with her makes his solo a kind of rivalry, or declaration that establishes his dominance. This behavior is acceptable behavior for boys and demonstrates what Pollack refers to as "the imperative men and boys feel to achieve status, power, and dominance" (24). Throughout Travolta's dancing solo the rejected woman stands isolated from the rest of the crowd on the upper stage right corner of the disco floor. She leans on one leg and appears to be simultaneously rejected and waiting for him to finish, watching him like the others. Travolta's character does not acknowledge her and at the end of his solo she simply disappears much like the naked go-go dancer that set up this sequence. The scenario suggests the presence of the always-available female, highlighting the difference between her passivity and his activity, the woman as potential prize to the conquering male.

When Travolta's character takes center stage, he moves without apology; the crowd's approval of him lets us know this male's dancing is acceptable. His movement is simple: arm, hand, leg, and pelvic gestures strung together. Because the human torso easily reveals both emotional content and abstract objectification, Travolta – like Astaire – moves his torso minimally. As Travolta's solo progresses he occasionally smiles at the crowd, but the show of pleasure is always in response to the crowd's reaction: in much the same way that Astaire acknowledges the audience in his solo from *Top Hat*. These facial responses are not an indication of any pleasure that Astaire or Travolta might be feeling from their dancing, which could easily come dangerously close to an emotional response and leave their dancing open to interpretation. In both films Astaire's and Travolta's solos are manipulated so the audience knows exactly what to look at and what to think. When the stars respond with their faces they are simply acknowledging their audience's response and agreeing that they are, indeed, fabulous dancers.

The accumulation of this filmed sequence and Travolta's dance

performance maintains the unspoken requirements of the boy code in Hollywood cinema of the 70s. His dancing is the task of showing off, much like Astaire's tapping virtuosity, with no suggestion of personal expression. Travolta is in control of his dancing, his body, the admiring women, and the crowd of men and women who obviously love his dancing. Travolta's suggested sexuality invites attention to the gestures he makes with his body, or, at the very least, lets us know it is OK to watch him. The fact that in the film both men and woman, all presumably heterosexuals, are cheering him on, fulfills Mulvey's definition of both "active scopophilia" (sexual stimulation through sight) and "identification with ones like" (271).

Travolta's invitation to us to pay particular attention to his bodily gestures is similar to the graining focus used by Astaire to draw our attention to his feet. However, while Astaire's focus remains indirect, Travolta's focus is direct. Travolta knows what we are looking at; he wants us to look at him and to imagine his sexual potential as demonstrated through his dancing. This aggressive objectification of Travolta's body was the highlight of *Saturday Night Fever*. What is significant in Travolta's case is that he actively invites the audience to look at his body and the suggestive gestures he performs, and so participates actively in his own objectification, which becomes the driving action of the scene. This subversively fulfills the figurative gender straightjacket that Pollack defines as an essential boy code requirement: "As soon as a boy behaves in a way that is not considered manly, that falls outside the Boy code, he is likely to meet resistance from society – he may merely be stared at or whispered about, he may be humiliated, he may even get a punch in the gut, or he may just feel terribly ashamed" (58). Travolta's active objectification allowed him to participate in what is considered a feminine activity, without experiencing the consequences or shame that can easily come with such behavior.

In contrast to 1935, by 1977 the new social issues of the day dictated that Travolta's character needed to perform demonstrations of his masculinity for fear of being misread by an American audience, which was busy dealing with the changing times caused by the Feminist and Gay Movements of the late 60s and 70s. To the early-twenty-first-century American eye Travolta is by far a more masculine dancer. By contrast, Astaire, to the contemporary eye, seems fay with his limp wrist, slim body, and easy-going manners. In 1935

Astaire's masculinity did not have to be demonstrated in the same way Travolta's needed to in 1977, when a limp wrist would have given his character homosexual connotations and damaged his constructed heterosexual identity. Astaire's aggressive interest in Ginger Rogers was enough to establish his sexual preference for he and Hollywood needed the audience to perceive and agree with the notion that dancing was an acceptable career for a red-blooded American male. By emphasizing the boy-code attributes of virtuosity and ingenuity, and by choreographing stereotypical male activities such as grooming for a night on the town, competing with the male chorus, and shooting a gun, Astaire demonstrated that his dancing is a masculine activity. In 1977 Travolta's manufactured masculinity is clearly the objective of his dancing in *Saturday Night Fever.* He actively uses his performance as a demonstration of his male prowess, making a clear plug for the staying power of the straight male in a rapidly changing world.

The culture-carving power of the Hollywood machine manufactured and commercially exploited the carefully constructed images of the dancing male that perpetrated rather than threatened the established codes for masculine identity in the above mentioned films. Other Hollywood examples of this include Gene Kelly in *Anchors Aweigh* (1945, Sidney), Kevin Bacon in Footloose (1984, Ross), or Patrick Swayze in *Dirty Dancing* (1987, Ardolino). Also recent independent films, even with their politically correct homosexual subplots, such as *The Full Monty* (1997, Cattaneo) and *Billy Elliot* (2000, Daldry), can be included in the list of non-threatening male dancers.

In order to assist his discussion of the gender clichés being challenged in Western Theatrical dance, Arnd Weseman, in the introductory editorial of Ballet International's issue *Dance and Gender*, quotes Judith Butler: "There is no reason to divide the human body into male and female sex, unless this division meets the economic needs of heterosexuality and bestows on heterosexuality a naturalist luster, the luster of man / woman cliché which stresses differences instead of common ground" (i). Such words equally apply to my own discussion of dance and male gender. By stressing gender difference and emphasizing acceptable male attributes, Astaire's and Travolta's heterosexual luster was never in question. Their work clearly served the economic needs of the stars themselves and of the

Hollywood machines that manufactured their films. Also, the resulting cultural spinoffs, such as an increased interest in social dancing lessons, generated an ancillary financial market within the culture for which the films were created.

Learning to dance like Fred Astaire has been one of the main promotional slogans for many ballroom studios, from the mid 30s – when Astaire's films were first released – to today. Imitation of Fred Astaire and John Travolta is one way the boy code continues to be learned and performed by boys and young men across North America and beyond: one of the results of the global distribution of Hollywood films. *Top Hat* and *Saturday Night Fever* function both as entertainment and as social conformist propaganda. When Pollack writes that the boy code "is so ingrained" that "no one is immune" he can rightly include the images, the impact, and the influence of Hollywood's male dancers (6).

Final Thoughts

In the early 1960s, while growing up in the small rural town of Dawson Creek, British Columbia, I took my first dance lessons with a woman named Mrs. White. At the end of each school year Mrs. White put together a recital for parents and friends. Being the only boy in a group of about thirty girls, I was dubbed Mrs. White's Fred Astaire. I think this was mostly because it helped to justify my participation in her classes. I was allowed to perform certain dances, such as the Highland Fling or the Mexican Hat dance, but other dances, such as the Can-Can, I did not perform. Of course I was allowed to tap. Eventually the strain, and shame, of continuing classes with Mrs. White was too great, both for her and for me, and I stopped attending. It was not until many years later that I started to dance again, and many years after that, I began to realize what had happened and what I had given up. Fred Astaire had given me some means of access to dance as a boy, but not enough.

The widely distributed world of Hollywood films has done nothing to challenge the Western cultural norms of masculinity and dance. Hollywood's use of dancing to maintain the boy code is both a reflection of and an instruction for societal norms. Hollywood's portrayals make it nearly impossible for boys and young men to pursue a passion for movement that expresses something beyond the functionality of maintaining these boy code requirements. Even

young men's current fascination with Hip-Hop, which finds its roots in the exuberant acrobatics of Breakdancing, has simply upped the ante of extreme inventiveness, sharing more with the innovations of Astaire's tapping and with Travolta's active objectification than with any need to make statements that are personal, emotional, or that might be open for other interpretations. Hollywood has yet to provide us with images of male dancers that are emotional, expressive, delicate, or vulnerable.

In my ten years of teaching dance in a university Dance Department only a handful of young men have been enrolled. Professional studios in local and metropolitan communities share this same lack of young men's presence. Although the singular boys and young men who do dance in these studios and universities feel it is where they want to be, even that they belong, the pressure to maintain the boy code often shames them into quitting.

Fortunately, contemporary choreographers, such as Mark Morris and Lloyd Newson, are creating works for the stage that challenge the boy code and its many requirements. In 1989 Morris created and danced the title role of queen Dido in his seminal choreography *Dido and Aeneas*. Considered to be a big man, particularly in the dance world, Morris inhabited his character without the aid of 'female' costuming or extreme makeup. Morris used his almost fully unadorned male body to represent a female character and by doing so freed himself from the "imaginary construction" that Judith Butler argues is "the culturally instituted fantasy" imposed on each of us because of the body parts we are born with (90). In 1996 Lloyd Newson used the interior of an English pub as a setting to explore the male psyche in his work Enter Achilles, a dance that explores the lonely, and at times violent, insecurities that come with the pressure of fulfilling the boy code requirements. The catalyst in Newson's all male work is a stranger who enters the pub and interferes with the noisy surroundings by selecting soft music on a jukebox and dancing casually by himself. Once the pub's male regulars notice the stranger and his activity, they isolate him and mock him. When they physically attack, the stranger protects himself by turning quickly on the spot, and shedding his business suit to reveal a Superman costume. The attack takes on a comical tone as the pub gang lifts the stranger over their heads and make him soar through the air as if he were an airplane. As this scenario progresses, two men leave the group and begin to

explore, in secret, a physical relationship with soft gestures that turn into a gentle giving of their body's weight, to each other. As these two images contrast and interact with each other simultaneously on stage the complex laws of the boy code are revealed as a coverup – symbolized by the Superman costume – for the lack of intimacy or meaningful contact in the lives of the men in the pub.

Newson ends his sixty-minute exploration of violence and vulnerability with a poignant image that speaks to the difficulty, and perhaps impossibility, of ever finding a way out of the boy code's labyrinth of demands. One man from the gang is left crying over the rape and mutilation of his plastic life-size female sex doll while the stranger sings "the Impossible Dream."

Morris's and Newson's challenging productions, which have both been filmed, do not have the wide distribution available to Hollywood films. However, both productions have toured successfully as live performances, and the cinematic versions have been presented on television and in select film festivals. They are a long way from the Hollywood stamp of approval, but a promising start at showing alternate views of the male body as an emotional, vulnerable, and expressive instrument.

Fred Astaire and John Travolta's dancing performances were constructed to tell us that red-blooded American men dance, at least in the fantastical world of the cinema. However, they do not tell us how to overcome the real-world stigma attached to dancing that keeps boys and young men away from their passion in universally large numbers. If Mrs. White or I had any idea why we were uncomfortable with each other, I wonder if we could have changed our behavior. In all honesty, I doubt it. After all, Mrs. White and I were not reacting to our own experiences in the studio, but to our fears of other people's perception of my dancing. In the end, like Fred Astaire and John Travolta, maintaining the boy code was the priority, one that we both had to accept.

Thanks to Anna Blewchamp, Selma Odom, and Lisa Cochrane for their valuable assistance.

Works Cited

Ardolino, Emile, dir. *Dirty Dancing*. With Patrick Swayze and

Jennifer Grey. Vestron, 1987.
Badham, John, dir. *Saturday Night Fever*. With John Travolta and Karen Lynn Gorney. Paramount, 1977.
Bridges, James, dir. *Urban Cowboy*. With John Travolt and Debra Winger. Paramount, 1980.
Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
Cattaneo, Peter, dir. *The Full Monty*. With Robert Carlyle, Mark Addy, and William Snape. Fox Searchlight, 1997.
Cohan, Steven. "Feminizing the Song and Dance Man: Fred Astaire and the Spectacle of Masculinity in the Hollywood Musical." *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*. Ed. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark. New York: Routledge, 1993. 46-69.
Daldry, Stephen, dir. *Billy Elliot*. With Julia Walters and Jamie Bell. Universal Studios, 2000.
Griffith, D[avid] W[ark], dir. *Intolerance*. Image, 1916
Kleiser, Randal, dir. *Grease*. With. John Travolta, Oliva Newton-John, and Stockard Channing. Paramount, 1978.
Lamhut, Phyllis. Summer Dance Intensive. Simon Fraser University: Burnaby, B.C. Summer 1979.
Mamoulian, Rouben, dir. *Silk Stockings*. With Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse. MGM, 1957.
Morris, Mark, perf. and chor. *Dido and Aeneas*. Dir. Barbara Willis Sweete. Rombus, 1989.
Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance*. Ed. Lizbeth Goodman and Jane de Gay. New York: Routledge, 1998. 270-75.
Newson, Lloyd, chor. *Enter Achilles*. Dir. Clara Van Gool. DV8 / BBC / RM Arts, 1996.
Pollack, William. *Real Boys*. New York: Holt, 1998.
Ray, Nicholas, dir. *Rebel Without a Cause*. Warner, 1955.
Ross, Herbert, dir. *Footloose*. With Keven Bacon, John Lithgow, and Dianne Wiest. Paramount, 1984.
Sandrich, Mark, dir. *The Gay Divorcee*. With Ferd Astaire and Ginger Rogers. RKO, 1934.
——. *Shall We Dance?* With Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. RKO, 1937.
——. *Top Hat*. Perf. Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers RKO, 1935.

Seiter, William A., dir. *You Were Never Lovelier.* With Fred Astaire and Rita Hayworth. Columbia, 1942.

Shawn, Ted. *One Thousand and One Night Stands.* New York: Da Capo,1979.

Sidney, George, dir. *Anchors Aweigh.* With Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra. MGM, 1945.

Stallone, Sylvester, dir. *Staying Alive.* With John Travolta and Cynthia Rhodes. Paramount, 1983.

Stevens, George, dir. *Swing Time.* With Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. RKO, 1936.

Thomas, Bob. *Astaire: The Man, The Dancer.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984.

Wesemann, Arnd. "Introduction." *Ballet International / Aktuell Tanz.* 8-9 (August 1998): i.

Middle Eastern Body-Building: The Construction of Dana International

OREN MEYERS

Oren Meyers is a Ph.D. candidate at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania. Meyers' main areas of research are collective memories, journalistic practices, and popular culture. He has recently written on the self-perceptions of Israeli migrants and on Holocaust commemoration in Israeli popular music. An earlier version of this article was presented at the "Sex on the Edge" conference at Concordia University, Montreal, in October 1998.

On the evening of May 9, 1998, an unusual crowd of cheering Israelis celebrated Dana International's victory in the Eurovision Song Contest, a competition in which 25 European countries, represented by their respective public broadcasting services, took part. After Dana's song *Diva* was announced as the winner of the contest, thousands of joyful Israelis rushed to Tel Aviv's Rabin Square. In a surprising juxtaposition, at least by Israeli norms, the rainbow flag was raised next to the blue and white national flag of Israel, and gay and lesbian activists danced in the company of enthusiastic fans of Betar Yerushalayim, the country's champion soccer team at the time, which is traditionally linked to right-wing and conservative sections of society (Ochovsky 25; Peri 3).

This somewhat surrealistic gathering in Tel Aviv's main square illustrates the complex role Dana International plays in the Israeli cultural and political spheres. Dana, born male-bodied in 1971, was originally named Yaron Cohen. She went through a sex change operation[1] in

[1]In order to distinguish the surgical procedure Dana International went through,

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 3 (2001) © CLGSA / SCELG

1993, and in recent years has occupied the spotlight at the intersection of gender, cultural, and political discussions in Israel. Although criticized by political activists and religious leaders, she has won the appreciation of hundreds of thousands of Israelis who not only bought her CDS, but also chose her as Israel's top woman singer of 1995.

The challenges posed by the varied forms of transgender representations to conventional perceptions of gender and sexual identities have been widely discussed (Butler 1-72, 128-34; Garber 93-117, 353-74; Goldsby 108-15; Stone 151-76) and much of this work has argued that gender is not inherent, but rather socially constructed or performed. Dana's case adds an important contribution to this body of knowledge since it positions the strain between essential and interpretive perceptions of gender and sexuality under unique circumstances. This is so because the *Dana phenomenon* – which I define as the accumulated public outcome of Dana's construction through her body, through her performed images, through her artistic work, and through her dialogue with varied audiences– exists within the context of two interrelated frames of analysis. On one level, the ways in which Dana performs her images of femininity and sexuality challenge common perceptions regarding the meaning of 'being' a man or a woman. On a second level, this interplay between supposedly inherent traits and constructed images of gender merge into the complex politics of Israeli identity.

And so Dana's alternative reading of gender images is extended into an alternative reading of the tensions that shape Israeli reality. In a society that is, arguably, entering a "post-Zionist" era (Cohen 203-14) Dana embodies a trend of questioning longstanding truths.[2] Through her musical choices and public personas, Dana underlines

---

I have decided to follow the works reviewed in this paper and define her as transsexual. At the same time, transsexuality is addressed as one of the many possible variations of transgender representation.

[2]See for example an article about Dana International by Amalia Ziv that was published in *Te 'oryah u-vikoret* (Theory and Criticism) special issue marking Israel's 50th anniversary through a survey of people, organizations, and events that represent a counterhegemonic reading of Israeli history. Another example of Dana's role in Israeli cultural discourse can be found in an interview with the novelist Abraham B. Yehoshua, one of Israel's prominent cultural and political thinkers (Koren). In the interview, Yehoshua offers a new model for state-religion relations in Israel based on the recognition that the Jewish people exist in an androgynous condition. "The androgynous are always more artistically rich," Yehoshua explained, "and it is not accidental that Dana International has become a national symbol over the last year" (26).

tensions between essential and interpretive readings of religious and secular identities, Jewish and Arab cultures, and other standard Israeli categories of separation. In this sense, Dana is a clear threat to schools of thought that construct their arguments through essential distinctions between 'us' and 'them.' Thus, the mere fact that Dana was the official representative of Israel in the aforementioned Eurovision Song Contest stimulated angry responses from ultranationalistic and religious leaders (Sharrock 10).

But what is the mechanism through which Dana crystallizes issues such as gender and politics? And how does Dana's interpretation of those issues help her to be accepted by a variety of audiences? This paper aims to explore those questions through a study of Dana's work and public personas. The paper argues that the construction of Dana as seen through her body, her performed images, her artistic work, and her dialogues with audiences, reveals an ongoing dialectic process in which Dana simultaneously utilizes both essential and interpretive perceptions through changing circumstances. Thus the Dana phenomenon reflects a recurring pattern of working within and against gender, culture, and political conventions. In the cultural sphere, just as in the spheres of political or gender identity, Dana manages to convey unconventional or even subversive ideas through the constant use of accepted and legitimate imagery. Furthermore, the accumulated consequence of Dana's reading of Israeli reality is a reworking of diverse social spheres that are usually perceived as distant and unrelated.

Four Means of Construction

The following discussion probes four dimensions of the Dana phenomenon: Dana's body, her performance of public images, her artistic work, and her dialogue with various audiences. The connecting thread between these four components is their reflection of Dana's extraordinary ability to work simultaneously within and against common conventions of gender, culture, and politics in order to project her own messages. The analysis integrates relevant theoretical studies, works performed by Dana, and journalistic coverage. The theoretical studies considered here deal with various aspects of the tensions between essential and interpretive perceptions. Hence those works offer conceptual means that position the Dana phenomenon within the larger context of culture and gender studies. Moreover, those

works provide several comparable and thus useful instances of cultural phenomena that underscore similar essential/interpretive strains. The material produced by Dana was gathered through a survey of the CDs and video clips she has released in the last eight years. The journalistic data was drawn from stories about Dana and interviews with her that appeared in six Israeli newspapers since 1993. Additional English-language stories were located through a Lexis-Nexis search.

Construction through the Body

Dana's body stands at the core of her self-definition and the discourse that surrounds her – two concepts that are, in many ways, inseparable. As a pop star Dana invests vast amounts of energy and money in order to maintain her physical appearance, and in interviews she has openly addressed her sex-change operation, consumption of hormones, and purchase of silicon implants. In many ways, Dana's example stretches Richard Dyer's (1-18) idea of the self-producing star to its limits: unlike other stars Dana was not satisfied with a nose job or a new hair color. In order to match her 'natural resources' to her image as a woman who is 'larger than life,' she went through the ultimate body transformation.

Dana's sex change, and especially the fact that the operation gained so much public attention, emphasizes the idea of the pop star's body as a commodity. Dana's drastic 'body upgrading' takes even the concept of the body as commodity (see Finkelstein 81-129) to its limits. While other stars may try to deny the fact that they consciously use their bodies to sell themselves and their sexuality, in Dana's case her body – which is undoubtedly 'constructed' – is to a great extent the message itself. This becomes clear while reading the interviews in which Dana continuously addresses issues of femininity and sexuality: she boasts about her sexual success with men (Kerem, "I Wouldn't Dare"), confesses about her desire to enlarge her breasts (Birenberg), and poses for news photographers in a variety of provocative (see figure 1) positions.

Dana's attitude toward the relation between her body and her gender identity is extremely complex. In the newspaper interviews given by Dana, she addresses her gender identity in three contradictory ways. In the clear majority of the interviews, Dana reinforces the concept of essential and binary gender division. In these interviews, Dana represents herself as a woman who was trapped inside a man's

body and was liberated through surgery (Kerem, "What the Eyes See"). Furthermore, her former experience as a man is explained by her as "God's manufacturing error" (61). This logic strengthens the binary concept because it underscores that men and women are two essential parts of a dichotomy. Even the issue of transgender is not in conflict with the claim that Dana has always been a woman. It can be maintained that the physician merely helped her by exchanging her penis for a vagina, and so fixed god's error.

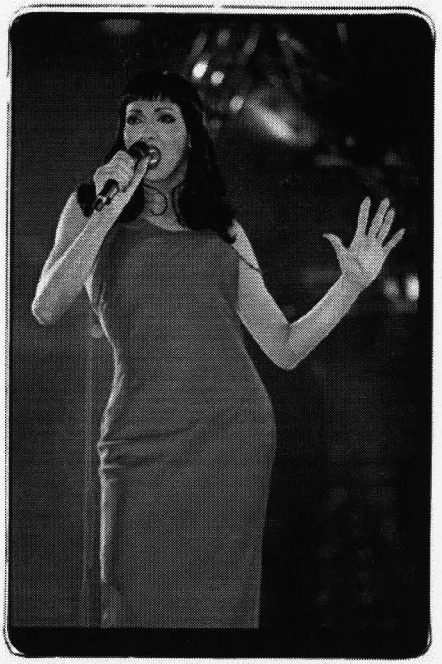


Photo: Ziv Koren

Dana reinforces the notion that she has always been '100% woman' by repeating several types of stories that address her past and present. First, she tells stories that position her as the 'trapped woman' revealing, for example, that as a child she never wanted to dress up as a cowboy on *Purim*[3] – the Jewish equivalent of Halloween – but rather as Little Red Riding Hood (Bar-On 12). In references to her current life she reinforces her femininity, not only by projecting her sexuality but also by telling reporters that many women consult her on 'feminine issues' (Birenberg 7). Furthermore, she addresses the most mythic aspect of femininity when she says she wants to have a child (Kotas, "International Family" 24).

The relation between Dana's body and her gender identity is extremely salient when it comes to coverage in the Israeli press. Since

[3]A Jewish religious holiday commemorating the preservation of the Jews in ancient Persia and celebrated by story-telling, dressing up in costumes, and partying.

Dana has become famous, Israeli newspapers have on several occasions published claims from anonymous sources that Dana was never really operated upon and thus is not a 'real' woman. Such reports represent a more traditional and binary perception of gender division. Dana has responded by strengthening her feminine identity through recruiting witnesses such as family members (Kotas, "International Family") and ex-boyfriends (Riva), who confirm the fact that she has been surgically transgendered.

In contrast, two further interviews offer instances in which Dana presents more complex perceptions of her gender identity and body-gender relations. The interview with Ronit Foryan was given as Yaron Cohen in 1993, then still an active transvestite. A few months later, Cohen underwent the sex-change operation and became very famous through the success of his (then already her) first hit. In this first interview Cohen claims he is a gay man who only wears women's clothes in order to make money. He denies taking hormones and claims he has no intention of going through a sex-change operation.

The interview with Tzipa Kampinsky was given as Dana in 1996. By now she was very successful. The sharp difference between this interview and most others is that while all the others appeared in mass-circulation national dailies, this one appeared in Tat-Rama (Substandard), a gay publication of limited circulation. In this interview Dana remarks: "A transsexual went through an operation and she is grooming a breast, but at the same time, just like a homosexual, she loves to have sex with men. All of us will always be men" (qtd. in Kampinsky 6). Here, Dana also qualifies her present self-representation as a '100% woman' by saying: "Sometimes in interviews you have to beautify things. I have never felt I am a woman. If a woman who had a baby or went through an abortion should sit here next to me, I would never be able to feel like her. I never felt I am a woman, I just felt I am different" (qtd. in Kampinsky 2). The remarkable difference between three versions of Dana's gender identity as reflected in the interviews could be interpreted as a calculated manipulation or even as a string of lies. I argue, however, that if we adopt Sandy Stone's "Posttranssexual Manifesto" (151-76) we must conclude that none of the abovementioned versions is a lie, just as none of them is true. Stone's analytical scheme suggests that these types of truth/lie binaries would not be adequate in a case such as Dana's.

Stone stresses the idea that gender identities are in many ways social constructs, and often enough masculine and feminine characteristics are acquired skills. Her manifesto suggests that sexuality is a text that can be read – or rather performed – in alternative ways. The traditional concepts of binary gender divisions suppress the voice of transsexuals because they do not fit into either of the categories and therefore have to choose one and deny the other. When transsexuals manage to pass successfully to the other side of the gender border, they have to prove that the transformation was complete and that their old gender identity has been erased.

In contrast, the textual interpretation of sexuality broadens the scope of possible gender options by delineating a certain reversibility. Because there are a variety of options in regard to gender identity, the idea of a man trapped in a woman's body or vice versa is no longer relevant. And so, if sexuality can be perceived as a text, then Dana simply reads her sexuality as different gender-genres under different circumstances. This can be true both for different interviews catering to different audiences and for different life phases. Sometimes Dana prefers to read or perform her sexuality as a man, sometimes as a woman, and sometimes as 'something different.'

Construction through Performed Images

Dana's identity is – or identities are – produced through a series of contrasting public images she performs in different contexts. The first and most significant set of such contrasting images are related to Dana's feminine identity. In her public appearances Dana shifts between two poles: she is either the 'ultimate femme fatale,' defined by her sexuality and extraordinary talent to manipulate men, or she is the 'little loyal woman' who truly worships her man (Kotas, "Dana"). By the same token she moves between promiscuous sex and family values or between cynicism and romance. Thus, for instance, she criticizes other Israeli women singers for not being sexy and provocative enough (Kerem, "What the Eyes See" 62), but at the same time she says she pays heed to her boyfriend's complaints that she is not modest enough (Kotas, "Dana" 18).

In this context it is worth examining how Dana utilizes her boyfriends in the process of constructing her images. In her first reference to the subject Dana claims she has a boyfriend serving as an officer in a paratroopers unit of the Israeli army. Though the

boyfriend was never publicly identified – and thus might be totally fictional – Dana's continuous references to his service in a combat unit links her to the classic Israeli macho fantasy of the girl who is in love with the tough warrior. A second boyfriend was interviewed together with Dana, and the portrayal that emerged was that of an extremely traditional and chauvinistic relationship. Although the boyfriend was unemployed at the time and Dana's work was the main source of income in their household, she keeps mentioning that she cooks for him and washes his clothes. "With all due respect for my achievements," she said, "love is more important to me than my career. And I also know that it does not matter to Nissim [the boyfriend] if I finish first or second in any song contest. For him, the most important thing is that I am his woman" (Kotas, "Dana" 16).

The common characteristic of those contradictory female images is that both are exaggerated to the extent that they no longer reflect a 'real' woman, but rather hyperbolized symbols of femininity. As a seductive slut or as an obedient homemaker Dana is self-reflectively performing the role of a stereotyped woman. Dana's choice of these extreme representations could be interpreted in two contradictory, or rather complementary ways. On the one hand, it is possible to claim that Dana's frequent shifts between clichéd feminine images – even if they are caricaturistic in nature – reflects her sophisticated use of the "politics of signifier" (Kaplan 158). By performing those different images under different circumstances, Dana rejects essential binding definitions. Her constant use of varied images does not conceal some hidden 'true' self, but rather demonstrates the possibility of personal and political self-invention. Her identity-shifts thus have subversive potential.

On the other hand, it is also possible to argue that Dana performs these kinds of exaggerated feminine images since she has no other choice. Under the current conservative Israeli circumstances (see for example, the aforementioned journalistic inquiries regarding the operation, or the religious reactions to Dana), Dana is unlikely to be considered an 'ordinary' or 'normal' woman. Thus the only way for her to pass as a woman is to poach those unrealistic, or even hyperrealistic, feminine images.

Dana's identity is likewise constructed through contradictory, performed images in the context of Israel's social reality. This begins with her name: when Dana decided to replace Yaron Cohen with a

new invented name she chose "Dana International," a name that combines two contrasting concepts. While "Dana" is a very typical Israeli name – one frequently mentioned in children's songs – "International" obviously reaches beyond the scope of the Israeli nation-state. The same concept is evident in the way Dana positions herself between east and west. She sings in Hebrew and Arabic, but also in English and French. In the same way, her music combines Western dance music with traditional Middle Eastern rhythms.

This choice should be understood in the context of the ongoing negotiation, or struggle, over Israel's cultural identity. Although in the first few decades of its existence Israel absorbed hundreds of thousands of Jewish migrants from Middle Eastern countries, its political and cultural agendas were determined by the dominating Ashkenazi elites (i.e., of European origin). This type of relationship between Jews of Middle Eastern and European origins continued to a significant extent into the next generation. So wide gaps between the two groups still exist in the realms of education, income, occupational status, and social mobility (see esp. Smooha and Kraus).

In the last decade or so, and after years of relative marginalization (see Regev), Middle Eastern music has managed to make its way into Israel's cultural mainstream. Dana is undoubtedly among the leading artists contributing to this process. Her presentation of mixed rhythms and texts in different languages, including Arabic, would have been virtually unthinkable in terms of the mainstream Israeli cultural scene twenty or thirty years ago (see Alcalay 220-38).

In my opinion the most interesting coupling of contrasting images can be found in Dana's relationship with god and religion. For obvious reasons Dana is not well-liked by the religious sections of Israeli society, and some municipal rabbis have tried, sometimes successfully, to prevent her from appearing in their towns (Fishbein 19). On several occasions, Dana has attacked Israel's religious establishment and expressed fear about the growing strength of the religious parties. At the same time, Dana keeps emphasizing that she believes in god (Bar-On 11) and thinks it is important that young Israelis should know more about their Jewish heritage (Kerem, "I Wouldn't Dare" 57).

But the most unusual way in which Dana links herself to Judaism is through a story about the way she found out about "God's manufacturing error" (Bar-On 12; Kerem, "What the Eyes See" 62). This revelation occurred on her (then his) bar mitzvah, the Jewish

rite of passage from childhood to adulthood that every Jewish boy is supposed to go through when he is 13. On his bar mitzvah day Yaron Cohen went with his family to the Western Wall in Jerusalem, the most sacred place to the Jews. While he was approaching the wall, an Ultraorthodox Jewish man saw Cohen turning to the men's section of the Wall and told him that young girls should go to the other section. Dana explains that, at that moment, she knew she was a woman. This appropriation of the Jewish cultural-religious rite of passage into Dana's personal-sexual rite of passage between the genders positions her individual narrative within the context of some major cultural narratives. By choosing to tell this specific story Dana demonstrates her strategic ability to poach the symbols of mainstream Jewish-Israeli discourse (bar mitzvah, the Western Wall) while charging them with subversive messages.

Construction through Artistic Work

In order to discuss Dana's use of her artistic work, I address four examples.

The song "I Can't Do without You"[4] was among Dana's first hits. In order to analyze it accurately it is important to note that in Hebrew, verbs and nouns have male and female suffixes that enable the listener to understand that when Dana sings "I Can't Do without You" it is clear that she is a woman who is addressing a man. The text corresponds with typical feminine submissive imagery through lines such as "You can tell me/ that the night is over/ that you have to go/ that it is becoming late/ but don't tell me/ that you don't want me anymore." The song portrays a woman who is totally dependent on her one and only man, perhaps the loyal wife waiting for her husband to return home from his mistress, or the 'other woman' frustrated with her man who is able to escape from his family only for a brief moment. In either case it is clear that the text corresponds with the traditional, negative stereotype of the emotional woman who is totally controlled by a dominant man.

When Dana sings this simplistic text it can be interpreted in two contradictory ways: on the one hand, it fosters her 'little woman' image, which is also emphasized in some of the interviews she has given. On the other hand, Dana's singing of this kind of stereotypical

[4]Lyrics: Max Gat-Mor; melody: Tzvika Pik.

text can also be interpreted as a parody on traditional gender relations. Dana's choice to cross the border between genders is reflected in her theatrical and larger-than-life performance of this song, and suggests that her reading of the text is a form of ridicule. Her ability to read herself as the 'little woman' can be regarded as part of a costume game, or as a part of her ongoing process of self-invention. Under these circumstances her use of such a text could be grasped as a critical or liberating act.

The liturgical poem "Freedom Shall Be Bestowed" (Dror Yikra in Hebrew), praising god for giving the Sabbath to the Jewish people as a day for rest and worship was written by the ancient, mid-tenth century Jewish scholar Dunash Ben Labrat (see Popper 13) and it is usually sung around the family dinner table on Friday evening. When Dana sings this song she is linking herself to two traditions. First, she connects herself to her Jewish roots, just as she has aimed to do in other contexts. Second, she is relating herself to other famous Israeli singers, mostly men and women of Yemenite Jewish origin (Ofra Haza and Boaz Sha 'arabi, to name two well-known examples) who already performed their versions of this notable poem.

Yet, when Dana sings "Freedom Shall Be Bestowed" she offers an alternative reading of the text, an instance of cultural poaching. This is first emphasized through the rhythm of her singing. Although Dana follows the traditional melody, she adds to it a Western rhythm that makes it sound like a typical dance song. Secondly, when especially Dana sings the declaration that "Freedom shall be bestowed upon a boy and a girl/ and he shall guard you as if you were the apple of his eye" the poem is undoubtedly charged with a different and new meaning, that shifts its focus from a religious-moral intent to a sexual one. The freedom for "boys and girls" can be interpreted in a very nontraditional way as a call for unhindered sexual self-expression.

The song "There Are Girls" was originally sung by a military musical troupe in the 1960s and since then it has gained the status of a classic Israeli pop song. Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and until the mid 1970s, the military singing troupes, comprised of young men and women in uniform, were among the most popular musical groups in the country. The military groups' soloists were treated like rock stars and their alumni dominated Israel's civilian popular music scene.

"There Are Girls"[5] is a typical song from the golden age of the military troupes. Although it does not directly address military issues, it certainly reinforces traditional patterns of interaction between men and women that were so common in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The song deals with the traditional division between 'good' and 'bad' girls. The good girls act in accordance with what is socially acceptable for young girls, while the bad ones are promiscuous and thus manage to seduce all the good guys: "There are girls, there are girls/ they dress up like cover girls/ their skirts get shorter and shorter/ and there are so many holes in their blouses/ that any guy can come and choose."

Dana's cover of "There Are Girls" links her to the origins of Israel's pop culture and to the IDF's unique folklore. That Dana chose to cover this specific song is not accidental. In its original version, when performed by the military troupe, "There Are Girls" was ironic in the way it supposedly represented the complaints of the good girls, while in truth mocking them. Dana's version offers us another ironic twist. First, we tend not to take Dana's claim about identifying with the complaints of the good girls so seriously. This is somewhat similar to Madonna's claim that she feels "like a virgin." It is clear that the emphasis should be put on the word "like," since Madonna's projected image is far from virginal. In Dana's case it is clear that she is hardly a good girl, since the image she projects tends to be provocative.

Second, when Dana sings "But I'm not like that/ but I'm not like that/ I am usually demure/ so no one bothers with me" the popular verse gains a whole new dimension of interpretive options: why is Dana not "like that," and what exactly makes her different from other girls? After dismissing the idea that Dana is protecting some imagined chastity, we are left with the ironic-subversive option: what is the "that," or the essence of any gender or sexual identity? Are the differences between types or genres of girls inherent or are they culturally constructed? And what about the differences between girls and boys? This type of interpretation is reinforced in the video clip of "There Are Girls." It features a mocking militarylike parade of dancing women, dressed in different costumes representing different 'genres' of professional feminine identity: a nurse, a policewoman, a teacher, a showgirl, and so on. While answers to questions of feminine

[5]Lyrics: Yoram Tehar-Lev; melody: Ya 'air Rozenblum.

identity can vary, it is clear that Dana's use of this text adds a completely new layer of meaning to its conventional rhetoric.

The video clip of the song "Cinquemilla" provides another example of the self-reflective dimension of Dana's works as well as of her intensive dialogue with her audience. In the clip, Dana is portrayed in her larger-than-life image as a sexy and seductive woman. During a significant portion of the clip Dana is filmed while she is riding passionately on an enormous artificial banana. This image directly addresses Dana's questionable gender identity, since it is hard to ignore the visual hint that Dana is riding a larger-than-life penislike object.

The decoding of this charged image can be assisted by considering Garber's concept of "male subjectivity" (95-96) as a way of perceiving traditional gender definitions as determined by men. At the core of this "male subjectivity" stands the male phallus; its existence or absence is the ultimate gender definer. This fundamental assumption guided male physicians and psychologists while dealing with transvestite and transsexual patients, rendering the core definition of gender as determined by their relationship with their penis: a male patient who looked like a woman, talked like a woman, and thought of himself as a woman, but still 'operated' his penis in order to gain sexual pleasure was a man confronting a psychological crisis. At the same time, a man who wanted to go through an operation in which he would lose his penis was deemed a 'woman trapped inside a man's body.'

Dana's intentional choice of riding an object that clearly resembles a male penis touches upon the most sensitive aspect of "male subjectivity" the fear of castration. In this context Dana's control of the penis signifier represents her triumph. Just when she got rid of it and replaced it with a new kind of gender identity, she finally managed to master the male penis. This interpretation is validated by a radio interview Dana gave after the clip won the first prize in the video clips category at the Haifa Film Festival. Dana was asked about the inspiration for the clip's main metaphor. She replied that some time before the clip had been shot an Israeli standup comedian had mocked her by joking: "Poor Dana, somebody cut off her banana." Riding the enormous fake banana was Dana's response.

Construction through Audiences

It is impossible to talk of a singular way in which Dana is perceived by her audiences.[6] By the term "audiences," I do not refer only to those who buy Dana's CDs, but also to the many people who find it necessary to address her publicly. Dana's ability to position, or rather reinvent herself, within many cultural contexts corresponds with the reactions of her audiences. And so she is perceived by various parties – both followers and opponents – in different and, in many cases, contradictory ways.

Dana's relationships with her audiences have a clearly circular nature. As explained above, Dana constructs her identities in several simultaneous political, cultural, and sexual spheres. Different audiences perceive these fragmented identities in a variety of ways, then Dana formulates her public reply, and so it goes on, enriching and layering the Dana phenomenon. Furthermore, the mosaic of perceptions about Dana stresses the noninherent dimensions of the Dana phenomenon even more, making it clear that Dana means very many different things to various audiences at one and the same time.

There are several distinct audience perceptions of the Dana phenomenon that I wish to discuss here. The first perception is that of Dana's Israeli fans and especially those who belong to the gay community. As previously mentioned, in the last eight years Dana has sold hundreds of thousands of albums in Israel, and since her success in the Eurovision she has also released several albums targeting international audiences. Those fans who have bought Dana's albums are obviously supportive of Dana's musical projects, but beyond that Dana has also gained the status of a hero among homosexuals, lesbians, and the transgendered across the world, and especially in Israel.[7] For instance, following Dana's victory in the Eurovision, Yair Keidar, the editor of *Hazman Havarod* ("The Pink

---

[6]A similar phenomenon was discussed in Kaplan's analysis of the three possible perceptions of Madonna. The first, conservative perception positions her in the "perversion" frame. The second perception, common among culture critics, follows Theodore W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer's tradition by positioning Madonna in the "repression" frame. The third perception is attributed to teenage girls, and it positions Madonna in the "subversion" frame since she offers young girls a revolutionary type of role model, embodying a new kind of feminism.

[7]See for example Dana's web page on <http://www,gay.org.il/asiron>, the web site of the Gay and Lesbian Student's Union of the Hebrew University.

Times") commented: "It is the best thing to happen to the gay community here in 50 years. Dana got where she got without forgetting where she came from" (qtd. in Keinon 8).

This wave of support is undoubtedly related to the fact that, throughout her career, Dana has always spoken openly about her gender identity and about her past experiences as a gay man. Furthermore, Dana has performed for free at events organized by gay associations, sung at the opening of the 1998 Gay Games in Amsterdam, and supported the struggle for gay rights in Israel. This behavior is unique on the Israeli pop scene, where Dana is one of the few singers who publicly addresses her nonnormative sexual preference or gender identity.

But Dana's identification with the gay community, binding gender identity with sexual preference, is not always viewed as natural or inherent. For example, Amit Kama, the former chairperson of Israel's association for the protection of individual rights (an organization representing Israeli homosexuals, lesbians, and bisexuals) made the following comment: "'I refuse to include Dana International in the homosexual scene. There is much less of a common denominator between her and myself than there is between you [the heterosexual woman reporter] and myself. I am enraged when people tell me she contributed to our community. She is neither a homosexual nor a lesbian'" (qtd. in Kampinsky 6). Later Kama softened his criticism, while still expressing some uneasiness regarding the way Dana ties homosexuality with transsexuality, thereby suggesting what gay men really want is to become women (Levertov 9). Michal Maroni-Fenner, an Israeli lesbian activist, revealed a similar conflicting view regarding Dana. According to her, the transgendered are an integral part of the gay community since they all "undergo a shared oppression" (Levertov 11). At the same time, she claims that it is hard for her as a lesbian feminist to embrace Dana as a role model since "she represents the most stereotypical woman there is, heavily made up, and with her breasts hanging out."

These contrasting responses again illuminate the fluid and complex components in Dana's public image. Her past experiences as a gay man, her diligent support of the gay community, and the fact that most of her entourage is made of gay men position her as a spokeswoman for the community. At the same time, her decision to abandon her male gender identity and her current self-positioning as

a feminine sex symbol seem to undermine – at least according to some community members – the causes both of homosexuals and of lesbians.

The second public perception I wish to discuss is that of Ultraorthodox Jewry. As mentioned previously, certain rabbis have tried to prevent Dana from performing in their towns, and in other instances managers of wedding halls refused to let Dana film video clips in their halls for fear that they would lose the kosher certification. Also, a striking piece of anecdotal information that came to light after the murder of Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's late prime minister, seems all too revelatory in this context. The investigators found that before the assassin Yigal Amir shot Rabin, he was waiting in the parking lot and speaking with some of the policemen guarding the area. At the same time, Aviv Geffen – another controversial Israeli singer – was singing on the stage as a part of the peace rally. According to the testimony of the policemen, Amir commented upon Geffen's performance by saying: "well, at least we are lucky they didn't bring that androgynous Dana International to the stage" (qtd. in Kampinsky 5).

This story, together with other less sensational ones, reveals the fact that Dana has gained the status of a symbol in the most intense dispute dividing the Jews of Israel. Since the establishment of the "State of Israel," its citizens have fiercely debated the question of Israel's religious and cultural identity. The fundamental issue is whether Israel ought to be specifically a "Jewish State," with all of the relevant religious implications, or only a "state of the Jews," which is to say a more-or-less secular homeland for the Jewish people.[8] This dispute has been manifested over the years in a series of debates on questions ranging from the exact interpretation of the Law of Return (i.e., how to determine the qualifying criteria for being Jewish) to quarrels over the closing of specific streets during the Sabbath.

Following the 1967 Six Day War and the growing dispute over the future of the occupied territories, the religious rift has increasingly overlapped with the political-strategic one, increasingly dividing the Jewish population into two opposing groups affiliated with two

---

[8]There is also a third option, less popular among Israeli Jews, that Israel should be the state of "all its citizens," which is to say it should abandon its Zionist vision.

opposing world views. This tension has caused several researchers to argue that present day Israeli society is in many ways on the brink of a culture war, if not an actual civil war (see esp. Etzioni-Halevy 7-26; Ohana 9-27).

In this context, Israel's conservative and religious sectors view Dana as more than a curiosity. Dana, a proud transsexual and a vocal supporter of gay causes embodies, as her opponents see it, the dangers of an Israel that is secular and immoral. She is a symbol of a public alienated from its Jewish heritage and, thus, bound to lead to the country's destruction, or at least to the abandonment of its Jewish identity. Following Dana's victory in the Eurovision, Shlomo Benizri, Deputy Minister of Health and a representative of the Ultraorthodox Shas Party, stated: "God is against this phenomenon. It's a sickness you must cure rather than give legitimacy" ("T*Dana").

Dana's assertions that she is a firm believer in god, and her constant appropriations of national and religious symbols as a means of conveying her nontraditional messages represent a challenge and threat especially to religious leaders. One instance of such appropriation was evident when Dana took part in Amnesty International's human rights campaign. Her poster titled "Gay Rights Are Human Rights" featured her in a relatively modest outfit, wearing a head cover, as she holds a lighted candle, which is both the logo of Amnesty International and a potent symbol of traditional Jewish womanhood. Following the same pattern, Dana's insistence that she is an Israeli patriot and that her victory in the Eurovision was her "gift for Israel's 50th anniversary" (Gozani 7) clearly demonstrate why she is viewed as a sophisticated threat by religious and ultranationalistic elements.

The two final perceptions I wish to discuss are found, respectively, among Dana's Arab fans and Egyptian officials. As mentioned, Dana sings in several languages, including Arabic, and her music combines Middle Eastern and Western rhythms. This formula has made her extremely popular in neighboring Arab countries, and according to some estimates six million bootleg Dana cassettes were sold in Arab countries up to July 1996 (Kerem, "Operation Dana" 46). When the Egyptian authorities discovered that Dana had become a favorite of Egyptian music fans they denounced her cassettes as abominations and forbade their distribution. Articles in the Egyptian press later claimed that Dana's successful "penetration" of the country was part

of a "Zionist scheme to corrupt Egypt's youth" (Karem, "Operation Dana" 46).

Those far-fetched allegations should be understood in the context of Israeli-Egyptian relations. Although the two countries signed a peace treaty 21 years ago, their relations are usually described as a "cold peace." Furthermore, the normalization process between the countries does not stop Egyptian newspapers from continuously publishing stories that accuse Israel of spreading AIDS in Egypt, increasing prostitution, and so on. These new themes relate to the old accusation that Israel is the most powerful representative of Western imperialism in the Middle East.

There is of course some irony in the fact that while Dana is still struggling in some respects to gain legitimacy in Israel, she is perceived elsewhere as an official representative of the Israeli authorities. Beyond that, it seems as though the fears of Egyptian officials are similar in nature to the ones expressed by the Jewish religious establishment in Israel. Dana is popular among Egyptians and other Arab pop music fans because she manages to provide a musical fusion of the local and the international. It is feared that this appropriation of local Middle Eastern culture (or Jewish tradition and Israeli patriotism in the Israeli case) may make her fans less immune to her subversive contents. Furthermore, just as in the case of Orthodox Judaism, Dana's Egyptian critics have been arguing that appropriation of cultural and religious assets is superficial and misleading. Hence, a *Cairo Times* reporter commented that Dana's songs are "laden with Arabesque clichés of what the West thinks is an Oriental sound; coupled with the use of colloquial language, screeches, and grunts, it all evidences a level of impropriety one doesn't find in bona fide Arabic pop music. It's all very contrived and not a little condescending" (Hammond 7).

Just as in other such instances, Dana articulated a reply to this perception of her, this time by means of cultural-commercial appropriation: she agreed to be a leading model in a fashion catalogue that was shot in Egypt. Thus, in what was described as "Operation Dana" (Kerem), she was sneaked into Egypt and photographed wearing miniskirts and other attire in front of the pyramids and while cruising on the Nile.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this paper has been to analyze the inner workings of the Dana phenomenon, that is, to explore the mechanisms through which Dana International constructs her varied identities. This investigation has revealed a sophisticated mixture of self-awareness, constant cultural quotation, and ongoing self-invention, a blurring of the borders between high and low cultures, a breaking of the links between signifiers and marked entities, and other familiar elements of the postmodern inventory (see Jameson).

But Dana is more than a cultural rarity or a postmodern poster girl. Her ongoing juggling of images and identities is not arbitrary nor is it located from her surroundings. Instead, it is a result of her interaction with Israeli identity. Dana's sophisticated use of elements such as her traditional Jewish background, her stated belief in god, or the lyrics of an old song from the army troupes' repertoire relates her to a specifically Israeli collective reservoir of images and memories. Her poaching of Israeli mainstream culture enables her to use those cultural tools in a way that undermines the conservative and traditional attitudes and beliefs they otherwise maintain. This is precisely the reason she is embraced by so many Israelis while feared and loathed by others.

In a larger sense Dana not only plays with the fundamental elements of Israeli reality, she also alters them. Her conscious decision to construct her gender identity through a complex set of images seems to permeate other dimensions of Israeli life. Following the same pattern, Dana constructs herself in the context of religion, nationality, and cultural orientation in ways that seem also to undermine the accepted underlining binary nature of these categories. She offers an interpretive performance not only of gender and sexuality, but also of the relations between secularism and religion, East and West, and Jews and Arabs. Her main subversive contribution in doing so is that she manages to embody all of these conflicting cultural and political personas simultaneously, thus challenging their inherentness. In this sense she truly challenges the society in which she lives.

I wish to thank Laura Grindstaff and Barbie Zeitzer for their comments on previous versions of this article. I also wish to thank Ziv Koren and Roni Rabinovitch for taking and obtaining the photograph

accompanying this article.

Works Cited

Alcalay, Ammiel. *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Bar-on, Ya 'akov. "'I Come to My Audience as a Woman Singer and Not as a Gimmick.'" (In Hebrew) *Laisha* 2 May 1994: 10-13.

Birenberg, Yoa 'av. "'What Can I Tell You Yoa 'av? We Have a Wonderful Country and a Wonderful People.'" (In Hebrew) *Yedioth Ahronoth* 23 Aug. 1996: 6-7.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge, 1990.

Cohen, Eric. "Israel as a Post-Zionist Society." *Israel Affairs* 1 (1995): 203-14.

Dana International. "I Can't Do without You." *Umpatampa.* IMP, 1994.

———. "Freedom Shall Be Bestowed." *Umpatampa.* IMP, 1994.

———. "There Are Girls." *Umpatampa.* IMP, 1994.

———. "Cinquemilla." *Diva.* IMP, 1998.

Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society.* New York: St. Martin's, 1986.

Etzioni-Halevy, Eva. *The Divided People.* (In Hebrew) Kefar-Sava, Isr.: Arye Nir, 2000.

Finkelstein, Joanne. *The Fashioned Self.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

Fishbein, Anat. "Dana is Singing, But Not in Tiberias." (In Hebrew) *Iton Tel Aviv* 13 Oct. 1995: 19-20.

Foryan, Ronit. "My Name is Not Dana." (In Hebrew) *Iton Tel Aviv* 21 May 1993: 36-39.

Garber, Marjorie. *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety.* New York: Harper, 1993.

Goldsby, Jackie. "Queens of Language: Paris is Burning." *Queer Looks.* Ed. Martha Gever, Pratibha Parmar, and John Greyson. New York: Routledge, 1993: 108-15.

Gozani, Ohad. "Israeli's Song Win 'Defeat Bigotry.'" *Daily Telegraph* 11 May 1998: 7.

Hammond, Andrew. "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun." *Cairo Times* 15 May 1997: 7-8.

Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: A Reader*. Ed. K. M. Newton. New York: St. Martin's, 1997. 267-75.

Kampinsky, Tzipa. "'In the Same Place a Homosexual Gets a Bottle Thrown at His Head, a Cokesinelle Will Receive an Indecent Proposal.'" (In Hebrew) *Tat-Rama* 2 (1996): 2-6.

Kaplan, Ann E. "Madonna Politics: Perversion, Repression, or Subversion? Or Masks and/as Master-y." *The Madonna Connection*. Ed. Cathy Schwichtenberg. San Francisco: Westview, 1993. 149-65.

Keinon, Herb. "A Victory Not Celebrated by Everyone." *The Jerusalem Post* 11 May 1998: 8.

Kerem, Shay. "'I Wouldn't Dare to Grade a Cokesinelle at the Top of the Chart.'" (In Hebrew) *Yedioth Ahronoth* 2 Dec. 1994: 56-57.

———. "Operation Dana." (In Hebrew) *Yedioth Ahronoth* 19 July 1996: 44-50.

———. "'What the Eyes See Now is Not Always the Truth.'" (In Hebrew) *Yedioth Ahronoth* 10 Dec. 1993: 60-62

Koren, Anat. "On the Nature of Our Androgen Identity." (In Hebrew) *Toa 'ar* Nov. 1998: 24-26.

Kotas, Chen. "Dana and Niso." (In Hebrew) *Ma 'ariv* [Yom Kippur supplement] 3 Oct. 1995: 16-18.

———. "The International Family." (In Hebrew) *Ma 'ariv* 10 Mar. 1995: 21-25.

Levertov, M. "The Body in Question." *Ha 'aretz* 22 May 1998: 8-11.

Ochovsky, Gal. "The Success and Gaultier's Parrot." (In Hebrew) *Ma 'ariv* 15 May 1998: 27-28.

Ohana, David. *The Last Israelis*. (In Hebrew) Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999.

Peri, Tal. "I Proved That in This World There Is Also a Place for My Way of Life." (In Hebrew) *Ma 'ariv* 11 May 1998: 2-3.

Popper, William. "Dunash Ben Labrat." *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. Vol. 5. Ed. Isidore Singer. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1906. 11-13.

Regev Motti. "Organizational Fluency, Organizational Blocks, Cultural Relevance: The Case of the Music Industry in Israel." (In Hebrew) *Te 'oryal u-vikoret* 10 (1997): 115-32.

Riva, Gil. "'She Was Operated, She is a Complete Woman.'" (In Hebrew) *Col Ha'air* 27 Sept. 1996: 78-81.

Sharrock, David. "Real Lives: The Very Other Dana." *The Guardian* 31 Dec. 1997: 10.

Smooha, Sammy and Vered Kraus. "Ethnicity as a Factor in Status Attainment in Israel." *Research in Social Stratification & Mobility* 4 (1985): 151-75.

Stone, Sandy. "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto." *Camera Obscura* 29 (1992): 151-76.

"T* Dana Wins Eurovision Contest." PlanetOut.com. May 11, 1998.

Ziv, Amalia. "Dana International." (In Hebrew) *Te'oryah u-vikoret* 12-13 (1999): 401-11.

Communicating Queerness in the Communications Classroom

DAWN JOHNSTON

Dawn Johnston (debjohns@ucalgary.ca) is a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Communication and Culture at the University of Calgary. Her research explores queer urban space, public spectacle, and uses of various media by queer activists. This essay, first presented at the 2000 CLGSA conference in Edmonton, is an experiential reflection on first-time teaching of queer theory in undergraduate Communications Studies courses.

When I was in the third year of my undergraduate English degree at Memorial University in Newfoundland in 1995, I gave a class presentation on homoeroticism in the poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. It was the only time that queerness was discussed in any of my English courses. While completing course work for my Master's degree at the University of Calgary in 1998, I presented a paper on queer theory in my communications theory class. It was lumped into the week called "feminist theories," and I was told by the professor that I would have to find some background articles for the class to read in advance, because the theory textbook did not cover it, and he "didn't have any literature on this topic in his files." When I started preparing course outlines for the undergraduate classes I was to teach at the University of Calgary in September, 1999, I was advised by a colleague that if I was planning to discuss "gay and lesbian issues," I had better add to the outline a warning about "sexually explicit material" in the course that might offend some students. And when, on the first day of classes, I discussed the semester's reading list with my fourth year cultural studies students, the words "queer theory" generated a response that consisted of an equal mix of uncomfortable giggles and blank stares.

I was genuinely surprised (more so than offended) by the

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 3 (2001) © CLGSA / SCELG

responses I received from my professors, my colleagues, and my students when I introduced queer theory – or even my own queerness – into the classroom. My experience as an out lesbian in academia has been nothing but positive – I guess I expected that the level of tolerance and acceptance that my personal life had received would be reflected, at least to some degree, in the response to my academic interest in queerness. If I was not shocking people at the faculty Christmas party, I certainly did not expect to be shocking them in the classroom. But as a student, I felt distinctly isolated in my pursuit of queering communications theory. And as an instructor, my determination to queer the curriculum and the class space has been met with mixed responses. A great deal has been written on why queering the classroom is a useful – even necessary – activity (see Britzman; Bryson/de Castell; Ellsworth; Khayatt; Sedgwick). This paper is about what happened to me when I tried it.

Queer theory's place within communications studies is clear to me. As a field of study, communications is certainly interdisciplinary. It brings together scholars and professionals from a variety of areas – media studies, journalism, public relations, and cultural studies, to name a few. But at the simplest level, communications is about the making of meaning. It looks at the way that individuals construct identity, their experiences of self and other, their interactions with their environments and communities. And it is within that core of communications studies that queer theory has a place. Representation and performance are central issues in many contemporary communications theories. Race, class, gender, and more recently, sexual orientation, have been identified as important elements in the marking of 'self' and the construction of 'other' in studies that examine the marginalization of individuals and groups on the basis of such markers. The reason for this is clear: like race, class, and gender, sexual orientation can be understood as a product – and producer – of community, identity, and power. Sexual orientation is a powerful site within contemporary popular culture. In turn, the discourses of queer theory make important contributions to the communications discipline as a whole.

And it is not as though no communications theory looks at issues of sexuality or challenges normativity. Some excellent work has been done in the area of queer theory within communications and cultural studies. Queerness on television and in film, queer

performance and spectacle, queer political activism, and queer urban space have all been tackled deftly and thoughtfully by a variety of communications theorists. So why is it still a shock to so many students – and even to many other professors – when queer theory appears on a syllabus for an undergraduate communications course? Why are so few introductory communications texts even mentioning the 'q' word, let alone devoting a piece of a chapter to it? Why are so many people questioning whether or not queerness belongs in the classroom?

One answer is obvious. Like sexuality itself, studies of sexuality are contentious and political. Furthermore, like its postmodern roots, queer theory is slippery. Along with bringing the personal into the realm of the political (as though the two were ever mutually exclusive), it insists on breaking down the popular assumptions of individual identity and interpersonal relationships that have been solidified by centuries of heteropatriarchal presumptions. As Donna Haraway says, "social reality is lived social relations" (150). So when I want to start talking about queer theory with my students, I find myself starting at a level far below – or at least far away from – the level at which I want them to be thinking about sexuality, power, and identity. In other words, before I can get them to problematize sexual binaries, deconstruct identities, or challenge normativity in any fashion, I first have to get them to say the words, read the articles, and begin the process of questioning the roots of their own assumptions.

In my Communications 201 class – which is the introductory communication theory course usually populated by first year students – feminist theories, standpoint theories, and critical theories in general are 'handled' in just one chapter in the textbook (see Figure 1). The bulk of the course focuses on theoretical traditions in the communications discipline, along with more practical attention to communications careers and interpersonal and group dynamics. So my attempts to queer perspectives or introduce notions that might challenge the heteronormative environment must be made in, for lack of a better term, baby steps.

One activity that I have found to be quite effective early in the term is Julia Wood's "Uncertain Dialogue" (see Figure 2 for full activity description). I provide role-play dialogues between fictional couples and have them acted out both by student pairs of the opposite

sex and by student pairs of the same sex – an activity that inevitably causes a few volunteers to blush, but has never been received with overt hostility. Not surprisingly, students often incorporate physical stereotypes of gays and lesbians in an effort to break any tension with humor. It is interesting to watch how those physical 'identifiers' are acted out and received by students, and I make a point of investigating those stereotypes in our postactivity discussion.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF GENERAL STUDIES
(now COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE)

COMS 201 LEC 29
INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES

SPRING 2000
SATURDAYS, 8:00am - 12:00pm

Instructor: Dawn Johnston

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES
Through readings, lectures, written assignments, and group tutorial activities, Communications Studies 201 will introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of communications. Recognizing that communication is integral to all human activities and interactions, this course explores elements of communications studies which appeal to scholars from a variety of academic disciplines. Through an overview of the key concepts, methodological traditions, and major theoretical currents of the field, students will have an opportunity to experience the cutting-edge diversity that defines communications studies.

TEXTBOOKS/READINGS
Wood, J. (2000). Communication Theories in Action. Toronto: Wadsworth.

Reserve readings as assigned by instructor.

Figure 1

Further along in the semester, I have students get into groups and discuss a series of statements to determine whether the language used is sexist or homophobic (list of statements in Figure 3). Most of the students have no trouble identifying the homophobia in the statement "It's fine for gays to get married but I don't think they should be able to adopt," but fewer immediately identify the heterocentricism in the statement "Bob is a great friend of mine – he's gay, but acts just like a normal guy." One student's response to that comment was "But if he's my friend, and I really like and respect him, how can that be considered homophobic?" Inevitably, several students agree when a

comment like this is raised. But so far, I have been pleasantly surprised to discover that one of the other students in the class usually jumps in to offer an explanation of why positioning straight as normal positions gay as abnormal – no matter how much liking or respecting might be going on! That recognition of heteronormativity by my students demonstrates a notable shift in thinking for many of them. As Janice Ristock and Catherine Taylor suggest, "convictions about sexuality seem so deeply embraced that setting out to change people's minds amounts to an attempt to alter the grounds of consciousness, to change not only the content of the forms through which we think, but the very forms themselves" ("Introduction" 7). Getting first year university students – many of whom are from rural Alberta and the heart of ultraconservative Reform/Alliance country – to change not only what they think about sexuality, but also the *way* they think about sexuality is no small accomplishment.

So at the introductory level, I have discovered that my aim has to be less about 'queering' the classroom in an active, aggressive way,

This activity, called "Uncertain Dialogue," comes from the Instructor's Resource Guide attached to Julia Wood's Communication Theories in Action (Wadsworth, 2000). Students volunteer to act out the dialogue, and are given identities and relationships which must be communicated through their body language and intonation. I usually assign the dialogue to a fictional heterosexual couple, a fictional gay couple, friends, co-workers, co-conspirators and a variety of other relations and activities. It is particularly interesting to notice the ways in which students rely on physical stereotypes of gays and lesbians in order to communicate their relationship to each other with maximum humour and minimum discomfort. Our discussion at the end of the activity reveals many assumptions and stereotypes that feed great class discussion.

1: Hello.
2: Hi.
1: So, uh, how are you?
2: About the same. And you?
1: Nothing new to report.
2: I thought maybe you might have something to tell me.
1: Why, has anything changed?
2: Not that I know of. Do you know of a change?
1: No.
2: So what do you think we should do now?
1: I suppose we could go ahead and... you know...
2: Yeah, seems like it's a good idea.
1: Are you sure?
2: As sure as we ever can be in a situation like this.
1: Do you want to reconsider: A lot is at stake here.
2: No, I'm ready. Let's do it.

Figure 2

and more about introducing sexuality as a valid site of inquiry in communications studies. The fourth year cultural studies class that I teach offers much more of a chance to play with queerness. It is at that level that I encourage people to haul out their ideas about 'gay' and 'straight' and 'bent' and 'normal' and all those other loaded words and lay them on the table. Once they are out there, we start messing them around.

The cultural studies course is divided into sections based on major theories of popular culture. We begin the course by looking at mass culture theory, work our way through semiology, structuralism, Marxism, feminism, and postmodernism, and then finish up the course with queer theory (see Figures 4 and 5 for course outline and schedule of readings). The placement of the queer theory segment at the end

I give this list of statements (some of which come from Julia Wood's text) to students in groups of 3-4 people, and have them discuss whether they consider the statements to be in any way racist, sexist or homophobic.

IS OUR LANGUAGE SEXIST, RACIST, AND HOMOPHOBIC?

Read each of the following ten statements and discuss within your group whether they are sexist, racist, homophobic, or none of the above. You may not be able to reach consensus on the issue, but be prepared to explain your group's discussion.

1. I now pronounce you man and wife.

2. The news program features 'man in the street' interviews.

3. Let's see if we can't make something good happen here by using a little white magic.

4. I was surprised that Anne kept her last name when she got married.

5. John stayed home to babysit his son while his wife went back to the office to finish up some work.

6. I met a female lawyer and a male nurse at the party last night.

7. Blacks are really confrontational.

8. I think that the only way two people can really show their commitment to one another is to get married.

9. My hairdresser, Bob, is gay, but he acts like a regular guy around his clients.

10. I think its fine for gay couples to marry, but I don't think they should be able to adopt.

Figure 3

of the course is not arbitrary. It is quite by design. The class is small – capped at 25 students – and usually becomes more interactive, open, and comfortable by the final few weeks of the course. As well, I find postmodernism makes for excellent preparation for queer theory. After the class has spent a couple of weeks trying to digest works by Frederic Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, and Michel Foucault, and getting their heads around notions of fluidity, multiplicity, discontinuity, leakiness, marginality, and fragmentation, for example, transferring some of those theoretical building blocks into a discussion about sexual identities seems easy! When we discuss postmodernism, we look at the way in which the abstract is privileged over the linear, and at how traditional valuations of single/unified/one as strong, and multiple/uncertain/fluctuating as weak are broken down (see Hammer 74). So when such postmodern notions are applied to construction and representation of self and identity, the place of queer theory in the class is illuminated. Both theories are full of questions and contradictions, and often focus their energies on complicating and challenging societal traditions and norms. But at the beginning of the term, no one was surprised to hear that we would study postmodern theories. The place of queer theories seemed a little less obvious.

When introducing the segment on queer theory, I made as many connections as possible to other theories that we had covered in the course. Since postmodernism was the freshest in their minds, the connections to it were also the clearest. Queer theory embraces postmodern methods of looking at the world on philosophical, historical, structural, and aesthetic levels by refusing totalizing or essentializing notions of self and other, by acknowledging the fragmentation and discontinuity of identity, and by creating a space in which sexual selves are recognizable as multiple, varied, and responsive to context. As queer theorist James Darsey points out, "the gay liberation movement has a strong claim to being the most thoroughly postmodern, not just in its chronological placement, but in its sanguine acknowledgment of the partiality of the world and the decay of natural law" (47). Like the movement itself, queer theory has a strong claim to postmodernism as the driving force behind the discourse that surrounds both sexual minorities and the scholarly analysis of them. Multiple and contradictory meanings are inherent in rhetorical analysis of sexual orientation.

Thus the connections between queer theory and postmodernism

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

COMS 441 LEC 60
CULTURAL STUDIES IN COMMUNICATIONS

SUMMER 2000
TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS, 2:00pm - 4:45pm

Instructor: Dawn Johnston

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the major cultural and critical approaches to studying and understanding communication. Throughout the course, we will explore the diverse cultural, historical, and intellectual contexts from which various theoretical currents have emerged, as well as their roles and applications in particular cultural texts, practices, and environments. Through a survey of key concepts and research methods in cultural studies, this course will help students to question, problematize, and better understand the making of meaning in mainstream and marginalized communities in our society.

TEXTBOOKS/READINGS

Strinati, D. (1995). An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture. New York: Routledge.

Van Luven, Lynne and Priscilla Walton. (1999). Pop Can. Ontario: Prentice Hall.

Reserve readings as assigned by instructor.

Figure 4

soon become clear to most students. The next obvious link is between queer theory and feminist theories. As Elizabeth Weed says, "when feminism meets queer theory, no introductions seem necessary. Both academic feminism and queer theory are connected, however directly or indirectly, to political movements outside the academy, in some cases to overlapping movements. Both are interdisciplinary modes of inquiry; both constitute themselves in critical relation to a set of hegemonic social and cultural formations" (vii). As Weed points out, feminism and queer theory are inevitably linked by virtue of their commitment to studying marginalities and problematizing stereotypes. Feminism and queer theory are also often linked in their tendency toward academic activism – bringing the personal into the realm of the political, and demanding changes in societal treatment of groups who face systematic discrimination on all levels. Both are

interdisciplinary, finding their roots as well as their contemporary academic significance in a variety of fields. And both feminism and queer theory are plagued with a constant need – from within and without – to clarify, justify, and redefine the terms that constitute their academic and political language. The word 'feminism' has been and is as widely debated a term as 'queer' will ever be. Also, semantics aside, most queer theorists of today are quick to acknowledge the roads that were paved by yesterday's lesbian feminists – particularly within the second-wave feminist movement – and by the academic recognition of women's studies. All of these points of intersection between feminism and queer theory help students to understand why queer theory belongs in communications and cultural studies.

But in addition to showing students that queer theory is intricately connected to other theories of popular culture, I also take great pains to show them that it is both inadequate and inappropriate to lump queer theory together with those other theories, with the expectation that 'the material will get covered somewhere else.' Because more often than not, the material does not get covered somewhere else. To expect feminist theory, for example, to devote sufficient attention to issues of queerness is unreasonable. While their large-scale goals are comparable, even complementary, the differences, points of disagreement, and perceived responsibilities of feminist and queer theories are both significant and contentious. Surface logic would suggest that since the struggles of women are often similar to the struggles of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people, the communities should band together and create alliances to overcome common obstacles – politically, socially, and academically. But looking deeper into the particular oppressions and experiences of each community indicates that such a suggestion is not just narrow-minded – it is inadequate. As Adrienne Rich suggests, we cannot fully comprehend the complexities of homosexuality – as she describes it, the "particular oppressions, meanings, and potentialities" – as long as it is simply bracketed with other marginalized and stigmatized existences (218). She insists that like racism, sexism, and classism, heterosexism is an institution, and that such an oppressive social construct cannot be challenged or deconstructed without specific, focused attention. In this vein, I have my students look through a variety of gay and lesbian magazines and compare their layout, content, and advertising to mainstream heterosexually-

The following is a list of readings that lead up to and shape my Cultural Studies (COMS 441) class' discussion of queer theory. This list has shifted from semester to semester as I find new readings that stimulate discussion.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality* (Volume One, Chapter One). New York: Random House, 1978.

Gilbert, Sky. "Everybody in Leather." *THIS January* - February 2000: 12-14.

Queen, Carol and Laurence Schimel. Pomosexuals: Challenging Assumptions about Gender and Sexuality. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1997.

Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Adrienne Rich's Prose and Poetry*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1993.

We also spend class time in small groups looking at a variety of popular gay/lesbian/bisexual magazines, such as:

Curve	Out
Girlfriends	Hero
Diva	Genre

Figure 5

oriented publications (see Figure 5). I have them discuss representations of various sexual minorities in the news. They watch a series of television shows and films that feature gay and lesbian characters, in search of heterosexual bias and reliance upon stereotypes. Most importantly, perhaps, I encourage them to read and interpret their own identities, sexualities, and communities with a more critical eye.

Getting students to talk about sex is easy. Getting them to let go of – or at least challenge – some deeply held convictions about sexuality and its place in the classroom is a little bit more difficult. To go back to the words of Ristock and Taylor, ideas and value judgments about sexuality are so firmly planted in most of our minds that rethinking them requires us to question not only our ideas, but even the roots and "forms" of our ideas. Such a shift in thinking, or pursuit to "alter the grounds of consciousness" and queer the classroom requires both commitment and sensitivity on the part of the instructor – commitment to encouraging students to unhook binaries and challenge traditional notions of self and identity and sensitivity to the students who are very reluctant to do so. On one of the final exams for this course (see Figure 6 for sample final exam question), I still had one student who chose to define "queer" as

abnormal like "a lesion, or spiritual ailment." But I also received exam responses like the one that is quoted in part below:

> At the beginning of this course, I did not think that sexuality was as valid an area of study in popular culture as race, class, or gender. Having completed the course, now, however, I see it as very valid. Sexuality is as much a part of our identities and our everyday lives as race, class and gender are. Our sexuality is a source for discrimination, and so, much like feminism looks at discrimination against women, queer theory helps us look at discrimination against people of different sexualities. I know that I said [before] that there's something about heterosexuality that just makes sense. But now I also feel it is important to gain an understanding of other different sexualities, and to see how they've been not only misrepresented by the media, but much more often excluded from the mass media. I also feel that there is a need to critically think about ourselves and our sexuality. It is something we don't question enough. I think that it's important to see ourselves as sexually complex, and studying queer theory as an area of popular culture makes that kind of thought process possible. And that, too, is something that just makes sense.

Such a response was incredibly affirming. But, of course, it was the

The following is an essay question option which has appeared on the final exam. It challenges students to both draw on the concepts and theoretical frameworks that we've discussed in class, and develop their own argument about the place of queer theory in communication and cultural studies.

1. In her book entitled Pomosexuals: Challenging Assumptions about Gender and Sexuality, Carol Queen says of queerness that it "lives in the space in which all other non-binary forms of sexual and gender identity reside – a boundary free zone in which fences are crossed for the fun of it, or simply because some of us can't be fenced in. It challenges either/or categorization in favour of largely unmapped possibilities and the intense charge that comes with transgression. It acknowledges the pleasure of that transgression, as well as the need to transgress limits that do not make room for all of us" (1997: 23).

Describe queer theory, identifying some of its key concepts and goals, and comment on whether or not you believe that sexuality is as valid an area of study in popular culture as, for example, race, class, and gender.

Figure 6

exception, as opposed to the rule. Expecting such a significant psychic shift in all students would undoubtedly set a professor up for disappointment. But if we do not begin – or continue – to teach toward goals of critical thinking and social action, those goals will not be achieved. The queer classroom – or any classroom in which identity is questioned, challenged, or destabilized – cannot be realized without taking the 'baby steps' of such activities as those described in this paper. For instructors (particularly those of us who are not tenured), those steps can be difficult and dangerous. Even if job security is not threatened, personal security and professional authority can be. As Didi Khayatt mentions, outing oneself in the classroom can cause an "irrelevant distinction" between personal identity and course material, with the professor becoming the text (39). I would also point out the frustrating and common assumption by students that queer subject material is only relevant to the course because the instructor is queer. These assumptions, which are somtimes palpable in the classroom as well as evidenced in teaching evaluations, can be discouraging. In the few days prior to beginning almost every new session, I question myself, my position in the classroom, and the reasons behind my determination to introduce – and to be – a queer presence in my classroom. But at some level, as a teacher, I am compelled to teach the things that I wish I had been taught. The decision by any instructor consciously to incorporate queerness into pedagogy is not easy, tidy, or without risk, but has the potential to transgress some of academia's boundaries in large and small ways.

Works Cited

Britzman, Deborah. "Queer Pedagogy and Its Strange Techniques." Ristock and Taylor 49-71.

Bryson, Mary and Suzanne de Castell. "Queer Ethnography: Identity, Authority, Narrativity, and a Geopolitics of Text." Ristock and Taylor 97-110.

——. "Queer Pedagogy: Praxis Makes Im/perfect." *Canadian Journal of Education* 18 (1993): 285-305.

Darsey, James. "Die Non." *Queer Words, Queer Images*. New York: New York University Press, 1994. 45-76.

Ellsworth, Elizabeth. "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering?

Working through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy." *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*. Eds. Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Hammer, Barbara. "The Politics of Abstraction." *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*. Eds. Martha Gever, John Greyson, and Pratibha Parmar. Toronto: Routledge, 1993. 70-76.

Haraway, Donna. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge, 1990. 190-233.

Khayatt, Didi. "Paradoxes of the Closet: Beyond the Classroom Assignment of In or Out." Ristock and Taylor 31-48.

Queen, Carol and Laurence Schimel. *Pomosexuals: Challenging Assumptions about Gender and Sexuality*. San Francisco: Cleis, 1997.

Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Adrienne Rich's Prose and Poetry*. Ed. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi. New York: Norton, 1993. 203-24.

Ristock, Janice and Catherine Taylor. *Inside the Academy and Out: Lesbian/Gay/Queer Studies and Social Action*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.

——. "Introduction." Ristock and Taylor 3-9.

Sedgewick, Eve Kosofsky. "Queer and Now." *Tendencies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

Weed, Elizabeth. "Introduction." *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*. Ed. Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. vii-xiii.

Wood, Julia. *Communication Theories in Action*. California: Wadsworth, 2000.

Mementoes

BLAINE MARCHAND

Ever since I began writing as a child, my poetry has explored the themes of solitude, love, and death. Lurking under my adolescent scribblings was the question of sexuality, which came to the fore in my fourth book, Bodily Presence. *Increasingly, my poetry and my prose are preoccupied by differences – cultural and linguistic – in Canada and between Canadians and people they encounter in other parts of the world. This poem is from my current poetry manuscript* The Craving of Knives. *(blainemarchand@hotmail.com)*

I was taken aback when I saw his death announcement. Usually, I'm not surprised to discover occasionally that someone I know has died. In fact, this is the reason I read the obituaries every day, to keep track. But his: Dieudonne, Guy. I vaguely recalled some gossip two years ago about how he had died. At the time, I had speculated it must have been AIDS. According to the press, everyone in the community was dying of the 'plague.' Maybe this announcement was really an In Memoriam notice. Maybe it had been accidentally misplaced. No, it was an obit.

But I was surprised by his age. 57. He couldn't be that old. Perhaps it was a different person. Someone with a similar name? My finger skimmed the details: the names of his sisters, predeceased by his mother. It had to be him. No hint as to the cause of his death.

A wave of loss overwhelmed me. Why? Perhaps it was because I had fixated on him all these years. But why him? True, he was physically imposing: tall, rail thin, with a head of blond serpentine curls. His skin was translucent, as if your fingers could pierce it without any effort. I had been walking down the Sparks Street Mall on a humid July night. A heat wave had gripped the city like a clamp for a week. The street was thick with people walking to escape the furnaces their Centretown apartments had become. Teenagers were hanging out, gawking at the first ghostly forms of the National Arts

Centre rising from the deep pit along Elgin Street. Then they would break out into gangs, dispersing along the canal's banks.

I used to do that, but now my purpose was different. I needed to escape the claustrophobic townhouse I shared with my mother. To her, I was still her "little man," a term which conjured up for me Buster Brown shoes, flannel pants, and a navy blue blazer trimmed with piping. "My little man," she would say when I was a child, and tug at the bottom of my blazer to make the corners sit straight whenever we headed out to church or to a restaurant. I hated that gesture, the proximity of her hand to my crotch. I would squirm, pull away, desperate to break free of her hold.

As I grew more and more sullen over the years, she retreated too, to the solace in drink. Evenings would find her softly splayed on the couch, one arm fallen open, her fingers cradling the neck of a bottle. The TV screen cast its pearly light across the room, her snoring like the purring of a cat. Escape was easy.

The city was changing. Old buildings were being pulled down and new boxes of glass were towering over the streets. More and more, I found suburbia monotonous, confining. We lived in Parkwood Hills where there were no parks, no woods, no hills. Downtown called, a promised land full of potential and a life my mother would have never guessed. Danger tasted sweet.

By the canal's edge, I would linger by the clumps of lilacs or sprawl across a bench, waiting. Waiting for another young man to walk by and stop just beyond where I was. There were plenty of older men, but I found their fleshiness, their obsequiousness, repulsive. Luckily, there were guys my age too, if I waited. One would pass, light a cigarette, and then circle back. We'd exchange words for a few minutes, our eyes sizing each other up. Then we'd disappear beneath the arches of the Pretoria Bridge.

Those first feeble fumblings were tentative, awkward but exhilarating. The way desire would fill my body, a container wanting to burst. I had buried my need for affection when my father died. But in my teens, when I first experienced sex, it became a hunger I fed in secret, the way as a kid I snuck cookies into my bedroom and relished their creamy centers beneath the privacy of my covers.

Over time I learned the ropes. As soon as I could pass for 21, I hit the clubs. There it was easier. Everyone had the same thirst in their eyes. They nestled their beer bottles close to their chests, running

their fingers along the necks, tearing off the labels.

That July night was so humid. Cars buzzed around Confederation Square. The walk light refused to change.

"Hello there." A husky voice warm as a hand hovered just behind my shoulder. "Do you have a light?" A cigarette curved close to my face. I could smell the sweetness of the tobacco, spicy aftershave on the fingertips that held it.

"No, sorry, I don't smoke." I stepped sideways to a safer distance, out of the range of the scents.

"Too bad, man. Might be great if you did. Smoke that is." A laugh jumped from his lips. His head tilted back and tendons, thick as rope, stretched down this long neck. He was wearing a mesh tank top, orange as hot embers. The streetlight cast a shadow across his chest, highlighted a large brown nipple.

"What are you staring at?"

He placed the unlit cigarette in his mouth and growled like an animal.

"Ooh ... nothing ... your shirt." I decided honesty was less dangerous than a lie, though I chose not to mention his nipple.

"Groovy shirt isn't it? Makes me feel sexy. Do you think it does?"

"But everyone can see your chest." I inched closer to the curb.

"That's the idea. Advertising, man. Got a great bod, why not show it off? Advertisement ... the way of the future. Hey, you didn't answer my question. Do you find me sexy?"

I stepped off the sidewalk and waded through the stream of cars, crossed the Square and headed toward Union Station.

"Too bad man. Don't smoke. Don't answer questions. Tête carrée. Could have been the beginning of a ..."

Cars swooshed by drowning out his final words.

Coincidence is an amazing thing. Almost as if things are meant to happen. Maybe I'm obsessive, drawing links that aren't really there. Unearthing patterns to make sense out of the chaos of life. And death.

A month after the obit about Guy, there was one for his sister Lucie. "*Après une lutte valiante*," it stated. She must have been ill, Cancer? Lucie, I noticed, was the same age I was. Four years younger than Guy. Funny, I could have sworn she was even younger.

Where he was tall and blond, she was short, dark and heavyset.

Her hair had been shagged, as the popular style was then called. I first met her at a new club, Ray's Place. It was above a greasy restaurant on Rideau Street and drew a young crowd convinced it was exploring the edge, the boundaries of experience. One, we believed, that most others in this gray, middle-aged civil-servant city didn't know existed.

As I approached the only table in the club with an available seat, I heard her speaking French to a friend.

"Est-ce cette chaise gratuite?" My voice stammered as if I was coughing.

She burst out laughing. "No, but it's discounted by 50%. The reduced price is on the orange tag on the back."

"Huh?"

"The word is 'libre' not 'gratuite.' You mean free as in available, not as in having no cost."

"Oh, sorry."

"Yes it is. And so are we. Sit down before someone else does. At least you are harmless looking."

She winked at the woman sitting next to her, pulled out the chair.

"I'm Lucie. This is Danielle."

I wanna take you higher, the voice of Sly Stone trebled through the room.

"Excusez."

The two women moved to the packed dance floor. *High, high, higher* warbled in vibrato. An amoeba of colored lights floated across her face and clothes. Lucie smirked from the dance floor, walked toward me.

"Venez!"

She took my hand and led me toward Danielle, whose slight body moved delicately as a ribbon falling through air. The three of us spun around each other. At the end of the song I made my way through the gyrating bodies, back toward the table.

"Non. Restez ici. Il faut danser. Vivre, c'est danser."

After thirty minutes we returned to the table. "Je suis tellement fatiguée." Lucie's hands shuffled her layered hair.

"Et mouille," added Danielle mopping her face with her sleeve and fanning the fabric of her shirt.

"Let's go back to our place and have a swim," Lucie suggested as much to me as to Danielle.

"But I don't have my bathing suit."

"Swim in your underwear. Or borrow my brother's. He lives with us."

On York Street, we pulled into a spitfire-red mustang. Dangling from the rear-view mirror were a rosary, a Shiva, and a necklace with a pendant of a raised fist encircled by the female symbol. The car sped along Rideau, across the Cummings Bridge, and down Montreal Road.

The brakes seized and the car spun around in a sharp 45-degree angle toward the entrance of Notre Dame Cemetery. Lucie stepped on the gas. The car lurched forward.

"What the hell!" I braced myself against the front seat. "What's this? A shortcut?"

"Mais non!"

Lucie let out a cry, the kind a small animal makes when it is struck by the wheel of a car.

"J'ai décidé de visiter ma mère."

"Lucie! Mais non!"

Danielle's voice filled the car with reproach. A heated exchange erupted in French. I couldn't follow it. Through the window, rows of tombstones surged past. The car slowed, halted. Lucie's door flung open and she hurtled down along a row of graves. Danielle turned to me, shrugged, quietly pushed open the door, and slipped out after Lucie.

I felt I was an intruder on this private moment. I debated sneaking away, catching a bus home. But something held me pinned as the sound of crying seeped through the open window.

My father was buried here somewhere. A jumble of memories were all that remained from that day ... numbing cold ... my father's gray casket ... a lurid green carpet ... earth mounded ... the grave like a wound.

Danielle stepped out of the shadows, leading Lucie by the hand. She motioned for me to move out of the back seat. As I stood by the door, Danielle folded Lucie into the vacant spot tenderly as one places a fragile ornament into tissue. The tips of Lucie's fingers rubbed her eyes over and over. Her head was so low it almost rested against her knees. Danielle lay her back on the seat but rather than unfolding, Lucie pulled her knees up toward her chest. Her sobbing was low and deep.

Danielle swung in behind the steering wheel. She motioned for me to get in. As I sat down, her hand reached over and gently stroked mine.

"Her mother died in the spring." Her voice was paper thin. Of its own volition, my arm extended back toward Lucie. My fingers stroked her hair with a tenderness that surprised me. I had never been so intimate with a woman.

The engine drowned out Lucie's weeping. The steering wheel arced to the left and we slowly moved toward the gate, the gravestones flickering in the moonlight like memorial candles.

Danielle leaned toward me. "Sa mère s'est tuée."

The words sent a shock of electricity through my body. My father in the bathtub ... his legs webbed with hairs ... his penis floating dark and thick ... an arm fallen over the side ... a red gash at his wrist. I clenched my fists, reopened them, rubbed them along my thighs. I tilted my head back, closed my eyes, willing the images gone. As numbness set in, I lowered my head, opened my eyes and focused on the lights of traffic flowing along Montreal Road. I gave myself up to the motion of the car.

We turned, then turned left again, and crawled down St. Laurent Boulevard, took the first right and headed up a small incline. Lucie had grown quiet. Was she asleep, drawn into the motion of the vehicle, a technique used to calm cranky infants? And the plight of the parents who have not yet learned to decipher nuances in their offspring's cries.

As the car halted before a townhouse, Lucie raised her head. Strands of her hair clung like weeds to her face. She looked out from them as if she was emerging from under water.

"Revenons à nos moutons." A guttural laugh broke like a bubble from her mouth.

Danielle turned to Lucie and quickly brushed aside the wet strands of her hair.

"Chèrie, la piscine nous attend, n'est-ce pas?"

Posters of Robert Charlebois, of Louise Forrestier, and of Les Beaux Dimanches were tacked onto the walls of the living room. Lucie went upstairs. Footsteps moving across a floor were followed by opening drawers and then a quick skip down the stairs. She entered the room waving a maroon bathing suit like a flag.

"La voilà. Il sera si cute avec ça, eh Danielle?"

"But it's so small. I couldn't."

"Pis? Don't be so English. It's only us."

I excused myself and went upstairs and into the bathroom. I wedged myself into the suit. The fabric was an elastic constricting my thighs. On my way out, I noticed Lucie had left the light on in the bedroom. I strolled over to shut it off. A drawer hung open from a bureau.

When I came back into the living room, she had already changed into her swimsuit and was huddled over the coffee table.

"Tiens." A cupped hand reached out toward me.

"What's this?"

"Rien. Sugar. It will give you energy and dreams." She popped a cube into her mouth. I followed her lead.

Danielle joined us, three towels over her shoulder. With a smooth gesture, she pulled one off and swung it around Lucie's neck, drew her close and kissed her with a loud smack. I walked over and put my arms around them and gave them each a chaste peck. The two burst into gales of laughter.

Out of the patio doors we went, through a gate in the back fence and onto the deck of a pool. It was empty except for a row of lounge chairs, their ribs of plastic the bleached bones of beached whales.

Then it happened. As I leapt from the diving board my body ascended higher and higher into the air as if it were entering heaven. Then it began to plunge. It split a stone that was liquid, that shattered into a thousand fragments as I passed through it. Somewhere in a nether region of my brain panic set in but the caress of the wet brilliance made me want to stay embedded in it forever, like the remains of the martyr in a glass reliquary. Rawness seized my lungs. I needed air. I burst through the surface gasping, a trail of silver nails dripping from my hands.

My head rotated, my eyes trying to decipher where I was. In the 'v' edge of the corner of the pool, Lucie and Danielle sprawled across the deck, their feet dangling into the water, their arms in the air as if they were about to rise like the dead from a grave.

At the other end of the pool, the door to the yard was ajar. Through it, a soft light beat in rhythm with the blood pounding in the artery at the base of my neck. The pulse was a voice calling to me to come to it. I pulled myself out of the water, walked toward the glow. I was surely on the path of illumination, of salvation.

I slipped through the curtain billowing out of the patio doors like a cloud, mounted the stairs and went into the bathroom. At either end, against the pale wood of the open drawer, red slashes of cloth were stigmata in the palms of Jesus. In the centre of the room white sheets, the dug out hull of a boat waiting to ferry me safely across a sea. I lay down, crossed my arms over my chest, shut my eyes, ready to meet my Lord.

His breath was upon my face, his soft words tumbled in the well of my ear. I reached out to him.

"Quelle surprise! Quelle délicieuse surprise!"

My eyes popped open. Kneeling by the side of the bed was Guy. His tongue wet his lips, a cat staking a bird. My heart beat against the trap of my ribs.

He moved closer, the stubble on his chin scraped my cheek as if it were pumice cleansing me. A fragment of recall, like a flake of skin, tore loose, floated before me. My father and I when I was seven ... in the living room ... rough-housing on the green carpet ... I thrash about in his arms, raise my head ... his comes down .... the sharp drag end-of-the-day growth across my face painful, yet comforting as calloused hands ... I roll over and push my face against his wanting to do it again.

"No. Don't do that!" My father's voice a slap.

He straightened himself, shook out his trousers and his shirt, left the room. I lay on the floor, my hands pressed against my chin to contain and hold the sensation of his bristle.

I bolted up in Guy's bed, my fists clenching and unclenching. How could I have forgotten this memory? How could I have submerged it? It had happened the week my father had killed himself.

I grabbed Guy's head and dragged it against my face. Once. Twice. Three times.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry." Tears lubricated our faces. The friction of the stubble still burning.

"Arret! Arret! Es-tu fou?"

I jumped up and ran down the stairs, flung open the front door and fled, somehow making it home despite being barefoot and wearing only Guy's bathing suit. I have no idea how I did it, but I did.

I ran my finger over Lucie's obituary as if I could recapture the life that was. I shoved myself out of the chair, away from the glare of the reading lamp, went down the hall into the bedroom and pulled

open a dresser drawer. I rummaged among my socks and underwear and found it. The maroon bathing suit.

I picked it up, cradled it in my palm like a bloodstone. I had always meant to return the suit but I couldn't face him. Even in those first years, when I knew where he lived, when I would deliberately walk down his street looking into the windows of his apartment, hoping he would pass in front of them or come out. But if he had, it would have meant explaining. Each time I neared his place, I would rehearse what I would say. I would have to sound surprised, natural. But though it never happened, although I never saw him again, I could not discard the suit. I took it with me each time I moved.

I reached down, slid open the lowest drawer. Sitting there in a green felt pouch were a worn pair of kid gloves, a stained silk scarf, and a watch. My father's. I discovered them in an armoire at my mother's when I was cleaning out her things after she died. Odd, I found no photos of my father in the house. I never recall her having any. These three things were the only fragments of his life she had chosen to keep. Why?

I don't even remember what my father looked like. He disappeared from my life just as I did from Guy's, never having the chance to explain, to make things right. Funny, but in some vague way the memory of Guy became the image of my father.

Carefully I folded the maroon briefs, rubbed their sleek surface one last time across my face, placed them in the pouch among the mementoes of my father. I bent down, mounded sweaters over them. I closed the drawer. It rattled.

New York '98

AIDAN LYNCARO

Aidan Lyncaro is a pseudonym for a Canadian Ph.D. candidate specializing in Slavics. Aidan has previously published in the United States and with the web ezine 'Word Salad.' Aiden commutes to work on a 198, mint condition, Honda Rebel, 250.

I am a piloteer techno explorer
palm pilot subway map in hand
old enough to remember orienteering with map and compass
internal navigational sense without global positioning satellites
but progressive and wise to embrace technology

distance bridged by satellites and land microwave towers
you at Mont Tremblant Quebec
me in a car coasting past the chemical farms
of Elizabeth New Jersey
more storage tanks
than jersey cows in the Garden State

our long conversation on the mobile lingers
suspended in the haze
each word a breathless syllable

George Washington bridge shines like a jewel
in the misty morning light
rich York poor York
New York of contradictions

Pier 76 on the Hudson wears the faded name United States Line
in 1956 we disembarked the fastest ocean liner
SS United States majestic proud ambassador of hope

immigrant dreams in my father's pocket
burning a hole with ambition
an American! he was going to be an American!
sweet land of liberty
of thee he sang
as the trunks revealed their meager cargo
mother's china all the way to New York
from France to America
from war's end and poverty to promise
promise and dreams

and the mobile conversation
dangles in the air
me here you there
everywhere
in poor York rich York
New York of contradictions

two newly minted jacksons and an honest abe or two
buy bvlgari at Saks
the animated shop window dressing is free
for passers-by patient enough to wait
one by one

homeless with their possessions, plastic bags not from Saks
praying in the nave of Saint Patrick's
for redemption and the next meal

I light a candle and pray
a Vivaldi summer
brought promise and transition
from the imagined to the real
the prayer floats on angel wings
within St. Patrick's walls
lifting my intention to the universe in a trance
a portal fitting of New York
reflecting in Cologne like a digital image

clean streets
once mean streets

scented by the smoke of oversized pretzels grilling on coals
bagels large as transport truck tires
in the child's recollection cuisine

Times Square incandescent glow gone
light bulbs replaced
hi-tech computerized razzle
past the neon dazzle
getting ready for 99

arrogant cabs armored grills
no fear
heart stopping maneuvers
my car left to jockey
through traffic-choked Broadway and the Avenue of the Americas
heart pounding

beneath the surface
safe within
the subterranean efficiency worming through tunnels
a buck fifty to ride transfer and arrive
without the need for cardio pulmonary resuscitation

subway tokens with their pentagonal centers
brass life savers jingle in my pocket
in time to the tintinnabulation of
rockefeller bells

Rockefeller wire angels all in white
ignore the December twenty-ninth rain
trumpet gabriels herald
peace on earth goodwill
just around the corner from Saks Fifth Avenue
where homeless street angels huddle on the subway grate
in the ozone-tinged rising heat

Grand Central Terminal
constellations trigger memories
of a Ferlinghetti Coney Island of the Mind
'when Christ climbed down from His bare Tree
and ran away to where

there were no rootless Christmas trees
hung with candy canes and breakable stars'

loose change on the streets
subway stairs
copper pennies
embedded in the hot summer asphalt
pave Broadway and 42nd
enough in the collection for one subway ride to Whitehall
the bullish market wall
two pebbles disappear into my pocket
as a souvenir of the rock foundation
heart and soul create

George Washington bridge shines
like a jewel in the misty night
rich York poor York
New York of contradictions

Suitable for Children

RUTH DYCK-FEHDERAU

Ruth Dyck-Fehderau currently teaches at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. In her spare time, she writes stories and things, scores plays and things, lifts weights and things, and fantasizes about living in other lands.

My mother has brought me a book from the church library again. She says she brings me books because my books from class aren't suitable for children. The book she brought me this time is called The Compleat Housewife. It doesn't have any pictures. Well, except for the picture on the cover. A tired-looking woman from olden days sits by a thick table peeling vegetables with her red hands and a small knife. Stacks of vegetables sit beside her on the table and under it. I guess she'll be peeling for a long time. Maybe til her hands split and ooze out the cracks like beetjuice dripping from a knifecut. When I ask my mother why this book is for children if it doesn't have pictures, she says because it has Virtue. I ask her if books with Virtue can't have pictures, and she says I'd better just be quiet already and read it to her while she peels bushels and bushels of tomatoes for canning with her red hands and a small knife.

TheCompleat Housewife: Or, Accomplish'd Gentle woman's Companion: Pr eface: It being grown as unfashionable for a Book now to appear to People without a Preface, as for a Lady to appear at a Ba ll without a Hoop-Pettico at; I shall conform to Cu stom for Fashion sake an

I show the book to my friend Darlene and we make the Salve For a Sprain. Except we don't know what burgundy pitch is and we don't have any frankincense so we use Vaseline and her mother's most expensive perfume instead. We pretend that Darlene

To make a Hare Pye, ski n your hare, wash her, d ry her, and bone her; sea son the flesh with pepper, salt, and spice, beaten fin in a stone mortar; do a y

oung pig at the same tim e in the same manner; th en make your pye, and la y a layer of pig and a la yer of hare till it is full; p

To make Salve For a Spr ain, Take a quarter of a p ound of virgin-wax, a qu arter of a pound of franki ncense, half a pound ofBu rgundy pitch; melt them w ell together, stirring them

has a sprain in her bum and I have a sprain in my stomach. And I rub the sprain salve into her bum and she rubs it into my stomach until it's all gone and there isn't even any salve left to put in the little bottles in her doctor kit. Then Darlene says that smelling like expensive perfume might get us big spankings. So we sneak out to their cowbarn hayloft and play in the hay until suppertime so that we smell like cowbarn and hayloft and not too much like expensive perfume.

One day, when I get home from school, my mother says not to read to her. My father killed a pig today. Behind the barn this afternoon, while I was in school, he pulled a knife across the pig's throat and opened the door to its hallways of blood. And then he hung it up by its back legs from a barn beam and let the blood fall out into a pail sitting on the barn floor. He took the saw that he uses to cut wood and the pig that was alive before and he sawed it in half the long way. Then he hauled it into the house, a half at a time, and heaved it up onto the kitchen table. Now he has taken the sharpest knife in the house, sharpened it some more, and is cutting the pig that was alive before into pieces the size of my mother's roasting pan. My mother says I have to go into the kitchen and keep him company.

I watch from the door. I want to be anywhere anywhere else in the world even the principal's office even the backroom closet where my father's new leather strap hangs beside the old leather strap he wore out. When he reaches for the saw to pushpull it across an extra-thick bone, he sees me and asks me what I did at school today. The push-pulling jiggles the table. I watch a stopandgo stream of leftover blood wiggle to the end of a sawed-off pigfoot and somersault slowly into a red-brown puddle on the floor, and I think about the pig that was alive before, and I tell him that today I learned about people who are Vegetarians.

For a Distemper got by a n ill Husband, Take two p ennyworth of gum dragn ant, pick it and clean it, a nd put it in an earthen pot ; put to it as much red ros e-water as it will drink up

drip drip

He laughs. And gently, lovingly, slips the sharpest knife in the house under a thick warm strip of muscle and silently, smoothly slices it away from the bone. When the warm weight of it slides against his bare arm his fingers slowly move up to brush brush brush gently across it his eyes close halfway his cheeks and bald head turn pink his mouth opens halfway his upper lip gets shiny when his tongue drags slowly across it I've never seen him feel this good before.

So. I tell him I will read to him from the Bible. I walk into the kitchen, reach behind him and take the Bible down from the corner shelf beside his usual chair at the table.

drip drip

And moving into the farthest chair away from him, I open to Leviticus 11, and I read:

drrri

"The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'You must not eat the meat of a pig or touch its carcass. Whoever touches its carcass will be unclean. Do not defile yourself by any of these creatures. Do not make yourself unclean by means of them.'" And I drop the Bible and run away, knowing that he will not chase me with his bloody hands and drip red-brown blood through the house.

In the picture on the cover of *The Compleat Housewife*, a dead rabbit swings from the ceiling very close to the tired woman's head, its front paws almost brush brush brushing velvet across her forehead.

To make a fine Hysteric Water, take zedoary, roo ts of lovage, seeds of wil d parsneps, of each two ounces, roots of single pi ony four ounces, of mistl etoe of the oak three oun

Her feet are hidden by a bunch of dead birds and a big dead red lobster. Oh, there's a puppy watching her. And it's alive. But it's not eating the dead birds on the floor. Puppies eat dead birds, you know. They do it all the time. Maybe this puppy knows that if it eats the dead birds, it will be next on the dead animal list and will be hung up by its back legs to swing

from the ceiling and brush its fur across her forehead. Or maybe it knows it will get a very very big spanking too.

***

The next week, my mother brings me another book, even though I'm still reading *The Compleat Housewife* to her. It's called *How to Tell Your Children About Sex: A Guidebook for Christian Parents.* It doesn't have any pictures either. I'm supposed to read it alone, my mother says, but I show it to Darlene up in my bedroom the next Sunday afternoon. Quietly we read it to each other and try to understand. It tells us that when our children turn nine or ten or eleven, it's time to tell them about sex. And that what we should do is send our husbands away for the evening and let the girls come into the room when we change the diaper on their younger brother and show them his Genitals. Darlene asks if Genitals are like the Gentiles in the Bible. I tell her I don't think so, but we check the dictionary just to make sure.

The dictionary says that Genitals are human Gonads.

So. We look up Gonads. And there's a little picture. Genitals must be a boy's things. I know all about a girl's things, but I don't have a baby brother to look at so I've never even seen a boy's things. Darlene whispers that she hasn't either. So we put our heads under the blanket so no one can hear us whisper, and we decide to investigate Genitals and spy on our older brothers.

That night, I go to bed at 9:30, but I take *The Compleat Housewife* to bed with me and put it under my back to make sure I stay awake even when my eyes are closed. At 10:30, when I hear two of my brothers come up the stairs and close their door, I climb out of my bed, pull up my nightgown so I don't trip on it, and tiptoe quickly down the green hallway carpet to their bedroom door. I can hear people moving around downstairs behind me and I know that if anyone sees me spying at this door I will get the worst spanking of my life. My bum still has sore places from

A Plaister for Worms in Children: Take two oun ces of yellow wax, and a s much rosin; boil them half an hour, stirring the m all the while; skim th em well, and take it off and put to it three drac hms of aloes, and two s

the Leviticus spanking and our second batch of Salve For a Sprain isn't helping at all. Quietly quietly, I turn my brothers' door handle and push open the door the smallest, teeniest crack. I listen for footsteps on the stairs behind me, I crouch to make myself small, and, through the doorcrack, I watch.

My older younger brother climbs into bed and takes his clothes off under the sheets, throwing his pants and t-shirt out so they land on the floor. I can't even see his legs let alone his Genitals. And then he lays back and fastens his eyes on my older older brother undressing in front of him. My older older brother glances sideways at the door but he doesn't see that I have carefully opened it a tiny bit, I don't think he sees. His arms reach back to pull his t-shirt over his head and then down to push off his jeans. But when it comes time to take off his underwear, he turns slowly to face my older younger brother. His back faces me and when the underwear slides down his legs onto the floor, all I see is his bum. An ordinary e v e r y d a y bum. Like Darlene's bum when I put Salve For a Sprain on it except bigger. And then he gets into bed and curls up slowly like a spoon close behind my older younger brother. Four nights in a row I spy on them and every night I see exactly the same thing. Just an ordinary everyday bum. Just an ordinary everyday bum. Finally, I give up on my brothers.

A Salve for the King's E vil: Take a burdock-roo t and a white lily-root, w ash, dry and scrape them; wrap them in brown pap er, and roast them in the embers; when they are so ft, take them out, and cut off the burn or hard, and

And decide I have to spy on my father. (This might not be such a good idea.)

He's the last one in the family to go to bed every night, so I have to stay awake longer. The first night, I fall asleep and wake up in the morning with a long bruise on my shoulder from where *The Compleat Housewife* dug into it. But the second time is better and I stay awake. After I hear him drag heavy feet up the stairs and into his bedroom, hear the door close behind him, I climb out of bed, pull up my nightgown so I don't trip on it, and tiptoe quickly down the green

hallway carpet to his bedroom door. I try hard not to think about the new leather strap in the backroom closet as I quietly quietly turn the door handle and push the door open the smallest, teeniest crack. Listening for noises behind me, I crouch to make myself small, and, through the doorcrack, I watch.

He undresses slowly, slowly, like a tired old man. First, he unbuttons his denim shirt with his red sandpaper hands. When the shirt slides off his shoulders, he pulls in a sharp breath as it rubs over the scar from a long ago accident. Then come his jeans. He unzips, pushes them down to his knees, and he lands heavily on the bedside chair. Slowly, he bends forward to pull the jeans off the hook of his foot, a low growlsound falling from his mouth. And then all that's left is his underwear and socks, and I have a clear view of his front. But just as he's about to slide his underwear off he reaches inside the front of them straightens up turns to look at my mother asleep in the bed his eyes close halfway his cheeks and bald head turn pink his mouth opens halfway his upper lip gets shiny as his tongue drags slowly across it All of a sudden, I forget about the new leather strap and think of warm pigmeat, and I have to turn away quick quick, without seeing anything. I don't even make it to the stairs before bringing up and up and up.

One two three all the bedroom doors open just like that.

I am too sick even to feel guilty. When my brothers and my father complain about the smell of all the bringup, my mom tells them to go to bed, that I'm bringing up there on the green hallway carpet in front of her bedroom door because I was coming to wake her up and tell her I am sick and need something for my stomach. I'm so relieved that I bring up even more.

A Cure to Stay Vomiting : Take ash-leaves, boil t hem in vinegar and wate r, and apply them hot to the stomach; do this ofte

***

When I go back to school, Darlene meets me after school like always. As we walk home she tells me that she's not allowed to play with me anymore because my dad shot her dad's dog the last time he was in

the mood. But she promises to send me secret notes about new doctor games I can play by myself. I give her a hug goodbye and when I do she whispers into my ear that she saw her brother's Genitals. She says the word like she owns it. Genitals. And she even saw him pee out of his thing. A straight thin stream like it poured out of the end of a straw, she says, like it poured out the end of a drinking straw.

***

All quotes are taken from Eliza Smith's *The Compleat Housewife: or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion: Sixteenth Edition, With Additions*. 1758. London: Studio Editions, 1994.

Thanks go to Workshop West Theatre and Guys in Disguise, especially to Ron Jenkins (director) and Daniela Vlaskalic and April Banigan (actors) who performed a version of this piece at Loud 'N Queer 2001. Their input was invaluable.

Show-Room Mannequins

TERRY MALANCHUK

Terry Malanchuk (melanoxylon@shaw.ca) has been a keen photographer since the age of six when he got his first Kodak Brownie Holiday Flash camera. He maintains that his style and sense of proportion have not fundamentally changed since then. His impossible dream was to own a Polaroid camera and this he achieved by age 14. Although the Polaroid was expensive, he used it for the next four years until it was stolen. He was introduced to 'real photography' (chemicals, darkrooms, etc.) at the University of Alberta. He worked here as a photographer for the Gateway *newspaper and the* University of Alberta Yearbook *for a couple of years before attending the Northern Alberta Institute for Technology. Though photography then came to play a secondary role to a passion for motorcycling and full-time work as a motorcycle mechanic, he nonetheless produced more than 10,000 negatives in the 1970s. Most of the prints were given away to friends as soon as they were dry; all the negatives were destroyed on one day in a deliberate and malicious act designed to cause the photographer great pain. Terry returned to the artistic use of the camera only on November 17, 1999.*

Artist's Statement

Each dictionary has its own definition of art and artist. Webster's New World defines an artist as "a person who does anything very well, with a feeling for form, effect, etc." An artisan is "a skilled workman or craftsman." I claim both titles, having worked in both fields, although 'artist,' to be valid, must be conferred by one's peers (other artists) whereas an 'artisan's work' can be measured by empirical means.

Yet there is overlap between the two. I have seen 'snapshots' hidden away where no one ever sees them, a few of which are undoubtedly works of art. I have also seen a few photographs in respected galleries that I wouldn't pull out of the garbage.

Styles in architecture, clothing, the use of color, etc., change

radically over a relatively short period of time – say, a few decades. Next time you are at a Value Village or Goodwill store, look at some books describing, for instance, clothing and architectural styles of the late 1960s to the late 1970s. The criminal use of color (purple, orange, avocado, harvest gold), smoked glass, patterned gilded mirrors, furniture that appears to have been created using only an axe – and all of this in the same room!

So was it mass hysteria?

Drive around Edmonton and notice the architecture and use of color. There are tens of thousands of new dwellings having as the main architectural feature a triple garage and an entryway with a 17' ceiling, curved staircase, and gaudy chandelier. All in 'architecturally controlled' subdivisions. All in the same 'inoffensive' colors. How will these stand the test of time?

I would often drive past a shop that sold show-room mannequins (I refuse to call them 'dummies'). One night I spotted a pair of Lucite women's 'gams' in the window. I was then totally hooked and the wonderful staff gave me the run of the place. I was fascinated to find out that the mannequins are made from molding casts that were made from 'real' people. Once 'perfect' bodies from 40 – or four thousand – years ago are still valid today. (Of course, garish repainting can make them valid only to a certain time or place.) So is beauty essentially timeless? Is beauty innate? Is beauty ever 'architecturally controlled'?

Portrait photos of circa turn of the century were always serious, painstaking, and made to impress one's peers, friends, and – perhaps – enemies. I remember when my cousin and I were 13 years old we put our 25 cents (for 4 different poses) into a mechanized photo booth. The first photo was serious, the other three were making gaudy faces, smirks, and waving our tongues around. (Mooning had not been invented then.) When we showed these pictures to my grandfather he literally glowed at seeing the first exposure. Seconds later he was beetroot red and frothing at the mouth.

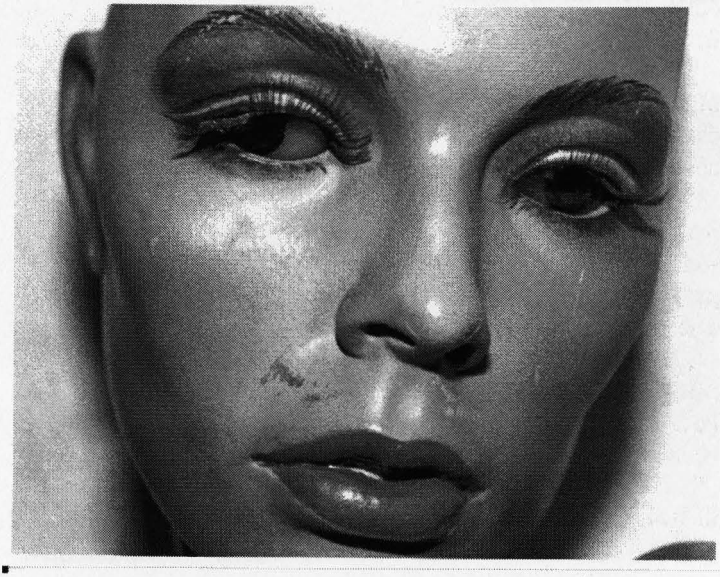
When I do the printing I just stand back and see what happens. I then choose the themes and motifs that speak to me and toss in a bit of metaphor and hyperbole. Some prints almost print themselves; others may be cajoled. My 'style' is based on a belief in an inherent sense of proportion; this can be used in a grand manner, a mediocre manner, or in parody. Rules are made to be broken. I love angles,

usually acute but sometimes oblique. Squares are to be avoided, but again: rules are made to be broken.

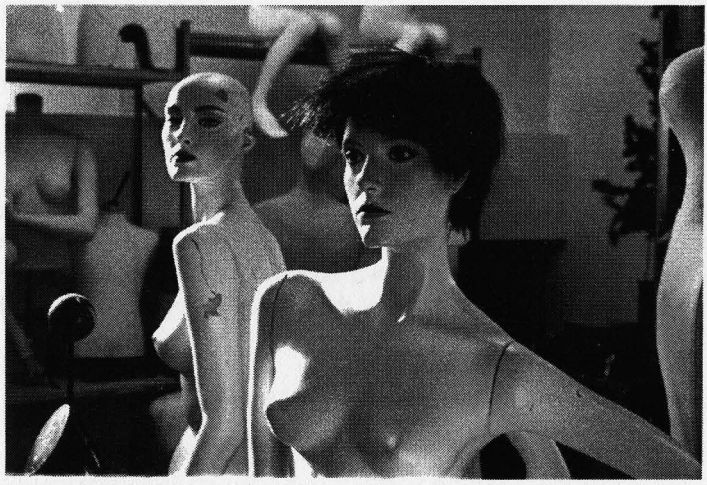
The most import technique is having a vision of the desired result. Second must be to do one's own printing. Lastly, expensive or esoteric cameras are not required. One of my favorite cameras I bought from a Goodwill store for 99 cents.

My advice is to shoot lots of film and try to make each exposure the best you can. Ten mediocre photos of something that attracts you are nothing compared to the one that sums it all up. Also, some negatives are so easy to print that it seems there is nothing to it. Then there is the negative that takes two days and 50 sheets of paper to get it Just Right. Near my enlarger is the quote: "We choose to do these things not because they are easy ..."

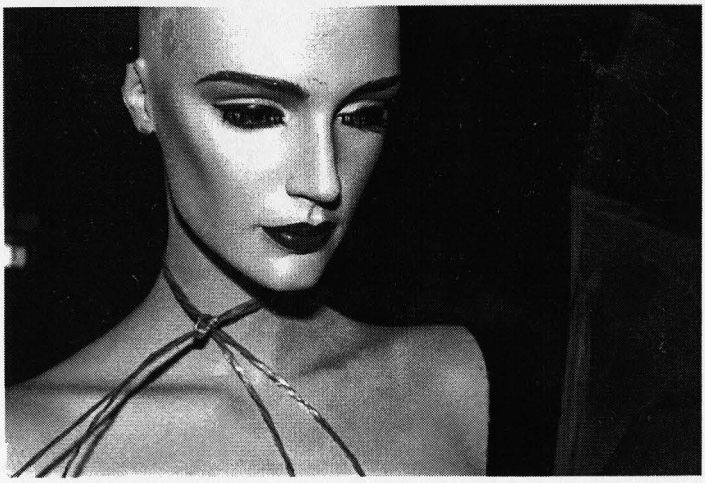
The photographer thanks Normand and Value Store Fixtures.



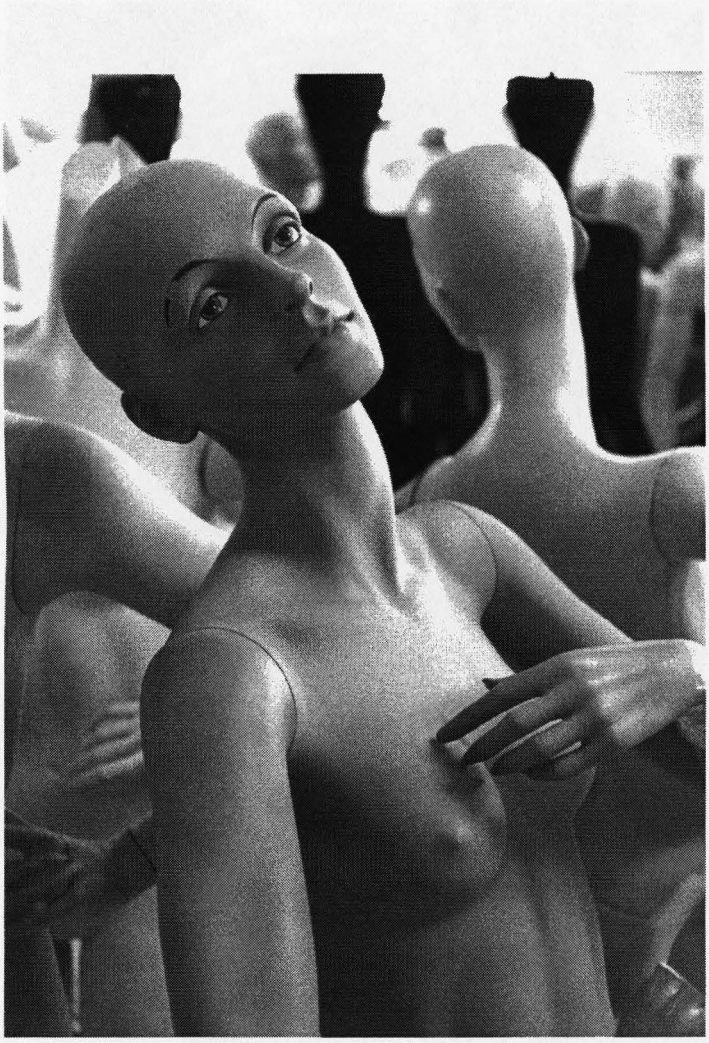
Terry Malanchuk, *Mommie on Morphine.*



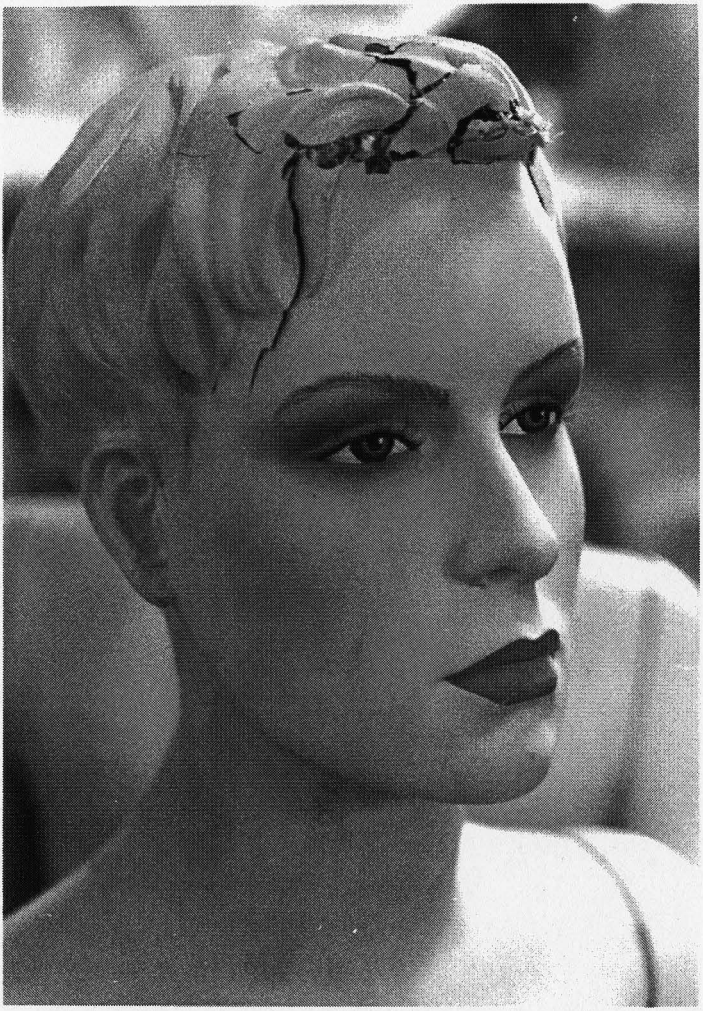
Terry Malanchuk, *Vogue.*



Terry Malanchuk, *Drag Queen.*



Terry Malanchuk, *Serene Sacrifice.*



Terry Malanchuk, *Cracked 1950 / Rita Hayworth.*

Getting an Education in Edmonton, Alberta: The Case of Queer Youth

ANDRÉ P. GRACE
KRISTOPHER WELLS

André P. Grace (andre.grace@ualberta.ca) is an academic whose work focuses on sex-and-gender issues and inclusive education. He received the 2001 Sheryl McInnes Award in recognition of his service to the gay and lesbian community of Edmonton. Kristopher Wells (kwells@ualberta.ca) is a master's student in educational policy studies, University of Alberta, and a facilitator with Youth Understanding Youth, Edmonton's queer youth outreach group.

Introduction: School's Out?

Protection against discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation is included in both the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and human rights legislation in all provinces and territories except the Northwest Territories (EGALE 1). Despite this, "schools remain one of the last bastions of tolerated hatred toward glbt [gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender] people" (STA 2). Sex-and-gender youth minorities still struggle to be seen and heard and to remain safe in Canadian schools. Their struggles for a voice and recognition, which contest the limits placed on their school experiences, define the contemporary queer phenomenon in Canadian public education. However, while queer students are finding the courage to come out in greater numbers than ever before, most still run the gauntlet of a repressive contingent of socially conservative school-district personnel, homophobic administrators and teachers, rightist clergy, and unreceptive parents. They experience a barrage of mental, emotional, and physical violence as they confront a "Grades not AIDS" conservative mindset (Ritter 3). Queer students have to be brave as they face social stigmatization, public animosity, and their fears of being alone without the support of family, friends, school,

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 3 (2001) © CLGSA / SCELG

and community (NEA et al. 3). Outreach groups – such as Gay-Straight Alliance clubs in some schools nationally and Youth Understanding Youth in Edmonton – become spaces of hope and possibility for these queer students. Here we explore aspects of these initiatives regarding outreach to queer youth in Alberta.

Getting a Formal Education: Queer Youth and Schooling in Alberta

In *A Vision and Agenda for Public Education*, Alberta's Education Partners, including the Alberta Teachers' Association, have set directions for a system of public education organized around a commitment to *educate all children well.* The partners declared, "It is essential that public education foster and support the intellectual, social, physical, emotional and spiritual development of each child" (1). Necessary conditions stated to help achieve this mission include (a) the creation of safe-and-caring school environments where students sense that a milieu of trust, respect, and inclusiveness prevails; (b) the provision of programs and support to provide equitable opportunities so children at risk may stay and succeed in school; and (c) the recognition of the student-teacher relationship as the central dynamic that can enable all students to be, become, and belong as they grow and develop as persons in school. However, while these directions have been taken up more overtly across such issues of difference as race, gender, and class, the establishment of conditions necessary to *educate queer children well* requires a substantial and focused effort. Kathryn[1] – a lesbian high-school student who was living in a safe house at the time she was interviewed – describes her school experience in Edmonton in a way that stands as an exemplary testimony to the need for work that addresses sex-and-gender differences in educating youth:

> The high school I went to in grades 10 and 11 was awful. It was very, very homophobic. It's funny. When I got involved

[1]Kathryn and other queer youth whose reflections and writing appear in this piece are members of Youth Understanding Youth, which is an Edmonton-based support group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, straight, and questioning youth who are under the age of 25. They were participants involved in a research project that we designed to identify needs and to build supports for queer youth in their school and community settings.

> in going to gay bars, I even saw some of my teachers that are gay. But why aren't they out in school? I don't know, but I wish they were. Then at least I could have gone to them. But I can understand why they're not because it is a really homophobic high school. If I ever did hear a queer-related topic, it was always something negative. So I always had to shut up because I was too scared ... I remember when we were going over the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in class. When our teacher was going through it, and reading it and telling us our rights, I just wish that he talked about gay rights as much as he talked about the other rights. I just feel that if teachers are open to this issue then kids also will be ... After I had my depression in Grade 11, I ended up being in the hospital for half of the school year. So that was it for that school. Other kids who are also queer go to that school, and they also weren't out. Sometimes I see them in the community, and they are just so out and everything. But when they are in the school, they are just like the straightest kids.

Kathryn's story of omission and invisibility highlights the fact that schools do not "truly care about ALL of our students" (STA 2). Like all students, queer youth confront their differences in schools. However, they find themselves uniquely and simultaneously included and excluded: included as youth, but excluded as queer youth (Epstein/ Johnson 133). They learn to manage their stigmatized queer identities with little or no support from mainstream educational and cultural institutions. However, if schools are to be safe, inclusive learning environments, then they ought to take up issues of sexual orientation so (a) straight students learn about queer differences and (b) queer students see themselves represented in curriculum and instruction. Unfortunately, educators often avoid discussions about queer persons and families built around a queer partnership. Key reasons for avoidance are often grounded in personal fear:

> Why are we [educators] so fearful? There are some common elements to our fears that include: 1. Lack of knowledge about glbt people and same-gender families. 2. Worries that discussing glbt relationships means talking about "gay sex" at school. 3. Fear of parent reactions. 4. Worries about administrative concern and lack of support. 5. Religious

> and/or moral objections of parents and the community at large. (STA 3)

Queer youth, who live with this fear and its fallout as much as educators do, see it for what it is. For example, Tim, a gay first-year university student, situates the fear this way: "People don't know you so they fear what you are and what they might become."

The avoidance of queer issues contributes to queer students' negative experiences of schooling, which are often marked and marred by isolation, self-hatred, self-abuse, fear of humiliation, and lack of social (peer, school, family, and community) support (NEA et al. 3). Queer students are more likely than straight peers to (a) miss school because they are afraid, (b) be verbally or physically threatened by other students, and (c) have their belongings vandalized (NEA et al. 3). Constantly subjected to a learning culture of threat, risk, and danger, queer youth exhibit higher rates of (a) emotional distress, (b) depression, (c) suicide attempts, (d) sexual promiscuity, and (e) alcohol and substance abuse (Friend; NEA et al.; Ryan/Futterman). They often have nowhere to turn because there is an absence of queer role models in schools. Marie, an eighteen-year-old lesbian high-school student, stresses the importance of visible queer role models: "They help us to imagine our future lives and to say 'Yes, I can do that.' When I see people live openly gay and successful lives, it shows me that I can have a job and a relationship too." However, queer teachers frequently choose invisibility as their way to mediate antiqueer cultural bias and social stigmatization in their life and work. Sadly, when teachers hide their queerness, queer and questioning youth also pay the price for this invisibility.

Nevertheless, more queer students are fighting back when it comes to their education. Indeed, "the [queer] 'problem' that teachers and administrators have for years been too frightened to confront is suddenly walking through the schoolhouse door every weekday morning" (Bull 29). Some queer students have been working to set up gay-straight alliance clubs in at least a few Canadian schools as part of antisexist, antihomophobic efforts to counter discrimination and exclusion that limit their experiences of schooling. This work takes its toll as these students are pushed into greater awareness of real life in schools, which mirrors life in the larger culture where antiqueer fears, phobias, bigotry, and prejudice are pervasive.

It is important that groups with responsibility to educate all

children well take the initiative to provide social and cultural supports for queer students. In recent years, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) has included protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation for teachers and students in its *Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities for Teachers* and its *Code of Professional Conduct* (see *Teaching in Alberta*). However, while the neighboring British Columbia Teachers' Federation has moved to endorse publicly the establishment of gay-straight alliance clubs in provincial schools, the ATA has yet to do so. Thus establishing these clubs remains an uphill battle in Alberta. Yet it is an important one, and part of larger queer advocacy initiatives needed to support the right of queer students to learn in safe, healthy, just, welcoming, and caring school environments.

Getting an Informal Education: Youth Understanding Youth as a Safe and Caring Learning Space for Sex-and-Gender Minority Youth in Edmonton

Queer youth fear or face prejudice, discrimination, violent behavior, and language assaults in three key social spaces: the family, the school, and the community (NEA et al. 3). Moreover, in response to the social stigma surrounding homosexuality, queer youth commonly withdraw from typical adolescent peer group experiences that are usually interactions in heterosexualizing, alienating contexts (see Ryan/Futterman). Finding little or no space in mainstream social spaces, queer youth seek alternative social spaces. Edmonton's queer youth speak about the city's gay bars and Internet adult chat rooms (such as Gay.com and Internet Relay Chat's [IRC] #gayedmonton) as risky spaces where they attempt to socialize. Such socialization can contribute to increased pressure to engage in high-risk, "anonymous sexual behaviors that have a direct correlation with increased STD, AIDS and drug and alcohol abuse" (Ryan/Futterman 107). However, for some queer youth, the risks are outweighed by the desire and need for any available means of education that can help them understand their sexual feelings, isolation, and alienation (Ryan/Futterman 73).

In this milieu, an informal learning space like Edmonton's Youth Understanding Youth (YUY) provides a welcome and needed space for questioning, searching queer youth. By providing "supportive, age-appropriate activities" for queer youth, it also provides

"opportunities for normal socialization and interaction with peers" (Ryan/Futterman 73). In its statement of philosophy, YUY describes itself as "a self-supporting volunteer group that strives to create a safe environment in which youth can explore and express their interests and needs in an atmosphere where they can expect to be supported and respected for their contributions and unique individual differences" (YUY 1). YUY is a peer support and discussion group that welcomes all young people who want to investigate sex-and-gender differences in a physically and emotionally safe space where confidentiality and privacy are respected. The group operates using guidelines that respect the equality, uniqueness, identity, and integrity of each group member. It provides this statement of purpose:

> The mission of Youth Understanding Youth is to provide a warm and friendly place where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, straight and questioning youth, who are under the age of 25, can gather together to have fun and learn about themselves and others in a safe, supportive and caring environment. (YUY 1)

YUY starts its meetings by having a youth cofacilitator read the philosophy statement. Then, cofacilitators and group members sit in a circle and introduce themselves. Next, everyone is invited to answer a youth-created icebreaker question. For example, members might respond to one of the following starter questions: What do you find most attractive about another guy or girl? Who is your favorite queer singer? What is your favorite queer-themed movie? Following the icebreaker exercise, everyone is invited to share his or her positive and negative experiences for the week. For example, at a recent YUY meeting, one gay-male youth announced, "I have a new boyfriend and things are going really well." A lesbian youth shared, "I got kicked out of my house last week." Another gay-male youth added, "My parents are still not accepting me, but the positive thing is that we are still talking."

These opening activities usually take forty-five minutes. After a fifteen-minute break, group members participate in the evening's planned event. The group meets every Saturday at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre of Edmonton (Suite 103, 10612 - 124th Street) from 7-9 pm. YUY can be contacted by email at <yuyedm@hotmail.com>. They also have a Website: <http://www.yuyouth.tripod.com>. Testimonials at this site reiterate the

importance that queer youth place on Youth Understanding Youth as a support in their lives. For example, Mark wrote these comments:

> I went to my first meeting this Saturday, and it was an awesome experience that I'm sure I'll relive again next Saturday. ... Awesome Website! I don't know what I'd do without you guys, and I'm sure a lot of people agree with me. In life you go through tough times and good times. Then you go to the meeting and talk about it. That's life, and it's great! See-ya all next Saturday. Peace guys.

YUY holds a planning night once every two months so youth group members can plan activities and topics that adult and youth cofacilitators will help deliver in weekly meetings during the two-month interval. The meetings have traditionally been loosely designed around five alternating themes. Theme 1 is *Discussion Night* where guest speakers engage topics such as spirituality and safer sex, or group members discuss topics including relationships, coming out, dating, and school issues. Theme 2 is *Sharing Our Stories* where one or two group members take the opportunity to speak about coming out and/or other aspects of their lives in dialogue with other group members. Theme 3 is *Activity Night* where group members take part, for example, in drama games, bowling, and Pride Day planning. Theme 4 is *Fringe Night* where group members share special talents (such as dance, poetry, music, and art) or something that has special meaning to them (such as pictures, quotes, or collectibles). Theme 5 is *Movie Night* where group members watch gay-themed, contemporary movies like *Jeffrey* (Ashley 1995), *The Broken Hearts Club* (Berlanti 2000), *Priest* (Bird 1995), or *The Hanging Garden* (Fitzgerald 1998).

YUY provides a fugitive learning space where queer youth actively participate to create a sharing space in which they can make sense of themselves and those around them. For queer youth, this self-determined, informal education becomes a political and personal practice that "intersects with a wide range of overlapping and shifting sites of learning" that contest dominant cultural modes of expression, containment, and regulation (Giroux 15). YUY becomes a safe and caring space to build and integrate positive sex-and-gender identities. The work to help queer youth grow and develop as self-confident persons who accept and love themselves takes time. It requires access to supportive peers and adults, access to accurate information, and a

connection to a community in which accommodation and validation are provided (Ryan/Futterman 20-22). It is important work since queer youth who have "developed and integrated a positive identity show better psychological adjustment, greater satisfaction, and higher self-concept, with lower rates of depression or stress" (Ryan/ Futterman 20). Justin, a twenty-year-old youth group member who works in Edmonton, considers Youth Understanding Youth to be an important source of support in his life. He affirms, "It's just a place to go and be yourself. You don't have to be so closed up. It just makes you feel good inside." Kathryn, a regular at YUY meetings, also speaks to the important role that the group plays in building her self-confidence and self-esteem:

> Youth Understanding Youth is a little group, but it's still really big to me. It's something to do on the weekend ... I need that insurance that there [is] a group of queers getting together and doing some good, fun, positive activity. For me, the group is inspiring. The kids are really just fantastic. They are very intelligent kids. They all have jobs. Most of them are looking for a career, and they have really inspired me to actually go on with my life and not give up. When I hear of each one of them graduating, I'm like oh, I want to do that too. She's gay and I'm gay. She has also been kicked out of home, but she made it. I can do it too. That's why I come here to hear more success stories and to get hope. ... I feel like I have no family, but this is sort of family for me. This is the closest thing to me right now. I have no one else that I can talk to about relationships, about life, my goals, my hopes, about my dreams. All the people that I know are from this community, and I'm comfortable and I'm myself. I'm not afraid of saying anything. I'm myself. I dress the way I want. I talk the way I want. I'm comfortable. That's all that matters.

Concluding Perspective

Community youth groups like Youth Understanding Youth provide an important social space for queer youth to explore being, becoming, and belonging. However, relationships with peers are not enough. Queer youth also identify teachers as a most important source of support to help them deal with their problems and concerns (Ryan/

Futterman 74). Educational interest groups need to work together to enable teachers, especially queer teachers, to interact with queer youth as mentors and supporters. Gay/straight alliance clubs can be one important site of mentoring and support. The Alberta Teachers' Association needs to continue its work to address issues in relation to sexual orientation and schooling, and it ought to support ventures such as the establishment of gay/straight alliance clubs in Alberta's schools.

Now follow some expressive arts testimonies by members of YUY.

Lyrics

Lincoln Ho

Lincoln is an eighteen-year-old gay university student. If you would like to learn more about Lincoln and his creative writing, visit his website at <www.lincolnho.8m.com>. Of this piece he writes: "I wrote this story on September 14, 1999, from my friend's perspective. He is going through a picture album and he flips to a page with a picture of me on it. The title of my story is 'Lyrics' because many closeted youth find few ways to communicate with the world and lyrics have traditionally been useful tools for youth who have nowhere to turn. I'm not good at expressing my emotions physically, so I use words to do that for me."

This page of pictures is of my friend Lincoln. For as long as I have known him, he has always amazed me. There is so much about his character that I admire, and I respect him a lot for handling his difficult times the way he has. I know that he's been through a lot, mostly because he's gay. He's still standing proud though, which is a great quality that I very much like about him. I don't really care that he is gay. He sure has changed a lot of the stereotypes of gay people that I used to think were true.

He and I met about a year ago in grade ten through our interests in music. He and I both really enjoy listening, composing, and learning about music. We both love to write songs and sing. In fact, he once lent me a tape of his songs sung *a cappella*. They all seemed to be about suicide, and how the world sucks and everything. I guess

he likes that type of music for some sort of reason. I really don't know why he always writes all those depressing songs.

Anyway, deep inside the Lincoln who everybody knows, there is a stronger Lincoln who is locked up just because of his surroundings. He can achieve so much because he can forget and forgive so many things that happen to him. I didn't really know that he was gay until he told me. It just shows how he can be such a good actor. However, he doesn't like acting, and he says that it's not his thing to show emotions.

In the beginning, he didn't talk about himself very much, but the inner struggles that he has been going through have given him some rough times. When he started to talk to me about himself, and what had happened in his life before, it amazed me even more that he hasn't committed suicide. I'm very serious! According to what he said about himself before I knew him, he was on a roller coaster with very extreme highs and lows all because of something called discrimination. And by the way, studies show that gay and aboriginal youth have some of the highest suicide rates in Canada.

When he was still in junior high, Lincoln was editor of the unofficial school paper. He spent hours every week putting it together. Many teachers and students had weekly subscriptions to it. When a copy of the newspaper ended up in the principal's hands about two months later, the principal felt that he needed to approve further editions before copies were circulated. It all went fine until the Delwin Vriend case started to surface in November 1996.[2] Lincoln, by that time, was sure of himself, and he decided to write about the case and how it is okay to be gay.

This single article resulted in the banning of the newspaper for two weeks. According to the principal, this was a paper that went

---

[2]Delwin Vriend, an educator at Kings College, Edmonton was dismissed in 1991 on the pretext that his employment violated the institution's antiqueer religious policy. When the Supreme Court of Canada decided in Vriend's favor on April 2, 1998, in his legal challenge to have sexual orientation read into the Alberta Individual Rights Protection Act, the Government of Alberta abided by the decision and extended provincial human rights legislation to prohibit discrimination against queer persons. The Supreme Court's decision aligned with Section 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Sexual orientation is a category of person protected by equality provisions in this section where it is considered analogous to other personal characteristics listed there.

home to families, so it was inappropriate to have an article like *that* in it. The principal felt that it would negatively influence some families and the school would get complaints. Lincoln published the article anyway, and the story about Delwin Vriend caused sales of the newspaper to double. The school received no complaints. The principal got quite upset, and he couldn't do anything about it because Lincoln distributed the newspaper off school property. Quite smart, eh?

However, the issue with the newspaper made Lincoln vulnerable to attack in some places. He didn't care, though, and nothing really serious happened to him until the following April when he was sexually assaulted. He told his best girlfriend who told her friends. Eventually, the person who abused Lincoln found out. He told the principal that Lincoln was spreading rumors about him. When Lincoln finally had the guts to explain the truth, police, psychologists, and his parents were called into the school. There were seven people in the room, including his parents who asked him if the story was true. He wasn't "out" to his parents then, so the pressure led him to tell them that he made the whole story up just to get even with that person. This was the only lie that he told during the whole thing. Lincoln was expelled from school and sent to see a psychologist because *they* said that he had disturbed the learning environment for students in the school.

Lincoln has told me so many more stories, and each seems just as terrible as this one. Yet Lincoln always seems to be an optimist who sees the good side of things, and he makes the best out of each situation. Like anyone, he has his moments, but he always comes back and picks himself up again. And, through it all, he still manages to care about the people who are most important in his life. If only a lot more people were like Lincoln, it would be cool.

Cartoon: "Eighteen and I Like It?"

MICHAEL BROWN

Michael is a twenty-two-year-old gay male who has a fine arts degree. Michael's art has been featured in Edmonton's queer Times.10 Magazine *and in the University of Alberta's* Gateway *student newspaper.*

Until Never Again

André P. Grace

Rage hard
Resist deeply and long
And long for what might be
For the many queer students and teachers
Assaulted
Assaulted by the fists
Assaulted by the words
Of enemies afraid
Of those they don't know or understand
Ignorance is violence
That leads to more violence
Never forget
Until never again

Never forget
Until never again
Rage hard for the queer boy with the battered face
Blood swimming in his sad eyes
There is no room for the tears that need to flow
They left his locker in shambles
And stuffed his beaten body into it
Wednesday was a very hard day at school

Never forget
Until never again
Rage hard for the queer girl
Her chest tattooed with a pocketknife
The caked blood concealing a hateful slash
Hacked by her schoolmates
D-Y-K-E
She cries alone in an alley afraid to go home
Friday night was not this girl's night out

Never forget
Until never again

Rage hard for the queer teacher
A lump in his throat
Tears in his eyes
Because he found pictures of naked men
And a note on his car windshield
F-A-G-G-O-T
Someone seems to know
He walks afraid in his school
He finds no refuge there
Not even in the staff room
Where fag jokes are just more spit in his face

Rage hard
Resist deeply and long
And long for what might be
For the many queer students and teachers
Assaulted
Assaulted by the fists
Assaulted by the words
Of enemies afraid
Of those they don't know or understand
Ignorance is violence
That leads to more violence
Never forget
Until never again

Works Cited

Alberta's Education Partners. *A Vision and Agenda for Public Education*. Edmonton: Authors, 2000.

Alberta Teachers' Association. *Teaching in Alberta: A Teacher Education Learning Resource*. Edmonton: Authors, 2001.

Ashley, Christopher, dir. *Jeffrey*. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, 1995.

Berlanti, Greg, dir. *The Broken Hearts Club*. Meanwhile Films, 2000.

Bird, Antonia, dir. *Priest*. Miramax, 1994.

Bull, Chris. "Ahead of the Class: Anthony Colin and his Peers Take On a School District for their Right to be Out." *The Advocate* 11 Apr. 2000: 24-33.

Epstein, Debbie and Richard Johnson. *Schooling Sexualities*. Briston, PA: Open University Press, 1998.

Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere (EGALE). "Canada Watch: Who's Doing What." 1998. <http://www.egale.ca/features/watch.htm>

Fitzgerald, Thom, dir. *The Hanging Garden*. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, 1997.

Friend, Richard A. "Choices, not Closets: Heterosexism and Homophobia in Schools." *Beyond Silenced Voices: Class, Race and Gender in the United States*. Eds. Lois Weis and Michelle Fine. New York: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Giroux, Henry A. *Fugitive Cultures: Race, Violence and Youth*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

National Education Association, American Psychological Association and Partners. *Just the Facts about Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators and School Personnel*. Washington: Authors, 1999.

Ritter, John. "Gay Students Stake their Ground." *USA Today on the Web* 17 Jan. 2000. <http://www.usatoday.com/news/acovtue.htmt>

Ryan, Caitlin and Donna Futterman. *Lesbian and Gay Youth: Care and Counseling*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

Surrey Teachers' Association (STA). *"Moving Beyond Silence": Addressing Homophobia in Elementary Schools*. Surrey, BC: Author, 2000.

Youth Understanding Youth (YUY). *YUY's Philosophy and Mission Statement*. Edmonton: Author, 1998.

Pussies Bite Back: The Story of the Women's Bathhouse Raid

CHANELLE GALLANT
LORALEE GILLIS

Chanelle Gallant (girlaction5@hotmail.com), 28, was born somewhere in Chicoutimi, Quebec, and now resides in Toronto. She has dabbled in video, performance, and writing. In 2002 her performance text "Standing By My Man" was published in Bent on Writing: Contemporary Queer Tales, *to the great acclaim of her parents. A truly eager beaver, Chanelle has been an organizing member of the women's bathhouse committee since 2000, and examines the bathhouse in her Master's work in Sociology at York University, still in progress.*

Loralee Gillis (lgillis@passport.ca), 33, was born and bred in Peterborough, but now calls Toronto home. She works as a community-based qualitative health researcher. Her Master's research in medical anthropology at York University focuses on the lives and experiences of women living with HIV/AIDS. She is one of the founders of the Toronto Women's Bathhouse. Her greatest claim to fame belongs to her right nipple, which was the very first female nipple to appear on the cover of Xtra *(Toronto's Lesbian & Gay bi-weekly). Other examples of her moonlighting career in soft porn can be found in* eye magazine, *the* Toronto Sun *and a variety of safer-sex posters in and around Toronto.*

December 2001

Introduction

On September 14, 2000 seven officers from the Toronto Police Services raided the Toronto Women's Bathhouse, affectionately known among queer women in Toronto as the Pussy Palace. Although there has been extensive media coverage of the raid, as a committee we have written very little about the events of that evening and what followed. Most of our public communication

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 3 (2001) © CLGSA / SCELG

has been through press releases, media interviews and statements from our lawyers. This article is an attempt to foster a more open dialogue about the repercussions of the Pussy Palace raid. Both of the authors are members of the Toronto Women's Bathhouse Committee. We aren't speaking for the committee in this article, only providing our observations as two participants closely involved in the process.

The information presented in this article is constrained by two facts. First, immediately after the raid on the Pussy Palace, city councilor Kyle Rae criticized the actions of the Toronto Police Services in the press. Councilor Rae has since been hit with a defamation suit from the officers involved in the raid. Thus, our comments throughout this year and within this article have been carefully chosen in order to minimize the possibility of such action being taken against us. Second, the charges against us have not been resolved. In December 2001 (more than one year after the raid) our lawyer presented his final arguments in court. To date, we have yet to hear whether the charges will be dismissed or go to trial. As a result, anything we write can be used as evidence. These two frames prohibit a completely candid discussion of these issues.

The raid on the Pussy Palace did not just affect the people[1] that were in attendance that night. The Pussy Palace itself changed women's sexual culture in Toronto. It created new possibilities for how women could think about, organize, and enact their sexual desires. Whether or not women attended the Pussy Palace, it existed as an option, as a possibility, as a problem for how women think of themselves as sexual beings.

One of the reasons that we began the Pussy Palace was to address the invisibility of queer women's sexuality. We knew that queer women were having lots of sex, and we knew that we were discouraged from talking about it or doing it in the same explicit public ways that gay boys could. The Pussy Palace has given queer women's pleasure and sexual cultures a higher profile in Toronto. With increased visibility we have also become an object for increased legal and moral regulation. The police raid on the Pussy Palace adds another layer to how we think about ourselves as sexual beings – our

[1]The Toronto Women's Bathhouse is a trans-positive space. Participants include women, and transsexual and transgendered men and women.

public expressions of sexual desire have been witnessed, monitored and documented by the state. The fantasy of sexual freedom that prevailed at the earlier events was shattered by the presence of five large bio-men, roaming around, staring at our naked bodies.

This article is primarily expository – we want to share the facts, from our perspective, with queers in the academic community. However, we also want to begin to consider the impact that the Pussy Palace and the police raid have had on the sexual culture of women in Toronto and elsewhere.

History of the Pussy Palace

In the fall of 1998 a handful of queer women activists in Toronto hosted the first Pussy Palace. A small group of us had canvassed men's baths across the city for months, until one finally agreed to let us rent their facilities. We frantically scrambled to find volunteers, organize tickets and advertising, the bar, the DJ, etc. – it was quite an undertaking. None of us were event planners; we were queer, bisexual, and lesbian women who believed in women's right to fuck and saw the need for a place to do it. The original committee was a group of friends who shared a similar radical sexual politics and felt a frustration at the lack of opportunities to put those sexual politics into public practice. There were certainly elements of radical sexual politics in Toronto's queer community prior to the Pussy Palace. The women's leather community in Toronto is very active. Events like Narnia, a queer women's fetish night, have a devout following. And as for semipublic sex, you really could not beat the bathroom stalls at Buddies, a queer theater space in Toronto that featured Viva Vulva every Friday night for several years in the mid nineties. However, the Pussy Palace provided a new organizing force for women interested in casual, kinky and public sex.

Loralee: At the first Pussy Palace we had no clue what to expect. We didn't know whether to expect ten women or one hundred. Much to our surprise, four hundred women stood in the rain for two hours or more to get in. The first Pussy Palace was like a dream. I ran around from 4pm until 7am the next morning. I got no action that night, I just ran from one organizational crisis to another. But I watched four hundred women cruise each other. I listened to women fucking each other through the paper-thin walls. Women walked around naked, lingered in the hot tub, hung off the fire escape. It was a

glorious feeling to think that we had facilitated all this pleasure. The Pussy Palace is the epitome of female decadence. It is bacchanalian – it gives women the opportunity to escape for several hours of absolute sexual indulgence.

Description of the Pussy Palace

The Pussy Palace is unlike any other event that we know: for one night women and transfolk run riot in a men's bathhouse. The floors are full of activity from 6 pm till dawn when security finally shuffles the last few smiling attendees out the door into cabs. The first floor contains an outdoor pool, sauna, hot tub, showers and small dance floor and the cash/door. This is where women leave the street and enter into the Pussy Palace. Other floors house dozens of very small rooms with a basic bed and locker. Some of these rooms are available for rent for the evening and most are left open on a first-come-first-served basis (or the other way around, depending on your perspective). There are a host of enormously popular erotic activities organized for participants. Add to this hundreds of women and trans people milling about in what we like to euphemistically call 'various stages of undress,' drinking (when we have a liquor permit), dancing, flirting, and fucking.

The environment is charged with anticipation; it is sexy, playful, tense and carefully planned out as well. The night involves a great deal of coordinated security – bags are checked for substances, all participants are of age of majority, rooms are cleaned after every use, rules and etiquette are provided along with a towel and safer sex supplies. Committee accountability is well established – two committee members are on duty at all times and ultimately responsible for any decisions. Volunteers staff the entire event – from the DJs to the food and drink servers to the cleanup crew and dancers. Moreover, tours of the location, etiquette, and rules are provided for the uninitiated.

In our design of the event and the organization of the night we are effectively transforming queer women's sexual culture in Toronto. The basic culture of the Pussy Palace is traceable to men's bathhouse cultures but the heart of it is a unique amalgamation of egalitarian feminist policies (e.g., equity outreach and recruitment, collective committee structure, nonprofit) with pro-sex and sex worker practices (porn rooms, dancers, massage).

Chanelle: Preraid, the Pussy Palace was a sort of queer sex playground to me. Within a setting that I (mistakenly) believed was relatively safe from harassment, I had thrilling sexual experiences, took risks being bolder than I would otherwise ever be, experimented with pleasure and desire and developed a sense of community and connection with other queer women in Toronto. I lap danced at my first bathhouse and got an addictive first taste of the pleasure of power. I walked away exhilarated, well-fucked, and newly aware of my femme power.

Shamefully, there aren't many safe places in the world to be a slut. Aside from launching thousands of orgasms, the Pussy Palace validates sexualities that do not conform to the middle-class norms of 'private,' marital/sanctified (hetero)sexuality, and are not dependent on men to 'civilize' and legitimize women's bodies. The policies, laws, and norms that make it hard to be a hussy are often the same ones that define and punish single mothers, sex workers, and anyone else visibly defying the bounds of acceptable sexuality. So while the Pussy Palace allows me to delight in my kinky femme bisexuality, it also erodes or at least challenges the stigma against all nonnormative sexualities. The Pussy Palace offers us a physical and discursive space in which to negotiate and make our own sexual choices, above and against the moral and legal restrictions that haunt those choices.

September 14, 2000

On September 14, 2000, the Women's Bath House Organizing Committee hosted "2000 Pussies," our fourth bathhouse. That night, it was our second anniversary. In the year preceding this event it had become apparent that the civil relationship between queers in Toronto and the Toronto Police Services had eroded. In June and July 1999, the cops raided the Bijou, a men's bar in Toronto. Nineteen charges of indecency were laid against patrons and the bar was charged with liquor license offences. Eventually all of the criminal charges were dropped. The bar was forced to close down but then reopened without its liquor license. In March and April 2000 the cops raided the men's naked parties at the Barn and charged them with permitting disorderly conduct under the liquor license act. The Barn is still fighting these charges in court.

In Toronto there are about a dozen men's baths. Most of these

establishments run twenty-four hours a day, three hundred sixty-five days a year. All of the baths in Toronto are licensed and regulated by the city. One of the pivotal moments in Canadian lesbian and gay history occurred in the early 1980s when the Toronto Police Services staged raids of the men's baths in Toronto. They entered with axes, broke down doors, charged the occupants with public indecency and published their names in the Toronto papers. At that time there was a massive public outcry from the queer community. Queers took to the street in protest and the cops backed down. All charges were dropped. The crown refused to prosecute the criminal charges. Since that time the police have had a relatively amicable relationship with the baths. Police check in at the baths, but generally they will not enter unless they suspect prostitution or drug trafficking. The police were slowly eroding the détente that had existed with the community since the raids of the 1980s. At some of our previous events, the police had arrived to caution us that neighbors were complaining about noise levels. In turn, we would attempt to quiet things down. Our relationship has been minimal and uneventful.

At 12:45 am on September 15 five hefty and intimidating male officers from 52 Division entered the Pussy Palace. When the woman at the door told them it was an all-women event, they told her that if she did not let them in she could be charged with obstructing justice. The officers split up and proceeded to search every nook and cranny of the space until 2:15am. Although many women were naked or seminaked, we were explicitly prevented from warning participants of the police presence. Many women were deeply angered and emotionally distressed by the police presence. During and immediately after the raid many of the participants left.

Loralee: When the police entered the Palace I was swimming naked in the pool. As the word that men were there rippled through the crowds I watched a palpable change in women's bodies and their demeanor. Naked women grabbed for towels, clothes or anything to hide themselves from these police officers. I ran to my room and donned the bulky track pants and sweatshirt I had worn earlier in the day. After covering myself I went to follow these men and monitor their activities. I watched as two large men conducted the search for some wrongdoing on the premises. Police have insisted that the purpose for the men's presence was a liquor license inspection. I watched these men knock on women's doors, search their rooms, take

their names and addresses, and visually inspect their bodies with an aggressive and penetrating gaze. Later at the trial, I heard the officers that I had followed claim that they calmly walked through the premises counting women to ensure that we were not overcrowded. They claimed that women were friendly and unaffected by their presence.

One of the officers found a sign we had made with brightly colored markers pointing to the Porn Room. This was a room where we played porn on a large screen TV. He tore the sign off the wall and searched frantically for this room. It was brutally ironic to see this man waving around our innocuous little sign and insinuating that we were somehow running a nefarious porn ring – in effect that we *posed a danger to those in attendance, not the cops themselves.*

Activism

Chanelle: Two days after the raid, the committee gathered in my kitchen for eight hours to share our shock, fear, guilt, and anger and then to strategize a response to the raid. To me, the raid on the Pussy Palace was clearly connected to the wide discretionary powers of the police to act against marginalized communities, evidenced in the historical harassment of gay men's sexual spaces (bathhouses, parks, porn bars) and 'community policing' of people of color in Toronto, and the domination of women through the incursion of a non-consensual sexual gaze. It was with these broader social issues in mind that we began to design our responses.

Within the first two weeks after the raid, we produced a press release and fact sheet that were distributed to media outlets across the city. We organized a public meeting at the 519 Community Centre to provide a forum for community responses to the raid ("the 519," as it is called, primarily serves the gay and lesbian communities of Toronto). We invited several activists to speak with us, including Tim McCaskall who had been an organizer of the response to the original bathhouse raids. Never having been in this situation, none of us knew what to expect. We were stunned by the support for the bathhouse. It was an enormous success from an activist point of view. Hundreds of people packed into the room, expressing their rage at the police action and their desire to take immediate action. What had been a public forum became a spontaneous protest march on police headquarters. We had not anticipated this but quickly decided to endorse and lead the march. Within minutes, march marshals

volunteered and were organized, bullhorns located, the media was called and hundreds of us spilled into the streets halting traffic and chanting "Fuck You 52 – Pussies Bite Back!" and "What do we want? Pussy! When do we want it? NOW!" At police headquarters, women staged a "kiss-in," we cheered, chanted, local media arrived to interview us ... and of course, the police arrived. They watched and waited until we dispersed, but made no move to interfere with our action. The raid had forced us into view of the state and many of us were left intimidated and unsettled by this sudden visibility and assessment. In the fashion of queer activists before us, we responded by refusing and reframing that attempt to shame and humiliate us.

Following the 519 meeting, we staged a "Panty Picket" in front of police at 52 Division where we arrived with a show of panties, garters, bras, boas and signs that shouted "Sluts Can't be Shamed." Following in the footsteps of recent reconfigurations of political protest in Canada, our style of activism is flamboyant, fun, and unrepentantly pro-sex. Not long after that, we marched in the Toronto Take Back the Night where we may have been the first women in the history of the march to shout from bullhorns "Lesbian! Pornography! Into our Society!" We were delighted to speak to marchers and connect the raid to a broader-based political response to police harassment of women and people of color. This last Toronto Gay Pride (2001), we were chosen by the Pride Committee to lead the Dyke March. After nine long months of legal and fundraising strategizing, this came as a welcome boost to our efforts. The invitation indicated a wide base of support and allowed for a consolidation of political objectives.

Publicity

Media responses to the raid have been overwhelmingly supportive of the bathhouse. Toronto television stations and all three Toronto daily newspapers carried reports immediately after the raid and many later printed editorials questioning the motives of the police. City, community, and university radio covered the raid as well and conducted interviews with community and committee members. The alternative weekly newspapers such as Toronto's *Eye Magazine* and the Vancouver-based *Georgia Straight* as well as gay and lesbian media in both Canada and the U.S. came out against the police raid. To date, mainstream media has been in support of the bathhouse –

something quite remarkable given the diversity of media involved in this case. An editorial in the *Globe and Mail*, that most august of Canadian media institutions, chastised the police for their lack of restraint and common sense and stated that the police had "blurred the line" between enforcement and harassment ("Barging In" A14). A *Toronto Star* columnist speculated that the underlying reason for the raid was to demonstrate police resistance to Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino's mandate. "If the Chief had earned any credit in the gay community, and among mushy liberals, the cowboys (police) blasted it to smithereens" (Slinger A2).

Police Relations

A week after the police raided the Pussy Palace, our committee appeared before the Toronto Police Services Board. We expressed our concerns about the raid and our frustration at the lack of response from the police about the inappropriate and harassing nature of their actions. The Board passed two motions: a) to request a report from the chief of police concerning this matter; and b) to have the public parts of the report sent to our Committee. We waited but no information ever arrived. In January 2001, we made an appointment to make a second deputation at the Toronto Police Services Board. *Loralee: Prior to the date of our deputation a Superintendent from the Toronto Police Services contacted me. He told me that he had noticed our request and encouraged me to cancel the request and speak with him instead. He suggested that he could more effectively deal with our concerns. We agreed to cancel our request and meet with him instead. We had an hour-long meeting in February 2001. He admitted privately that the Toronto Police Service had made a mistake by raiding us and that in fact policing practice in Toronto had changed because of the fallout from the raid. He told me that he would find information about the internal investigation and forward it to me within a week. I called him several times to follow up, but he has never returned my calls, and has never made a public statement confirming the private admissions. That was the last we heard from the police.*

Police Liaison Committee

Before the raid on the Pussy Palace, the chief of the Toronto Police had initiated a process to establish a police liaison committee with

the queer community. Despite the grave concerns expressed by many members of the queer community in light of the string of police raids on queer establishments including the Pussy Palace, the working group, which was composed of community members, decided to proceed with forming this committee.

The Women's Bathhouse committee decided not to participate. We felt that the committee was a public relations façade orchestrated by the Toronto Police. While the police publicly indicated that they wanted to build bridges with our community, they remained unapologetic about raiding the Pussy Palace, and still had made no substantive changes in their policing practices. The police liaison committee encouraged us to bring our concerns to the token lesbian constable who had been assigned to them. We refused to do so because her superiors had already disregarded our concerns. The process of creating a liaison committee has allowed the police to ignore our complaints and instead defer them to someone who has no power to change policing practice. It is deeply disturbing that parts of our community saw fit to proceed with this committee immediately after the raid. The police wanted a rubber stamp from our community and they got it. By participating in the Police Liaison committee, Toronto's queer communities lost an important opportunity to demonstrate unified opposition to policing practices. The most compelling bargaining chip we had with the police was refusing to participate in this process. Many in our community worked in vain to stop the forming of this committee and then watched in horror as others happily surrendered this power to the cops.

Legal Defense

Soon after we were charged, the committee hired a Toronto lawyer, Frank Addario, to defend the women who were charged. Frank is well known for his defense of Eli Langer and Glad Day bookstore, and for his participation in the Little Sister's trial. Brenda Cossman, a University of Toronto law professor, also acted as our legal advisor. Brenda is known for her critique of the *Bad Attitude* trial, which she argues is increasing evidence of the sexual conservatism inherent in Canada's obscenity legislation.

Understanding the charges laid against us is a little confusing. There were no actual criminal charges laid against us. All the charges were laid under the liquor license act. Each of the two women whose

names appear on the special occasion liquor permit were charged with one count of serving alcohol after hours; one count of failing to provide adequate security; one count of serving outside the licensed area; and finally, three counts of permitting disorderly conduct. At this point we can say no more about these charges other than that they are unjustified and unsupportable.

Between October and December 2001 our case was finally heard in Ontario Provincial court. The basis for our defense was that the constitutional rights of the defendants were violated in the process of collecting evidence on the night of the raid. Our lawyer argued that the right to privacy of the defendants was violated by the presence of the male officers. We are still waiting for the verdict.

Human Rights Complaint

In March of 2001, six months after the raid, our committee filed a Human Rights Complaint against the Toronto Police Services Board, Chief Fantino and the five male officers who were present at the raid. This is the substance of our complaint: policing is a public service. In Canada, all services must be provided in ways that safeguard the Human Rights that are protected in the Charter. The Human Rights Code guarantees equal treatment regardless of sex or sexual orientation. In our Human Rights complaint, we assert that the police violated our human rights by: a) policing our event in a manner which is not consistent with the way in which other events (like weddings or bar mitzvahs) are policed when they have a special occasion (liquor) license; b) not conducting their liquor license search with female officers; and c) with regard to the chief and the Board specifically, by not providing training for their officers so that they would have some understanding of our community. We have requested monetary damages, an apology from each respondent named in the charges and, finally, an order directing the chief and the Board to institute mandatory cultural competency training around working with the queer/bi/lesbian/trans and gay communities, and in particular, the needs of the women in those communities. The Human Rights Complaint is a lengthy process. We are still waiting to hear whether our complaint has been accepted for review.

Fundraising

Fundraising is one of our biggest ongoing concerns. While we consider our early fundraising efforts to have been wildly successful

– we raised almost $30,000 – those funds have only paid for the preparation of the court case and we estimate that we will require an additional $30,000 to $50,000 to carry the case through to its conclusion. Our small committee struggles to manage a complicated legal battle, mount a massive fundraising campaign, respond to media inquiries, and stay connected to other community groups who are fighting police harassment. We are now in need more than ever of new funding sources to maintain this defense.

There was never any question that we would need to resist the charges laid against the two women charged in the raid, only how we would pay for a legal defense of this magnitude. The bathhouse is not an incorporated charity and we have always run on a not-for-profit basis. At the time of the raid, there was very little money available for a significant legal defense of this kind. At our community meeting at the 519, Toronto city councilor Olivia Chow gave a fundraising pitch and to our utter shock, nearly $10,000 was raised in ten minutes. Our fundraising has crossed the economic boundaries of queer communities – from a $100 a ticket oyster bash to $3 buttons with a catwoman graphic, to shaking our cans at the annual Pride weekend celebrations. The fundraising cabarets we held in a Toronto dyke bar probably best reflect the committee's style and approach – raunchy, sexy, funny, and loud.

Pussies Bite Back and the Future

The September 15 raid plunged us into a completely unanticipated long-term legal battle. While we are dedicated to successfully fighting the charges against the Pussy Palace, a focus on the court case exclusively was draining our excitement and our energy. Planning legal strategies and extensive fundraising activities were not what brought us all together. With our legal strategies in place and fundraising activities launched, we turned our attention back to what we do best – organizing bathhouses. Given that it could be years before all the legal issues were resolved, we decided not to wait any longer for another bathhouse since this would have been akin to effectively shutting the Pussy Palace down. In the spirit of resilience and defiance, we planned another bathhouse and called it Pussies Bite Back as a reminder that the women of the Pussy Palace will not take it lying down (so to speak).

To provide the police with fewer excuses for their "interest" in

our sexy little party, we decided not obtain a liquor license and to completely prohibit alcohol from the event. We tried to strike a balance between protecting ourselves from police investigation and not over-regulating the bathhouse to the point where we were cowed by police powers. These acts of defiance are tricky when police have such wide discretionary powers to interpret the law – powers that have grown alarmingly since September 11, 2001. Not everyone is equally affected by the danger of police intervention either – women with children, immigrant women, women with a history in the criminal justice system, prostitutes and closeted women (just to name a few) may face greater consequences if they are discovered in a bathhouse or implicated in a court case related to one. These considerations strongly affected our decisions about Pussies Bite Back.

Like any embattled political organization, we chose our battles carefully by regulating some matters stringently (e.g., laws prohibiting drugs, minors, alcohol) and leaving others to individual interpretation by giving Pussy Palace guests information about laws, ordinances, and regulations and then letting them make their own decisions about their behaviour (e.g., nudity, sexual activity, 'obscenity').

Having the Pussies Bite Back bathhouse scheduled during Toronto's Pride week offered us some comfort, knowing that we would be able to round up thousands and thousands of supporters on short notice in the event of another raid. Thankfully, the bathhouse was a success and there was no police presence that we are aware of. Overall, it was the smoothest and most well coordinated Pussy Palace yet. We are now in the early stages of planning another bathhouse for early in 2002 with plans to develop the fundraising potential of future bathhouses for the legal defense fund.

Conclusion

In this article we have provided detailed description of our experience with the Pussy Palace. While these events most directly affect the queer girls in southern Ontario who frequent our events, they have broader implications for all queers and more generally anyone who is concerned about the erosion of civil liberties and the protection of human rights in Canadian society. Immediately after the raid, many of us on the committee were struck by how many people came up to us and said something like "You know my mother lives in the suburbs and she doesn't even know what a bathhouse is, but she is just outraged

about what those cops did." People's lack of familiarity with the baths, or even with queer culture generally, did not prevent them from recognizing the indignity of men prowling around a women-only space.

This article has allowed us to express a modicum of the outrage that we feel about the police actions on that night. However, our critique has been blunted and constrained by the fear of reprisals from the police and regulation by the state. We have come full circle in our political efforts. We started the Pussy Palace because we wanted to address the invisibility and silence that surrounded queer women's sexuality in our community. We have certainly achieved a higher degree of visibility, but our ability to articulate a response to the raid must now be framed and limited by the exigencies of our legal battle. We have returned to a place of silence – this time a silence that is actively imposed by the police and supported by the state. This article is an effort to break that silence, to begin to speak candidly about the raid, and to ground that speech on the sexual and political ideals that originally catalyzed the creation of the Pussy Palace.

Update – September 2002

A great deal has happened since we wrote this article last December. Here is a brief overview of the major events:

1. First and foremost, we won our legal case! On Thursday January 31, 2002, Justice Peter Hryn dismissed all charges against the members of the Toronto Women's Bathhouse committee. Here are some highlights from his decision:

   → He ruled that the organizers and the patrons of the event had a reasonable expectation of privacy vis-à-vis men. He was very critical of the police failure to look for and use female officers.

   → He suggested that the actions of the police were analogous to a strip search. He recognized that strip searches were humiliating, degrading, and devastating, particularly for women and minorities.

   → He felt that the breach of charter rights was very serious. He stated that the "flagrant and outrageous" charter violations would shock the conscience of the public, that the police actions contradicted fundamental notions of justice, fair play,

and decency, and that they were patently unreasonable. Furthermore, he said, the police actions displayed a blatant disregard for the quality of humaneness that are shared by the Canadian public.

→ Finally, he found that the actions of the police "Bring the administration of justice into disrepute."

2. While we feel vindicated by this decision, the cost to all those involved has been significant. Our legal fees to date have topped $60,000. To date our committee has raised $54, 000. We still welcome donations – see below.

3. In June 2002 we held a second post-raid bathhouse: "License to Liq'Her." Happily, it involved lots of girl-on-girl action and no police.

4. In June 2002, JP Hornick and Rachel Aitcheson, or as we fondly refer to them, "the co-accused," were the grand marshals of Toronto's annual Pride parade.

5. Also in June 2002, Counselor Kyle Rae lost the defamation suit launched against him by the officers involve in the raid. Although the presiding judge described the officers' complaints as "flimsy," the jury awarded $170,000 to the seven officers involved in the raid. Detective Dave Wilson, who led the investigation, was personally awarded $50,000, while the remaining six officers each received $20,000.

6. The Human Rights Complaint that the committee launched against the Toronto Police Services is currently under review by the commission.

7. And last, but not least, the Toronto Police Services remain unrepentant and unapologetic in regard to the raid.

Many thanks to Bobby Noble for his editorial suggestions, and input.

Works Cited

"Barging In." *Globe and Mail*. 25 Sept. 2000: A14.
Slinger. "Bathouse 'Visit' a Message – But from Whom?" *Toronto Star*. 21 Sept. 2000: A2.

Donations to the Women's Bathhouse Defense Fund can be sent in the form of a cheque or money order c/o Good For Her at 175 Harbord St., Toronto, Ontario M5S 1H2. Or you can call 416.588.0900 and charge a donation to your credit card.

Book Reviews
Les Comptes rendus

Readers wishing to review books should consult the list of Books Received on the *torquere* website (http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~torquere), and contact the Editor, John L. Plews, at jplews@ucalgary.ca

Les lecteurs/lectrices intéressé(e)s à recenser un ou plusieurs ouvrages sont prié(e)s de consulter la liste de Livres reçus disponible sur le site de *torquere* (http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~torquere), et de communiquer avec John L. Plews, Directeur, à l'adresse suivante: jplews@ucalgary.ca

Thomas Waugh. *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000. xii + 312 pp. ISBN

JIM ELLIS (University of Calgary)

One consequence of the distance the gay and lesbian community has traveled in the past thirty or forty years can be seen in the exaggerated historical divides between its various generations. This is to be expected in a movement that underwent frequent self-examination and self-invention, demanding (at times fairly harshly) that its adherents adjust themselves to the latest theoretical and political developments or be left behind by history. The most obvious instance of this call for self-invention was the shift from "gay and lesbian" to "queer," which, whatever else was at stake, was in part fueled by a desire to be free from a difficult and painful history. The result, of course, was a kind of anxious forgetting.

Thomas Waugh's *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema* offers both evidence of this generational amnesia

(he often notes how his students simply don't understand what is at stake in films that were vital ten or twenty years earlier) and a series of writings that may help to overcome it. The book reproduces articles written by Waugh from 1977 to 1997 for a number of venues: the leftist film journal *Jump Cut*, the revolutionary Toronto gay and lesbian newspaper *The Body Politic*, various other gay and lesbian community publications, academic conferences and essay collections on queer cinema. What is probably most interesting and most valuable about these pieces is that they are *not* a retrospective look at key developments in the gay and lesbian movement, or the cinema that accompanied it, although Waugh does provide commentary at the beginning of each piece, often reflecting on how his views have changed. What we are offered instead is the perspective of someone who was vitally engaged in the movement, giving us a response to these films at the moment of their emergence. How did the first audiences react to the revolutionary documentary *Word is Out*? What did they see in it that they had never seen before? What was it like to watch Derek Jarman's *Sebastiane* with 700 gay men on opening night in Montreal in 1978, before anyone knew who Derek Jarman was? Younger readers are reminded that the world was not always thus, through essays that give us a privileged view on what it was like to be gay in the academy, or in a leftist film journal, or at a film festival in the 1970s and 80s. Equally importantly, we are reminded of important gay and lesbian films that most of us have forgotten, or never heard of in the first place.

In the foreword to the volume, filmmaker John Greyson writes that reading these reviews makes him "embarrassingly nostalgic" (x) for the political engagement they display. Most readers are likely to have that nostalgia counterbalanced with a certain relief to be past the particular kind of ideological rigor that the movement once demanded. Waugh himself comments humorously on the "positive image Stalinism" (4) displayed in the early pieces, a mode of criticism that is understandable given Waugh's own leftist beliefs, and the venues in which he was publishing. The reviews are thus marked by a willingness, indeed eagerness, to call to task critics or filmmakers, gay or straight, friend or foe, on their various shortcomings. Most often these criticisms still seem justified (and occasionally show us how little has changed): leftist critics are chastised for their unconscious homophobia, Montgomery Clift's biographers for

reproducing stereotypes of the tragic gay artist, gay film makers for blithely reproducing middle-class values and ignoring lesbians and other oppressed groups. At other times the "ideological checklists that constituted so much of the film criticism of the day" (259) make the complaints now seem startlingly beside the point, as when he castigates fictional features, such as Ron Peck and Paul Hallam's film *Nighthawks*, for failing to address all of the items on the oppression list. Either way, the commentary is instructive.

What now can be seen to have been missing in much of this era's criticism (and the comparison to socialist realism is telling) is a concern for aesthetics and especially for the politics of aesthetics. Remembering both the publication venues and the tenor of the times, this is not to be wondered at, but it does perhaps account for the celebration of directors and films that would rapidly fade into obscurity, and the inability to appreciate the early work of directors who would go on to greatness, such as Jarman or Almodovar. Hindsight is, of course, 20/20, and there are myriad reasons why films disappear or directors stop working (and bad films, it has to be said, can often begin to look good in the light of later work). Nonetheless what one misses in here, and what one is grateful that these reviews paved the way for, is criticism that can be more relaxed and more complex in its assessment of a particular film's merits, without at the same time losing sight of the larger political issues. We can certainly see those aesthetic concerns lurking in the background of many of these pieces, but given the brevity of the review genre, we are most often given narrative summaries and an indication of how well the film satisfies the particular representational demands of the moment. Nonetheless, it might have been illuminating, in either the introduction or an afterword, for Waugh to have offered to us a reflection on his own aesthetic sensibilities, and how they shaped or were shaped by his politics. Or, to take this in a slightly different direction, to have looked at how the political demands of the times shaped the aesthetics of these filmmakers.

In light of the particular critical history on display here, it is no surprise that the latter-day Waugh seems most comfortable talking about censorship and the ethics of representation, and dealing with genres that have a certain claim on the real: photography, documentary, and pornography. The final essays in the volume take up these issues at length, discussing the history and the particular

innovations of gay and lesbian documentary, and detailing the long and difficult struggle to publish his illustrated history of homoerotic imagery, *Hard to Imagine*. As with the earlier pieces, these essays display a passionate engagement that is fortunately matched with a sense of humour. There is much to be grateful for in this volume, not just for its documentation of the battles that have been fought and the ones that remain, but for the revolutionary energy that produced these writings (and their subjects) in the first place.

---

bill bissett. *b leev abul char ak trs*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2000. 144pp. $16.95(Cdn) ISBN 0-88922-433-1
Mark Cochrane. *Change Room*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2000. 144pp. $15.95(Cdn) ISBN 0-88922-432-3
Daphne Marlatt. *This Tremor Love Is*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2001. 112pp. $15.95(Cdn) ISBN 0-88922-450-1
Erin Mouré. *Pillage Laud*. Toronto: Moveable Type, 1999. 99pp. $25(Cdn) ISBN 0-9684908-0-8
Erin Mouré. *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person*. Toronto: Anansi, 2001. 131pp. $16.95(Cdn) ISBN 0-88784-660-2
nathalie stephens. *Somewhere Running*. Vancouver: Advance Editions, 2000. 96pp. $13.95(Cdn) ISBN 1-55152-089-3
Rachel Zolf. *Her absence, this wanderer*. Ottawa: BuschekBooks, 1999. 71pp. $14.95(Cdn) ISBN 0-9699904-8-0
Charles Watts and Edward Byrne, eds. *The Recovery of the Public World: Essays on Poetics in Honour of Robin Blaser*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1999. 464pp. $35(Cdn) ISBN 0-88922-388-2

JOHN C. STOUT (McMaster University)

Contemporary poetry – in Canada and elsewhere – affords the most interesting site for doing, and for studying, experimental writing. Among the many highly talented and original poets producing experimental work in this country, queer poets have made an especially outstanding contribution. In this review I want to focus on seven recent books of poetry by queer writers, along with a volume of critical essays on radical poetics in honour of Robin Blaser. These eight texts – all first-rate, in my opinion – demonstrate the range and vitality of these new poetries.

bill bissett

Since the 1960s, bill bissett has made a substantial and important contribution to Canadian poetry. He is, indeed, one of Canada's most innovative and prolific experimental poets. Critics have studied his work mostly within the context of the development of the new poetics in this country during and after the 1960s (see Caroline Bayard, *The New Poetics in Canada and Quebec*). His achievement has been compared with that of bp Nichol, Steve McCaffery, Paul Dutton, and other male experimentalists. However, the gay sexuality that distinguishes his poetry from theirs remains unexplored by his critics. For example, Karl Jirgens's monograph on bissett avoids all discussion of the gay content of the poems. Significantly, for bissett himself, his sexuality is of fundamental importance for interpreting his work and understanding his view of language. He has told me that he suspects that lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people have a relationship to language that is quite different from that of heterosexuals.

Traditional lyric themes, such as love, longing, spirituality, and a closeness to nature frequently surface in bissett's poetry. His poems often resemble entries in a personal diary, recounting events in his life and the lives of his friends. In these respects, his work may appear rather conventional. However, throughout his oeuvre he practises an idiosyncratic respelling, or 'misspelling,' of familiar words, substituting his own phonetic spellings of the words for the 'proper,' dictionary spelling. bissett thus reinvents written language. He alters his reader's feeling for, and relationship to, everyday reality by radicalizing language. One could argue that, by means of this 'odd' approach to spelling, bissett is queering how and what poetry communicates. His writing expresses an estrangement from conventional written language while, at the same time, opening up that language to evoke a fresh perspective on experience. A sense of childlike wonder at the beauty of the world, with its unexpected coincidences and surprises, characterizes many bissett poems.

b leev abul char ak trs is a splendid new collection of his poems and drawings. The poems present a joyous immersion in experience, including sexual experience:

> we leev our bodeez th bluez aftr th serching
> tongue cock mouth carresses evree opning letting
> go uv anee with holding thers time 4 that aftr th

raining will occur tho 2 sit n stare at th rain
endlesslee til sumthing ionik is almost satisfied
thn getting bizee promising mor lushness we live (17).

As is evident in this passage, bissett's poetry is characterized by an openness and receptivity to the world around him. The outlook the poems express remains fundamentally optimistic and tender, as he blends the personal, the political, the erotic, and the ecstatic.

Mark Cochrane

In his new collection of poems, Mark Cochrane uses the metaphorical space of the change room to explore the construction and transformation of male sexuality. The poems' speaker is a father to two small children. He is involved in a heterosexual relationship with his partner, Miranda. However, many of the poems focus on his fascination with male bodies (those of hockey player Pavel Bure and of the men he observes lifting weights at the gym). The increasingly erotic contemplation and description of these bodies leads him to sexual encounters with another man. At the end of the book, the speaker outs himself as a bisexual.

The title *Change Room*, as the book's back cover tells us, is meant to act as "a barbed hook of seduction for the reader in love with the body of language." Many of these poems revel in a macho imagery of gay jock erotics. At the same time, Cochrane displays a cocky inventiveness with poetic form and language. I especially enjoyed the two poems "Sexing the Page" (130) and "Thief's Journal: Glottal Jack" (131), where the poet brings together linguistic playfulness and in-your-face gay eroticism, while showing his awareness of writing in, and beyond, a gay male tradition including bill bissett and Jean Genet.

The final section of *Change Room* is a long poem in XIII parts. Throughout this sequence, Cochrane continually references leading queer theorists: Michel Foucault, Leo Bersani, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, and others. Although the text's earlier sections had foregrounded a heterosexual lifestyle, here the sex is decidedly homo – and hot. The speaker's pleasure in the presence of men's naked bodies becomes his chief preoccupation. He makes homo physicality coextensive with textuality, quoting Whitman: "Camerado, this is no book/ Who touches this touches a man."

The final poem in the collection, "Bi," allegorizes inness and

outness; it voices the (potential) ambiguities of a bisexual identity:

> even if the body of the man be far gone (in) or come out
> already, wherever in is/ out is, the rays of knowing
> him, or thinking so, hung to fade on choice's
> cusp - & we scorn his flicker, wave fists
> in the air yet cut with no shadows
> a picture of one who is neither
>
> there nor there (142).

Like the texts of his contemporaries stephens and Zolf, Cochrane's *Change Room* deserves to be recognized as an exciting and challenging example of the new poetics in Canada.

Daphne Marlatt

Daphne Marlatt is, unquestionably, one of the most gifted poets writing in English in Canada. Initially linked to B.C.'s Tish poets, and influenced by the Black Mountain School of poetry and poetics (Olson, Creeley, Duncan), Marlatt is now best known for her crucial contribution to the development of feminist poetics in Canada. She was one of the four founding editors of *Tessera*, one of the leading theoretical/creative journals for feminist writing from Quebec and English Canada. Through her activities as an editor, poet, professor of Women's Studies and organizer of feminist conferences, she has played a major part in encouraging women's creativity. In her own poetry, she has succeeded in giving voice and form to a lesbian desire considered illicit or heretical within patriarchal culture. Addressing other lesbians, she asserts that "we have to break language, its syntactical rules, its labels, to convey the repressed, even the previously unthought or unthinkable – lesbian experience, its articulation" (*Readings from the Labyrinth*, 2). The catalyst for much of Marlatt's most influential writing, such as the long poem "Touch to My Tongue," is the need to enunciate and celebrate lesbian eroticism:

> To mark eros with lesbian identity: a new word, *lesbera*, the *lesberetic* (yes, here-
> tic) expression of erotic power as a trans-forming energy we revel in each time we move
> our lovers, our readers and ourselves to that ecstatic surging beyond limits. Each time we

> follow the language-surge of connection writing beyond conventional limits across the
> page. (*Readings from the Labyrinth*, 49)

This Tremor Love Is, described on its back cover as "a memory book – an album of love poems spanning twenty-five years," includes both heterosexual and lesbian love poems. The earlier, heterosexual poems are dedicated to Roy Kiyooka, Marlatt's partner in the 1970s, prior to her coming out as a lesbian. Two sequences of her later love poems, "Small Print" and "Sea Shining Between," are dedicated to Betsy Warland. A more recent sequence,"Impossible Portraiture," is dedicated to Bridget MacKenzie. All these poems are carefully written, aesthetically innovative and pleasurable, and extremely sensuous.

In "Sea Shining Between" the poet evokes a voyage to present-day Lesbos with her female lover. The quotes she presents from such ancestors as Renée Vivien, H.D., and Sappho as well as from contemporary poets (Nicole Brossard, Olga Broumas) connect Marlatt's quest, and her poetic voice, to a wider intertextual community of lesbians. Sappho, in particular, provides the main context for this journey linking love and writing:

> like her, precisely on this page, this mark: *a thin flame runs under / my skin.* twenty-five hundred years ago, this trembling then. actual as that which wets our skin her words come down to us, a rush, poured through the blood, this coming & going among islands is (72).

At the end of the sequence, B.C.'s Gulf Islands provide an analogue to Sappho's Lesbos as a privileged domain of lesbian desire and creativity.

The book ends, in "Impossible Portraiture," with the poet's suggestion that it is, ultimately, not possible to create an exact, fully accurate verbal portrait of "this tremor love is." Still, crucial fragments of it may be transposed to the page:

> this tremor love is, all premise
> promise, fold-
>
> over-
>
> -no hold anywhere ...

finding the aperture
opens me to you (96-97)

Erin Mouré/ Eirin Mouré

In two very different recent books of poetry, *Pillage Laud* and *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person*, Erin Mouré once again demonstrates her quirky, brilliant and highly inventive approach to poetry and poetics. As in her earlier collections *Search Procedures* (1996) and *A Frame of the Book* (1999), Mouré's latest work combines a keen interest in philosophical speculation on language, the body, and being, with her project to develop a lesbian textuality. In a discussion of *A Frame of the Book* that was reprinted in *Tessera*, Mouré sums up her concerns as a poet as follows:

> In my body of work over the years, I've pursued a kind of questioning: what does it mean to love, to exist, to communicate? How does the social framework influence us? Limit us? What are the limits of 'the person', of tenderness, of grace, of honesty, of speech? (25)

Thinkers as diverse as Wittgenstein, Lyotard, Donna Haraway, and Gilles Deleuze provide her with catalysts and interlocutors for her textual pursuit of these, and other, issues. In this way, Mouré moves the (traditionally) strongly personal genre of the lyric into the public, civic sphere. Although she acknowledges that "The usual images of girls fucking are not what you will find in my work, for the most part" (*Tessera*, 30), she nonetheless labors to eroticize language, to work with language as an erotic medium.

Pillage Laud is a dazzling, virtuoso text. It parallels the finest achievements of the contemporary American L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, while affirming a lesbian erotics that is seldom present in their work. To compose the poems of *Pillage Laud*, Mouré began with a combination of the high-tech and the aleatory:

> Pillage laud selects from pages of
> computer-generated sentences to pro-
> duce lesbian sex poems, by pulling
> through certain found vocabularies,
> relying on context: boy plug vagina
> library fate tool doctrine bath dis-
> cipline belt beds pioneer book ambit-
> ion finger fist flow.

The poet divides the book into twelve separate "pillages" followed by two codas at the end. She shapes the material taken (pillaged) from the computer program in order to praise (laud) the rapturous encounter between women that sustains her writing. The poems of *Pillage Laud* seem to me to be the most linguistically inventive and clever lesbian sex poems since Gertrude Stein's "Lifting Belly." Like Stein, Mouré offers coded, playful and indirect evocations of lesbian sex:

> Those visas between every vagina and some business.
> Has so bold an era between the hole and the book nodded?
> Whom were they piercing? The sister term: a waist.
>
> While you drank me, museums vanished.
> Depths met this.
> The strap (her partner) badly paused.
> To nod uncorked our jerseys (23).

With *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person*, Mouré shifts gears to offer her reader a work of eccentric, nontraditional translation, which she calls "a transelation." In this case, she is "transelating" a famous work by Alberto Caiero, one of the five heteronyms of the great Portuguese modernist poet Fernando Pessoa (whose name, in Portuguese, means "person" – hence the title ... *by a Fervent Person*). Mouré herself writes *Sheep's Vigil* via the heteronym "Eirin Mouré," an extension of herself. The poet explains the book's genesis with this anecdote:

> A temporary move to Toronto last winter, a twisted ankle, an empty house - all inspired Mouré as she read Alberto Caiero/Fernando Pessoa's classic long poem O Guardador de Rebanhos. For fun, she started to translate, altering tones and vocabularies. From the Portuguese countryside and roaming sheep of 1914, a 21st-century Toronto emerged [...] And her poem became a transelation, a transcreation, the jubilant and irrepressible vigil of a fervent person.(*Sheep's Vigil*, dust-jacket description).

Eschewing the impersonal and self-effacing stance of the traditional translator, "Eirin Mouré" inserts personal, Toronto-centered details into "Caiero"'s pastoral poem. Thus, the river Tejo in the original poem is replaced by the Humber River in her translation. She also adds extra lines in many passages of her English

"transelation" that have no source in the Portuguese original.

"Mouré"'s irreverent, ludic approach to translation suits Pessoa's poetry perfectly, as Pessoa himself, through his heteronymic equivalents, often adopted a tongue-in-cheek attitude to what he was writing about. As a transelator-appropriator of "Caiero"'s long poem, "Eirin Mouré" makes us aware that language is not – cannot be – transparent or impersonal, however much some translators may wish to perpetuate the fiction that the meaning and tone of any work can be reproduced fully in another language. *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person* becomes a model for a new kind of appropriation of the classics by radicalizing translation.

nathalie stephens

Born in 1970, nathalie stephens has now published five poetic texts, three in French and two in English. *Somewhere Running* takes its place in her oeuvre as the third panel in a lesbian triptych which she began with *Colette, m'entends-tu?* (1999) and continued with *Underground* (2000) (both published in French by Editions Trois in Montreal). Each of these three texts focuses on a linguistic-erotic-existential encounter between two women in search of a language and a history (or, more precisely, a herstory). The first-person narrator of *Colette, m'entends-tu?* writes impassioned love letters to her lesbian ancestor/lover, Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette, author of the pioneering queer text *Le Pur et l'impur*, originally published in 1932 as "Ces plaisirs..." The narrator of *Colette, m'entends-tu?* makes lesbian desire and herstory present through her evocations of literary and historical figures (Virginia Woolf, Joan of Arc, and others). Her imagination creates "the [textual] garden of my dreams" where she and Colette embrace even as she acknowledges the harsh, gritty reality of the city around her, where lesbians struggle to claim space. With *Underground* stephens describes the meeting of two strangers, Madicole and Ernestine. Each of the women stands on the opposite side of the tracks in an anonymous subway station. Their largely mute efforts to make contact with each other across, and in spite of, the intimidating "abyss" of darkness and danger (both literal and figurative) that separates them from each other gives a powerful political and social meaning to *Underground.*

In *Somewhere Running* stephens recasts her writing style through an appropriation of the literary techniques of Gertrude Stein. Stein's

modernist experiments with breaking the narrative line to create a continuous present of spiralling repetitions informs stephens's own practice of carefully choreographed repetitions of words and phrases, as in this passage:

> This woman this one woman who catches a glimpse
> of another and she too the other woman the
> woman unseen until now becomes visible and here
> perhaps they the one woman and then the other
> glance briefly at one another saying nothing at all
> waiting waiting for the woman the second
> waiting for the first or the other way around
> the one who stands this woman seen for the
> first time who doesn't speak or move but both
> are present motionless speechless (10).

As her press release indicates, *Somewhere Running* "irreverently examines the tensions between two women ('the artist'), a photographer ('the eyes that watch'), and 'the city.' Beginning with a very simple premise – two women standing at a distance from one another – the text circles hypnotically as details come into focus and the pull between figures intensifies ... Tentacular and rhythmically insistent, the text exposes what it means to be seen, takes on the artist as voyeur, and charts the transformation of the two women from *objets d'art* into autonomous subjects of their own desire, voice, and movement." Thus, stephens takes on the media and processes of aesthetic representation (writing, art, photography) in order to lesbianize them. Here, seeing, writing, and describing transpose women's desire for other women playfully, but purposefully. stephens opens *Somewhere Running* with a quote from Gertrude Stein: "Successions of words are so agreeable." Following Stein, taking (lesbian)pleasure in language, in description, and in the image are the goal of this expertly crafted, innovative, and compelling text.

Rachel Zolf

Rachel Zolf's *Her absence, this wanderer* explores issues of post-Holocaust Jewish identity and lesbian desire. Zolf bears witness to the difficulty of transcribing memory after the Holocaust through a complex, multilayered textuality in which individual fragmentary phrases alternate with blocks of verse placed against the blank space of the page. Reading this text, we catch glimpses of a historical reality

that is distant and, almost, too painful to contemplate. Through a series of photographs placed at the centre of the book, Zolf juxtaposes images of tombstones from Jewish cemeteries in Poland and Czechoslovakia, images of WW II death camps as seen in 1996, and photographs of family members who died at Treblinka. She thus combines the roles of archivist and poet. As an archivist, she faithfully records and restores fragments of historical reality; as a poet, she transmutes this historical material into a postmodernist collage where various voices and perspectives interact.

Zolf's achievement in *Her absence, this wanderer* recalls that of other young Jewish-Canadian artists, such as filmmaker Elida Schogt (*Zyklon Portrait*, *The Walnut Tree*) who seek to restore their family's history while recognizing the difficulties and aporias involved in retrieving what has been lost. Snapshots, graffiti on a wall: these are the models Zolf employs as metaphors for the arduous process of recovering the past: "layers on layers, palimpsest text/ -ures, found fragments// stitchings// how the pieces/ don't quite fit together" (64).

Her exploration of her sexuality serves a different, though also crucial, personal quest for the speaker of Zolf's text. Her presentation of sexuality in the sequence of poems entitled "erotic play" is intense, though, at times, ironic:

> why can't she be a good lesbian
> and write a real poem
> ?
> full of slippery tongues and thighs
> deep thrusts and sighs (19)

Zolf's word-play here, and her use of dramatic structure (with sex acts named for acts in a staged play) seamlessly blends the erotic with the linguistic: "so goes the erotic stanza, unleashing/desire: pungent, ambrosial -/ syllabic enrapture// how the black ink bits slip and slide/ how the ululant turns pustule/ how the w(ou)nd gapes, weeping// so goes the erotic stanza/ devouring// trompe l'o(r)eil(le)"(24). This eroticization of language through lesbian desire links Zolf's writing to Marlatt's, Mouré's, and stephens's. Like francophone writers Nicole Brossard, Michele Causse, and Monique Wittig, all four poets have produced outstanding examples of a new lesbian writing that is changing the contemporary literary scene.

Coda: Robin Blaser

To complete this brief survey of some recent works of queer lyric in Canada, I wish to note the publication of *The Recovery of the Public World: Essays on Poetics in Honour of Robin Blaser*. This is a generous and impressive book of essays by well-known poets and literary scholars that focuses on compelling, difficult problems of ethics and aesthetics raised in the work of US-born B.C. poet Robin Blaser. Through his incisive, challenging thinking on poetics and the poet's role in society and, preeminently, because of his brilliant long poem *The Holy Forest* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1993), Blaser ranks as one of Canada's finest poets. As in the case of bill bissett, a gay critical perspective has, to date, remained largely absent from discussions of Blaser's poetry. The reclaiming both of bissett and of Blaser as *gay male* experimental poets is an important task for gay criticism on Canadian poetry in years to come.

Vive La Poesie Queer!

Works Cited

Bayard, Caroline. *The New Poetics in Canada and Quebec*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.

Jirgens, Karl. *bill bissett and his works*. Toronto: ECW, 1987.

Marlatt, Daphne. *Readings from the Labyrinth*. Edmonton: NeWest, 1998.

Mouré, Erin. "On *A Frame of the Book*". *Tessera* 27 (1999): 25-31.

Peter Dickinson. *Here is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Literatures of Canada.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. 262pp. $19.95 ISBN 0-8020-8210-6

B.J. Wray (University of California, Davis)

Here Is Queer contributes a much-needed Canadian presence to a growing body of gay, lesbian, and queer scholarship concerned with the complex relationship between nationalism and sexuality. Many of these existing texts address the

ways in which state-sanctioned nationalism coerces, excludes, and terrorizes "improper" sexualities. I am thinking here of recent books such as David Bell and Jon Binnie's anthology, *The Sexual Citizen*, Morris Kaplan's *Sexual Justice*, and Bruce Macdonald's *Queer Judgments*. More often than not, these works redress the problems of an official (hetero)sexual national identity by insisting upon an expansion of national institutions (legal, cultural, and political) to include diverse sexualities and their various forms of expression. Calls for same-sex marriage, immigration, full and equal citizenship, and so forth, are exemplary of this additive approach. On the other hand, scholars such as Shane Phelan, Carl Stychin, and Michael Warner shift the focus onto the rather vexed and problematic connection that has always existed between minority models of community-building and national models of identity-making. They argue that nationalism – especially the sense of connection, unity, and commonality that its discourses convey – holds a certain appeal for an otherwise amorphous community whose members do not share a single geography, passport, or currency. In the succinct phrasing of legal theorist Carl Stychin, "Social movements ... deploy the language of nation as a means of constituting and reinforcing their own identities" (7). These scholars maintain that one of the dangerous consequences of this linkage is the inscription of national norms onto sexual minorities, thereby upholding certain limited understandings of family, relationships, and identities across national and sexual communities.

If it were not for a few notable and groundbreaking exceptions such as Gary Kinsman's *The Regulation of Desire* and Becki Ross's *The House That Jill Built*, Canadian book-length analyses of this intimate connection between nationalism and sexuality would otherwise be nonexistent. Rather predictably, this field is dominated by American and British case studies. The lack of critical resources on our Canadian context means that the nuances of Canadian nationalism are generally absent from larger debates concerning nationalism and sexuality. *Here Is Queer* offers a welcome corrective to this Canadian invisibility, and Dickinson must be commended for his willingness to intervene into these debates by foregrounding the often overlooked contributions of Canadian writers. In doing so, Dickinson accomplishes two distinct, yet overlapping, projects. Firstly, he expands the terrain of queer criticism on national and sexual identities through an attentiveness to the uniquely trinational

(Canadian, Quebecois, and First Nations) composition of "Canadian nation-ness" and our never-ending preoccupation with definitions of national identity. Secondly, he challenges the silence on (homo)sexuality that tends to characterize traditional Can Lit scholarship. Dickinson astutely reminds us that "the discourse of (homo)sexuality, and its role (or non-role) in the formation and organization of a literary tradition in this country, is virtually, non-existent" (4) and, in response, *Here is Queer* intends "to juxtapose against the predominantly nationalist framework of literary criticism in this country an alternative politics, one propelled by questions of sexuality and, more often than not, homosexuality" (3).

In a typically Canadian fashion, Dickinson's agenda in *Here is Queer* combines the political sensibilities both of the additive and of transformative approaches to nationalism and sexuality. His project simultaneously offers a queer rereading of several canonical Canadian texts and the literary tradition that they have engendered, while he also seeks to expand the parameters of the existing tradition through inclusive canonical and pedagogical strategies. In Dickinson's own words, "While I firmly believe that 'que(e)rying' the canon requires making space for 'new' textual voices, I also believe that such a process requires the simultaneous rereading of 'old' voices in 'new' ways" (29). The most prominent 'old' voice in *Here is Queer* is the godfather of Canadian literary criticism, Northrop Frye. In response to "where is here?" – Frye's famous question on Canadian national identity – Dickinson answers with a resounding "here is queer". He contends that "here is queer" because "the identificatory lack upon which Canadian literary nationalism has historically been constructed – the 'where' of Frye's 'here,' for example – is in large part facilitated by, if not wholly dependent upon, a critical refusal to come to grips with the textual *superabundance* of a destabilizing and counter-normative sexuality" (4). Dickinson skillfully applies his dramatic challenge to this 'master' narrative of Can Lit across a range of canonical texts, from John Richardson's *Wacousta* to Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*. Dickinson also analyzes the more explicit treatment of nationalism and sexuality in the work of Michel Tremblay, Nicole Brossard, and Daphne Marlatt, and the linkages between race, nation, and sexuality in the texts of Dionne Brand and Tomson Highway. Dickinson's treatment of these authors deftly weaves together his own close readings with a myriad of interdisciplinary critical materials

(queer identity theories, postcolonial discourses of nationhood, Canadian literary history texts, book reviews, lesbian-feminist political writings, and so forth) to produce an original assessment of the role of sexuality in Can Lit.

Dickinson's intervention into conventional Can Lit studies also speaks to several key definitional debates within gay, lesbian, and queer literary studies. The ongoing engagement of literary studies with the conundrum of nationalism and sexuality is seen in the various historical approaches to defining the fields of lesbian, gay, and queer literature. The composition of these fields, their canons, their authors, their subject matter, and their standing with particular national canons are all frequently contested areas of inquiry. For instance, early lesbian and gay literary critics such as Bonnie Zimmerman, Bertha Harris, and Henry Abelove, insist that the composition of the canon of great literature, and the approaches to analyzing it, are shaped by excision. They argue that traditional literary studies excises, at the very least, three kinds of knowledge: the consideration of same-sex love as a central aspect of human experience, the analysis of the forms of gendered being that go beyond heterosexual norms for masculinity and femininity, and various popular texts and practices that are not 'literary,' but that have helped people express forbidden desires and build resistant communities. National canons, according to this argument, must be opened to a recomposition that includes gay and lesbian authors and texts. Of course, this tactic relies upon a coherent human subject the gay or lesbian author whose sexuality, or even whose very existence, was effaced from history but now available to the knowing reader and the diligent researcher. This approach relies on the misconception that what gay and lesbian literary studies is *really* about is playing authorial and textual hunt-the-homosexual. In other words, we run smack into the biographical fallacy in this reductive search for homosexual 'clues.'

It is precisely this tendency that *Here is Queer*, in the spirit of contemporary queer criticism, seeks to avoid. Rather than relying on the 'truth' of authorial lives or the intelligibility of (homo)sexuality in the plot or characters, Dickinson's close readings of canonical texts employ what he terms "my Sedgwickian analysis of Canadian literature" (12) to critically reassess the structuring power of gaps and absences. In Dickinson's words, "I seek to transform what I have been more or less calling the *absent* presence of queerness in

Canadian literature into a more *manifest* or *embodied* presence" (6). Following from Eve Sedgwick's analysis in *Epistemology of the Closet*, Dickinson argues that a queer sexuality circulates within traditional Can Lit, and it is the ongoing and active critical disavowal of this counter-normative sexuality that enables the aforementioned "identificatory *lack*" (4) at the heart of Canadian literary nationalism. Dickinson's assessment of canonical Canadian literary texts also draws upon the notion of homosociality that Sedgwick outlines in her earlier work, *Between Men*. There is, according to Dickinson, a "triangulation of male desire in several of this country's foundational literary texts" (5) and furthermore, "Canadian literature, or at least *English*-Canadian literature is riddled with male couples who displace their love for each other – and frequently their nation – across the 'body' of a woman, whom they symbolically share, or else onto a mythically feminized region or landscape, which they symbolically exploit" (5). Dickinson's close analysis of this phenomenon in his first three chapters is highly convincing and will surely raise the hackles of more than a few Frye devotees. I should also note that Dickinson's debt to Sedgwick is evidenced in his book's style; his lucid formalist criticism is frequently framed by personal anecdotes that vary in their effectiveness. Although it is refreshing to escape the minutia of close readings, his confessional style – which Dickinson situates within a wider tendency in current queer criticism in his "Coda" – risks confirming the self-centered, divaesque reputation of queer writing. Perhaps this is exactly what Canadian literature criticism needs!

The focus of *Here is Queer* shifts from English Canada to French Canada in chapter four as Dickinson takes up three Quebecois plays: Michel Tremblay's *Hosanna*, René-Daniel Dubois's *Being at home with Claude*, and Michel Marc Bouchard's *Les Feluettes*. This chapter also signals a shift away from homosociality to an analysis of the explicit links between representations of homosexuality and Quebec nationalism in these plays. Dickinson usefully moves beyond his emphasis on close readings in the first chapters to include a discussion of the plays' productions and their critical receptions in English Canada. This expanded, cultural studies-like focus continues throughout the second half of the book and it allows Dickinson to engage with contemporary interdisciplinary writings on the intersections of sexuality, nation, gender, and race. Chapter five

examines the collaborations of Brossard and Marlatt and issues of translation within and between Canadian literatures, languages, bodies, and desires. Dickinson argues that lesbian desire in their texts potentially questions the male homosocial and patriarchal configurations of nationalism. Similarly, his analysis of Brand's work in chapter six looks at how race and ethnicity may disrupt conventional constructions of nationalism. Dickinson foregrounds Brand's boundary-crossings (in terms of her textual subjects and her own cross-cultural position as a poet, filmmaker, and activist) to demonstrate the various challenges her work poses to Canadian literary nationalism. Dickinson's textual readings conclude with an evaluation of Tomson Highway's plays. Dickinson argues that Highway's 'First Nation,' two-spirited writings destabilize the bicultural model of Canadian literature at the same time as they re-imagine conventional notions of Indigenous community.

I cannot overstate the importance of *Here Is Queer* within Canadian literary scholarship. Through an innovative focus on the absent presence of queer sexuality in canonical criticism, Dickinson crucially reimagines the legacy of nationalism in Canadian literature. His linkage of contemporary writers to this complex relationship between nationalism and sexuality offers an initial framework for future Canadian queer scholarship. But, *Here is Queer* focuses exclusively (and strategically) on well-known or canonical authors, and the work of emerging or recently established authors, thoroughly steeped in queer identity politics and interdisciplinary artistic practices, also requires our critical attention. Similarly, an expanded discussion on the interconnectedness (and separateness) of Canadian queer politics and queer culture would nicely compliment Dickinson's project. Canadian queer artistic productions and theoretical endeavors deserve an international audience, and I hope that *Here Is Queer* is only the first of many book-length studies on Canadian queer culture.

Works Cited

Bell, David and Jon Binnie, eds. *The Sexual Citizen.* Cambridge: Polity, 2000.

Kaplan, Morris. *Sexual Justice: Democratic Citizenship and the Politics of Desire.* New York: Routledge, 1997.

Kinsman, Gary. *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada.*

Montreal: Black Rose, 1987.
Macdonald, Bruce. *Queer Judgments: Homosexuality, Expression, and the Courts in Canada.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.
Phelan, Shane. *Sexual Strangers: Gays, Lesbians, and dilemmas of Citizenship.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.
Ross, Becki. *The House That Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.
Sedgwick, Eve. *Epistemology of the Closet.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
—. *Between Men.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
Stychin, Carl. *A Nation by Rights.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
Warner, Michael. *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Christoph Lorey and John L. Plews, eds. *Queering the Canon: Defying Sights in German Literature and Culture.* Columbia: Camden House, 1998. 498 pp. ISBN 1-57113-178-7.

BRUCE PLOUFFE (UNIVERSITY OF REGINA)

The title of this collection of essays is somewhat cryptic inasmuch as it is unclear what the phrase "defying sights" means, or, if in fact this coinage actually corresponds to standard English usage. A cursory scan of the contents reveals that the scholarship in this anthology investigates textual and visual artefacts in terms of their queer, that is, heterocentrist-defying characteristics which have heretofore remained unelucidated.

In the editors' introduction to the anthology, "queer" is defined broadly as an expression of identity that is at variance with and marginalized by a dominant sociocultural ideology; more specifically, "queer" are those elements of deviance contained within cultural artefacts that resist the heterocentrisim shaping their contours. Lorey and Plews draw on a Hegelian epistemological model to account for the dynamic and trajectory of the queering process. If one speaks with Hegel, one is claiming that empathetic identification with more

integral perspectives, previously considered inadmissible, results in simultaenous self-contradiction and self-transcendence in the direction of an ever-broader horizon of knowledge and truth. However, "queerness is not assimilated, rather it questions the validity of, corrects, partly erases, and partly rewrites the very norm it is called upon to assert: it is deviance that civilises the norm (xix)." This philosophical, teleological frame of reference will no doubt be a target for those critics who demand that homage be paid to Derrida, Foucault, and Freud, since it posits that there are such things as truth, meaning and spirit. Certainly, in terms of current scholarship, a more usual underpinning for the concept of a liminal, queer space between norm-erasure and retranscription would have been, for example, Foucault's model of power that always produces uncontainable resistance, or Barthes's and Kristeva's concept of the *texte de jouissance*. Nevertheless, it would have been more reassuring if this contradistinction and departure from significant trends in current thought and scholarship had been addressed, especially since a significant number of essays in the anthology draw on Foucault for their scheme of reference. Yet overall, the editors' remarks provide an apt orientation and are an enticement to continue reading.

Among the articles that are a pleasure to read is Holger Pausch's essay entitled "Queer theory: History, Status, Trends." Pausch provides an informative and concise overview of the parameters of the debate, making it clear that queer theory's methodologies and objects of investigation are plural and fundamentally political, since the broad objective is to "break down the barriers of racism, sexism, and homophobia" (3). Also of an instructive nature is Angela Taeger's article "Homosexual Love between 'Degeneration of Human Material' and 'Love of Mankind:' Demographical Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Germany," in which she discusses Paragraph 175, a German law criminalizing homosexuality that was in effect as late as 1969. Taeger presents compelling evidence to show how the prevailing views on 'healthy' sexuality have been a function of population maintenance, expansion and control in the context of consolidating the power of the capitalist nation state. Yet by the beginning of the twentieth century, the stigmatization of homosexuality had already begun to be destabilized in sociological and psychological discourse. Evelyn Annuss's article on the "Butler Boom" offers an interesting critique of Judith Butler's Lacanian

deconstruction of gendered duality and of her project to underscore the potential of postmodern decentering and fragmentation of identity as a means to achieve "more pluralistic and heterogeneous forms of politics" (79). Annuss takes issue with Butler's failure to recognize to what extent her own argumentation is embedded in the "cultural logic of late capitalism" (79).

The group of articles under the rubric "Queering German Literature" begins with a well-written piece by Helmut Brall, who employs a Foucauldian approach to examine how attitudes toward homosexuality in medieval chronicles had increasingly less to do with notions of moral reprobation and religious doctrine than with the enforcement of courtly rules of social standing and hierarchy. Equally well-written and compelling is Martin Blum's article on the Middle High German comic tale *The Belt* by Dietrich von der Glezze. Blum demonstrates how this text, in that it employs the same discursive strategies to describe both the erotic norm and its transgression, undermines the prohibition it claims to uphold.

Silke Falkner has written one of the more thought-provoking essays in this anthology with her analysis of the character of Mephisto in Goethe's *Faust II*. Falkner posits that Mephisto undergoes a transformation from masculine assertion to feminine receptivity, from heterosexual desire that maintains the devil's immutable identity to a wish for the desiring gaze of a masculine angel and thus the salvific reciprocity inherent in the impulse to be in union with the other. Another highlight is Robert Tobin's essay "Thomas Mann's Queer Schiller," in which he shows Schiller's astonishing openness to sensual male-male love (166). Although Schiller casts the latter as an imperfect surrogate for male-female bonding, Tobin argues that surrogate and original are portrayed in terms that are indistinguishable in the drama *Don Carlos*. He goes on to demonstrate how Thomas Mann appropriates the queerness of this text for his novella *Tonio Kröger*. Harry Oosterhuis's outstanding article on politics and homoeroticism in the works of Klaus and Thomas Mann traces the evolving attitudes both of father and of son toward homosexuality; Oosterhuis is able to show how these attitudes are predicated on the connection between aesthetics and the perceived role of the artist on the one hand, and the cultural and political crisis of National Socialism on the other.

The last section of the anthology, "Queering German Culture,"

contains pieces on cinema and in one instance works on canvas. Les Wright's discussion of German gay coming-out film in the context of New German Cinema traces the development of this genre from "the primitive [von Praunheim], the classical [Fassbinder], the revisionist [Ripploh] and the parodic [Wortman]" (321). His line of argument is carefully reflected, clearly presented, and ultimately persuasive. Equally insightful and cogent is James W. Jones's discussion of Ripploh's *Taxi zum Klo*, in which he shows how the technique of "intercutting" is used to undermine the stereotypes associated with gay sexuality. Ute Lischke-McNab sees the beginning of a new acumen in German cinema and cinema attendance with Sönke Wortmann's *Maybe ... Maybe Not*. She ascribes this film's novelty and success to its comedic character, its nostalgic revival of 'swing' music from the Weimar period, and Hollywood marketing strategies that include comic books, T-Shirts, posters, and soundtracks. Although the film exploits sentimentality and nostalgia to ensure a healthy profit margin, Lischke-McNab notes that its portrayal of gender fluidity and "'perversity' as an aesthetic impulse" are a significant example of queer discourse (412).

Space does not permit that more than fleeting reference be made to other substantial contributions to this collection, such as Caryl Flinn's analysis of soundtrack and camp aesthetic in von Praunheim's film *Anita*, or Martin Scherzinger and Neville Hoad's essay on the undoing of the hierarchy of major and minor chords in music (of greater interest to those with some background in music notation and theory). Taken as a whole, *Queering the Canon* contains a good deal of original, creative, and inspiring scholarship.

Michael Riordan. *Eating Fire: Family Life, on the Queer Side*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001. 302pp. $22.95 (Cdn) ISBN 1-896357-45-8.

DAWN JOHNSTON (UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY)

Three years ago, when I first picked up a copy of Michael Riordan's *Out Our Way: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Country*, I was on my way out of the publisher's fair at the Learned

Congress in Ottawa. It intrigued me: as a young lesbian from Newfoundland, living in Alberta, I was interested, to say the least, to read someone else's experiences and interpretations of queer life in Canada's *other* spaces. I had read many excellent accounts of the gay ghettos and villages of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, but the scholarly writings on smaller, less metropolitan queer Canada were few and far between. Riordan's book was a treat – informative, thorough, beautifully written, even entertaining. So it was with enthusiasm that I anticipated his new book, the just-released *Eating Fire: Family Life, on the Queer Side*. I was not disappointed: *Eating Fire* has proven to be an equally strong book, pushing the boundaries of oral history, ethnography, and academic writing, and challenging readers to examine their own limitations and biases when it comes to defining 'family.'

Eating Fire, according to the author's preface, began four years ago with a friend's suggestion that Riordan write a book about the 'success' of his own twenty-year relationship, within the particular context of a community whose reputation has not lent itself to long-term couplings.

From that first conversation about the particularities of queer relationships, Riordan began a more detailed questioning of non-traditional family units. He spent eight months traveling across Canada, interviewing parents, children, couples, singles, threesomes, and groups about their experiences in building, being born into, or being thrown into queer families. Riordan skilfully weaves his participants stories together around themes common to these very diverse families, sometimes delivering an individual's story in one extended, thorough narrative, but more often introducing and revisiting a person or family repeatedly throughout the book. Though the book could arguably have been organized in a variety of ways, Riordan's organization is interesting – he divides the book into three major sections. "Fruitful couplings," which comprises roughly the first 80 pages of the book, looks at the various romantic, sexual, and domestic pairings of his many participants. The second (and longest) section, "Family Values," focuses on parents and children – straight parents of gay children, gay parents of straight children, transgendered parents and children, adopted children, adopted parents, and guardians and caregivers of various sorts. The third and final section, appropriately titled "Roles in the Hay" delves into the stories of the

much-less-traditional family structures that are, as Riordan points out, sometimes perceived as a threat even by their own queer communities. These stories are of intergenerational sex, transgendered marriages, leather threesomes, and sex for money. As Riordan describes them, these are the "bad queers ... who continue to have sex with too many people, or people of the wrong age, or in places the authorities considered insufficiently private. Or they would be too effeminate, or too butch, or they wouldn't have enough money, or they would be too old, or the wrong race, or they would dress badly" (204). Their stories are among the most fascinating in the book, reflected in Riordan's tendency to pay much more detailed attention to them.

Evident just in the description above, one of the foremost strengths of *Eating Fire* is the incredible diversity of the group of participants that Riordan gathered. In this sense, he has overcome one of the usual difficulties inherent in the snowball-sample method – very often, when participants are contacted by word of mouth, they are a relatively homogenous group. As Riordan says in his preface:

> To find stories, I asked a few well-connected folks to suggest potential contacts. Those contacts led to others, and they to others; this is family on a grand scale ... This isn't a survey or a comprehensive study. I missed whole provinces, whole races, and many people in unique relationships that I'd like to have met. (viii)

What he fails to reveal in this list of 'lacks' in his book is the surprising breadth of people who he did contact. The families are racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse, individuals interviewed range from toddlers to octogenarians, and their sexual and domestic partnerships span the very traditional through to the wildly unconventional. Despite his own claims to the contrary, Riordan has met with remarkable success in presenting a far more colorful picture of queer family life – and queer communities – in Canada than most authors ever achieve.

Another characteristic of Riordan's writing that sets him apart from many other ethnographers and oral historians is his very balanced self-awareness and presence in the book. The book begins with a story about Riordan's own relationship with his partner; similarly, the last story in the book is his. And without a doubt, his thematic arrangement of stories, his choices for inclusion, and his occasional

commentaries and observations are deliberate. In simply choosing which stories – and how much of them – to present, he moulds and manipulates his material to tell stories that will inform and inspire his readers. His occasional comments – of surprise at the lack of legal entanglements in one child's nine-parent family, of envy for some of the warm and supportive family units he encounters, or of rage for a 'justice' system that has been so unjust to sexual minorities – remind us of his constant presence in the stories he tells. He even interjects with periodic acknowledgments of his own biases, saying:

> Certainly, queers can do appalling things, like abusing other people, or supporting right-wing political parties that do it for them. But that's not because they're queer – it's because our hard-won equality includes the right to be as greedy, brutish, and narrow-minded as anyone else ... As the last sentence might suggest, I'm a little inclined to be judgmental." (205)

Those moments of 'judgement' are rare, but appropriate to his work. The book would be invariably weakened by a total lack of the author's voice. Riordan's voice is audible, but it is careful; his presence strong, yet subtle, and an excellent conduit for the stories of his participants.

While many books about gays and lesbians struggle – and often fail – to acknowledge and examine the intersections between sexuality and all of our other identity markers, Riordan's book valiantly engages in that struggle. Marginalized sexual orientation is the common bond of these stories, but the uniqueness comes from the cross-points with race, dis/ability, age, gender identity, class, HIV status, monogamy, and values. *Eating Fire* is a book *about* the intersections, about the messiness and leakiness and blurriness of the lines that form the box we each know as "family."

Call for Chapters for a Refereed Book on Gay & Lesbian Youth

Canadian Plains Research Centre. Publisher

Working Title: ***I did not speak my heart:***

Education and Social Justice for Gay & Lesbian Youth

Mary Cronin and James McNinch, University of Regina. Editors

INTENT

The book has two purposes and two main sections. The first is to come to know and better understand the lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and two-spirited (GLBT) youth in Canada in general, and in the Prairie Provinces in particular. The second section of the book will devote critical attention to the educational implications of this reality. Given what we now know and can and must now talk about, how do we reflect this change in education at the public and postsecondary level and in the programs of such professions as teaching, nursing, social work, medicine, and law? In the social and cultural environment of rural and northern Canada, often as harsh and severe as its inhospitable climate, gay youth have lived discordant, shadowed, closeted existences: young citizens supposedly like any other - except that their sexual identity is often masked or denied. This book will help to change the status quo.

CONTENT

Submissions for both sections of the book are invited from a broad range of disciplines and perspectives. We seek contributions from scholars working across the academic spectrum; only such multifaceted approaches to the subject of gay youth will help us to know and understand it. For both sections of the book we hope to attract theoretical pieces that will further our understanding of the formation of the discursive identities of GLBT youth and of queer culture in general. It is our intention that identity theory and politics, and feminist and queer theory will be understood in relation to professional practice and appreciated by our audience in texts that are written clearly. This will be a collection of peer-reviewed articles that are truly transdisciplinary in that they do not rely on the jargon of any one discipline to foster thoughtful discussion. The publication of this book will be celebrated in a symposium where the authors, in conjunction with gay youth, can publicly explore the relation between context, theory, and praxis which defines social justice.

TIMELINES

Chapter Descriptions or Abstracts: November 30, 2002.
(minimum 500 words). Please include a brief bibliography and a brief biography.
Completed Manuscripts received: May 2003
Editing completed: Nov 2003
Book published: March 2004
Book Launch and Symposium: May 2004

Please contact:

James McNinch
Associate Professor
Faculty of Education
University of Regina
Regina, SK, S4S OA2

e-mail: tdc@uregina.ca
phone: (306) 585-5284
fax: (306) 585-5286

Information

Les Renseignements

torquere

Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and 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.

Editor / Directeur
John L. Plews (University of Calgary)
Managing Editor / Rédactrice en chef
Heather Zwicker (University of Alberta)
Book Review Editor / Rédactrice associée pour les comptes rendus
Katherine Binhammer (University of Alberta)
Creative Submissions / Soumissions des oeuvres de créations
Kathryn Payne (George Brown Community College)
French-Language Submissions / Soumissions de textes français
Claudine Potvin (University of Alberta)
Secretary / Secrétaire
Rachel Warburton (University of Alberta)
Treasurer / Trésorier
Garrett P. J. Epp (University of Alberta)
Editorial Board Members / Conseil de rédaction
Rick Lee (Rutgers University), Christoph Lorey (University of New Brunswick)
Production Assistant / Assistante à la production
Marge Hayes (University of Alberta)
Website Manager / Directrice du site "Web"
Mo Engel (University of Alberta)

Advisory Committee / Comité consultatif
Gamal Abdel-Shehid (University of Alberta), Barry Adam (University of Windsor), Douglas Arrell (University of Winnipeg), Glenn Burger (City University of New York), Heather Cameron (York University, Freie Universität Berlin), Sheila Cavanagh (University of Western Ontario), Dianne Chisholm (University of Alberta), Dennis Denisoff (Ryerson Polytechnic University), Lee Easton (Mount Royal College), Gloria Filax (University of Alberta), Terry Goldie (York University), Nathalie Kermoal (Directrice du journal *Le Franco*), Rosalind Kerr (University of Alberta), Christoph Lorey (University of New Brunswick), Michael MacKinnon (University of Winnipeg), Robert K. Martin (Université de Montréal), Anna Pellatt (Athabasca University), Claudine Potvin (University of Alberta),

Nasrin Rahimieh (University of Alberta), Sharon Rosenberg (University of Alberta), Eric Savoy (University of Calgary), Debra Shogan (University of Alberta), John Stout (McMaster University), Gérard Théorêt (Cornish College), Janice Williamson (University of Alberta)

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, bisexual, 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 Germanic, Slavic, and East Asian Studies, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 1N4 / e-mail: jplews@ucalgary.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 Germanic, Slavic, and East Asian Studies, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 1N4 / e-mail: jplews@ucalgary.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 9) 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 Germanic, Slavic, and East Asian Studies, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 1N4 / courriel: jplews@ucalgary.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 Germanic, Slavic, and East Asian Studies, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 1N4 / courriel: jplews@ucalgary.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 9) 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.

Subscription Information

torquere is published annually. Members of the CLGSA receive torquere with their membership. Subscription rates are as follows: $60.00 (CDN) per year for regular members; $30.00 (CDN) per year for students; $75.00 (CDN) per year for institutions. For more information about membership with the CLGSA please contact the association's treasurer (Robert W. Gray, Secretary/Treasurer, CLGSA/ SCELG, 354-1755 Robson Street, Vancouver BC, Canada V6G-2B7 / e-mail: rwgray@telus.net). *torquere* is a member of CELJ, the Conference of Editors of Learned Journals, and CALJ, the Canadian Association of Learned Journals. *torquere* is able to offer reasonable advertising rates.

Renseignements sur l'Abonnement

torquere paraît une fois par an. Les membres de la SCELG reçoivent la revue grâce à leur cotisation : les droits seront de $60.00 (can) par année pour les membres réguliers et de $30.00 (can) par année pour les étudiants et les chercheur(e)s communautaires ; le prix à payer par les institutions sera $75.00 (can) par année. Tous ceux/toutes celles qui voudraient devenir membres de la SCELG sont priés de s'adresser au trésorier de la SCELG (Robert W. Gray, Secretary/Treasurer, CLGSA/ SCELG, 354-1755 Robson Street, Vancouver BC, Canada V6G-2B7 / couriel: rwgray@telus.net). *torquere* est membre de la CELJ, et de la CALJ. Les tarifs de publicité sont disponibles sur demande.

Acknowledgments / Reconnaissances

For ongoing support, the Executive and Members of the CLGSA / SCELG; for technical support, Aimée Morrison and the Technologies for Learning Centre, Faculty of Arts, University of Alberta.

Cover Credits

Image © Terry Malanchuk. Cover design by Jaroslaw Malanowski, Mo Engel, John L. Plews, and Heather Zwicker.

Printed by Quality Color Press Inc. / Imprimé par Quality Color Press Inc., Edmonton

© Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies 2001. All rights reserved / Tous droits réservés.

CN ISSN 1488-5182

http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~torquere