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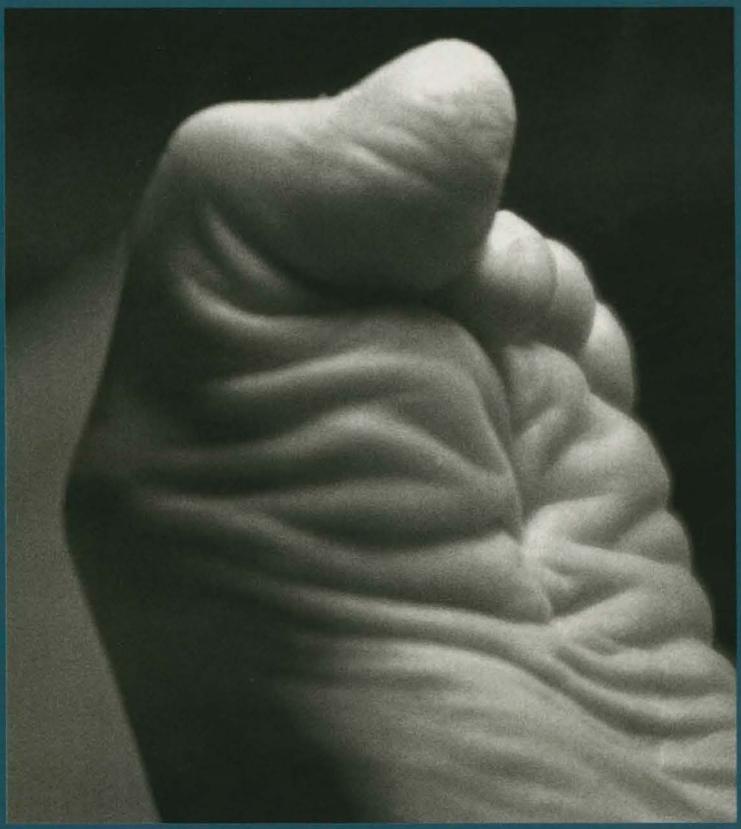

Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association
Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies

vol 4-5
2002-2003

torquere

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

This volume of *torquere* is dedicated to the memory of

Maureen Estella Ruth Irwin,

Anna Sari Pellatt, O. B. M.,

and

Greg Jacobs.

Volume 4-5 **torquere** 2002/2003

Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association
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Generation Trouble: Reflections on Gay Male Identity, Generational Consciousness, and Social Belonging

RICK H. LEE

Rick H. Lee is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at Rutgers University. His dissertation, Generation Trouble in Gay Male Literature and Culture, *analyzes the generation concept as an ideological problem that shapes gay men's relationship to familial succession, social belonging, and historical memory. Part of that dissertation, this article examines the implications of generational thinking in contemporary gay male discourse and social life. He welcomes responses via email at rick_h_lee@hotmail.com.*

> [Generation's] important development has been towards social and historical uses, beyond the specific biological reference.
>
> — Raymond Williams (140)

> The phenomenon of generations is one of the basic factors contributing to the genesis of the dynamic of historical development.
>
> — Karl Mannheim (395)

> ... to ask ourselves to which generation we belong is, in large measure, to ask *who* we are.
>
> — Julián Marías (106)

I

"Is There a Gay Generation Gap?" muses *Out* magazine in a headline on the cover of its October 2001 issue. What at first appears as a genuine question, however, turns out to be merely rhetorical. For the headline leads to two articles that differ not only in focus, but, more revealingly, in their *uses* of the generation

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 4-5 (2002-2003) © CLGSA / SCELG

concept. In "Youthquake," Mike Glatze and Benjie Nycum approach the concept as a demographic term to consider the emotional and physical isolation of gay youths in rural areas in the U.S. and Canada. In "The Gay Generation Gap," Steve Weinstein draws upon the concept's genealogical dimension to consider the absence of historical memory in urban gay male culture. The difference between the authors' perspectives is more than a matter of geography; by their own admissions, it is also a matter of age: "we're in our 20s ourselves," admit Glatze and Nycum (54); "I just turned 49," confesses Weinstein (91). Juxtaposing two articles that differ both in their object of study and in their method of inquiry, *Out* magazine succeeds in showing that there is indeed a "gay generation gap." By the same token, however, the magazine fails to engage in a more meaningful fashion with the debate it aims to set up.

These two *Out* articles illustrate a larger phenomenon in gay male culture that I call "generation trouble." By trouble, I mean specifically the ways in which the generation concept has come to dominate and saturate — through often competing and contradictory claims — our vocabularies of self-definition and our taxonomies of public collectivity and social belonging.[1] Especially in the last fifteen years the concept has appeared with increasing frequency as an analytic and experiential category in discussions of gay male identity across a range of gay publics — in the academy and in cyberspace,[2] as well as in local weeklies and in national magazines. For example, in "The Problems and Promise of Gay Youth," one of the articles featured in the *Advocate*'s "Young and Gay" issue on 16 September 1986, Mike Hippler announced that "there is a new gay generation

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[1] At the risk of "situat[ing] lesbianism as a footnote to gay male history" (Fuss 110), I want to make the following admission. Although some of what I have to say relates to lesbian culture as well, I also want to keep in mind that the generation concept functions in markedly different ways for lesbians. The uses of the generation concept in lesbian culture are evident in the ways that lesbians negotiate their relationships to, among other things, histories of feminism, the "sex wars" of the 1980s, butch-femme aesthetics, and reproductive culture. See, for example, Freeman; Hayden; Heller; Martinez; Roof; Stein; and Wiegman.

[2] In August 2001, for example, a lively and heated discussion occurred on the listserv <http://www.circuitpartyinsanity.com> about issues of ageism and generational difference in the circuit party scene; the discussion was resumed, more recently, in late April and early May 2002. I thank Vincent A. Lankewish for drawing my attention to this discussion.

emerging — whose experiences, priorities, and prospects differ significantly in many respects from those of previous generations. It is a different world they face in 1986. It may be a different future they face as well" (42-43). The future Hippler speaks of has come and passed, and the "new gay generation" he refers to has since acquired the name of Generation Q, a youth cohort that came of age in the late 1980s and early 1990s whose members resist gay male identity in favor of a postgay and post-AIDS identity.[3] The shift from the "promise of gay youth" in the pages of the *Advocate* in 1986 to worries about the "gay generation gap" in the pages of *Out* in 2001 is striking and deserves critical attention. On the one hand, the current debates about the generation gap in contemporary gay male culture articulate a familiar narrative of generational difference that reflects the disparate ideologies of different cohorts. On the other hand, today's version also differs from earlier versions of this narrative for at least two reasons: first, the increased visibility of gay youths and elderly gays as social constituencies — unprecedented in the modern history of homosexuality — has demanded far more expansive visions of the needs of diverse gay male subjects; second, the AIDS epidemic has interrupted vital processes of generational transmission in gay male culture. With some important qualifications, the question of whether there *might be* a "gay generation gap" is certainly worth asking. But we must do so by posing a different set of questions. What constitutes either a gay male generation or a queer generation? More importantly, are the two different in kind or only by degree?

I raise these questions to make two related arguments in this article. First, gay men of different ages *use* and, in effect, *understand* the generation concept in different and sometimes competing ways.

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[3] To the best of my knowledge, the term "Generation Q" gained currency in the mid 1990s. See, for example, the four-part documentary *The Question of Equality*, produced in 1995 by Testing the Limits and Channel 4/U.K. for the Independent Television Service, and, in particular, its last installment entitled *Generation Q*, directed by Byrd. In 1996, Bernstein and Silberman edited the anthology collection *Generation Q*; in the summer of 1997, the *Advocate* published a special double issue on Generation Q entitled "Generations of Trailblazers," which featured profiles of younger gay men and lesbians in politics, sports, the arts, society, and science and technology. For a summary of crucial events that have culminated in post-AIDS discourse, see Román; on postgay identity, see Signorile.

Second, and concurrently, the generation concept remains at once problematic and productive for gay male identity formations. That the concept can be used and understood as both stems from the fact that it signifies, on the one hand, a normative principle of familial succession and kinship descent, and, on the other, a viable social practice of affiliation among cohorts belonging to different historical generations. Because we often use the generation concept interchangeably, we need to be attentive both to its biological-genealogical dimension and to its sociohistorical dimension. Ultimately, I want to propose a theory of the *conditional uses* of the generation concept, a theory that would at once critique the normative dimension of the concept without necessarily sacrificing its inherent value as an analytic and experiential category that makes possible gay men's self-definition and sense of social belonging.

I have coined the term "generation trouble" to underscore the generation concept's multiple functions in gay male culture — the ways in which it shapes processes of identity formation; secures or fails to secure social belonging; and measures the shifts in collective consciousness about historical events such as the Stonewall riots and the AIDS epidemic. My term generation trouble evokes and is indebted to Judith Butler's groundbreaking work on gender as a necessary but troubling category of identity. In the preface to *Gender Trouble*, Butler invites us to consider the ways in which "trouble need not carry ... a negative valence" (vii). She puts the matter even more pointedly in her essay "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," where she states: "I'm permanently troubled by identity categories, consider them to be invariable stumbling-blocks, and understand them, even promote them, as sites of necessary trouble" (14). Following Butler's example, and drawing from the foundational works of generation theorists Karl Mannheim, José Ortega y Gasset, and Julián Marías, I wish to promote the identity category of generation as a site of necessary trouble. In developing the theory of generation trouble, I also take as my models Raymond Williams, David Schneider, Brent Edwards, Nayan Shah, and Michael Warner, whose works have productively interrogated certain keywords and concepts fundamental to our cultural vocabulary. In different ways, these critics and theorists have been acutely attentive to the problems of meaning that accrue historically to terms that are integral to "the vocabulary we share with others ... when we wish to discuss many

of the central processes of our common life" (Williams 14). The uses of the generation concept in contemporary gay male culture demonstrate both a "politics of nominalization" (Edwards 46) and a "politics of assertion" (Shah 481). That is to say, gay male generation trouble describes a struggle over representation as well as a crisis in epistemology concerning different forms of social relations in gay male culture: it is a phenomenon that at once challenges, modifies, and validates the meanings and values of gay male identity formations and social belonging.

In what follows, I first provide a history of the generation concept, before situating it within the context of contemporary gay male culture. I then rehearse and evaluate two essays that, in addition to the two recent *Out* articles, illuminate the shift in gay men's uses and understandings of the generation concept in the last fifteen years: Arnie Kantrowitz's "Letter to the Queer Generation" and Justin Chin's "Q-Punk Grammar." Throughout, I also examine a host of other sources, drawn from both academic and popular literature, as evidence of gay male generation trouble. The definitional and usage problems of the generation concept in these texts illustrate not only its ubiquity in the gay cultural imagination; they also reveal its profound yet troubling influence in shaping gay men's negotiations of their identity formations and their perceptions of Stonewall, AIDS, and the coming-out process — all of which, in turn, contribute to their sense of belonging, or not belonging, to gay male culture and history. Because the concept increasingly organizes our ways of thinking and modes of being, we need to think carefully about our uses and understandings of the generation phenomenon in gay male culture. In short, we need to examine the concept's very *usefulness* as a descriptive and analytical term that registers the range of our experiences. As gay men, we have a stake in recognizing that our uses of the concept will affect its meaning and value for succeeding gay generations in the future.

II

Before situating the generation concept in relation to gay male culture, I want to sketch out its history and context. In Indo-European languages, the etymology of the term derives from the Greek root of the word *genos* (*gen-*), meaning "to come or bring into being" or "to come into existence" (Strauss / Howe 433), and from the Latin

generare, meaning "to reproduce one's own kind" (Williams 140). The concept is a defining characteristic of Classical literature — in Homer's account of the Trojan War in the *Iliad*, as well as in Hesiod's explanations of the genealogy of the gods in *Theogony* and of the five ages of man in *Works and Days* (see Nash). It is also a defining characteristic of Judeo-Christian traditions and their various genealogical narratives in both Old and New Testaments (Strauss / Howe 433-34). The generation concept began to be developed as a secular idea in the West in the nineteenth century, when the formation of social classes and the rapid industrialization of Europe contributed to the stratification of age groups (Jaeger 275-76) and to the elaboration of an ideology of youth (Kriegel 26-27). Since then, it has come to occupy an increasingly important place in the Western cultural imagination, generating much debate both in popular and in academic discourses about its meanings and coherence. The concept has several distinct but overlapping meanings: a principle of familial succession and kinship structure; a social practice of affiliation among cohorts; a phase or stage of the life course; and an index of historical periods (Kertzer 126). Moreover, with technological advances and increased consumerism, it has frequently come to be used to describe successive types of manufactured products (Williams 141).

Increasingly, the generation concept appears in a range of contexts that reflects this spectrum of meanings. Within the academy, for example, it is used to structure discussions between feminists or between literary critics about shifts in disciplinary methods, objects of study, and political ideologies (see Herman; Looser / Kaplan). It is also used, in more empirical fashion, to structure discussions between social scientists, for whom the term remains a primary analytic category for research in the fields of demography, political science, and social policy. Within popular culture, it is used to market products to consumers, from soft drinks and dolls to denim jeans and luxury cars, in each case suggesting not only new consumer demographics but also new products (e.g., "the Pepsi generation"; "the Generation Girls," Barbie's new friends from Mattel; the retailer GAP markets its clothing "for every generation"; "the new Jag generation"). And most familiar to us, it is used in popular culture to describe the emergence of new social types in an ever-changing and ephemeral youth culture — from "Generation X," the adolescents and young adults of the 1990s, to their twenty-first-century cohorts, the "Millennials," to

the "Organization Kid," a new breed that ostensibly belongs to both generations.[4] Given these rich possibilities, the generation concept deserves its status as one of the keywords that helps to define and make intelligible modern culture and society (Williams 140-42).

The generation concept also functions as a keyword in gay male culture, where it is used to reference just as many of its possible meanings. Consider the two *Out* articles with which I began my reflections on gay male generation trouble. In "Youthquake," Glatze and Nycum use the generation concept as a strategy to claim solidarity with other gay youths and to discuss issues that confront them as a demographic constituency — such as their sense of isolation within and outside the gay community, the violence they encounter in school, and the high rate of gay teen and youth suicides. In their article, they describe their travels across the United States and to Halifax, Canada, in search of "Young Gay America." "Our goal," they explain, "is not only to prove that gay teens exist and are thriving everywhere but also to give them a better way to express themselves, feel less isolated, learn from each other's experiences, and come to understand their importance in the world" (56). In the process, they address what they see as "the institutionalized gay indifference to youth issues" in gay culture. "It's up to youths themselves and compassionate parents to fight a battle that probably should be on the top of the gay community's list. Is it really more important," they ask provocatively, "to recognize gay spouses than it is to stop violence in schools?" (62). For Glatze and Nycum, the generation concept affords them the opportunity not only to speak on behalf of gay youths in "Young Gay America," a vibrant yet neglected social constituency that in part makes up contemporary gay male culture, but also to call into question what they see as the

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[4] See Brooks; Coupland; and Howe / Strauss. Interestingly, what Coupland calls in his novel "mid-twenties breakdown" (27) has since become a distinctly postmodern phenomenon, with the recent publication of Robbins and Wilner's self-help book, *Quarterlife Crisis: The Unique Challenges of Life in Your Twenties*. The book stands as one of the most striking, if bizarre, confluences of the generation concept being used both as a marketing tool and as a descriptive category — in this case, the introduction of "quarterlife crisis," a new stage of the life course that supposedly precedes "midlife crisis," its later counterpart. On a different note, the tragic events of 11 September 2001 have introduced what B. Kantrowitz and Naughton call "Generation 9-11."

misdirected energies of activists who support the normative and assimilationist political agenda of gay marriage.

In "The Gay Generation Gap," the other article featured in the October 2001 issue of *Out* magazine, Weinstein uses the generation concept to answer the question, posed as the subtitle of his article: "Why can't over-40 and under-35 gay men communicate?" (10). In doing so, he raises important questions about cultural memory and processes of generational transmission in gay culture. According to Weinstein, "Before Stonewall, secret codes — like touching your nose with your index finger, a red tie, or a nosegay in a lapel, even the location of bars — were part of gay lore passed down to newcomers ... With the mainstreaming of gay culture, there's no need for a secret set of shared references. All of which makes it harder for gay men to communicate. If there are fewer and fewer common touchstones," wonders Weinstein only half facetiously, "what is there to talk about over cocktails?" (91). That "gay lore" is prevented from being transmitted across the generations, according to him, contributes to and is a direct consequence of "our [culture's] lack of an institutional memory." "You don't study gay rights in school, and you don't learn to be gay in college," Weinstein concludes. "Such things are passed down, one generation to the next, and if the generations aren't mixing, everything we had will be lost" (109). Although Weinstein's differentiation between "over-40" and "under-35" gay men suggests that he, like his younger counterparts Glatze and Nycum, aims to speak on behalf of a particular constituency, he is more interested in using the generation concept to underscore the difficulties of forging and sustaining forms of generational consciousness in contemporary urban gay male culture.[5]

Reading these two *Out* articles side by side shows not only that younger and older gay men use the generation concept differently, but that they understand its purpose and value differently as well. While Glatze and Nycum want younger gay men to "learn from each

[5] Weinstein's worry that there is a lack of communication and interaction between older and younger gay men implicitly touches upon the relationship between mentorship, friendship, and inter- or crossgenerational social relations in gay male culture. For various critical approaches to and discussions of this topic, see: Adam; Greenberg (esp. 26-40); Halperin; Herdt / Boxer; Litvak; Nardi; and Weston (esp. 121-22). For fictional and autobiographical treatments, see: Bartlett, *Ready*; and Quinn.

other's experiences," Weinstein wants them also to learn from the experiences of older gay men. While Glatze and Nycum stress "the institutionalized gay indifference to youth issues" in gay culture, Weinstein worries about its "lack of an institutional memory." Glatze and Nycum use the generation concept as a strategy to understand the present; Weinstein uses it as a strategy to understand the present's relation to the past. Although both articles' uses of the generation concept are valid — and even predictable given the range of overlapping meanings that the concept encompasses — they also need to be understood *as* different. Gay men use the generation concept as a register of their age-specific needs and experiences, one that deeply structures not only their negotiations of their personal identity but also their definitions of what it means to belong to a public collectivity. The generation concept remains an effective category because it provides gay men with empowering modes of affiliation and identification with others situated in similar generation locations — and, as the two *Out* articles also imply, with equally effective modes of disaffiliation and disidentification with others belonging to other generations.

How readers of these articles interpret the generation concept is also worth noting. For example, the December 2001 issue of *Out* reprints a letter by Mark Morale of Los Angeles in response to Weinstein's "The Gay Generation Gap." "Steve Weinstein," Morale writes, "takes a condition that is prevalent throughout humanity and tries to make it a gay issue. The way I see it, there's no difference between a generation gap among gays and one among Mexican-Americans, Republicans, or people who wear blue jeans ... I don't need Judy Garland lore passed down to me to know how to love another man intimately" (10). Morale astutely challenges Weinstein's proscriptive vision of what should or should not count as cultural references, what should or should not constitute part of "our" institutional memory. But to base such a challenge, as Morale does, on the false assumption that the generation phenomenon is "a condition ... prevalent throughout humanity" and thus not a "gay issue" is to miss the point entirely. The generation concept is *not* a human universal category, as Morale would lead us to believe; on the contrary, it is definitively a *cultural* category whose specific functions in gay male culture invite critical and theoretical elaboration. As a result, we need to interrogate the generation concept

in order to broaden and deepen our understanding of its profound, if problematic, impact in structuring the gay social world.

III

We need to make generation a gay issue because there are consequences in the choices we make about our generational identifications and affiliations. As generation theorist Julián Marías puts it, "to ask ourselves to which generation we belong is ... to ask *who* we are" (106). Who we are is up for debate, of course — are gay male and queer generations different in kind or only by degree? Social scientists working in lesbian and gay studies, who focus on the intersection between gender, sexuality, age, and generation, have begun to provide some answers to this question. In their study of the Horizons youth group in Chicago, for example, anthropologist Gilbert Herdt and psychologist Andrew Boxer propose a cohort system of four historical age-groupings that constitute the gay and lesbian generations that came of age in the twentieth century: Cohort One, after World War I; Cohort Two, during or after World War II; Cohort Three, after the Stonewall riots in 1969 and the advent of gay liberation in the 1970s; and Cohort Four, during the age of AIDS (6-13). Situating these different cohort groups within their specific historical contexts, Herdt and Boxer show that gay and lesbian generations, like other types of historical generations, emerge and are made intelligible through the occurrence of particular historical and social events. "The individual does not invent these grand historical events or create the relevant cultural categories," they explain, "but through social development the individual participates in collectively shared experiences, linking himself or herself to other persons of similar status, according to where they were at the time and what they did in relation to the historical events" (8). Herdt and Boxer stress the importance of our approaches to and interpretations of historical events — that is, what we do in relation to them. To anticipate my discussion, I suggest that Generation Q's view, which would most likely claim that gay male and queer generations are different *in kind*, is misguided and ultimately self-defeating, since it both stems from and is a reflection of a distressing lack of historical knowledge about contemporary gay male culture.

The Stonewall riots and the AIDS epidemic are significant not only as historical markers, but also because they have transformed,

in different and profound ways, gay men's relation to the generation concept. Stonewall created new scenes of extrafamilial sociability for gay men, and introduced, with those scenes, empowering modes of affiliation and identification by which individuals could locate themselves in relation to the collective within history. In the 1970s and 1980s, many urban gay men in the United States and elsewhere viewed Stonewall as a pivotal frame of reference in the creation of an emergent cultural consciousness, as well as a strategy to distinguish between gay male generations: pre-Stonewall, Stonewall, and post-Stonewall. As a result of Stonewall and the ensuing gay liberation movement, gay men were empowered to "come out of the closet," an experience that was seen not only as a personal choice or an individual rite of passage, but also as part of a larger political project to claim a collective identity based on fighting homophobia and sexual oppression. During the last two decades, the AIDS epidemic completely altered gay men's positioning of themselves in discourses of generation — especially in the context of the concept's definition as a stage or phase in the trajectory of the life course. Witnessing the deaths of lovers, friends, and numerous others as a result of HIV/AIDS, and facing the possible truncation of their own lives, gay men were forced to confront the intimate connections between their desires and mortality.

Stonewall and AIDS figure prominently in Arnie Kantrowitz's "Letter to the Queer Generation" and Justin Chin's "Q-Punk Grammar," two essays that explicitly use the generation concept as a framework for discussing gay male identity formations. Appearing in the New York City weekly *NYQ* in 1992, "Letter to the Queer Generation" was written in response to the irreverent views made by the editors of the Toronto-based queer zine *Bimbox* following the death of film critic and AIDS activist Vito Russo.[6] To illustrate the multiple shifts in Kantrowitz's uses of the generation concept, I quote

[6] The *Bimbox* editors, "Johnny Noxema" and "Rex Boy," had launched an "inning" campaign of prominent gays and lesbians that, in their view, "defile[d] the good name of our people." When a reader wrote back to protest the inclusion of Vito Russo on the "inning" list, the *Bimbox* editors responded with: "Just 'cause someone has AIDS doesn't mean they're exempt from being labeled an asshole. Russo is/was/ and will remain one of the most miserable disgusting insufferable clones ever to enter the public eye. Honey, rest assured that we were well aware of his medical condition

at length his explanation to the *Bimbox* editors and, more generally, the readers of their zine who belong to the queer generation:

> We don't come from nowhere. When Larry Kramer and Vito Russo watched Vito's last Gay Pride March in 1990, thousands of ACT UP activists shouted up the balcony, "We love you, Vito!" (Take that, *Bimbox!* You'll never hear the like.) My lover, Larry Mass, heard Larry Kramer say to Vito, "These are our children." Queer Nation is the child of ACT UP, which is the stepchild of GMHC [Gay Men's Health Crisis]. GAA [Gay Activists Alliance] gave birth to the Gay Teachers Association, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and a host of other groups. GAA in its turn was the child of its forebears, the Gay Liberation Front, the Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis, the Society for Individual Rights, even Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science in pre-Nazi Germany. Queer people are not newly born, only newly named. You have a history, and you should not only be proud of it, you should learn from it.
>
> I know that oedipal rebellion against our predecessors is an important step, as is reinventing ourselves in each generation, but reinventing the wheel as well is a waste of valuable energy and time. My gay generation rebelled against the Mattachine Society because we considered it too obsequious and against the Gay Liberation Front because we found it too doctrinaire, but we learned things from their experience, as you should learn from ours ...
>
> The "gay" generation is in the process of its mid-life crisis. After fomenting amazing changes in our culture, we suddenly find ourselves uncomfortable with more change — a sign that our day is drawing to a close. It is a reminder that we are all one step closer to death (as if a generation traumatized by the grim spectacle of AIDS needed any reminders).

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at the time our inning list was [put] together, and to be honest, we're elated he's off the planet ... Oh sure, Vito's finally dead and we got our wish and we should just drop the whole thing, but we won't be satisfied until we dig him up and drive a stake through his filthy film queen heart" (qtd. in Blasius / Phelan 812).

> I thought I had come from the best era of all. I had survived the oppression of the '50s, participated in the social experiments of the '60s, and emerged from the closet into the sunlight of the '70s, managing to have a great deal of fun and fulfillment before the plague years of the '80s ...
>
> Good luck being queer. I hope you really have fun, and I hope you make us proud of you. (816-17)

Kantrowitz's "Letter to the Queer Generation" can be read in at least two ways. The author displays a remarkable ability in manipulating the generation concept, maneuvering, as he does, through each of the concept's common definitions: as biological-genealogical phenomenon ("Queer Nation is the child of ACT UP"); as sociohistorical phenomenon ("Queer people are not newly born, only newly named"); as a description of a phase or stage of the life course ("The 'gay' generation is in the process of its mid-life crisis"); and, finally, as an index of historical periods ("I thought I had come from the best era of all"). At the same time and despite such maneuverings, Kantrowitz fails to disguise his genuine struggle to make sense of the *normative* dimensions inherent in the generation concept. His chronological account of postwar gay history articulates a familiar narrative of generational difference between cohorts during various historical moments. Yet for Kantrowitz to claim successfully that same-sex social identities are variable and historically contingent, he must also rely on the language of reproduction and procreation (e.g., "stepchild," "gave birth to," "child of its forebears," etc.). For him to contextualize the existence of homosexual/homophilic, gay, and queer generations within the framework of the social and the historical — that they constitute different cohort groups and, thus, distinct collective entities — he must also position them within the framework of the biological and the familial. In short, for him to argue for these various same-sex generations as sociohistorical phenomena, he must simultaneously argue for their existence as biological-genealogical phenomena. Even his important qualification that "Queer people are not newly born, only newly named" gets deflated when he once again situates his critique within the genre of the family romance and "oedipal rebellion." That Kantrowitz is unable to make his claim without recourse to the language of procreation foregrounds the extent to which reproductive sex, as Michael Warner shows in a different context, "has become an even

more pervasive measure of value in modernity ... Whether we bear children or not, our lives converge on a future that continues to be imagined not as the activity of other adults like ourselves, but as the inheritance of children — our donatees, our surrogates, our redeemers, our alibi" ("Irving's" 776). The projected future proposed by Kantrowitz is teleological, one inhabited by imaginary children who will correct, or even redeem, the mistakes of the past: "we learned things from their experience," he writes of the pre-Stonewall generation in his admonishment to Generation Q, "as you should learn from ours."

Kantrowitz is not alone in confusing, whether strategically or not, generation as a biological-genealogical phenomenon and generation as a sociohistorical phenomenon. Performance artist Justin Chin also uses the generation concept to frame his discussion of gay male identity in "Q-Punk Grammar," an essay that first appeared in the anthology *Generation Q* (1996), and was later included in Chin's own collection *Mongrel* (1999). "Q-Punk Grammar" presents further evidence of the ways in which the language of reproduction and procreation shapes, both implicitly and explicitly, gay men's relation to and understanding of the generation concept. "The gay community is experiencing a great generational gap," Chin notes:

> It's a vicious cycle; each generation feels it has cornered the market on what it's like to be gay. The older generation tells us what it was like to be really gay *back then*, when they had: Donna Summer, when she meant something; ... sex without condoms; venereal diseases that didn't outright kill you; and those insidious little homosexual mustaches. My generation tells the younger queer brats what it was like to be queer *back then*, and how they will never know what it was like: to sit in a room of sixty people on a Wednesday night and try to reach consensus on something; ... to be at a kiss-in when a kiss-in meant something; to be so filled with anger and a strange hope at an AIDS demonstration; [and] having to defend using the word *queer* ...
>
> I look in my closet and I see that I have inherited a gaggle of colored drag queens tossing bricks at cops who look suspiciously like uniformed queens in a leather bar ten or twenty years later ... I have inherited a virus, a wrecked community, memorials and Names Quilts, clinical trials and

> the AIDS industry as a viable and "noble" career choice. (32-34)

Like Kantrowitz, Chin must resort to the language of life course — that is, the structuring of life as a narrative, whose intelligibility must adhere to categories such as age, career, maturity, inheritance — to make his claim that the "gay community is experiencing a great generational gap." In the end, Chin, while aiming to dislodge the normative structures that, in his view, contribute to the cyclical nature of generations, nevertheless recycles and recirculates the logic of reproduction and inheritance. Although this maneuver dulls Chin's otherwise sharp critique, it does underscore the inherent difficulties of using the generation concept without succumbing to vocabularies of life course and reproduction. No doubt Chin himself recognizes these seemingly insurmountable challenges; perhaps they are the reasons that lead him to declare, in the conclusion of "Q-Punk Grammar," his disenchantment with identity politics: "Let the young ones be queer the way they want to be queer, as long as they are queer, as long as they find among themselves each other to love." Chin ends with the remark: "I've given up the dream of the Queer Nation. Race, class, gender, ideologies, and values will always divide us ... I have no idea what it is to be gay or queer anymore; nor do I care. I am so over being queer, and I don't care what I call myself or what anyone else calls me; it's all a matter of convenience these days" (32-34). I suspect that, in large measure, Chin's disenchantment articulates less his refusal of sexual identities and more his attempt to underscore the complex intersection of sexuality with class and, specifically, with race and ethnicity. Gay men of color recognize that their refusal of heterosexuality often puts them at risk of becoming estranged from their own familial and cultural traditions — an issue that deserves more extended treatment than I can provide here (see also Herdt / Boxer 241). In "Q-Punk Grammar," Chin proposes a new lexicon by which to reconceptualize the possibilities, conditions, and limitations of various kinds of identity — not as identities per se, but, rather, where appropriate and necessary, as matters of convenience.

Both Kantrowitz and Chin attempt to illustrate that the generation phenomenon in gay male culture is a product of social and historical events. Both, however, must rely on the language of reproduction and procreation to do so. Their respective reflections articulate not only a struggle over representation concerning kinship

and other forms of social relations in gay male culture, but also how those collectivities are conceptualized in the first place. Social scientists and queer theorists have shown the ways in which nonheterosexuals have succeeded in expanding traditional and familiar notions of the family. In *Families We Choose*, anthropologist Kath Weston poses a set of intriguing questions that are relevant to gay male generation trouble. "What is all this talk about gay families?" she wonders. "Where did those families come from, and why should they appear now? ... Are gay families inherently assimilationist, or do they represent a radical departure from more conventional understandings of kinship? Will gay families have any effect on kinship relations and social relations ...?" (2). In a similar manner, Jeffrey Weeks, Brian Heaphy, and Catherine Donovan, in their study *Same-Sex Intimacies*, observe that "It is surprising ... that the growing recognition of relational rights for non-heterosexuals should be expressed in the language of the family. What significance can we read into this?" (15). According to them, "The appropriation of the language of the family by many non-heterosexuals can ... be seen as a battle over meaning, one important way in which the sexually marginal are struggling to assert the validity of their own way of life" (17). These scholars have contributed much to our understanding of nonheterosexuals' reconfigurations of family and kinship. With these studies in mind, I propose that Kantrowitz and Chin struggle, in their respective essays, to *appropriate* and *denaturalize* the generation concept in the context of gay male social and sexual identity formations. Equally importantly, I value their attempts because both men possess a deep understanding of the historical events that have led them to reflect on the generation concept.

IV

The slippages that characterize Kantrowitz's and Chin's uses of the generation concept are pervasive not only in gay popular culture but also in the academy. For the same kinds of slippages are evident in the work of social scientists, who "also fall into the tendency, characteristic of generational studies, of a slippery, ambiguous usage that blurs distinctions that should be clarified" (Spitzer 1354). An understanding of generations as sociohistorical phenomena depends upon — indeed, remains deeply embedded within — an understand-

ing of generations as biological-genealogical phenomena. In other words, although the generation concept is still used to measure time and historical progress and to organize the life course into a sequence of life phases, it is more often used *interchangeably*, to signify, on the one hand, familial succession and kinship descent, and, on the other, extrafamilial affiliations among cohorts or coevals. Even the most careful of theorists struggle to dislodge fully the conflation between generations as biological-genealogical phenomena and generations as sociohistorical phenomena. Hans Jaeger, for example, suggests that the "concept 'generation' is used in different ways":

> The naïve and original meaning of generation is without a doubt a biological-genealogical one. It indicates that descendants of a common ancestor take on average about thirty years to marry and have children. This is not only the natural conception today; it is also the conception of the classical tradition, as, for example, of the Old Testament and of Greek poetry and historiography. The historical notion of generation ... originates out of the biological-genealogical concept with an additional assumption, namely that there exists a connection between the continuing process of the succession between fathers and sons and the discontinuous process of social and cultural changes. (274)

Using the language of origins and reproduction — "natural conception," "originates," "succession" — Jaeger assumes that sexuality is always normative and reproductive. Given the term's etymology, it is hardly surprising that the generation concept inheres most insistently in its relation to the ideology of reproduction. I isolate Jaeger's explanation, however, because it is evidence of the difficulties involved in — and of the need for — interrogating and *denaturalizing* the generation concept within the context of nonnormative and nonreproductive sexualities. Put another way, although generation now more frequently refers to age cohorts rather than to family and kinship, such a discursive and epistemological shift still secures the status of normative heterosexuality; whereas it once implied the reproduction of familial and kinship structures, it continues to guarantee the reproduction of sociocultural relations.

It has been my intention thus far to encourage the denaturalization of the generation concept. But, at the same time, my readings of the two *Out* articles and of Kantrowitz's and Chin's essays also

demonstrate that gay men's engagement with cultural generativity cannot be guaranteed in advance. The inextricable connection between the generation concept's two main definitions — as biological-genealogical phenomena and as sociohistorical phenomena — presents the most trouble to gay men and their uses of the idea. Since biological and genealogical reproduction are inseparable (Erikson 266-68; Kotre), gay men struggle in securing cultural generativity — the production, transmission, and reception of values and practices across generations — because they tend not to have recourse to biological generativity. For any historical generation to survive and evolve, it must succeed in transmitting its values and practices to members of the next generation, who in turn participate in the reception of those values and practices — by embracing, modifying, or rejecting them. Unlike heterosexuals and even lesbians, most gay men have had to create and improvise different strategies through which to engage in and secure cultural generativity, mainly because of their nonparticipation in biological reproduction and child-rearing, and, in the last two decades, because of the AIDS epidemic.

That the generation concept remains firmly rooted in the ideology of reproduction should alert us to its normative dimensions. Let me be absolutely clear: I am not suggesting that gay men should refrain from using the generation concept. Rather, I am suggesting that we recognize the ways in which the generation concept remains inextricably connected to "heteronormativity," a term that Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant use to describe the wide and diffuse range of "institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent ... but also privileged" (548n2). Heteronormativity prevents gay men from creating and sustaining institutions for common memory and, in the process, interrupts and forecloses the possibility of generational transmission. The slippages in Kantrowitz's and Chin's uses of the generation concept are in many ways problematic because they recirculate and shore up the logic of heterosexuality and the intelligibility of the reproduction narrative. But they also show that the generation concept, despite or, rather, because of its multivalent capaciousness, remains useful as an analytic and experiential category for many gay men. That the concept has appeared with increasing frequency in discussions across a range of reading publics strongly

emphasizes its importance and relevance to gay men's negotiations of their identities and sense of social belonging (or not belonging) to gay male culture and history. That it has been used, at the same time, in radically different ways just as strongly suggests the generation trouble in gay male culture. Our goal, therefore, is not to refrain ourselves from using the generation concept. On the contrary, we need to continue, as Raymond Williams persuasively suggests, to commit ourselves to the task of "contribut[ing] to certain kinds of awareness and certain more limited kinds of clarification by taking certain words at the level at which they are generally used" in everyday life (24).

V

Given the difficulties of thinking about the generation concept outside the framework of reproductive culture, and given that it can be used as a strategy of simultaneous identification and disidentification, can we then use it effectively to theorize the formation and transformation of gay male social and sexual identities? Yes and no. The work of sociologist Karl Mannheim justifies my reservations concerning the possibilities, conditions, and limitations of gay men's uses of the generation concept. Within the context of what Mannheim calls "the sociology of knowledge," the generation concept represents "one of the indispensable guides to an understanding of the structure of social and intellectual movements" (361-62). In his groundbreaking essay "The Problem of Generations," Mannheim radically reconceptualizes generations as social and historical phenomena rather than as biological and genealogical phenomena. He finds equally inadequate the liberal-positivist tradition and its quantitative approach to generations as an "objective measure of unilinear progress," as well as the romantic-historicist tradition and its qualitative approach to generations as articulating an "interior time that cannot be measured but only experienced" (356). In his view, both schools of thought fall short of fully addressing the problem because each, in its own way, conceives of generations as intelligible only in relation to a biological rhythm that must adhere either to the patterns of the life course or to the process of familial succession. According to Mannheim, "It is a complete misconception to suppose, as do most investigators, that a real problem of generations exists only in so far as a rhythm of generations, recurring at unchanging intervals, can

be established. Any biological rhythm," he argues, "must work itself out through the medium of social events" (361). Reframing the problem of generations in relation to the social rather than to the biological, Mannheim conceives of generations as consisting of groups of individuals of roughly the same age, whose experiences of events during particular historical moments bind them to their cohorts, coevals, and peers, and, at the same time, differentiate them from their contemporaries in other age groups and from members of previous and later generations. "Were it not for the existence of social interaction between human beings," Mannheim maintains, "the generation would not exist as a social location phenomenon; there would merely be birth, ageing, and death. The *sociological* problem of generations therefore begins at that point where the sociological relevance of these biological factors is discovered" (366). By underscoring the primacy of social interaction and, in effect, proposing a theory of human relationality, Mannheim illustrates that the generation concept fundamentally shapes processes of identity formation. That is, the concept endows individuals within the same or proximate generation locations with empowering and expressive modes of *extrafamilial* affiliation and identification with their cohorts, coevals, and peers.

That the generation concept makes available to cohorts a means with which to define their identity in relation to others belonging to similar generation locations vitally suggests its potential applicability to analyses of gay male culture and identity. In many respects, the concept is ideal because it makes possible an understanding of the emergence of gay male culture as a social entity and, in turn, the existence of its constituent members as social actors. Moreover, because gay men share as their common frame of reference their same-sex desires, their daily struggles with homophobia and AIDS, and their exclusion from normative reproductive culture, many find appealing the scene of extrafamilial sociability and the forms of affiliation and identification that the generation concept makes available and sustains. In other words, our generation location secures for many of us forms of solidarity with others similarly embedded in a heteronormative cultural landscape. The sociohistorical dimension of the generation concept provides us, moreover, with a viable alternative that, in many ways, compensates for our exclusion from the biological-genealogical dimension of the concept.

Notwithstanding its potential applicability to analyses of gay male identity and culture, the generation concept also presents particular challenges and limitations that need addressing. According to Mannheim, there is "a tendency 'inherent' in every social location," whether it be class-based or generation-based, meaning that "the experiential, intellectual, and emotional data which are available to the members of a certain society are not uniformly 'given' to all of them" (366). In his view, "even where the [experiential, emotional, and] intellectual material is more or less uniform or at least uniformly accessible to all, the approach to the material, the way in which it is assimilated and applied, is determined in its direction by social factors" (366-67). Consider, for example, the Stonewall riots and the coming-out process — two important touchstones that are, arguably, part and parcel of the intellectual, experiential, and emotional data or material accessible to most, if not all, gay men. Yet, depending on our generation location, we view and approach that archive differently. "'Stonewall' is the emblematic event in modern lesbian and gay history," writes historian Martin Duberman in his preface to *Stonewall*, and "has become synonymous over the years with gay resistance to oppression" (xvii). Historian John D'Emilio makes a similar argument by suggesting that gay men and lesbians, in coming out en masse during the early period of the gay rights movement, participated in demonstrating the inextricable connection between the personal and the political (*Sexual* 235). The coming-out process secures not only an individual's sexual identity but also his social identity. As a ritual that marks an individual's entry into the gay social world, the coming-out experience signifies a defining moment in gay male identity formations (Herdt / Boxer 14).

But our expectations of what fulfills our entry into and sense of belonging to gay male culture have changed significantly, and, in the process, so has our repertoire of shared cultural references. Many now view differently the primacy of Stonewall and the act of coming out, and, consequently, their respective functions as a historical marker and a rite of passage. For example, Robin Bernstein and Seth Clark Silberman propose, in their introduction to the anthology *Generation Q*, that for members of Generation Q, "The closet has become a temporary convenience, a practical safety measure, a tool to use in particular circumstances, a toy to play with, rather than a constant, coercive presence. As the closet becomes less rigid, more

permeable, and less central, so too does the initial act of coming out"; "coming out," they conclude, "is no longer necessarily the primary rite of passage for queer youth" (xvi). We certainly need to recognize that some if not many gay youths find valuable the performative nature of identities. But we need also to consider that gay people claim their sexual identity not only during their teens and twenties but also *later in life*. For these countless others, the process of coming out is still a necessary and empowering rite of passage that marks and secures their entry into the gay social world. In short, it is not quite enough for members of Generation Q to note or to perform the changes in the meanings of the closet, without also recognizing that some may find the notion of identity-as-performance anathema.

Ultimately, we need to keep in mind — lest we forget — the pervasiveness of the closet as a deeply entrenched epistemology and way of life in modern Western culture (see Sedgwick). For this reason, we need to struggle to change the culture in which coming out of the closet continues to be perceived as a necessary experience for the constitution of gay male identities. Paradoxically, such a radical transformation of the meanings of the closet can only occur if we take the preliminary step of accepting, rather than dismissing out of hand, the generation concept's intimate connection to the act of coming out. For many of us, our sense of generational belonging is secured in relation not to our age, but, rather, in relation to when we came out of the closet to claim our social and sexual identities (see Escoffier 121). To the extent that generation signifies, among its four common definitions, a stage or phase of the life course, and to the extent that coming out secures our sense of social (read: generational) belonging, we need to recognize their interrelationship as one of the conditional uses of the generation concept. Doing so would allow us to critique the normative dimension of the generation concept, along with mainstream culture's expectation that coming out must remain the sine qua non of our identity constitution, and, at the same time, allow us to retain the concept's inherent value as an analytic and experiential category that makes possible gay men's self-definition and sense of social belonging.

I see the generation concept's connection to, among other things, the process of coming out as an opportunity for exploring the *commonalities* gay men share with members of Generation Q, and

vice versa. Bernstein and Silberman, however, use the concept as an occasion to differentiate themselves and their cohorts from previous gay and lesbian generations. They write in their introduction to *Generation Q*:

> As the post-Stonewall generation comes out, we often find a chasm between our experiences and perspectives and those of the lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people who came before us. We are members of the so-called Generation X ...
>
> As young lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people, however, we differ from not only our gay forebears but also our straight peers. We are not just "X" but "Q" — *Queer*, a word embraced by our generation. (xv)

To my earlier question about whether gay male and queer generations are different in kind or only by degree, Bernstein and Silberman would probably answer *in kind*. I would not begrudge them this view: I, too, recognize that there are significant differences between, on the one hand, the experiences and perspectives of the post-Stonewall generation or Generation Q and, on the other, "those of the lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people who came before [them]." At the same time, however, I suggest that the differences are not those in kind but by degree — and, to borrow their metaphor, that "the chasm" separating the generations is not as deep as they imagine it to be. In saying this, I have in mind D'Emilio's argument that "radical gay liberation [during the 1970s] transformed the meaning of 'coming out.' Before Stonewall, the phrase had signified the acknowledgment of one's sexuality to others in the gay world; after Stonewall, it meant the public affirmation of homosexual identity" (*Making* 244). Bernstein and Silberman's explanation strongly suggests a desire for the public affirmation of their absolute difference from their "straight peers," and, more problematically, from their "gay forebears" *tout court*. Put another way, I sense on their part a need to seek the public affirmation of their identity from mainstream culture, without, unfortunately, also expressing an equally important need to seek the acknowledgment of their identity from others in the gay social world.

I propose an attempt to recuperate the pre-Stonewall definition of coming out as the acknowledgment of one's identity *to others within gay male culture*. My proposal should not be interpreted as

wistful nostalgia but, rather, as a genuine strategy for gay men and members of Generation Q alike to regain a sense of our historicity. We need to consider the act of "coming out" also as an act of "going in," a felicitous redefinition of the closet I borrow from author and playwright Neil Bartlett. In his "experimental first-person narrative" (Chisholm), *Who Was That Man?: A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde*, Bartlett describes his move to London in the 1980s, and recalls his amazement at discovering that he is able to claim *his* gay identity largely because *others* before him had done so already throughout the last century. He explains his life- transforming epiphany: "Perhaps my life in this city is not so much individual and natural as collective and determined ... I find myself in ... the world of other men. I didn't so much 'come out' as 'go in,' since at the very moment at which we come out, declare our difference from the world, we immerse ourselves in ... gay society" (206). In reimagining "coming out" simultaneously as "going in," Bartlett reveals a deep understanding of the historicity of the closet. For him, coming out enables him not only to declare his "difference from the world" of heterosexuals, but also to immerse himself in — through the acknowledgment of — an already existing gay culture. Unlike Bernstein and Silberman, Bartlett views the past not as a distant memory, nor does he view its relation to the present as an unbridgeable chasm. On the contrary, he values the experiences and the perspectives of others who came before him, recognizing that his present-day gay male identity has been profoundly shaped by, and continues to be deeply embedded in, the history of homosexuality. Moreover, unlike Kantrowitz in his "Letter to the Queer Generation," Bartlett reconceptualizes history not as the past per se, nor as something to be superceded. Instead, he searches the past for models to emulate rather than to rebel against. I will have more to say about Bartlett in my conclusion, and, more specifically, about his innovative use of the generation concept in *Who Was That Man?* For the moment, however, I return to the ways in which the language of generations not only informs the shifts in consciousness about the meaning and value of the coming-out process, but also the shifts in the cultural perception of Stonewall.

Each year, we are reminded of these shifts as we witness the transformation of Stonewall into commercial spectacles at Pride celebrations. For example, during the 25th anniversary celebrations commemorating the event, in New York City in June 1994, *Out*

magazine sold T-shirts bearing the slogan "Stonewall 25: New and Improved for the 90s," a prime example of cultural amnesia that led many in attendance to join a countermarch, organized by the New York Chapter of ACT UP, as "a challenge to the rainbow-drenched official Stonewall parade" and "to protest not only the ongoing and deadly inattention to AIDS, but also, and more pointedly, the commercialization of this historical marker as a rather cynical improvement on the original" (Clarke 47-48). In a different manner, our perceptions of Stonewall have also changed because we have been encouraged to consider it as one of many defining moments, rather than as *the* sole defining moment of gay liberation. Novelist John Rechy, among others, has rightly called our attention to the fallacy of "the arbitrary demarcation of generations that emerged out of the emphasis on the Stonewall riots — before it, all repressed; after it, all liberated." There were "many other 'riots' before Stonewall" (including the Black Cat raids in San Francisco in the 1950s), Rechy explains, and the "emphasis on that one admittedly important event to the exclusion of others contributes to the sense of separation between generations" (qtd. in Modleski 325). That the critically-challenged *Out* magazine and the critically-savvy Rechy frame their separate claims about Stonewall in the language of generations — the former, implicitly; the latter, explicitly — again illustrates the complete saturation of the generation concept in contemporary gay male culture. In short, the concept remains deeply embedded within — indeed, structures — our consciousness of the gay social world. No longer an undisputed signifier, Stonewall remains a common frame of reference only because gay men no longer share a common view of it: for those at *Out* magazine, a misguided occasion to mark their disaffiliation from the past; for Rechy, a serious invitation to consider other watershed moments in the gay liberation movement. The generation concept profoundly shapes gay men's different valuations of Stonewall because it continues to represent an emblematic "queer fiction of the past" (see Bravmann 68-96). These shifts in consciousness concerning Stonewall illustrate that, depending on their generation location, gay men approach in different and competing ways the material and data that make up the gay male cultural archive.

To the extent that the Stonewall riots made available forms of historical consciousness to gay men in the 1970s and 1980s, the

human toll of the AIDS epidemic in the last two decades threatened to obliterate them with equal force. From the early 1980s to the mid 1990s, the AIDS epidemic radically changed gay men's relation to discourses of generation. In a variety of genres, from memoir and autobiography to cultural criticism and theory, many have written eloquently about the inextricable connection between the AIDS epidemic and the generation concept. For example, Paul Monette begins *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir* with the following confession: "The magic circle my generation is trying to stay within the borders of is only as real as the random past. Perhaps the young can live in the magic circle, but only if those of us who are ticking will tell our story. Otherwise it goes on being *us* and *them* forever, built like a wall higher and higher, till you no longer think to wonder if you are walling it out or in" (6). The late cultural critic Thomas Yingling also expressed his views about the disproportionate but all too real effects of HIV/AIDS on different generations of gay men, writing, in 1991: "It remains to be seen whether the numbers of younger gay men ... who have joined the battle against AIDS will continue their political work [into the future]. Certainly they, too, know people infected and dying, dead or at risk, but *as a generation* they could choose to avoid AIDS, to see it as the issue of an older generation of gay men" (294). Born only five years apart, Monette (b. 1945) and Yingling (b. 1950) would undoubtedly claim their membership to the Stonewall generation — the first to have experienced the triumphant joys of the gay rights movement in the 1970s, and also the first to have experienced the devastating losses of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. Their self-reflexive sense of historicity leads them to worry not only that the generation gap in gay male culture will widen as a direct result of the AIDS epidemic, but, even more terrifying, that HIV/AIDS, in decimating the pre-Stonewall and Stonewall generations, will render moot the idea of a generation gap. The intelligibility of the "gay generation gap" — whether in the present or in the past — ultimately depends upon the existence of more than one cohort group at any historical moment.

That AIDS has been nearly all but evacuated from mainstream and gay male public consciousness attests, unfortunately, to the uncanny prescience of Monette's and Yingling's observations: what was once termed an "epidemic of signification" (see Treichler) has since been transformed into what is being termed the "end-of-AIDS"

or "post-AIDS" discourse (see Román). The absence of historical memory concerning the AIDS epidemic is most prevalent among members of Generation Q who resist gay male identity in favor of a postgay identity, and, since the introduction of protease inhibitors as viable drug treatments for HIV/AIDS, of a post-AIDS identity. Generation Q's resistance to gay male identity in itself does not adequately explain the rise in recent years of HIV-infection and unsafe sexual practices among its constituency. Members of Generation Q offer conflicting reasons for this phenomenon. According to Bernstein and Silberman, "Generation Q is the first with no memory of sex before AIDS. We came out in the mid eighties or later, after Rock Hudson became ill and AIDS hit the mainstream media. For us, sex, love, queerness, and AIDS have been inextricably linked from the very beginning" (xvi). Others situated within the same generation location, however, reject what they see as the equation between gayness, sexual liberationism, and promiscuity: "It has finally occurred to Generation Q that [in order] to make any significant progress in our own lives (call it greedy, if you like) it's time for gay men to stop thinking with their dicks (excuse the expression) and start thinking about the future. The buzzword, so to speak, of Generation Q has been POST GAY" (qtd. in Castiglia 152). These different views serve as useful reminders that members of similar generation locations are not — nor should we expect them to be — homogenous. More importantly, these views strongly suggest that members of Generation Q have a uniquely paradoxical relationship to the AIDS epidemic. It is certainly true that, in the last two decades, younger gay men's recognition and acceptance of their same-sex desires have been shaped by the fear of sexual risk of HIV. But it is equally true that since protease inhibitors began extending lives, a generation of younger gay men have come of age with the misguided perception of the AIDS epidemic as a chronic, manageable problem, rather than as an enduring health and social crisis that demands our unwavering attention. Generation Q's consciousness of the AIDS epidemic remains radically different from that of previous generations because devastating loss and mourning have not directly and intimately shaped its members' awareness of HIV/AIDS.

The AIDS epidemic has prevented gay men from creating and sustaining a viable intergenerational culture. While the last two

decades have certainly heightened our awareness of the need to preserve a sense of collective memory and identity, they have also heightened our awareness of the difficulties of doing so. In *The Trouble with Normal*, Michael Warner explains the problem of queer generations in the following way:

> One reason why we have not learned more from [the history of AIDS and AIDS activism] is that queers do not have the institutions for common memory and generational transmission around which straight culture is built. Every new wave of queer youth picks up something from its predecessors but also invents itself from scratch. Many are convinced that they have nothing to learn from the old dykes and clones and trolls, and no institutions — neither households nor schools nor churches nor political groups — ensure that this will happen. And since the most painfully instructed generation has been decimated by death, the queer culture of the present faces more than the usual shortfall in memory. Now younger queers are told all too often that a principled defense of nonnormative sex is just a relic of bygone "liberationism." This story is given out in bland confidence, since so many of the people who would have contradicted it have died. (51-52)

That gay male culture struggles to create and sustain viable forms of generational consciousness further complicates the transmission of "sexual lifeways," which Andrew Hostetler and Gilbert Herdt define as "the culturally specific erotic ideas and emotions, sexual/gender categories and roles, and theories of being and becoming a full social person that together constitute life-course development within a particular *sexual culture*" (264). For these reasons, gay men need to commit themselves to struggles over patterns of cultural continuity precisely because of their exclusion from normative reproductive culture.

VI

I offer two final observations about the challenges we face as we continue to examine gay male generation trouble, as well as a strategy for addressing those challenges via a reading of Neil Bartlett's innovative use of the generation concept in *Who Was That Man?* First, in my view, Generation Q — both as a concept and as a social

constituency — embodies some of the contradictions and challenges of what I have been describing as generation trouble. The preferred name of Generation Q as a constituency — or its obverse, the queer generation — joins together two terms that have opposing functions: the term *generation* suggests a social body with a distinct identity that, in many respects, contradicts the nonidentitarian principles that many find valuable in the term *queer*. That members of Generation Q fail to see this as a problem — one, I should add, that invites rather than hinders serious reflection — is symptomatic of their seeming lack of knowledge that *generation* and *queer* are terms whose respective histories predate the emergence of Generation Q as a social constituency. Arguably, Generation Q emerged and gained currency around the same time that the term "queer" appeared in the academy as a theoretical category that effectively opposed not only heterosexuality but also, more broadly, various "regimes of the normal" (Warner, *Fear* xxvi). Indeed, critics and theorists who have begun to include the generation concept in their analyses of gay male identity and culture often do so within the framework of the disciplinary transition from gay studies to queer theory (Escoffier 121-24). I have found their analyses helpful as a starting point, though, as I have shown throughout this article, gay male generation trouble far exceeds the boundaries of the academy. In short, there exists a complex relationship between, on the one hand, self-reflexive critiques of heteronormativity by queer theorists and by activists in groups such as ACT UP, Queer Nation, and Sex Panic!, and, on the other, the unselfconscious co-optation of the term "queer" in gay popular culture.

This relationship, moreover, demonstrates that generational contracts function differently in gay male culture than in other sociocultural contexts. In saying this, I have in mind generation theorist José Ortega y Gasset's differentiation between the two main kinds of generational periods in history. According to Ortega, "ages of accumulation" signify periods of continuity, whereby the younger generation accepts its inheritance from previous generations; conversely, "ages of elimination and dispute" signify periods of rupture, whereby the younger generation rejects its inheritance (17-18). Gay male generation trouble presents a scenario that does not quite fit Ortega's schematization. Unarguably, particular social and historical events have certainly contributed to the production of gay

male generation trouble, just as much as they have to the creation of other forms of generational consciousness in other sociocultural contexts. But gay men have had to negotiate differently their acceptance and/or rejection of their inheritance from previous generations, not only because of their exclusion from normative reproductive culture but also because of their experience of the AIDS epidemic. The very existence of Generation Q — and, specifically, its members' conjoining of two terms that have opposing functions — suggests that processes of accumulation and elimination are not so easily distinguishable in gay male culture, precisely because it lacks the institutions of common memory necessary for securing and sustaining its sense of cultural heritage across generations.

My reflections on gay male generation trouble return me to Mannheim's suggestion that "the unity of generations is constituted essentially by a similarity of a number of individuals within a social whole" (365). Specifically, I want to suggest that the "location relationships" between gay men underscore not only the different ways that many of us approach, assimilate, or apply the material or data available to us, whether within or outside the context of gay male culture, but they also show that the generation concept itself figures prominently as part of that very archive of materials and data. Put another way, and this is my second concluding point, the generation concept works not only on a discursive level but on a metadiscursive level as well. In the former sense, the generation concept shows that age or generational differences do shape gay men's relation to their cultural traditions and history. In the latter sense, gay men of different age groups or generational constituencies *use* the generation concept for radically different purposes. They explicitly make mention of the generation concept — in all its guises — in order to make those very differences visible to begin with. Although it might be argued that this is part and parcel of the generation concept — what generational constituency does not use the concept for various purposes? — I maintain that gay men's uses of the concept demonstrate far more complex operations than other generational constituencies. Whereas generations are defined, in nongay contexts, solely by specific historical circumstances, in gay male culture, the term "generation" must itself appear in the formulation. In short, "generation" appears as a term that periodizes gay male history even as it secures gay men's sense of identity and

social belonging based on that process of periodization. If we are truly interested in understanding how the problem of generations "can only be solved on the basis of a strict and careful analysis of all its component elements" (Mannheim 395), then we need to be vigilant in evaluating the ways in which Stonewall, the AIDS epidemic, and Generation Q trouble our understanding of gay male identity formations and social belonging. In my view, Stonewall, the AIDS epidemic, and Generation Q are connected less because they are foundational touchstones of gay history in the last several decades, but more so because, in each case, the generation concept modified and helped to shore up our interpretations of those very touchstones.

I end with a final strategy for future theoretical elaborations of gay male generation trouble. In a recent article entitled "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" Judith Butler proposes a "double-edged" mode of critical thinking about gay kinship and gay marriage that is equally relevant for addressing the concerns I have established in this article. According to Butler, we need to possess an understanding of the terms that structure debates relating to gay sexual life; and, at the same time, we need also to refuse to allow those very same terms to circumscribe the parameters or to determine the outcome of those debates. "If we engage the terms that these debates supply," she argues, "then we ratify the frame at the moment in which we take our stand. And this signals a certain paralysis in the face of exercising power to change the terms by which such topics are rendered thinkable" ("Is Kinship" 40). The further elaboration of gay male generation trouble requires a similar strategy of critical thinking. As I have shown, I am anxious about the relative ease and haste with which members of Generation Q seek to differentiate themselves from previous gay generations. And I am equally anxious about the misguided perception, such as those proposed by *Out* magazine in its October 2001 issue, that the "gay generation gap" is a foregone conclusion. Both of these tendencies fail to engage in a Butlerian mode of "double-edged" critical thinking. As we continue to engage in debates about the possibility of a "gay generation gap," and about whether gay male and queer generations are different in kind or only by degree, we need to be especially cautious not to allow the generation concept itself to become, in the end, the sole determining measure of our identity formations.

Ultimately, I am hopeful that the definitional and usage problems of the generation concept will motivate us in pursuing, rather than deter us from investigating, gay male generation trouble. I conclude my reflections with yet another strategy drawn from Neil Bartlett's *Who Was That Man?* In his attempt to examine Oscar Wilde's pivotal role in the history of homosexuality in London, Bartlett explicitly uses the generation concept in an innovative — and conditional — fashion: that is, he strategically collapses the distinction between the biological-genealogical and the sociohistorical dimensions of the generation concept to enrich his understanding of the history of homosexuality — and, also, of his social membership within that history. He explains his interpretation of history and his approach to the generation concept in the following way: "I don't dwell unnecessarily on the contradictions of Oscar's social position, or on the peculiarities of my choice of him as father and guide to the city [of London] ... I read [Wilde and about Wilde] in order to discover my solidarity with my gay peers" (35). For Bartlett, Wilde remains important precisely because he is at once father figure and peer, ancestor and cohort. Exploring Wilde's life enables Bartlett to glimpse into the mirror of the past; the view reflected back leads to his recognition that the past continues to shape, in both indelible and profound measure, his own life and those of his peers and contemporaries. Rather than pose the query "Is There a Gay Generation Gap?" we should instead take Bartlett's cue and step back to consider a more pressing query — one that allows us to reflect not only upon the present-day relationship between gay male and queer generations, but also upon *their* connections to *past generations*. In order for us to understand who we are, we need also wonder: Who were those men?

I thank John Plews (and the journal's referees), Martin Ponce, and Raymond Ricketts for their thoughtful suggestions and comments to earlier drafts of this article. For financial support, I acknowledge a Doctoral Fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and a Qualls Dissertation Fellowship from Dr. Caroline Huber and the Rutgers University Foundation.

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Pauline Johnson's Sapphic Wampum

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We dance round in a ring and suppose,
But the Secret sits in the middle and knows.
— Robert Frost (153)

E. Pauline Johnson (1861-1913), Canada's famous poet born of a Mohawk father and a Quaker mother, has been called "The Boadicea" of New England and "The Sappho" of the New World[1] because she donned costumes of buckskin, then Victorian lace, and delivered to audiences in Canada, the U.S.A., and Great Britain strange and pagan tales of Indian glory followed by lyrics of love lost and regained. Johnson's first biographer Annie Foster has also compared her to British poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Although Foster claims Johnson and Browning share a

[1] *The Pall Mall Gazette* was the first to dub Pauline Johnson an "Indian Boadicea" in 1906 (qtd. in McRaye 102); in 1913 Thompson Seton indirectly compared the poet to Boadicea (Johnson, *Shagganappi*, Introduction, n.p.) and in 1931 biographer Annie Foster wrote that Johnson "resembles Sappho more than any other poet" (97). Boadicea, queen of the Celtic Iceni tribe in the east of Britain, is known to have led a revolt against the Romans, but was finally defeated in A.D. 61 and took her own life. Sappho, a Greek lyric poet born in Lesbos about the middle of the 7th century B.C., wrote tender, impassioned love poems, mostly to women.

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 4-5 (2002-2003) © CLGSA / SCELG

focus on natural imagery, she implies that the Mohawk Princess's verse is more "primitive" and "racial" (97-98). These associations with Boadicea (the "savage"-warrior) and with Sappho and Browning (the gentlewomen-love poets) signal the competing personae that Pauline Johnson brings to her work.

As if to confirm her double nature, early on in her career Johnson began using an inherited nom de plume — Tekahionwake — an Indian word she translated as "two wampums" (Duncan n.p). Wampum, a bead manufactured from shells, possessed spiritual power: "strung or woven into collars and belts, it provided mnemonic devices that recorded transactions such as alliances" (Dickason 78). Johnson's explication of the Indian word — "As wampum to the Redman, so to the Poet are his songs" (*White Wampum,* Dedication) — further connects these notions of wampum as narrative, memory, confederacy/espousal, and adds another dimension of performance too, through the word "songs." Further, Johnson's publicity stills play up aspects of her persona as performance poet and exotic Indian (see the two photographs on the cover of Johnston's *Buckskin & Broadcloth*), and the recent study of her life and work by Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson thoroughly examines this warrior / gentlewoman duality to argue that Johnson was "double-voiced" and "double-garbed" (69-70). Yet critics have not analyzed the ways in which the Mohawk Princess's lyrics, recitals, and social appearances play upon the Sappho role, or how the life may be considered Sapphic.

While there are many missing pieces to the Johnson biography, there is much speculation where gaps appear in her writing and life. This essay rereads Johnson and intervenes in biographical criticism by arguing that assumptions of her heterosexuality have prevented previous critics from understanding the extent to which her life story encompasses a lifelong love for women. In performing this critique, I employ the methodology of the Lesbian History Group (LHG) that challenges biographers to think of all women as in some sense lesbian, "within a lesbian continuum" (13). According to the LHG, reclaiming lesbians in history is imperative because it casts light not only on the lives of people in a minority but also on the values and beliefs of those who wish to keep lesbians a minority. Every social group needs access to its own history, the LHG argues, and knowledge of the past provides cultural roots and a heritage from

which to learn. Consequently, it is important to stop rewriting lesbian history into more "acceptable scripts" that expunge lesbianism and construct lesbians as heterosexual (2). In the following, I examine the evidence that biographers have collected about Pauline Johnson's love life and I trace the textual history of her hidden sexuality.

Biographer Annie Foster may have evoked Sappho as the sole example of a classical woman poet who could legitimate women as serious poets, yet one of the admired features of Sappho's work is that often both subject and object of shared passion are women. The identification of, and with, Sappho as a lesbian figure — a centuries-old association — was made popular during the Victorian era by British author Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909). As Swinburne's Dedication to *Poems and Ballads: First Series* shows, Sappho, the "supreme head of song," is his presiding muse. Published in 1866, this collection of lyrics glorified bisexuality and lesbianism, making them into gestures of social and cultural rebellion. According to Swinburne biographer Rikky Rooksby, the book scandalized Victorian critical moral opinion and was withdrawn from circulation by its publisher, Moxon (Rooksby 691). Nonetheless, the cultural impact of *Poems and Ballads* was "immense ... it made [Swinburne] an international figurehead for sexual, religious and political radicalism" (135). In a recent biography of Pauline Johnson, Charlotte Gray claims that Johnson "declared herself a devotee" of Swinburne, and that she always traveled with a copy of his verse (79, 302). Additionally, when Johnson's first book of poetry *The White Wampum* (1895) was reviewed in the *Manchester Guardian*, an anonymous critic praised the "Swinburnian style" of certain pieces, especially "The Idlers" and "Re-Voyage" (qtd. in Strong-Boag/Gerson 145). Of the two, "Re-Voyage" borrows part of its form from Swinburne's "Sapphics," which is, in turn, modeled on the classical Sapphic stanza's celebrated hendecasyllable line.

An awareness of the sapphic nature of Johnson's *The White Wampum* might have been prompted, as well, by her choice of publisher — John Lane. Many of the books published by Lane during the 1890s were by 'New Women' writers who focused on the woman as sexual object. Included in this list were novels that profiled masculine, strong-minded female characters who sometimes cross-dressed, such as George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893), Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), Iota's *The Yellow Aster* (1893), and

Emma Brooke's *The Superfluous Woman* (1894). These so-called "yellow lady writers" were criticized in *Blackwood's Magazine* as being "morbid," "disgusting," even "degenerate" (Stutfield 833-34). The press also received negative attention because Oscar Wilde, the "father of the whole flock," was one of Lane's authors, Aubrey Beardsley designed many of Lane's covers, and Richard Le Gallienne was one of Lane's readers (840). When Pauline Johnson visited England in 1894 (the year Wilde was sentenced), she met Beardsley, and Le Gallienne read her manuscript and helped select the poems to be included in *The White Wampum* (McRaye 42, 51).

Swinburne's erotic verse and Lane's 'New Women' publications aside, the nineteenth-century literary practice of sapphism was mostly a coded affair. It is known that upper-class British 'spinster' Anne Lister invented a cipher to chronicle her passionate love affairs with other women between 1817-24. Lister's other codes included a nickname — 'Fred' or 'Freddy' — and a masculine appearance and manner (Lister 105, 64). Queer theorist Paula Bennett argues that other famous American writers such as Emily Dickinson, Lydia Sigourney, Amy Lowell, and Harriet Spofford used a semiprivate code of sexual 'flower' imagery to convey ideas of homoerotic lust and desire (250). 'Canoes' may have been another means by which nineteenth-century women expressed passion and same-sex desire. Louisa May Alcott's 1868 article "Happy Women" argues for independent spinsters being free spirits "paddling their own canoes" (n.p). And the Canadian poet Isabella Valancy Crawford's "Lily Bed" and "Malcolm's Katie" (1884) involved suggestive allusions to female erotic arousal within the context of Indian legends that included canoes.

On the other hand, the social and cultural practice of lesbianism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was defined through dress, profession, and marital status (see Donoghue; Everard).The assumption of male clothes was a means through which women dramatized their selves and desires. The actress Charlotte Charke (1713-1760) who had an extensive stage career particularly in male roles, dressed in men's clothes off the stage, admitted that women were attracted to her, and lived with another actress (Morgan 19). The French painter Rosa Bonheur (1822-99) who spent her adult life wearing male attire and living with Nathalie Micas, was amused by people who wondered whether she was a spinster or bachelor.

Other cross-dressing nineteenth-century bohemian women include George Sand (1804-1876), who was for a brief period madly in love with the actress Marie Dorval, and the upper-class "Ladies of Llangollen" — Eleanor Butler (1739-1829) and Sarah Ponsonby (1755-1831) — who ran away from threats of marriage and the convent to live with each other in remote north Wales. Lady Eleanor was described as the more 'mannish.' And the enormously popular British author Adelaide Procter (1825-1864), who loved another woman, wrote a poem that openly expressed her passion ("To M.M.H."), then she explicitly dedicated her *Legends and Lyrics* (1858) to that same lover, the theatrical cross-dresser Matilda M. Hays (Faderman 223-25; Gregory 24-25; Vicinus 432, 440-41).

In all probability, Pauline Johnson knew about cross-dressing and lesbian women, since among the collection of her books bequeathed to friends was *The Complete Works of Adelaide Procter* (1905). And evidence shows that similar preoccupations with dress, lifestyle, relationships, and interests shaped Pauline Johnson's life. Eva Johnson describes how her sister smoked Cuban cigars and dressed in her brother's clothes (qtd. in Johnston 58-59). Further, Foster's 1931 biography states that Pauline Johnson had a few male nicknames: "Paul" was her family moniker and the pet name used by her teenaged friend Jean Morton (29), and later in life the poet abbreviated her own surname to call herself "John" or "Johnlums." Even more fascinating, an acquaintance in Johnson's Vancouver group seems to have tapped into a coded lesbian tradition when she chose to go by "Tommy." "Tommy" is a slang word for a woman who has sex with other women: its usage dates back to 1773, though this connotation has never been recorded in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Donoghue 5). Other words used by Johnson that stand for a complex of concerns include "fellowship" and "extreme womanhood" (from a letter to a former Brantford neighbor, qtd. in Johnston 203). To locate the codes by which she named the love that so famously could not speak its name is to see how Pauline Johnson both produced and disguised her homosexuality.

The Love Life Reconstructed

Over the last seventy years, biographers have thoroughly examined the scanty supply of evidence about Pauline Johnson's love relationships. Partially, Johnson's sister Eva — who was stamped

with a more conventional design — is to blame for the dearth of information. In order to 'protect' the poet's reputation after death, Eva Johnson burned the personal letters and diaries, and ordered Johnson's business partner J. Walter McRaye to do the same.[2] The evidence shows that Johnson resisted marriage, despite at least eight proposals from men (Johnston 70). We know that as a teenager, she embroidered leather tobacco pouches for five young suitors who were all competing for her attention (Foster 31). She chose none. She had professional relationships with men, first with the boyish British entertainer Owen Alexander Smily, who, as one biographer speculates, was probably homosexual (Keller 68),[3] and then with McRaye (nicknamed "The Dink" by Johnson) who ended up marrying her childhood friend Lucy Webling. The poet was engaged to Charles Drayton, whom she met in the summer of 1877 (Martin D3), but they did not marry. While the facts about her life before and after this severed relationship are confused, the date of her engagement to Drayton (25 Jan. 1898) came after Johnson's final breakup with Smily (Dec. 1897) and just days before her mother died (Feb. 1898). It is known that immediately after her mother's funeral Johnson went to Ottawa and did not return to the entertainment circuit with a one-woman variety show until the Fall of 1898. Then sometime between Christmas 1899 and 9 January 1900 her engagement to Drayton dissolved (Johnston 150-51). A letter to Regina-based journalist Kate Simpson-Hayes on 3 February 1899 — during the confused time when the poet was supposed to be engaged — may offer clues. In the note Johnson rejects her friend's offer of accommodation but uses a very sexual language to do so:

> "Now you know you are alluring, your invitation is like — sin, tempting, insinuating, insistent, and I, in virtuous chase after dollars, stoically turn my back on it, prayerfully resist

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[2] Three decades after Pauline Johnson's death, McRaye was still trying to 'save' the poet's reputation. In 1947, would-be biographer Dr. Gilbert Monture attempted to glean some undisclosed facts about Johnson but McRaye, who declined to gossip, replied: "'I know what you are after, Doctor, but you will never hear any word pass my lips that would in anyway affect the reputation of our dear and gracious Pauline'" (Van Steen 42).

[3] The Smily-Johnson team lasted a total of five years, from November 1892 until April 1894, when Johnson left Smily to go to England, and then from July 1894 until December 1897.

> it and with bated breath, locked teeth and averted eyes — dash past, resisting the fascination of it and thus gaining a crown of glory — composed of many bank notes and jingling coin of the realm." (Qtd. in Strong-Boag/Gerson 96)

This note, and a couple of extraordinary short confessional poems about parting from a lover (analyzed below) suggest at least two reasons why Pauline Johnson refused to occupy the wifely niche that society had prepared for her: she was interested in women and in making money. For the most part, biographers cite the difference in age (11 years), her "immoral" profession, or her mixed race as reasons for the failed engagement (Gray 247; Keller 133-35; Strong-Boag/Gerson 68, 104). In any case, her chosen path of poet / actress was an unconventional career that appears to have caused "the first rift" between Johnson and her family (Keller 62).

Biographer Betty Keller also speculates that Johnson had an illicit affair during the summer of 1900 with her manager Charles Wurz, a married man (160). But during the time she may have known Wurz, Johnson was in Halifax suffering from rheumatic fever brought on by a streptococcus infection (Keller 154-55). There is no evidence to prove that Johnson slept with Wurz, or with any other man. To add to the mystery, there is the poet's dying request to be cremated with a small gold shield-shaped locket containing the photograph of "a young boy" ("Were Her Wishes Observed?" 13). Although no one knows the identity of that person — perhaps the picture in the locket was of a "foster" child,[4] or of the poet herself being "boyish," or of a female friend playing the tom? — Keller suggests he was a male lover (267-68) and Gray identifies him as Michael Mackenzie or Archie Kains[5] (99, 132).

Why this need to pair her up in a heterosexual union? Johnson herself has written in letters addressed to friends Jean Morton and

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[4] McRaye tells a story about Johnson assisting a woman and her three small children on a train. One of the babies was a foster child and, over the years, the poet kept track of that little girl — whom the parents named Pauline — and sent her a locket, clothes, and money (Keller 192-93).

[5] Gray admits that the friendship between Johnson and Michael Mackenzie "never blossomed into anything romantic" but she still considers Mackenzie responsible for leaving "a permanent scar on the poet's heart" (100, 102). Similarly, Gray writes that Johnson's relationship with Archie Kains was "not a successful romance, but rather a comfortable companionship" (135).

Floretta Maracle that her relationships with women were the center of her life (Strong-Boag/Gerson 68; 251n27). Pauline Johnson adored women: beginning with Morton of Brantford, her "bonny girl" of the 1870s, and ending with Eileen Maguire of Vancouver, known inheritor of two of the poet's rings and referred to as "my beloved" in her will of 1913. As the LHG argues, a woman who "puts on record that she lived with or loved another woman, can be assigned a lesbian identity with rather more validity than many of the heterosexual ones that biographers have scattered about" (15). Over her lifetime, she may have had many alliances of the heart. Pictures of Johnson from her early and later years frequently show her flanked by a woman identified as Raby Wye (see the two photographs accompanying this essay). Like Sappho's circle of girls, who came not only from Lesbos but from all parts of Greece, those in Johnson's group trekked across the nation to be with her. Miss Kate McKeand, a Brantford friend, was frequently a guest at Dr. Lighthall's residence in Montreal when Johnson was there.[6] The two Webling sisters, Lucy and Rosalind, both moved from Brantford to Vancouver to be closer to their friend.[7] Bertha Jean Thompson, an acquaintance from a camping holiday in Ontario, also relocated to Vancouver and became one of the poet's 'protégées'; and Brantford-born Miss Nellie Van Fleet traveled from the Fraser River farm she shared with Miss Ethel Hanwell to bring an ill Pauline Johnson a pint of freshly picked strawberries (Foster 134). There was the so-called Friendship Group, a support-team for the dying poet, including Miss Isabel "Alexandra" McLean and her friend Miss A. M. Ross, who took a room in the same house in order to care for the poet (Foster 136). Then there were all the friends who were bequeathed personal items such as a toothbrush handle (Isabel Ecclestone MacKay), a comb (Nellie McClung), silver waist buttons (Bertha Browning), and two rings (Eileen Maguire) ("Were Her Wishes Observed?" 14). That Johnson bequeathed personal items to MacKay and McClung is not necessarily indicative of anything more

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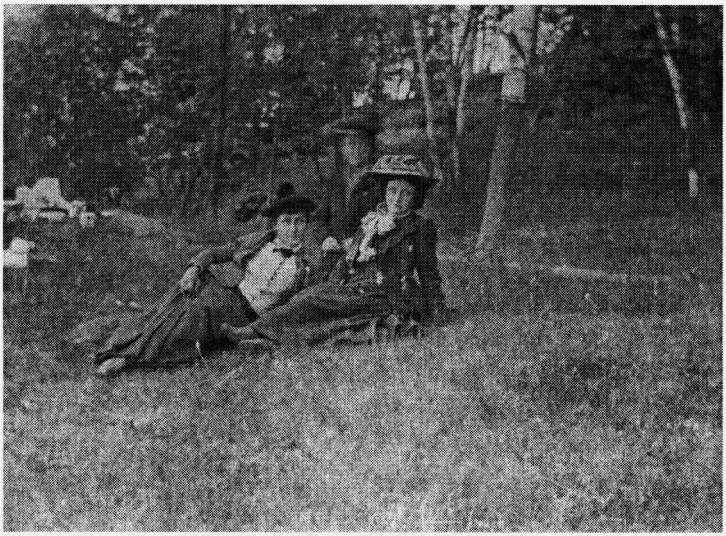
[6] Not much is known about McKeand, except that she dressed a doll in imitation of the poet for Lighthall's daughter (Foster 133).

[7] The Webling girls emigrated from England to Brantford in the 1890s. Lucy Webling formed part of Pauline Johnson's canoeing group that went to Camp Knock-About in Muskoka. At one of these camp-outs Johnson honored her friend with a poem. Lucy Webling also went on tour with Johnson and her circuit partner McRaye. In 1909 Lucy Webling and McRaye married (Foster 67).

than her regard for them as sister authors. Other offerings to McRaye, Dr. T. R. B. Nelles, her brother Allen Johnson, Bert Cope, and Frank Cope suggest her regard for them as friends. But the fact that she bequeathed *a pair of rings* to her "beloved" Eileen Maguire implies a particular intimacy. In reappraising Pauline Johnson's life and loves we need to address her most important relationships with women.

Previous biographers of Pauline Johnson practice a form of erasure by arguing for the poet's unions with her female friends as 'conventional' homosocial relations. Strong-Boag and Gerson suggest that the poet's passionate feelings for her girlfriends were 'normal' during the Victorian age, when "women commonly turned to one another for affection and support; the advent of husbands and children need not break those close ties" (64). Keller describes Johnson's early love poetry as "typical of the highly sentimental verses that girls of this period presented to one another" (36). Gray speaks of one of these lyrics as "a throbbing testament to friendship" (78). Basically, the biographers assume that Johnson and her female



This undated photograph of Pauline Johnson (reclining, left) relaxing with Raby Wye (reclining, right) and an unidentified person had been glued to the inside cover of her "canoeing" scrapbook. (The William Ready Division of Archives & Research Collections, McMaster University Library, Hamilton, Canada.)

friends were all heterosexual and that any passions between them were platonic. While it was common for girls of this era to be emotionally and even physically close, Johnson's relationships with her female friends are more than just 'schoolgirl crushes' as they continued long after she had left school. Because she forged intense relationships with women throughout her adult life, and because she did not turn her affections toward a husband or children, it seems that a radical change of sexuality did not occur after her formative years, but rather the opposite happened: her desire remained constant.

While the poet's commitment to women seems to have been consistent, the Mohawk Princess's understanding of how to present, and perform, her femininity went through a radical change early on in her career. She began to manipulate her social guise in 1892 when she fashioned an "Indian" dress. A letter from Johnson to her editor W. D. Lighthall makes it clear how the design of the garment is a construction of both race and gender:

This photograph of Pauline Johnson (seated, center) flanked by Mrs. Carter, J. Walter McRaye's cousin (left) and Raby Wye (right) was taken during a visit to Boulder, Colorado, in 1907. Johnson and McRaye were performing in the area, with the Chautauqua entertainment circuit. (The William Ready Division of Archives & Research Collections, McMaster University Library, Hamilton, Canada.)

> This season I am going to make a feature of costuming for recitals — always an interesting topic with ladies, but I am beset with difficulties on all hands. For my Indian poems I am trying to get an Indian dress to recite in, and it is the most difficult thing in the world. Now I know *you know* what is feminine, so you can tell me if the 'Indian stores' in Montreal are *real* Indian stores, or is their stuff manufactured? ... I want one that is made up of *feminine* work. (Qtd. in Strong-Boag/Gerson 110)

The asymmetrical buckskin costume she wears in her publicity still (see the cover of Johnston's *Buckskin & Broadcloth*) is one-sleeved, fringed and embellished with wampum beads, a tomahawk, and a bear-claw necklace. But what is most significant about the garb is the self-consciousness behind its construction, especially Johnson's emphasis on how she needs to look "feminine." The sexual dimension of her life could have influenced this choice. Under the prevalent psychiatric and medical discourses in the West during the 1880s and 1890s, especially the writings of German sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, sapphism and 'savageness' were both considered "degenerate," even "perverse" (see Terry 46), yet the appearance of civility, high social standing, and 'normalcy' that came with looking ladylike might circumvent these prejudices against Nativeness and lesbianism. In reassessing Pauline Johnson, we need to draw out other self-conscious constructions to see how her sexuality influenced her writings. I turn now to a formal poetical analysis that compares selections of her work to nineteenth-century sapphic verse and in the process, I question past biographical assertions to motivate new ways of reading Pauline Johnson.

The Poems Reconsidered

Pauline Johnson's friend Jean Morton was the inspiration for her first love poems. "My Little Jean," an eight-stanza verse about the predominant nineteenth-century idea that true love embodies a purity of spirit, appeared in Morton's high school album (Johnson attended the Brantford Collegiate between 1876-1877) and was later published in *Gems of Poetry* (1883). In the following excerpt, stylistic effects in stanza six include a variation of consonance ("life-love-love") and a dash, calling attention to the words "love" and "untrue," thereby stressing the poem's message that if the lovers sublimate and purify

their affections, their passion will remain free of physical 'manly' aspects, and their feelings for each other will stay 'true.'

> Your friendship has sufficed, and held its own
> Unsullied still,
> What manly voice upon my heart has grown,
> What stronger hand can soothe like yours alone
> My headstrong will?
>
> Life offers me no love but love for you,
> My woman's thought
> Was never given to test a faith untrue—
> Nor drink of passion's spirits drugged with rue,
> Too dearly bought.[8]

The speaker goes on to confess in the opening of the next stanza, "They say sometimes my wayward heart must rise, / To love so strong." This line finds an echo in Algernon Charles Swinburne's "Anactoria," a verse that was published in the controversial *Poems and Ballads* (1866): "Why wilt thou follow lesser lovers? are thine / Too weak to bear these hands and lips of mine?" (I: 57). Also written in iambic pentameter, Swinburne's address of Sappho to her female lover Anactoria uses the idea of lesbian desire as a metaphor for longings that cannot be satisfied. The emphasis in "Anactoria" on Sappho's broken heart, insatiable soul, and yearning song is also a feature of Johnson's "My Little Jean." In lines 3-5 of stanza seven Johnson writes about the friendship that "will grow cold when other ties / Enslave my heart" and concludes with the sentiment: "in my soul there lies / An unknown song." This idea that another "tie" will "enslave [her] heart" suggests that Johnson sees the limits to her

[8] "My Little Jean" is reported to be Johnson's first published work, but it is not included in her *Flint and Feather* (1912). Although *Flint and Feather* is subtitled *The Complete Poems*, it was hastily put together by a dying Johnson and other members of her 'Friendship Group,' and many early pieces do not appear in it. Strong-Boag and Gerson claim that their search of *Gems of Poetry* does not yield evidence of "My Little Jean" (277n2). Even so, three different versions of "My Little Jean" exist (Johnston 61; Strong-Boag/Gerson 63; Van Steen 129). The poem quoted is reproduced from Johnston's *Buckskin & Broadcloth*.

relationship with Jean and senses she will make a 'soul'-connection elsewhere.

Jean Morton's high school album also contains "The Fourth Act," and it too was written during Johnson's high school years.[9] The fourth act is often the last act; Johnson uses the opening lines to heighten the drama of actions being terminated. Because she has positioned an ending at the beginning, the poem starts off by reversing meaning. The first stanza employs pathetic fallacy that functions to connect the speaker's sorrow to a mood in nature: the light is waning, the air is stifled, dead; even the pine trees are mourning, "sobbing a weird unrest / In saddened strains" (rpt. in Van Steen 149). Another significant poetic device in the last couplet of this stanza creates a crosswise arrangement, or chiasmus, in the positioning of the words "breezes" and "die / death": "Breezes that die in a stifled breath: / O happy breezes, embraced by death" (rpt. in Van Steen 149). The chiasmus inverts the sentiment to make death happy, thereby creating a departure from the standard use of language. In the next stanza too, there is a crossover in a sequence of ideas that are reinforced, then reversed. Johnson sets up a parallel when she writes about trees reaching up, a speaker being lifted up, then she creates the reversal when that person asks to be set free: "Fir trees reaching toward the sky / In giant form / Lift me up into your arms, that I / May brave the storm. / O darling, unclasp your fair, warm hand; / 'Tis better I should misunderstand" (rpt. in Van Steen 149). Conflicts result from this 'crossing.' The speaker wants both to be held and then released, and to face the event yet also misunderstand. And the way Johnson's particular textual codes have changed — the 'soothing hands' (in "My Little Jean") have now become 'clasping hands' (in "The Fourth Act") — suggests another divergence, from physical comfort and adoration to grasping.

The poet offers a resolution to the dilemmas in the last stanza (the final act) of her verse. It comes in the last lines, when she establishes authority for her speaker by inserting an initial caesura. The strong punctuation after the word "Goodbye" puts a full stop to the feelings of the misunderstood lover:

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[9] Strong-Boag and Gerson date this poem as 1876 (234).

Turn in pity those tender eyes
Away from me.
The burning sorrow that in them lies
Is misery.
O, gentlest pleader my life has known,
Goodbye. The night and I are alone. (Rpt. in Van Steen 149)

Ten years later, Johnson revised "The Fourth Act," lengthened it, renamed it ("The Firs"), and published it in the journal *The Week* (1886).The revision contains a significant word change: "'Tis better I should *misunderstand*" becomes the cryptic "'Tis better I should *understand*" (rpt. in Foster 30; my emphasis). Furthermore, another first draft of a different poem dating from this early period shows that Johnson was revising her work in order to disguise her voice and her desire. In "Misguided" (n.d.), a poem originally composed for Jean Morton, Johnson wrote, "How frail is the craft I am steering." In "Temptation," the revision of "Misguided" that was published in the Canadian magazine *Saturday Night* in 1889, the entire tenor of the poem is changed by the replacement of the first person "I" with the third person pronoun "he." The final version reads, "How frail is the craft he is steering" (qtd. in Waldie 69). The same-sex eroticism may have been erased from the work because Morton had begun dating Douglas Reville.[10]

In the next set of poems that relate Johnson's feelings for another woman, Floretta Maracle,[11] the poet expresses her love by writing of concealment. The verse addressed to Maracle was first published as "Iris to Floretta" in the June 1885 issue of *Gems of Poetry*. While it was later renamed "To Florette Maracle," the original title, and the content of the poem, brings Johnson's work in line with that of other nineteenth-century poets who make suggestive allusions to female erotic arousal through the symbolism of flowers.

Johnson's lyric, divided into six three-line stanzas, is constructed in a highly regular pattern of iambic tetrameter. The first stanza's

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[10] When Morton and Reville married in 1893, Johnson curiously presented her "bonny friend" with a foot high white marble statuette of a Greek slave girl (Foster 51).

[11] The name Floretta is also written as Florence, Florette, and Florrie. Floretta Katherine Maracle, the youngest of six sisters, taught school in Oshweken on the Grand River Reservation until approximately 1888 when she moved to Ottawa to work with the Indian Department (Johnston 48).

slightly distorted rhyme — "among / song / long" — is the only place where the author forces sound: "They both live side by side, among / The wooded banks of endless song / Where wild birds carol all day long" (rpt. in Van Steen 130). Elsewhere, the endings are all true rhymes: "The iris grows beneath the ledge / Of bank, all overgrown with sedge / That creeps along the river's edge" (rpt. in Van Steen 130). Throughout, Iris speaks to Floretta in a language that is the same as the late-nineteenth-century rhetoric of romantic love. Both women are described as "strong," "pure," and "true," and "They both live where they daily meet / Temptations, through their lives so sweet, / An undercurrent 'round their feet" (rpt. in Van Steen 130). The alliance between technique and theme seems especially poignant here, as enjambment at the end of the first line runs the words "meet / Temptations" together to push at the artificial and conventional edge and stride across the verse-line. The subversive contours of temptation, and the dreamlike undercurrents of desire appear more and more in the next series of love poems.

During this mid-1880s period, Johnson stopped dedicating her verse to women and no longer indicated the gender of the speaker or the beloved. It is these undedicated, gender-neutral poems that have been collected in the complete works. Sappho also expunged the addressee from the verse, making it difficult to prove that all of her poems are declarations of woman-to-woman love. In one lyric, Sappho writes about "ungovernable passions of all sorts" (qtd. in Donoghue 248), while Johnson entertains "impossible romances" and "Indefinable sweet fancies."[12] Sappho's writing recalls the pleasant things she did with her female friends — laying on soft beds, taking refuge in sanctuaries (Lardinois 18). This became a discourse belonging to a particular sapphic sensibility into which Johnson tapped. In "The Idlers" (1890), a Swinburnian-styled lyric that is written as a nine stanza verse, Johnson locates her lovers in a birchbark canoe on a slow moving river. The title is a reference to the observation that the boat has coasted landward, and the canoeists

[12] "In the Shadows" was written in 1885 and first published four years later in Lighthall's *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889), then collected under Johnson, *Flint and Feather: The Complete Poems* 72. Unless otherwise specified, all further quotations from Johnson's poems are taken from this standard work and are indicated by FF and the page numbers.

have "let [their] paddles rest" (FF 60). Words that reinforce the notion of idleness, and that are all found in the first seven stanzas, include "indolent," "abandoned," and "languor." The sense of freedom that accompanies this inactivity is apparent in the qualifiers "unrepressed," "unconfined," and "unreserved." In their sanctuary, "far / From where his kisses are," the seduction begins:

> Your costume, loose and light,
> Leaves unconcealed your might
> Of muscle, half suspected, half defined;
> And falling well aside,
> Your vesture opens wide,
> Above your splendid sunburnt throat that pulses unconfined.
> (FF 61)

At the turn of the poem (stanza six), the two canoeists' hands touch and then one person (identified as "I") kisses the "very wind that blows about your tumbled hair." Immediately after the kiss, the other's "ardour wakes" and the language shifts away from a celebration of the body to a kind of punishment:

> The paddles lie disused,
> The fitful breeze abused,
> Has dropped to slumber, with no after-blow;
> And hearts will pay the cost,
> For you and I have lost
> More than the homeward blowing wind that died an hour ago. (FF 62)

All is different now: nature is no longer her speaker's ally, weeping for her as it did in a previous era. In this poem, because they have "abused" the breeze, it "puffs," then "dies," then there comes a heartfelt "cost" with the threat of an "after-blow."

Poems published after Johnson began touring extensively with Smily include "Through Time and Bitter Distance" (1892), or the nostalgic "At Sunset" (1892), which contains the intoxicating line: "And some hot soul seems throbbing close to mine, / As sinks the sun within that world of wine" (FF 63). Estranged from the urges of nature she is, nonetheless, drawn back into those remembered fantasies of river and canoe, setting sun, swift water. By the time she penned the famous "The Song My Paddle Sings" (1892), she had found the appropriate metaphor for her irregular meters in the rhythm and swing of a canoe paddle.

The work of the early 1890s is hypnotic, particularly "Penseroso" (1892) and the intensely sexual "Wave-Won" (1892). In the latter poem, the speaker addresses her "beloved," her "dear," and begs that person to recall being afloat together in a "light and lonely shell" (FF 68). A seven-stanza verse, "Wave-Won" is written in a common six-line rhyming pattern (aabccb) called the tail rhyme or rime coué. While the tail rhyme is associated with Middle English romances (and with Chaucer), other practitioners of the verse include the poets whom Johnson no doubt read as a child, such as William Wordsworth and Alfred Lord Tennyson. But Johnson's poem strikes its own note through its irregular line lengths. While the predominant foot is trimeter (lines 1, 2, and 4), it slips into the basic pentameter (line 3) and then into an even longer heptameter that actually breaks itself down into a unit of five feet followed by a run-on line of two feet. Some of the closing feet have feminine endings, and some masculine. These variations create differences in speed, stress, and nuance, all important elements for performance. The long lines intermingled with shorter ones also create tensions, or gradations of excitement. Hence, in line 3, the iambic pentameter sets up a pulsing rhythm as one lover bows down in an intimate gesture and places her "head so near my lap," then the syntax tumbles into the next verse-line with a long dash and we get a strong, highly stressed run-on line that brings the stanza to a heptameter climax:

> Your splendid eyes aflame
> Put heaven's stars to shame,
> Your god-like head so near my lap was laid—
> My hand is burning where
> It touched your wind-blown hair,
> As sweeping to the rapids verge, I changed my
> paddle blade. (FF 69)

By making that lover divine, the poet is able to keep the gender secret. Her reference to "change[ing] my paddle blade" can be read as a play on this idea. In the end, both paddler and passenger surrender to their desire. The concluding stanza exults: "in delirium reeled / Our maddened hearts that kneeled / To idolize the perfect world, to taste of love at / last" (FF 69).

If the poems from the early 1890s are about memory, the ones from the middle of the decade are about loss. In the center of "Thistledown" (1894) the lovers beach their canoe "where sands in shadows

lie / You hold my hand a space, then speak good-bye" (FF 101). Like the earliest lyrics (and like "The Idlers" and "Wave-Won") there is a focus on hands. But unlike "My Little Jean" that predicts the subject's heart will "grow cold," these more mature pieces suggest a rekindling. Words such as "heated," "aflame," "burning," "bloom," and "stir" are more characteristic of the later verse and they bring a clear erotic element to the work. In "Moonset" (1894) Johnson writes: "lost melody stirs / The love of long ago" and adds, cryptically, "I may not all your meaning *understand*, / But I have touched your soul in shadow-land" (FF 42; my emphasis). The references to song and soul echo another early poem to Jean Morton that expressed the feelings of a thwarted lover. In "The Fourth Act," the speaker, who wished to "misunderstand" the other's intentions, asks to be set free. Then later in "Moonset," we see an attempt not just to comprehend herself but to understand the intentions of the other as well. Further, in "Moonset" the words "melody," "love," and "soul" create a textual dialogue with Swinburne's "On the Cliffs," a poem about the spirit of Sappho that was published in the British poet's *Songs of the Spring-Tides* (1880). Swinburne writes: "Since thy first lesbian word / Flamed on me, and I knew not when I knew / This was the song that struck my whole soul through" (I: 614-15). The parallel implies Swinburne's influence on Johnson.

With the exception of "Fire-Flowers" (1894), few poems of a romantic nature were published during the long period when Johnson was on tour with Smily. "Fire-Flowers" was included in the Smily-Johnson skit "There and Back" and printed in the Canadian newspaper *The Globe* (15 Dec. 1894). In this two-stanza verse, the poet compares love to a forest fire that scorches and scars the "sweet wild flower" (FF 122). The floral reference echoes her first poem to Floretta Maracle, when the narrator veils herself as "Iris" and writes of the powerful "undercurrent" of inwardly felt and outwardly directed desire. Notably, in the 1894 verse, Johnson discretely admits that "fellow-feeling" — a code for same-sex love — has sparked once more: "There comes some purifying sweet belief, / Some fellow-feeling beautiful, if brief. / And life revives, and blossoms once again" (FF 122).

'Fellow-feeling' possibly germinated again near the end of the nineteenth century and that may have had something to do with Johnson's broken engagement with Charles Drayton (between

Christmas 1899 and 9 January 1900). Immediately after this, from February 1900 to April 1901, Johnson's day-to-day life is a mystery. She went to the Atlantic provinces but left few records behind and likely did not perform; she hired a new manager (Charles Wurz) and lost $500, then suffered an acute illness (Keller 154-55). During this period, she wrote three short confessional love poems. The first unpublished piece, "Morrow Land" was composed on Holy Saturday, 1900, and in the poem she plays on the ambiguity of "this passion week." At the beginning of the simple three-stanza verse, the distance between lovers is lamented — it is clear that they are miles apart and cannot meet soon. In the third stanza of "Morrow Land," a year-long separation is described: "But oh, these days will be so dear / Through all the bleak and coming year, / This passion week of gold and grey, / Will haunt my life and bless my way / In Morrow Land" (qtd. in Keller 158-59). And exactly one year later, during Holy Week, 1901, the poet resurfaces into public life, leaving the impression that her 'exile' was planned to the minute.

Keller's reading of "Heidleburgh" — the second unpublished lyric dated to the summer of 1900 — identifies the love interest in the poem as Charles Wurz. Keller's argument is very convincing: "First, Wurz came from Heidelberg, Germany ... Second, his hair was blond and his eyes were grey: the physical traits of the man in Pauline's classic fantasy of white-man-marries-Indian-maiden. Third, he arrived in Pauline's life when she felt most alone. Fourth, Pauline not only expected but was reconciled to the fact that this man would leave her" (160). It does appear that the poet was conducting a 'test' because in "Heidleburgh" she writes of "storm and stress and rain" and the speaker laments being "born in vain." The "storm and stress" reference may be to the German literary movement and so serve as more evidence, perhaps, of Wurz's influence. Yet the notion that she was "born in vain" finds a perfect echo in Swinburne's "Anactoria," a poem that is also about desire mixed with pain and frustration, the bitterness of love, the agony of separation, and the longing for obliteration of the self. The lines "Yea, they shall say, earth's womb has borne in vain / New things, and never this best thing again; / Borne days and men, born fruits and wars and wine, / Seasons and song, but no song more like mine" (I: 66) come at a point after Sappho has ditched her male lover Atthis for the female Anactoria.

The feelings of distress, and uselessness, shift by the time Johnson pens the third short confessional poem, "Song." The date of composition has been estimated both as the summer of 1900 (Keller 158) and as the summer of 1901 (Strong-Boag/Gerson 143). In any case, the formal twelve-line ballad is arranged in tight iambic pentameter quatrains using two sets of rhymes (abab). Since the conventions associated with the ballad are sincerity and openness (Fussell 134), it is noteworthy that this poem is the only one from the period ever published, and at that posthumously in *Canadian Magazine* (1913) (see Mackay). In "Song" the speaker no longer seems distraught for love, "Because you came to me, like a new day / Born of the beauty of an autumn night" (qtd. in Keller 159). This verse offers us some poetic closure too, as it harks back, again, to her late-1870s "My Little Jean" about a pure love unsullied by 'manly' physical desire and the notion that in the speaker's soul there lies an "unknown song." With "Song," then, "The silence that enfolded me so long / Stirred to the sweetest music life had known / Because you came, and coming woke the song / That slumbered through the years I was alone" (qtd. in Keller 159). Throughout the poem the influence of Swinburne's "Anactoria" — a verse dedicated to Sappho, his "supreme head of song" — can be heard in references to seasons, to rebirth, and, of course, to music and "the song."

When Swinburne writes of Sappho he often connects her physicality (in particular, her skin coloration and her beauty) to homoerotic passion, as in these lines from "On the Cliffs" (1880): "The small dark body's lesbian loveliness / That held the fire eternal" (I: 620). The idea of dark skin and comeliness is celebrated by Johnson's "The Idlers" (1890), "Harvest Time" (1894), "Lady Lorgnette" (1903), and "The King's Consort" (1912). These poems, particularly "Lady Lorgnette," contradict Johnson's ambivalent feelings about her own "washed out Mohawk skin" (qtd. in Strong-Boag/Gerson 212) and link the issue of race with some of the devices she uses in her poetry to express sapphic desire.

"Lady Lorgnette" is a long poem divided into two sections, each of which is loosely shaped (through rhyme and sometimes meter) into Shakespearean sonnets. Following the convention of the sonnet form, the first part of each section poses a problem that finds resolution in the couplet of the final two lines, also referred to as "the turn" (Fussell 121-22). The two dilemmas in "Lady Lorgnette"

concern performing gender in front of an audience and connecting this performance to race, and to sexuality. The focus of the first section is an audience member — Lady Lorgnette of the title. The speaker, an actor identified as "a mimic king," is separated from Lady Lorgnette by the edge of the stage, yet close enough to smell her perfume and to notice the "Madame's" pale-colored skin, jewels, and clothing. The speaker confesses:

> I may act till the world grows wild and tense,
> But never a flush on your features pale...
> I am only an actor, Madame, to you,
> A mimic king 'mid his mimic lords,
> For you are the belle of the smartest set,
> Lady Lorgnette. (FF 85)

The final couplet pivots on the conjunction "For," which grants the spectator in her box her class ("smartest set") and her beauty ("belle"), and identifies the narrator gazing down at "the Lady" as a mere 'mimicry.' The speaker's act, which has come under close inspection via the Lady's 'lorgnette,' has failed in some way because the Madame's "pale" skin did not "flush."

In the next section, the speaker's gaze targets a different audience member, Little Babette, who stands with the "mob" in the "pit":

> Little Babette, with your eyes of jet,
> Your midnight hair and your piquant chin,
> Your lips whose odours of violet
> Drive men to madness and saints to sin, —
> I see you over the footlights' glare
> Down in the pit 'mid the common mob, —
> Your throat is burning, and brown, and bare,
> You lean, and listen, and pulse, and throb. (FF 85)

The code word "violets" and the language of physical desire — "burning," "pulse," "throb" — identifies this dark-skinned spectator as the desired woman. Yet because she "lean[s]" and "listen[s]" intently, Little Babette is a desiring woman too, and hence her role is dual. The mimic king goes on to address this audience member as "dear" and to comment about her reaction to the performance:

> The viols are dreaming between us two,
> And my gilded crown is no make-believe,
> I am more than an actor, dear, to you,
> For you called me your king but yester eve,

And your heart is my golden coronet,
Little Babette. (FF 86)

The words "sin" and "crown" also appear in the letter Johnson sent to her friend Kate Simpson-Hayes during the year the poet was supposed to be engaged to a man (see rpt. in Strong-Boag/Gerson 96). These words, along with her 'manly' heart, hands, songs, canoes, and flowers, comprise part of Pauline Johnson's personal sapphic code that hints at an eroticized exchange.

Elsewhere, Johnson writes "there are two of me" ("Fate of the Red Man" n.p.) in order to reinforce her double-voiced, double-garbed persona. She has also revealed that "one of the secrets of good writing of any kind is the power of being someone else" (qtd. in Mackay 274). In "Lady Lorgnette," a dual role (of desired, and desiring, woman) is found not only in the dark-skinned audience member, but also in the speaker of the poem, the "mimic king." By emphasizing in this poem the 'manly' nature of her persona, it can be seen that this 'othered' position (as mimic "king") allows Johnson some degree of freedom when she is placed in a public role. In terms of sapphic wampum, as performer (in this case) of a male poetic persona, she plays with her appearance as a "king" to connect with female members of the audience. Hence, "Lady Lorgnette," a depiction of the cross-dressed actor gazing down at her female audience members — and watching as the brown-skinned Babette lustily stares back — identifies that Johnson is conscious of the complexities of the performing gaze performing gender. Similarly, earlier on in her career she wanted to appear in a different guise — feminine "Indian" dress — in order to be an "interesting topic with ladies" (see letter qtd. in Strong-Boag/Gerson 110).

As we have seen, the assumption of male clothes on and off the stage was part of the social and cultural practice of lesbianism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Johnson seems to register aspects of this sexual richness in her various costumes, in her performances, in her verse, and in her relations with women. In "Lady Lorgnette," as well as in earlier poems, Johnson speaks as a woman to women: her eroticism is both subjectively and objectively woman-centered. Too often critics have tried to restrict her eros to the realm of Platonic friendships, whereas I have argued for pervasive allusions to a discourse and a life that is sexualized. It seems clear that Pauline Johnson made a personal and subjective commitment

to lesbianism. Reading her poems in this way can enhance our sense of Johnson as part of a tradition of favored codes, poetic devices, and sexual dualities that have, through the ages, recorded the nature of sapphic desire.

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"Nothing in Particular": Queer Theory and the Loss of the Social

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In his genealogical analysis of male homosexualities, David Halperin summarily argues that "what *homosexuality* signifies today is an effect of [a] cumulative process of historical overlay and accretion" (91). Halperin proceeds from this justifiable and modern concept of homosexuality since it "defines the horizons of our immediate understanding and inevitably shapes our inquiries into same-sex sexual desire and behavior in the past" (90). Perhaps it seems obvious that no matter where gays and lesbians have come from, we have invariably ended up at *today*. Having thus arrived with all kinds of baggage, our cumulative understandings of (homo)sexual desire invariably cast long shadows, over the past and into the future. This is what Halperin describes as an inevitable "conceptual tyranny" (90), one that might be ameliorated if we let go of modern perceptions when we stare into our histories.

Yet where I become stuck is Halperin's implicit notion of our apparent 'arrival' and what that might mean in different contexts. Halperin is likely just positioning a foundational beginning for historical analysis. But I'm more interested in this literal and figurative point as it might suggest a historical *end*. Certainly, in many recent queer critiques of homosexual identity (whether historical, political, or social), much has been made of the current assimilation

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 4-5 (2002-2003) © CLGSA / SCELG

of lesbians and gays into the mainstream: the increasing acquisition of legal rights; the attempts to marry; and the frequent appearances on primetime American sitcoms, such as *Will & Grace*, to name but a few. What happened to the radical sexual liberation that the struggle for lesbian and gay equality was initially about?

When I gave a version of this paper in Montreal in 1998, at Concordia University's "Sex on the Edge Conference,"[1] I did not anticipate some of the antagonism my talk subsequently engendered. After a number of questions, it became clear that the disagreement with my critique of queer theory arose from a primary source: namely, certain queer activists whose distinction between 'queer' and 'gay and lesbian' was both theoretically discrete and served as a judgment that influenced their daily living. Now, as then, these self-differentiating queers look upon gays and lesbians as conforming and as having abandoned their dissenting activist roots in favor of the 'trappings' that flow from their adaptation of (chiefly white) economically middle-class identities. But what are these apparent trimmings and frills to which gays and lesbians have given themselves?

I had prefaced my Montréal paper with a description of the 1993 murder of a young Texas man, Nicholas West,[2] in order to make a point, as I again do here, about certain presumptions of queer theory and activism. Queer theory at once maintains that gays and lesbians have finally 'arrived' and that their time has passed. It can afford such presumptions only because it suffers from a profound and severe disconnect from the varied, lived existences of self-identified homosexuals. I argue that queer anti-identity constructions imperil essential *communal* identification and political responsiveness, and offer instead *individual* self-centered agendas incapable of political engagement. Moreover, and more dangerously, this queer threat carries with it the implicit presumption of an eventual takeover and effacement of the historical locations of homosexuals, lived or

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[1] "The 'Diseased' Homo: Queer Theory and the Re-inscription of Homophobia," Sex on the Edge Conference, Concordia University, Montreal, 9 Oct. 1998. Here, I embraced the notion that gays and lesbians still have not 'arrived' as full, unfettered citizens with complete human rights.

[2] On the night of 30 Nov. 1993, West was kidnapped, beaten, made to strip, and repeatedly shot. His death became part of the 1997 documentary about hate crimes, *Licensed to Kill* (dir. Dong).

literary. As Robert K. Martin forcefully reminded the audience at the Montréal conference's closing plenary, the study of lesbian and gay history is not done. Likewise, we are not done with reimagining and reforming homosexual identifications and affiliations, problematic as they may be, because we have not 'arrived.'

After describing West's murder, I then offered but one of many queer oppositional alternatives to the supposed gay and lesbian mainstream: a 1991 editorial from the zine BIMBOX, by the pseudonymous Johnny Noxema and Rex Boy.

> You are entering a gay and lesbian free zone ... Effective immediately, BIMBOX is at war against lesbians and gays. A war in which modern queer boys and queer girls are united against the prehistoric thinking and demented self-serving politics of the above-mentioned scum. BIMBOX hereby renounces *its* past use of the term lesbian and/or gay in a positive manner. This is a civil war against the ultimate evil, and consequently we must identify us and them in no uncertain terms ... So, dear lesbian womon [*sic*] or gay man to whom perhaps BIMBOX has been inappropriately posted ... prepare to pay dearly for the way you and your kind have fucked things up. (Qtd. in Cooper 31)[3]

The reader of this rant may either laugh and dismiss the overwhelming violence of the editorial as an example of the extreme irony embraced by the queer movement, or be taken aback by the naïveté of people who, using such shock politics, underestimate the fact that violence that includes anything from literary gay-bashing to physical harm is never ironic.

This now somewhat dated exposition, from a self-identified antiassimilationist movement, is not necessarily concomitant with queer *theory*, nor is its location in my discussion meant to imply that this is theory in practice. Yet the attack on a materialistic, commodified class of homosexuals is clear in its antinormative performativity. BIMBOX, given over to such textual irony, shares with its academic counterpart in queer theory a desire to displace a socially ingrained but supposedly outdated identity binarism: heterosexual/homosexual.

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[3] My discussion is indebted in part to Donald Morton's analysis of the editorial, in his essay "Changing the Terms."

"Nothing in particular"

I regard the difference between the two — queer activism and theory — slender and ultimately unimportant. Whereas queer activists use their sexual selves and social spaces as sites or conduits for political intervention, queer theorists use homosexual transgression but discard homosexual identity in favor of a politically disinterested program marked by a deeply troubling deconstructive rhetoric. In responding to similar charges of queer political imprudence, Diana Fuss writes somewhat antagonistically that "politics is deployed as the final measuring stick for assessing the present utility, and thus the final relevance, of theories of gay identity" (106); and Judith Butler, fine-tuning that sentiment, asserts that "the deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated" (*Gender Trouble* 148). It is the strangest of dances that they propose: a wary waltz into the domains of political expression stripped of any self-identifying politics. To identify as "gay" or "lesbian" is deconstructed by Fuss and Butler only to the extent that people understand that such identification is a shameful engagement, as if gays and lesbians are not astute enough to be conscious of the pitfalls of identity politics.

One cannot, at this time, completely assess the political efficacy of queer theory's aims of resistance to Michael Warner's "regimes of the normal" (*Fear* xxvi), for it is difficult to see how transgressive diffusions of identity can in any way present an immediate challenge to capitalist heteronormativity and socio-economic inequities. After all, queer recompense seems to be an update of the Socratic credo that the nondeconstructed identity and the *communal* action predicated by social cross-identification is not worth having. In any case, the irony of queer's activist pragmatics and academic theoretics is that political efficacy is the opposite of both — as the demise of Queer Nation has already shown. BIMBOX's editorial, as ironic textual activism, highlights in many ways the slippage between the two groups, especially as they both abandon the material homosexual subject in favor of an antihomosexual and anti-identitarian agency.

The hard-won gains made by the gay and lesbian movements are now in danger of being surpassed by a vague, and supposedly more agreeable, 'gender/sexuality' agenda that, for me, evokes

suspicion, for it lends itself to a definitional ambiguity even greater than the one found in the word "queer." William B. Turner, in characterizing queer, is typical in his approval of such definitional indistinction; he contends that

> 'Queer' has the virtue of offering, in the context of academic inquiry into gender identity and sexual identity, a relatively novel term that connotes etymologically a crossing of boundaries but that refers to nothing in particular, thus leaving the question of its denotations open to contest and revision. (35)

This proposal of "nothing in particular" is all the more discomforting in that Turner appears sincerely to believe that offering up "nothing" as a template by which to argue for a social politics of progression or activism will somehow bypass the rapacious interests of more conservative movements. The conservative nature of queer (anti-) identity means, as Max H. Kirsch argues, that the ambiguity of a queer politics, in allowing itself to be usurped by conservative forces, "represents an opposition that does not oppose. It includes the spectrum of ideologies from left to right, with the caveat that the *theory* generated around it is primarily neo-conservative, suggesting that the organizing of collective action is all but impossible" (99). Thus, Turner's mystifying pronouncement also highlights how queer has little to offer other than an oppositional ideology whose main tenet is constant contestation.

Turner's posture strikes me as indicative of an ongoing shift in recent Western academic circles to promote sexuality/gender studies that do not take into account, at the forefront, historically specific homosexual identities. Instead, the adoption of queer merely favors what can only be an ironically conservative move to efface any effort to self-identify homosexually. And it is the fear both of *identity* — or being identified by way of one's (homo)sexuality — and of the seemingly more inclusive-sounding queer that have provided much of the impetus.

Eric Savoy, in his critique of things queer, cautions that "to theorize homosexuality as an epistemological crisis not susceptible to resolution is, if not to elide the 'gay man,' at least to shift academic attention away from that affirmative [gay studies] position" (138). Hence, homosexuals, the study of them, and their studies, risk being passed by in favor of an adoption of indistinct queerness, whose

epistemological foundation is built primarily on *not being seen as lesbian or gay*. The resultant invisibility of the lesbian or gay subject is both figurative and literal.

My assertions that queer anti-identity formations threaten gay and lesbian communal identification and political responsiveness are certainly not new, although I believe they retain a strong sense of urgency. Exemplary of queer critiques is David Van Leer's 1989 reproof of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's political inutility and (what he sees as) her underwriting a homophobic thematics (Van Leer 605). However, I do not wish merely to repeat Van Leer's line of inquiry. Rather, I shall survey and examine the ways in which much recent queer theory, in its nonadmitted drive for an ideal and deconstructed subject-outside-all-subjects, effectively lops off its dis-*eased* progenitor, the socially self-characterized homosexual, a subject ostensibly either unable or unwilling to transform her or his binarized and essentialist-based identity.

Despite the demise of groups such as Queer Nation and the relative silence of queer social activism, queer theorizing continues, though it has become ever more detached from the activism that once inspired much of its formative drive. Queer Nation's practices, which eschewed homosexual identity in praise of a generalized difference, are more than just superficially similar to the theorists who have embraced such calls to difference. On the one hand, Savoy emphasizes that Queer Nation's commitment to concise activism differs from theoretical queerness's "highly suspect appropriation of 'queerness' in challenging the very concept of 'identity' and in dismantling the cohesiveness that accrues at the site of the lesbian and the gay." Savoy's point concisely highlights the difference "between queer irony and irony's queerness, between the rhetoric of politics and deconstructive rhetoric" (142). On the other hand, it seems inevitable (especially considering the demise of Queer Nation) that a politics based on irony could only wear out its welcome — as with any practice that breeds familiarity — as its ability to create change wanes. Queer Nation's organizational tactics, such as the promotion of the free rein of all desire(s), are part of the unworkability of queer theory in the social realm.

Likewise, queer theory suffers from an awkward relation to the social. Its basic premise of atomized difference and valorized individualism proposes that all meanings — across cultures, sex,

gender, race — have the possibility of becoming enacted at any time and in any place. This is simply impossible. A structure that would allow all options to exist simultaneously, so that all people could have access to, and possible fulfilment of, any personal choice, cannot exist. Such structures would involve immediate self-contradiction and give way to chaos. In the case of the failure of Queer Nation, the irrationality of this wished-for structure was overlooked, and the organization's demise was seen as the simple inability of different members to get along.

Queer deconstructive rhetoric, especially as it permeates the political body, will invariably give way to the same self-destruction that Queer Nation faced, because such theory has a direct investment in getting rid of material evidence, which is to say, the homosexual body.

Queer Nation's miming of civil rights sit-ins failed to reclaim public space precisely because queer visibility, in its use of (homo)sexual transgression, failed to keep up a day-to-day reinforcement of its project; the Queer Nation members were defeated by their own provisionality. Queer theorists presuppose a similar impermanence — much like Turner's "nothing in particular" — in tacitly intimating that the ongoing stimuli and the perpetual self-critique demanded can somehow be maintained over time. Queer theory's naive view is that it is possible to resist heteronormative regimes whose investments in the status quo are prohibitively fierce, especially in these days of capitalistic globalism.

In constructing this resistance, the main anti-identitarian tenets of the work of many queer theorists (including especially Judith Butler, Diana Fuss, Eve Sedgwick, and Michael Warner) disavow homosexual identity and propose instead that everyone is presumably or potentially queer. Although they reduce homosexual identity to a trope of transgression, they nevertheless rely on this mutinous category for its social and libidinal noncompliance; it is required and concomitantly refused. Instead of activism involving material bodies, however, what is proffered is activism by way of deconstructive rhetoric and signification. Sedgwick states, when writing of Foucault's questioning of regulatory sexuality, that "future interrogations of normative heterosexuality ... must begin from, and perhaps return to, the definitional centers of the achieved and loved 'perversion.' It must also begin from gay and lesbian studies"

("Gender Criticism" 292). Despite her fruitful examination of the arbitrary nature of the ordering of sexuality and an apparent valorizing of gay and lesbian studies, Sedgwick's 'beginning' would spell the end of lesbian and gay studies, and her 'return' to this arena is merely an opportunity to scavenge the graveyard of gay and lesbian identity for the rudiments useful for constructing, in Frankenstein fashion, a new queer corpus.

Sedgwick and her followers suggest that if we can change the terms of the argument to establish a new way to think about libidinal matters, we might thereby be able to regulate the rhetoric of sexuality. Since sex is text, or at least an effect of textual discourse, and all text is rhetorical in its ability to signify, a queer governance can change the heterosexist social apparatuses that oppress and dominate. But, as Donald Morton states, when writing of the privileged status of textuality accorded by the queer, "from the queer theory perspective, gayness is nothing more than a mirage of signification — a gay-effect" ("Changing" 12).

If homosexuals are part of a normative order signaled by the heterosexual/homosexual binary, it is curious that the queer theorists do not call upon the (supposedly) more powerful member of the binary, the heterosexual. It may seem axiomatic that to hail the hetero position would result in the reinscription of the dominant regime, since there is nothing contesting or resisting about heterosexuality. It may seem obvious, but it needs restating: heterosexuals are in no way about to relinquish their privilege. As Tom Warner wryly notes, "There seems to be little evidence to suggest that there is any reluctance to be labelled a heterosexual" (265). I contend, how can queer theorists simply appropriate only what is transgressive about the homosexual if this category has now become subsumed by and part of Michael Warner's "regimes of the normal"? Has such transgression not already been influenced or appropriated by the dominant group?

These unexamined assumptions result in the blaming of homosexuals for their own positioning in the social framework. The irony is that the queer position deftly merges with a reactionary conservative one. When queer BIMBOX attacks homosexuals as having been complicit in their own ruin, there remains amid the rubble of their irony a residual suspicion that homosexuals, possessing coherent, rational identities, have been collaborators in maintaining

a status quo society.[4] While one might look upon BIMBOX's musings as entirely ironic in their efforts to shake up complacent gays and lesbians, the subterfuge elicits quite a literal reinscription of homophobia. When Cooper asserts that Noxema and Rex Boy "pose questions about identity that are as lushly poetic as they are superficially irresponsible" and that "to become engaged in their illogic is to sense the idiocy that goes hand in hand with delusions of a united front" (31), he suggests that the textual ironizing of a supposedly coherent and united homosexual subject is required to make these queer writers' point. Therefore, attacking homosexuals cannot cause harm because homosexual material existence has been transformed into an allegory and is thus not the 'real thing.' Gays, as signified beings within the queer textual world, are simply, as Morton states, "gay-effects." They have lost a sense of material being and, despite Judith Butler's remonstrance (in *Bodies That Matter*), they are bodies that do not matter. To use this queer textual logic, Nicholas West died because of faulty identification as a gay man; but if he had not been an out gay man, his death would probably not have occurred.

BIMBOX's use of violence as critique cannot help but recall the real material lives of gay men and lesbians who have suffered, today and in history.[5] The editorial writers might protest that they, though queer, are interested in same-sex sex.[6] Yet at this juncture, where practice violently combines with a theory of emancipation, the resulting discourse cancels out the homosexual subject. Rising phoenixlike from the ashes of this infernal collision is the unscathed

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[4] The verve of much, but by no means all, recent gay and lesbian activism has been assimilationist. Tom Warner deftly summarizes the queer critique: "Rights advocacy and promotion of identity, perhaps inevitably, become conservative influences that eventually impede and then outrightly resist the more radical objectives of liberation and sexual freedom. A synergy of rights attainment and identities that are respectable and non-threatening to the heterosexual mainstream takes hold, and becomes itself constraining and oppressive, marginalizing those who do not, or refuse to, conform" (263).

[5] I do not suggest than the litmus test of lesbian and gay identity and existence should be suffering, although it is important to remind ourselves of historical fact.

[6] Even this is debatable. Johnny Noxema, in his interview with Cooper, says (ironically?) that "For my friends and myself, sex is the last thing on our minds" (32).

heterosexual who can blame homosexual deviance as the cause of unrest. When interviewed by Cooper, Noxema, in his rally against gays, notes that Jeffrey Dahmer picked up one of his victims at a gay pride parade. This is, no doubt, seen as ironic by Noxema; nonetheless, his joking implies that both perpetrator and victim deserve one another, that if it had not been for their identification as gay no violence would have occurred. Not only is violence against and/or by homosexuals positioned as innately homosexual, but it is thematized as such within the theoretical understanding that homosexuals have caused their own (violent) displacement by dint of their faulty essentialized nature.

Why Fear a Queer Planet?

Given the ongoing struggles of homosexuals — including the effort to stay alive — I find it strange that queer theorist Michael Warner remarks, when addressing the admirable accomplishments of gays and lesbians, that "the success of that work now makes some other kinds of thinking necessary" (*Fear* x). This is invariably the kind of statement made by those who are privileged enough not to have to worry about random violence, the effects of racism, sexism, and, especially, class. Warner's enveloping of gay and lesbian history within a theoretical dynamic is not surprising considering that in order for queer theory to take over, it must dispense with the homosexual body and the politics attendant upon such material existence, and at the same time spirit away the representation of the homosexual required for transgressive practices. Warner's assertion of a dubious "success" neatly allows him to remark upon (and appropriate) what has perhaps been a success — more queer academics? — and leave the scraps of essentialism around for queers like Cooper to pick up, recycle, and demonize once more.

For queer *practice*, according to Michael Warner, there remains the nonmedical, nonradical, and nonphysical issues of "challeng[ing] the common understanding of what gender difference means, or what the state is for, or what 'health' entails, or what would define fairness, or what a good relation to the planet's environment would be" (*Fear* xiii). But he elides the idea that similar practices were once vaunted by the radical gay left in the early 1970s. Warner shifts the issue from efficacy to 'difference' — not differences between people but differences within the self that reveal the constructed, contingent,

and ambiguous nature of identity. One might gather from this that homosexuals possess a hazardous, binarized essence that universalizes the notion of difference, whereas queers, in disrupting essentialism, do "a kind of practical social reflection just in finding ways of being queer" (*Fear* xiii).

This kind of navel-gazing reveals that Warner's project encourages a self-concerned individualism and is, in fact, antisocial. Again advocating the possibility of a queer entity possessing all the expressive punch of 'have-a-nice-day' sentiments, Warner's 2002 book describes the queer world as "a space of entrances, exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projected horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurate geographies" (*Publics* 198). But what exactly does this mean? Again, Turner's "nothing in particular" provides a fitting response. Yet Warner's watery rhetoric does serve a purpose: it underscores a projected and hoped-for unfettered individualism disconnected from the social and unable to form a radical or emancipatory politics of any sort. Warner asserts that queer politics invokes "norms of liberal modernity such as self-determination and self-representation ... [and] it continues to value sexuality by linking it to the expressive capacities of individuals"; and he resolutely determines that queer theory "relies absolutely on norms of expressive individualism and an understanding of sexuality in terms of those norms" (*Publics* 219).

That people operate, generally, from the locus of self is undeniable. But they also act communally in order to further their own interests, especially those they may share with others. Although Michael Warner's queers might be able to promote radical notions of sexuality, it cannot be that they could do so together, a basic requirement of political action. Lost as they are while exploring those "projected horizons" of the queer world, Warner's fellow pilgrims are also lost to each other since their lines of acquaintance are unsystematized. How would they recognize not only each other but what each other believes has to be done?

It is telling that Warner contradicts himself by stating that "queer politics is anti-assimilationist, non-individualist, and mobilizes non-communitarian practices of public-sphere media" (*Publics* 221). Perhaps Warner means that such politics are nonindividualist simply because there cannot be anything political organized on a queer planet. Warner's queer theory, while getting on with the serious work

of deconstructive understandings of the nonmaterial world, evokes an ever inward-looking world of atomized persons finding ways to be more themselves, the *ultimate* identity. Kirsch calls this the "'I matter most' philosophy in which individualism, subversion, and social resistance are equated. This conjoining of complex issues is encouraged by a culture that is now more than ever oriented towards separating the individual from the social, promoting an ideal that we are all unique, special, unfettered by structural forces outside our control" (3). From Warner's perspective, there is no continuity between people as libidinal localities are prioritized; each person, in becoming his or her own unique 'moment in history,' nurtures a passion for the self that supersedes communal action or political interests.

For Warner, "queer sexuality is like gender or race in being a political form of embodiment that is defined as noise or interference in the disembodying frame of citizenship" (*Fear* xix-xx). This is a significant point, but here, the embodied queer person is progressive only insofar as he or she disturbs; to what (political) end is not known since queers disdain a strictly goal-oriented politics, especially since such prescriptions tend to play into the predetermining hegemony of a coherent, stable, heteronormative ideology. The main tenet of "practical social reflection," defined by Warner, is "the project of elaborating, in ways that cannot be predicted in advance, this question: What do queers want?" (*Fear* vii). This view, shared by other queer theorists (Butler, *Bodies* 229; *Gender Trouble* 7; Fuss 106; Sedgwick, *Epistemology* 12), underscores a disinterested risk politics that is commensurate with abandoning essentialized collectivities.

Outdated lesbian and gay collective political action, Michael Warner elaborates, reinforces the regulatory framework of binarized structures since, he implies, the homosexual is part of "normalcy." Warner asserts that the queer is "an aggressive impulse of generalization; it rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal" (*Fear* xxvi). But I find that the idea that the homosexual subject has suddenly shifted from the margins into the centrality implied by "normal" would likely be startling (though for opposing reasons) to a large number of heterosexuals and homosexuals alike. Such queer resistance, fighting for necessarily

unanticipated effects, ultimately leaves itself open to appropriation by normative ideological structures, since it is these structures that will co-opt unregulated activity. Resistance by directionless atomized entities is not enough.

Neither is opposition in the form of "tempered rage and carnivalesque display" (*Fear* xvii). These methods of social release do little to transgress the temper of society, though Warner is quick to add that it is the normalizing feature of society that also must be resisted. Resistance in itself, however, as a critique or a call to action, implies *direction*; Warner omits — notwithstanding his push for a nonteleological project — that every argument produces its own dominance and will carry with it ideological implications. Warner believes that queers can become ideology-free (or at least free of dominant ideologies) through rigorous resistance that would never allow any ideology to settle.

But queering's appeal to constant contestation and disturbance will only become its own ideology: the ideology of change. Warner, seeing change as perpetual motion, confuses his apparent favoring of the choice of embracing all random directions with the simple ability to choose; the latter signals direction, even when the choice is resistance, whereas the former implies the impossibility that all directions can function within a structure at the same time. Of these queer attempts to subvert identity, Stephen Seidman writes that in queer theory there is "a celebration of liminality, of the spaces between or outside structure, a kind of anarchistic championing of 'pure' freedom from all constraints and limits" ("Identity" 133). It appears queer theory courts anarchy or chaos, only it becomes disguised by "risking the *incoherence* of identity" (Butler, *Bodies* 113).

Sounding much like Michael Warner, Judith Butler too sees queerness as a sort of disrupting, disembodied agency whose only force is a constant redeployment against (rationally coherent) identity. She maintains that identities produce exclusions and abjections and therefore fail to make connections across the very differences that are needed to (re)democratize coalitional frames. This 'new democracy' entails a rejection of the essentialized homosexual subject who is part of what Butler calls the "socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility" (*Gender Trouble* 16-17). Emphasizing the specific and the local throughout her work, she advocates "the possibility of agency and transformation" (*Gender*

Trouble 7) but, as Seidman notes ("Deconstructing" 137), she never describes the inherent possibilities entailed by her project's destination.

Butler, not surprisingly, appears to backtrack somewhat from a thorough constructivist position by suggesting a kind of essentialism that would, she states, "affirm identities that are alternately instituted and relinquished according to the purposes at hand; [the open coalition] will be an open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure" (*Gender Trouble* 16). This ploy of strategic essentialism, found elsewhere among queer theorists (Edelman xvi; Fuss 105), allows for identity with the assurance that such strategies are required to tap the transgression afforded by homosexual subjectivity. But if queer theory, as Savoy says, "locates homosexuality in suspension or liminality, and thus suspends the coherence of identity politics" (137), how can an invisible subject continue to underwrite dissent? Butler is interested in identity only as a "point of convergence" across differences (*Gender Trouble* 10), but she says little about either identity as socially revealed or what might compel solitary queers to come together to effect change, political or otherwise.

With the disappearance of homosexual identity under Butler's queer reign, the expression of homophobia is given a much freer rein since there would be, under a queer regime, no homosexual subjects to combat the homophobic subject (Bersani 56). However, Butler subtly admits that a concrete homosexuality might be at times yielded to if it can effect a queer collective contestation ("Critically Queer" 14).[7] But she never states just what constitutes an effective body politic, or how one might assume with assurance that all its members will share the same (contesting) interests, or how individuals sustain over time the stimuli to fuel an ever-aware and always-ready queer critical reasoning.

These questions accentuate one of the main problems of much queer theory: if all identities are locally conferred, how can queer

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[7] Although she never *directly* says 'homosexual communal politically-based identity,' Butler leaves that possibility open when she says that the term "queer," as a site of collective contestation, is "perhaps also yielded in favor of terms that do the political work more effectively" ("Critically Queer" 14).

values develop or change when interaction among individuals at a level above the immediate is not thoroughly engaged or considered? Lisa Bower intriguingly argues that "we have seen the development of different types of political practice which invoke political identities *that do not ask the law for recognition*" (281). This supports a populist perception that individuals can effect change merely through dissidence, or by fuelling an inward-looking identity that is always different *from*. In other words, they hope to create change by simply *being* but not necessarily *acting*. A self-centered will-to-power cannot contest anything, especially as unwillingness to identify interests beyond mere contestation will result in dominant self-interest groups doing it for the queer individuals who desultorily contest.

Bower's hope for a more immediate address to political problems is laudable. Yet without apparent structures beyond the atomized self by which to express desired change, it is difficult to know what fruitful contestations of any kind queers might achieve, in theory or in practice. Rather than using material beings providing visibility, Bower instead provides a straw person of "marginalized communities," which somehow share a transparent interest in common values. For example, Bower prescribes that queers "use legal descriptions of homosexuality to create contestation in the public sphere, to re-imagine community and to transform the political field by challenging community members' own identifications" (283). The homosexual as a transgressive but community-identified force seems paradoxical and untenable; moreover, queering advocates the intensification of localized groups in their marginalities, to the point where larger group action becomes impossible. The result is that certain groups who see an opportunity to promote their own agenda or who seek dominance will fill any political vacuum.

It is strikingly naïve to imagine that dominant groups would take positive action to respond to the minority group assertions that claim that societies regularly enforce misrecognition of the violence wrought through heteronormativity. Bower suggests that a "renewal of community and politics may occur through a politics of direct address enacted through cultural interventions and the re-imagination of community" (283). Favoring the tactics of Queer Nation's mall kiss-ins, Bower imagines that direct address, as a form of populism, can effectively disrupt and alienate heteronormative structures so that resulting ruptures will lead to greater (re)creation and reconfiguration

of minority social spheres. To elide identity politics, Bower proposes a strategically selective "role of identification" (285) wherein difference, conceived as value-neutral, cannot depend on one thing or another for its constitution. Therefore, homosexual identity (in a queer world), because it coheres everywhere (as part of the regime requiring its transgressive nature), really would cohere at no particular site (Savoy 150). Difference, as a somewhat abstract organizing concept — which, because it is queer, likely would not organize in a coherent fashion — presumes a largely invisible, apolitical, incoherent structure with no one (identity) in particular at its helm. Queer work, beyond dissidence, has no direction and insists upon not choosing one. Clearly, these kinds of proposals are antisocial in that there is no real constituency except for the self-regarding individual. Identity politics, though in some ways flawed, has at least the fundamentals of cross-social concern and identification working for it.

Reviving the Social

This queer politics, especially as it utilizes a deconstructive critique of identity, conceals subjectivity within a rhetoric of composite intersections. If constructed identity categories are unstable because of what they exclude, queer (anti-)identities are even less stable because of their multifaceted, porous natures. It would, of course, be too simple to say that queers want to do away with identity altogether, since people will invariably converge at some point, arbitrarily or otherwise. Rather, queers hope to open up identity categories as sites of contestation. The notion of strategic essentialism again arises, as Seidman observes that "the aim is not to abandon identity as a category of knowledge and politics but to render it permanently open and contestable as to its meaning and political role. In other words, decisions about identity categories become pragmatic, related to concerns of situational advantage, political gain, and conceptual utility" ("Introduction" 12).

But at these new sites, whose voices are heard and whose interests are pandered to? If queers struggle to abandon the baggage of binarized identity, for example, can one actually expect any subject to be available to speak for their positions? The problem is that queer theory, like much self-referential resistance theory, cannot support a position like Bower's politics of direct address; it is a theory that can-

not constitute a workable politics since it is concerned foremost with individuals acting discretely. Difference between persons gives way to an examination of difference within a person *without external referents*. The queer goal is to call forth and contest the knowledge and social practices inherent in (self) identity and desire, but this sounds much like the isolated individual who becomes the creator of self, as the fount of an atomized and socially *dis*engaged knowledge.

In ways similar to how paradoxical postmodernism predicates its existence on modernism, queer theory and practice seize upon identity as a necessity for its anti-identity project. However, again we see that queer practitioners, in their efforts to look ever more inward to understand the epistemologically bordered locus of self, begin to resemble the modernist artist who attempted to translate the world through his or her own mind. Although not quite that simplistic, queer theory nonetheless cannot argue the effects of and arousals caused by the trappings of power. The queer recreation of identities heretofore dismissed as constituting a rational, coherent, and normalizing category results in politically disinterested subjects whose only engrossments are revealed to be an encompassing self-interest. Queer offers up the seductive right to dissent *as individuals*; there is no inducement to dissent *collectively*.

Yet to promote stability in order to pursue other noncontesting interests, the subject will resort to the structures that regulate activity *for* him or her, most notably, the law, among other social configurations. Vying for power — who has it, who can use it, to what end — needs to be reified and reinscribed in order to promote a force of stability that will allow time for subjects to be *social*. As Kirsch rightly asserts, when writing about how the involvement of individuals drives social action, these concerned subjects "need to have structural representation in order to maintain the energy needed for sustained opposition. Individuals working against their oppressors, whether in the workplace or neighborhood, cannot succeed without a mechanism that can play a larger role in incorporating them into communities of resistance where mutual recognition is present" (118). The internalized structures that are required in order for us to interact are also part of the environments in which we get to act, to mediate actions, to be social.

But social division, which seems to be the promise of a post-structuralist critique of identity, only promises more fragmentation

under the aegis of the sign of the queer, resulting in only more isolation and doubt about the possibilities of communal action. The sanctioning of nonidentity becomes as regulatory as it presumably is under the current regimes of binarized norms. As the queer becomes increasingly theorized in the academy, fears are being expressed about the possibility of its homogenization. The totalizing effects of an omnipresent late-capitalist ideology, which sets up deviance only to co-opt it, would seem to be the likely suspect of this homogenizing maneuver. As Morton points out, "Queer Theory is now recognized as nothing but an ideological maneuver to enable the assimilation of queers to mainstream economic practices, which is to say, the assimilation of those on the sexual margins to the free market" ("Pataphysics" 5). Morton forcefully argues that material conditions, not a libidinalized economy, should be prioritized in order to bring about true liberation.

Morton compares the effects of the economic boom in the 1990s — what he calls "the Age of Difference" — with the long postwar economic expansion in the United States. In the 1950s to the 1970s, "the emphasis of Gay Liberation was on inclusion in the common economic resources of capitalist democracy *in spite of differences*, [whereas] in the Age of Difference, the emphasis of Queer Theory is on inclusion in global capitalist democratic rights to consumption *tailored to differences*" (14). Although I think Morton means to include consumerist-oriented gays and lesbians in that category of consumption, he nevertheless adroitly points out how the queer has been co-opted due to his or her lack of engagement in reimagining the social. Indeed, unless queer theory's 'niche' politics can prompt reconceptualizations in *social* spheres (wherein it must present itself as a desirable alternative in order to confront investments in current dominating structures), change wrought through a refiguring of the self as simply 'different' will remain only conceptual.

The question of how queer theory itself functions as a practice of differences arises when Michael Warner states that "people want to make theory queer" (*Fear* xxvi).[8] One wonders how queer theory,

[8] The idea of queering everything is modified somewhat in Warner's recent work. Here he states that the new use of queer "does not simply replace or expand the ones [such as lesbian and gay]. It competes with them and, if taken literally, will rule out many of the people whom the revaluation of the term was meant to serve" (*Publics* 316).

roaming within a deconstructed redefinition of a politics of difference(s), could even recognize itself, let alone other theories. Under the queer rubric that this, for example, is something that could not be anticipated (and thus not known), queering quickly becomes a theory of atomized differences traveling along intersecting structures that, altogether, cannot recognize strategic positions of contestation since such configurations (under a queer gaze) are without structural identification. Theory, in this instance, is strangely dislocated from its material subject, although queer theory, presumably willing to participate in its own critique, threatens itself with its own relegation to liminality. It is as though the scare quotes that once accompanied the word "queer" would, in an ironic reversal, return and extend the quotes to encompass not only scare-quoted "queer" but the word "theory" as well. As a tool signaling irony, such scare quotes serve as a counterpart to what might be the embodiment of a queer person: the scarecrow. Each signals an ironic existence, and neither cannot signal or be a material body.

It is also ironic that queer theory's double imperative — to maintain the integrity of critical distance while actively disturbing the foundation of the subject — works to undo itself, in theory and in practice. Such a disappearance can only be the result of an insistence on submission to a deconstructive taxonomy. However, it would be extremely naïve to think that this spells the end of queer theory. Although it may not maintain its own distinctive categorization, especially within the academy, its mission, as stated by Michael Warner, to queer all theory, is not unwelcome. Queer theory, despite its foundation in social constructionism, anti-identity formulations, and homosexual transgression, must still rely on the identification of 'the homosexual' and keep this category in visible circulation. But if it does not resolve the impasse created by its suspension or deferral of homosexual subjectivity and political strategies, queer theory will only continue to undermine its homosexual base by, as Savoy alleges, smuggling homophobia "in through the back door," thereby reinscribing a view of homosexuality as "highly dispensable" (134). Queers must stop disposing of the homosexual either through theoretical necessity or through (unintentional) social abnegation.

The resolve of this impasse seems to return us to Butler's call to a form of strategic use of identity categories or subject positions

as warranted. However, just who will make that determination without resorting to forms of dominance is yet another paradox to overcome. There appears no emancipation eminent in the queer project beyond a studied self-examination that presumably frees the psyche and creates another version of 'the best possible you,' a concept ironically promoted as the promise of capitalism's modern advertising campaigns. As Kirsch wryly notes, "queer theory's highlighting of the impossibility of identity and the relativity of experience closely follows the development of current capitalist relations of production, where the self-contained individual is central to the economic goal of creating profit through production and its by-product, consuming" (17-18). He adds, echoing Morton, that the tenets of queer theory do not resist the capitalist production of equality but have paradoxically mirrored it.

Rather than come to terms with the efficacy inherent in expansive and corrective forms of sexual identity politics, queers have simply been recuperated by the forces of consumerist production. Queer theory has initiated a politics of irresolution while focusing on its ironic "disciplining compulsory imperative to remain undifferentiated" (Seidman, "Identity" 133). It appears unable to recognize that political disinterest is a liability and prey to conservative political recuperation. The additional inability of queer theory to react quickly or in any substantive way to immediate needs is another pitfall. The necessary risk of a 'pure' queer project cannot be undertaken without reestablishing and reaffirming its roots in the *visible* communities from which it arises and to which it must answer.

I thank Robert K. Martin and Lianne Moyes for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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"You're Freer If There's Nobody Around": "Gay Women's" Space in Small-Town Ontario

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Introduction

In this paper we interrogate how women in a small town in Ontario who define themselves as "gay"[1] attempt to produce spaces, at different scales, that both challenge the perceived heteronormativity of the town and allow them to sustain their identities. Through the data collected during interviews with nine women from a town in Ontario that we are calling "Waterside,"[2] we argue that these women offer a partial challenge to the widely held belief that small-town life is inherently heterosexual. We begin with

[1] Only one of the interviewees said that she would use the term "lesbian" to describe herself. All of the interviewees said that they would use the term "gay," and one expressed intense dislike of the term "lesbian," preferring "queer" but using "gay" on occasion. In order not to misrepresent the women we use the term "gay" to refer to the interviewees but "lesbian" when we refer to the literature.

[2] With the exceptions of Toronto, Vancouver, and Ontario, we have given pseudonyms to all of the Canadian places and people in this paper. We worked with a gay women's community that allows access only to those who agree to maintain the strict anonymity of its most vulnerable members. Permission to use the interviews was based on our agreeing to maintain the anonymity of the group, even if some individual members of the group were 'out.'

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 4-5 (2002-2003) © CLGSA / SCELG

a brief discussion of existing literature, the location of our study, and our research methodology. Our primary analytic tools come from critical human geography. Then, we explicate the ways in which geographers analyze the links between space and social relations, focusing in particular on the concept of scale. We proceed to examine three scales through which our respondents generate spaces that they can use to reproduce and sustain a fourth scale, the gay women's community. We conclude by considering the implications of our tentative findings for further research and by outlining the questions that our findings raise about the nature of small-town spaces and women-only communities.

Existing Literature

The existing geographical literature refers on the whole to lesbian spaces rather than gay women's spaces. Terminology is political, and geographers' discussion of "lesbian" spaces may indicate the researchers' contact with politicized and feminist communities. Given that the women we interviewed explicitly rejected the term "lesbian" and described themselves as "gay," we refer to them as "gay women." We presume a commonsense, although highly contested, definition of "lesbian" and "gay woman" in which both refer to women who are sexually involved with other women; we do so in order to draw on the literature that discusses the geography of lesbian spaces. This literature is divided between discussions of the urban and the rural. Some authors — such as Sy Adler and Johanna Brenner, Ann Forsyth, Tamar Rothenberg, and Gill Valentine — have examined the production of lesbian urban spaces. Literature on rural lesbians tends to refer to women-only land colonized by urban lesbians who seek an idyll where they may create nonoppressive forms of living and community. As such it tends to be an overtly feminist space (Bell/Valentine, "Queer Country" 118-19; Valentine, "Making Space" 67-69). One exception is Linda McCarthy's work on the ways rural lesbians in the USA sustain their identities. Existing geographical literature on lesbian spaces is also overwhelmingly limited to the UK and the USA, with some work, such as Elsie Jay's, on Australia. There are some contributions to the literature on lesbian spaces in Canada, such as Julie Podmore's work on lesbians in Montréal, and Anne-Marie Bouthillette's and Jenny Lo and Theresa Healy's work on Vancouver, but these are examinations of lesbians in urban spaces.

All of this geographical literature raises questions about how space is sexualized, or how sexuality is reproduced through space. Given the absence of discussions about nonmetropolitan areas our interest is in whether small towns, which lack the diversity of metropolitan areas and provide limited access to resources but do have industry, might be significant spaces where gay women have enough economic opportunities to remain where they were born and brought up rather than migrate to a big city (Weston 254). We are not so much concerned with their development of identities as with their ability to create and negotiate spaces in which they can sustain their community. Our access to one particular small town in Ontario suggested a starting point for this question.

Waterside

Waterside is located in Ontario. It has a population of just over 20,000. According to the Canadian census definition Waterside would just fall into the category of "small nonmetropolitan city" rather than that of the "small town." It would also fall into the category of "census agglomeration"[3] of which there are 68 in Ontario. It consists of an older, compact, downtown core located on the waterfront, and a newer, large, sprawling industrial and service area that includes gas stations, factories, malls, and residential neighborhoods. Waterside is surrounded by farmlands and very small towns and villages whose residents use the social services and entertainment facilities available in the town. Its economy is based on a diverse range of manufacturing industries.

Class differences are clearly evident among the residents of Waterside and are organized spatially through where people work, live, and go to school. Over 95 per cent of the population identify as white, and the remainder comprise aboriginal and a multiplicity of "visible minorities." English is the predominant language. There are no mosques, synagogues, or temples. There is approximately one church per 650 people. The majority of these churches are of protestant denomination. Entertainment and socializing center around churches, pubs, bars, restaurants, pool halls, a bowling alley, a movie

[3] The term census agglomeration refers to one or more adjacent municipalities centered on a large urban core. To form a census agglomeration the population count of the urban core must be at least 10,000 and less than 100,000.

theater, a bingo hall, and seasonal outdoor sports. There are no lesbian or gay entertainment facilities or social services. The video stores and public library offer virtually no identifiably queer-positive resources, texts, or videos. Beyond the scale of individual lesbian and gay bodies, which may at times be read as such, there are arguably no (positive) institutionalized representations of lesbian or gay sexualities or individuals in the spaces of Waterside. To the extent that any place is representative, Waterside offers an example of a typical small nonmetropolitan city, commonly referred to as a "small town," in anglophone south-western and south-eastern Ontario.

Research Methods and Theoretical Considerations

Learning of the authors' research interest in lesbian space, three young heterosexual and bisexual women from Waterside volunteered information about their experience of public space in the town. They argued that it was defined as heterosexual in a homophobic discourse. They expressed resentment about the restrictions that heterosexist comments about Waterside necessarily attempt to place on their own gender and sexual identities. Their examples raised questions for us about how the heterosexualization of small-town space might be replicated and challenged by the gay women living in it. All of the interviewees were selected because one of the authors had insider status with them. Access to the larger gay women's community was facilitated by an insider relationship with one of its members.

This paper is based on data collected from unstructured interviews with three young heterosexual and bisexual women (16-18 years of age) and six gay women (27-55 years of age). All of the respondents, with one exception, grew up or went to school in the Waterside vicinity. Five grew up in Waterside and three grew up in smaller villages nearby. Seven went to school in Waterside and one went to school in the surrounding area. Seven live in Waterside and two live in smaller villages. One of the respondents currently has health problems and is not working, but all of the other respondents work in Waterside. They work in a range of occupations including retail, nursing, middle-management in a factory, construction work, mission work, social work, and work in the Armed Forces. All of the gay women have identified as gay for most of their adult lives with the exception of one who had been married and has two grown children and two grandchildren. She has been a part of the gay

women's community in Waterside for approximately 14 years. None of the interviewees disclosed their ethnic identity to us.

In interviewing the women, we asked them to clarify what terminology they use to identify themselves and about their use of space in the home, yard, and town. We also asked about the sorts of lesbian or gay signifiers, such as T-shirts, necklaces, and buttons, that they wore. These questions elicited a complex understanding of how they utilized differing spatial scales.

The number of interviewees from whom data was collected is small and their experience cannot necessarily be assumed to represent the experiences of all young heterosexual and bisexual women or gay women in Waterside. Therefore any conclusions drawn from this research are necessarily partial. Nevertheless, the data provides insight into the sociospatial regulation and reproduction of gendered space and sexuality in a small-town Ontario context.

As a category of analysis, space itself is multiform. It is emotional, mental, and physical. Its physical form includes the built environment and landscape. Physical spaces are social spaces inasmuch as each type of physical space — a school playground, a home, a highway — has meaning and social significance, and each functions, in contested ways, to reproduce social differences such as age, gender, and class. Space is produced by ideological forces and power relations. Spaces make these visible and at once naturalize them by means of walls, windows, tower blocks, fences, etc. Tim Cresswell argues that through this process of spatial naturalization some beliefs, behaviors, and bodies appear to be "in place," while others are positioned as "out of place" in both the geographical and social sense (154). This demarcation of particular people and practices as being "out of place" in any given context constitutes the 'othering' of nondominant bodies, practices, and ideologies. Social space is structured by normative understandings of gender in the sense that they define who should be included and excluded from access to particular spaces. Women, for example, are under ideological pressure to locate themselves most properly in domestic or private space, leaving public space to men (McDowell 71-95).

Judith Butler complicates notions of gender by pointing to gender intelligibility, which relies on the performance of gender, sexual desire, and sexual practice in continuity and coherence with the "sex" of a given body (17). Just as bodies are not inherently sexed

or gendered and come into being through the performance of a "stylized repetition of acts" (140), so too is space a product of performativity. Thus, we maintain that space is not only gendered but also necessarily sexualized. The demarcation of public and private replicates the perceived binarism of heterosexuality. The volume of heteropatriarchal imagery in billboard, bus shelter, and window advertisements, the dearth of equivalent lesbian imagery, the critical mass of apparently heterosexual actions (such as opposite sex flirting, hand holding, and kissing), and the paucity of similar apparently lesbian actions combine through everyday repetition to build up a sense of space as naturally heterosexual. David Bell, Jon Binnie, Julia Cream, and Gill Valentine further explicate the socially constructed nature of space as heteropatriarchal, stating that, like gender and sexuality, space is not intrinsically heterosexual, but is actively produced as heterosexual through the repetitious performances of identities informed by the workings of the heterosexual matrix (45; see also Valentine, "(Hetero)Sexing Space" 409-10).

The naturalization of heterosexualized space is open to contestation and does not manifest itself in a singular unified way across all spaces. Particular spaces are sexualized in different ways, despite the normalization of heterosexuality. One way to think about how such a process happens is through the concept of *scale*.

In his article on the significance of scale Neil Smith argues that scale is the level at which social relations are understood to be organized. He lists the scales of the body, home, region, nation, and the globe (102-13). The production of scale, for example the definition of a particular place as a region, creates a site of "intense political struggle," because it is through scale that social differentiation takes place (97-99). The new "regional identity" of the inhabitants of a place may come into conflict with those of a different "region." According to Smith different kinds of places are distinguished from one another through the scale at which their meanings are understood. For example, the difference between levels of government and what each is responsible for is naturalized in space, as if space creates natural boundaries between levels of government — municipal, provincial, federal. As Neil Brenner argues in his discussion of urban theory, "scales operate simultaneously as territorial containers and as geographical hierarchies of everyday power relations under capitalism" (374). Smith's definition of scale

and Brenner's discussion are primarily concerned with economic power relations.

Sallie Marston extends the definition of scale to suggest that particular groups may utilize power relations at one scale to access power through another scale that exceeds economic considerations. In her example, late nineteenth-century American middle-class urban women used the scale of the home for "social and political identity formation." Domestic ideology legitimated their power through this scale, and from this base they then extended "their influence beyond the home to other scales of social life" such as municipal housekeeping (235). In the process they actively produced spaces through which they reproduced and also challenged the naturalization of social relations at different scales. Susan Ruddick adds that "there is no necessary correlation between the physical scale at which a public space is constituted and the scope of its public realm" (140). A small space — such as a yard — can be invested with the function of reproducing the (heterosexual) identity of its occupants. Space, then, functions to naturalize social differences and scale divides the geographical level of that naturalization. Thus, there may be an assumption that lesbians and gay men exist in the nation but they may be assumed to be absent from the town.

In this paper we look at three scales — the body, the home and yard, and the town — in order to discuss how the gay women's community in Waterside produces space. We utilize scale to analyze the spatial expression of sexuality since, just like the economy, sexuality is a field that is subject to and a product of competing ideologies. We unpack the scalar levels of meaning in gay women's spaces.

Bodies

For the gay women interviewees the scale of the body is a site both of possibility and of challenge. It provides a means by which they recognize each other and a site of safety from epistemic and/or physical violence. In accordance with Valentine's study ("Negotiating and Managing" 241-45), gay women in Waterside all employ what she terms "time-space strategies" through which they are more or less out at different times, in different places, and to different people.

The interviewees use their bodies for expression in many ways, but only three behaviors are of relevance to our research. First, they negotiate how heterosexuals read their bodies. Kelly, for example,

drew attention to the T-shirt she was wearing that featured two female cartoon characters kissing: "But it's the first time I've felt comfortable wearing it out; but I know where I was going, I had to get in that headspace, where you know where you're going to go ... I've just recently shaved my legs and I know I couldn't have a summer of not shaving my legs in this town because people are like ... fuck! What the fuck?" Here, Kelly suggests that while she can wear a T-shirt to indicate her sexuality, defying gender norms is more difficult. Her gender performance in turn complicates her degree of visibility. She acknowledged that she can pass as heterosexual and that who she was with in public determined how her sexuality was read: "But going out, it depends who you go out with because I can play both sides, it's very easy to pass either way" (Kelly). Her singular body is insufficient to signal her sexuality without the T-shirt, and can only produce gay women's space when associated with another body. This means she is frequently confronted with the choice to activate what she defines as "queer" space through her selection of clothing, her presentation of her body (shaved or hairy legs), and her choice of company.

The body can also serve to exclude a woman from gay women's space, since the second use of the body is as an identifier for other gay women. This generates a space that is populated with women they can recognize and who are similar to themselves. Kelly's ability to "pass either way" means that she is sometimes misread by other gay women or lesbians. Referring to a coffee shop run by a lesbian, Kelly remarked: "But even when I go in there that woman is just cranky, like I don't go in there and feel comfortable because I go in there and I'm like, first of all you don't recognize me, you don't recognize me as in your subculture." This use of the body to reproduce gay women's space clearly limits the contours of that space, as Kelly attests. Dana implicitly acknowledged the limitations: "But I think there's a larger community of gays in Waterside than we know."

A third use of the body is to produce gay women's space en masse and confront homophobic behavior. Dana expressed irritation with the oversexualization of gay women, through which they were perceived as sexual predators with diseased bodies:

> You know people are very closed minded. You know it's not like I'm going to jump all over them just because you

> know I'm gay and I see you outside and like I'm going to take you to bed or whatever. That's what people think, you know ... Because they're afraid they're going to catch something when I shake ... Well, to the point where at a ball game, Joanne and Pam and Cathy and Diane and all the girls on the ball team and they would shake hands with the other ball team. You know the girls would go like this and wipe their hands on their pants because they knew that they were gay and they didn't want to catch anything. It was very obvious at ball games ... Well I mean, you know, give me a break. (Dana)

In response to the heterosexual ball-players' fear of contamination through touch, the gay ball-players at the next game returned the insult, wiping their hands after shaking with the opposing team. Overall, in the absence of public spaces, gay women in Waterside use their bodies to manage heterosexist and homophobic situations and ultimately to create gay women's spaces. These uses of the body to produce space are especially useful in Waterside because there are no institutional spaces (bars, clubs, community events) where they can assume everyone present is a gay woman. In the absence of identifiable and demarcated social spaces it is by means of their bodies that the gay women interviewees challenge the construction of Waterside as a heterosexual space.

Homes and Yards

Smith refers to the scale of the home as the "heavily gendered site" of "personal and familial reproduction" (104). Feminist geographers have examined the ways in which lesbians create sociosexual spaces in their homes. Sarah Elwood identifies contradictory meanings of home for lesbians. Her research reveals that some lesbians assert their sexual identity and challenge presumed heterosexuality by using visible signifiers on the outside of their homes, such as rainbow flags and posters (17). Her study is based on a uniquely politicized lesbian feminist community in the United States, whereas we argue that in Waterside the respondents challenge assumed heterosexuality and counter latent homophobia through the scale of the home in necessarily different ways. The first way concerns the inside of the house itself, and the second concerns the semipublic space of yards.

Kelly, Brenda, and Fiona all discussed the ways in which they manage the competing meanings of home inside the house. Kelly lives with her mother and much younger sister in "Willowville," a village outside Waterside. Asked whether she has any queer possessions in the home, she replied:

> Well, it's hidden, all my *on our backs* editions, and all my pictures ... I don't put any of that up, well actually my calendar, I am and I'm not, I'm at the point where I don't want to have to feel like I'm a dirty little secret anymore, I don't want to and I don't think I should ... but it's easy when you say that when you're single and it's not in your face. You know, all of a sudden I bring someone home and say can we sit here and hold hands on your couch? Or, you know, we're going to bed now ... that's going to be a completely new foreign ground for her to handle ... my ex and my other friend made me a calendar, boys who are girls, something like that, something really clever, and some really nasty dirty awesome genderfucked pictures and I thought I love this calendar this is my life, my calendar, you know, I've had it up since I got it May last year and I thought I'm going to put it up and I put it up in the closet, but the door was closed [laughter] I know but the door was always open, it was on the other side of the closet so I thought well if someone comes in I'll just shut the door, but I showed her [her mother] the calendar, I put it up, you know, and it was like, baby steps, you know, baby steps. (Kelly)

Kelly expresses here the complex negotiations around sharing her home with her mother. She feels pressure to hide the material that affirms her identity, yet is also prepared to work through her mother's response to the material at her mother's pace. Yet she acknowledges that this process is easy as long as she does not introduce another gay or "genderfucked" body into the space. If she did, her mother would then have to confront the relational meaning of Kelly's identity.

Home-owners Brenda and Fiona, on the other hand, expressed ambivalence toward the visibility of possessions, such as pictures and clocks, that signified their identities, and toward their 'de-dyking' strategies for dealing with visitors. Their strategies vary:

> It's pretty well de-dyked. Well, we had those pictures up on the wall of those two women. We took that down. Two nude

women. When we went Christian. We went Christian maybe a year ago, two years ago. It was too odd ... or someone was going to sleep in our room ... (Fiona)

The nephews were over. (Brenda)

That's right, but it hasn't gone back up. (Fiona)

I thought stuff just kind of happened. Like the batteries in our clock went funky. (Brenda)

Well that's funny 'cause we do have a rainbow clock. That's just because we always keep that up. I don't consider that to be, I don't know ... And we've got stickers on our cars, gay stickers. I guess the pictures in the bedroom are what I saw as de-dyking. We took those down for the nephews. The [sex] toys are very well hidden. If any. (Fiona)

In the closet, but again, that's the nephews. Don't want them running around with those. (Brenda)

We've got our books upstairs but they're out in the open. But we did take them out of the room if somebody stayed there. My sister. (Fiona)

In spite of the confusion over why particular 'de-dyking' strategies were employed, Brenda and Fiona were adamant that in terms of affection they were not prepared to 'de-dyke' their relationship; Fiona remarked: "That is something that we've made a conscious decision on is within the house. We haven't really talked about it but ... because we respect other people when we're out so we might not hold hands. It depends on who it is. But if anybody comes over, straight, gay, whatever, we'll kiss, we'll hold hands." Clearly, Kelly's struggle is diametrically opposite to Brenda and Fiona's. Kelly insists on creating what she defines as a queer space in her room with objects such as a calendar; she is at once aware that a relationship would create a new level of territorial struggle over her use of the sofa or of her bed to express her sexuality through holding hands, kissing, or having sex. Brenda and Fiona conceal or remove the objects that attest to their sexuality and relationship, but are not prepared to forego affectionate interactions in front of visitors. All three women point to the contradiction in negotiating the interior of the home, a supposedly private space associated with the expression of identity, with the perceived expectations of visitors or other occupants. The presence of other bodies seems to create a sense of limitation on the women's claim to spatial autonomy in

the home. This sense of limitation supports Johnston and Valentine's finding, in their comparative analysis of lesbians in New Zealand and the UK, that the scale of the home is overburdened with conflicting gendered meanings (111-12). These meanings complicate gay women's attempts to generate alternative versions of the "home."

Socializing in larger groups usually takes place indoors. Dana, Sam, and Martha referred to parties before Christmas, on New Year's Eve, and on long weekends, and to having people over to play cards or watch lesbian movies that had been copied from satellite dishes and distributed through the community. As Brenda explained, socializing with other gay women occurs, "Almost exclusively within people's homes with their yards ...We go to dances in 'Gladstone,' women's dances in Gladstone. Sometimes a couple of carloads of us will go up. But almost exclusively things like this." However, as Brenda indicated above, the women resist unspoken assumptions that expressions of their sexuality must occur only within the home. Although not intended as a direct political statement, they claim the territory of their yard as a legitimate but contested space for expression of their community. This expression ranges from individuals kissing to community gatherings during which no-one may kiss. Yet the mere presence of a women-only group provides a challenge to heterosexist assumptions about domestic space. These challenges are nonetheless always carefully negotiated around the participants' individual levels of comfort. Brenda, for example, explained that she and Fiona would "kiss on the porch and stuff like that. Like when I'm leaving for work ... I figure it's my yard. I wouldn't do it in somebody else's yard just out of respect for it being their yard. But in my yard, I mean ..." Brenda sees her yard as private even if it is overlooked by neighbors. Dana's understanding of the yard indicates that it can also be a semipublic space with varying degrees of privacy:

> Mind you it's nice to have privacy when you get a gang together like last night ... The girls are usually pretty good with neighbors that are close like this ... Well I'm sure that they probably sat out on their decks last night [laughter]. They did across the way. You know ... Now out at Gina and Tammy's there's no neighbors, you know ... Just through the trees there's someone off to the side but not that they

> could see what was, not that we did anything, but you know, you're freer if there's nobody around. (Dana)

If the home is a scale through which heteronormativity is written into the geography of domesticity, yards appear to provide more opportunities for developing gay women's space. Yards are still subject to surveillance, but they are not as clearly gendered as the interior of the home. However, unlike homes, into which people are invited, yards may be overlooked by strangers and hostile neighbors. The interviewees expressed a shared sense that their actions had to take into account the possible negative reactions of others. Exercising such caution at the scale of the town was a more complex process.

Town

The town of Waterside is, as a geographical scale, most simply understood as the site where "capital and social resources devoted to social production, consumption and administration" are centralized (Smith 107). To the extent that it is large enough to produce differential land uses through differential ground rent levels, the town is a space in which social differences — that is, levels of income, access to resources, access to different areas within the town — are reproduced spatially. In this sense the very idea that Waterside is a 'small town' can be understood as a shorthand for particular forms of social relations: the role of local government in promoting particular local interests; rigid gender roles; heterosexuality; and hard-working self-reliant individuals. The roles of capital, gender, sexuality, and state power are reproduced in people's everyday lives as they move around the town negotiating areas where they are sometimes in place and sometimes out of place.

Every interviewee used the term "straight-laced" to describe the town. Kelly went so far as to condemn it as "small-time, small-mind, small-town, very white, very straight, very hard to ... it's straight and narrow, you don't deviate from the norm here. You do and you're excluded, you're alienated and you're ostracized, completely, from any community." Kelly's sense of the town as rigidly heterosexual was supported by the experiences of the heterosexual and bisexual high school students interviewed. A common sentiment in Waterside is that lesbian existence is solely an urban phenomenon. While this understanding is likely largely informed by the fact that lesbians and

gay women in Waterside carefully negotiate their levels of visibility and do not strive for an obvious and continuous presence, it may also ensure the future invisibility of lesbians in Waterside. For example, the notion of lesbians as exclusively urban became an issue for a high school art class painting a mural that depicted employees working in a local factory. The students unintentionally created a woman (the only one in the mural) who "looked like a dyke":

> We were almost finished, we just had the woman left and our teacher was practically freaking out. He kept saying, "give her more hair," "why does she look like a man," "make her look more feminine." Some of us were annoyed and we knew he didn't want her to look like a dyke so we said, "Why Mr. S, what's the problem?" He got all red and said, "Not that I care, but she looks like a lesbian." So I said, "So what, don't you think any lesbians work there?" He got all mad and said, "Don't say that. I don't think it's appropriate. This has to go on the wall you know. Where do you think we are, San Francisco?" (Becki)

This example reveals 'commonsense' notions about what can be 'appropriately' depicted in a deliberate representation of Waterside life and represented to the community as a scholastic, artistic endeavor by young people. Lesbians, it seems, are in place in San Francisco, but out of place in Waterside. Moreover, schools must be seen to replicate gendered distinctions of appearance and occupation. The mural depicts only one woman as a worker and she must have a feminine appearance, regardless of how inaccurately that may reflect Waterside's female workforce.

Jenna stated that while attending a lecture on driving safety with a group of other high school students, the conversation turned toward the out American comedienne Ellen Degeneres. The teacher asked one student, "You like that dyke? What are you, a lesbian [laughing]? Sorry, just kidding, I know you are not a lesbian." As Jenna reports:

> I was so mad and I said, "Why do you think you can always tell if someone is a lesbian?" He's so dumb he just said, "Because you can just tell and I sure don't know any." I told him that my sister is lesbian and he just laughed and said "Oh yah, who is she?" When I told him he doesn't know her because she lives in Toronto he said, "Well that explains it. What do your parents think about what happened to her in the big city?" (Jenna)

Such statements concerning the urban construction of lesbians and of small town impossibility are profoundly invested in the notion of natural and original female heterosexuality that permeates the scale of the town. Individual bodies may lose their heterosexuality but only through a spatial shift. The gay women know that their presence unsettles the scalar function of the town to reproduce heterosexual space. By contrast, these men's statements insist that the scale of the town is secure. They work to reinscribe this security by refusing the possibility of unknown (to them) lesbian bodies that might denaturalize the presumed heterosexual contours of Waterside. These men's homophobic invocations of the urban/small town dichotomy as one of vice/virtue and lesbian/straight gain discursive legitimacy from their roles as teachers.

In another example of the reproduction of the town as a heterosexual site, the young bisexual interviewee remembered a conversation she had with a local real estate agent who expressed disgust after attending a business function. According to Carla, the real estate agent said: "'I hate going to all these dinners in Toronto and Ottawa with all the flashy queers. They just work to represent the 'gay community.' She [a lesbian real estate agent] just got up there and started talking about servicing [*sic*] the 'gay community' this and serving the gay community that. Like, as if this is relevant to us. Why do we have to sit through that?'" (qtd. by Carla). The "us" clearly denotes a heterosexual population that is assumed to constitute not just the real estate agent herself but the entirety of the small town in which she works. Again, the town is imagined as a purely heterosexual space by this woman. In her work she may well replicate that assumption, selling only to buyers she perceives as heterosexual. Her imagined assumptions about the town may thereby become concretized in its residential neighborhoods.

The young heterosexual and bisexual women encountered vehement denials of lesbian possibility in the town, and the teachers and real estate agent actively produced the space as heterosexual. In this context, the gay women have to negotiate the tension between their own physical presence in the town and the townspeople's construction of it as a heterosexual space in which they are out of place. Kelly described this tension as, "draining because you're constantly worried about, well, not worried but on guard about what people are going to react to, and how are they going to react, and

what are they going to do, how they're going to act, and then you have to constantly defend what you're trying to do when you're just trying to go to the bank, use the machines, eat in a restaurant, you know I don't need that kind of stuff." Kelly's experience signals how the intersection of two scales — the body and the town — is a site of struggle over social relations. Her need to be "on guard" suggests that social surveillance is a key element in the contest between those inhabitants determined to heterosexualize the town, those determined to challenge them, and those made uncomfortable by their position within the town. Fiona indicated how the fear of surveillance affected the behvavior of some gay women: "Like somebody was here today and I was outside and you and I were hugging or something and somebody said 'Oh I'm just going to move around this way because I know people across the street.'" Kelly also mentioned the complex role of social surveillance in the town and its effect on her activities. A coworker reported to Kelly a conversation he had had with another coworker: "she said she had seen you downtown and you were with a really butchy woman." Of course, the intersection between the body and town also occurs in larger urban areas, but the lack of anonymity in the town — "I know people across the street"; "she said she had seen you" — means that gay women cannot control the processes of recognition and safety when they are in the town. In larger urban areas, neighborhoods may to some extent replicate this lack of anonymity, but there are other parts of the urban area where anonymity is ensured. In addition, larger urban areas are often more diverse than small towns, and so visible difference is not such an issue as it is in a small town.

In spite of the conflict caused by the intersecting scales, Kelly self-consciously struggles to "jump scales" (Ruddick 140). Scale gives spatial expression to the meaning of social relations. Jumping scales is therefore the process of giving an action that has a meaning at one scale a meaning at another scale. For example, a kiss has meaning at the scale of the body, but if performed in public it may challenge the interpretation of the town as heterosexual and if performed as part of an organized political protest it may challenge the interpretation of the province or nation as heterosexual. Kelly asserted that: "I'll out myself as soon as I can and be very open about it because I'm not going to be anyone's dirty secret any more. I'm really sick of that and that whole perception of Waterside being really

straight." She expresses her identity through the scale of her body (T-shirts, for example) and is determined that her presence will have an impact at the scale of the town.

Rather than use their bodies as signifiers, Brenda and Fiona use the function of the town as a site of consumption to challenge its status as a straight space. Fiona remarked: "I was just thinking Mark's Work Warehouse. There is a gay guy. He's pretty obviously there. So it's pretty supportive. You know, so you kind of search those people out. There's a place called Picture Perfect and I am pretty sure it's a dyke who runs it ... Like I would tend to go there, you know. We'll buy from each other kind of stuff." Fiona uses "gaydar," the intuitive sense that another person is also lesbian or gay, to identify retailers she will support. Fiona uses counterassumptions, not necessarily fact, to make the space more gay or lesbian. She inserts herself, and Waterside, into an "imagined community" of lesbians and gays. The term "imagined community," derived from Benedict Anderson, signals a sense of shared connection with the unknown members of a "fictional group" (Weston 257). Fiona presumes that the assistant in Mark's Work Warehouse and the woman in Picture Perfect are both members of the imagined community, and interacts with them accordingly. Fiona's exercise of this practice may be influenced by the fact that she is the only one of the interviewees not born in Waterside or vicinity, but rather grew up in a major city. Other interviewees, such as Dana, might use their "gaydar" but were much more likely to wait until they had verbally established that a woman was "gay" before including her in the "community."

In contrast to these examples of interventions into the space of the town by individuals, when the interviewees are on a group outing their use of the town is more circumspect. Although they frequent a "plain restaurant, a regular restaurant" it is out of town and, as one of the women stated, "that's exactly why it's been chosen." Normally they reserve a private room at this restaurant for their events. When the gay women are in smaller groups (couples or foursomes) they dine in more centrally located restaurants. However, when they are together in the large, women-only group, their visibility as lesbians is dramatically increased and this prompts them to select more remote venues.

In spite of the everyday struggle involved in producing gay women's space in Waterside, few of the women expressed any desire

to leave. Dana explained her reasons for staying: "'cause my family's here ... Yep. I'm established. At one time I wanted to run away from home, but [laughter] didn't we all? No, I've never even considered moving away." Sam and Martha expressed similar reasons for staying, including proximity to family, cost of living, financial security, and the ability to own a house with a yard. Although none of the interviewees discussed this, it is extremely uncommon for working-class women ever to leave Waterside for an urban location. This too may have influenced their decisions. Others had moved away but subsequently returned. Kelly had returned in order to find work and save money, while living with her mother and sister, but had no intention of staying: "Oh fuck no. Not at all. I hate this place." After living in Toronto for six or seven years, however, Brenda moved back to Waterside, bringing her partner Fiona with her. They did not elaborate on their reasons for returning, but Fiona's ill health coupled with the cost of living elsewhere may have been contributing factors. In Toronto they rented an apartment, whereas in Waterside they own two properties, one of which they rent out.

Some of the interviewees acknowledged an implicit belief that small-town lesbians must go to a big city in order to experience the emancipation only possible in urban spaces. Others had enacted that journey toward emancipation for themselves, expressing the sense that the lesbian and transgender communities in Toronto and Vancouver felt like home. Nevertheless the various ties that brought them back to Waterside challenge two assumptions: first, that migration out of the small town is permanent (see Bell/Valentine, "Queer Country" 117); second, that when lesbians leave urban areas they seek rural feminist utopias (Bell/Valentine, "Queer Country" 118-19; Valentine, "Making Space" 67-69).

The interviewees' experiences suggest that the town is the most complex scale that they have to negotiate. Paradoxically, given that they all referred to it in the same way, the town is also the scale through which divisions between the gay women appear. Some mount conscious challenges to the assumption of Waterside heteronormativity. Others replicate that heteronormativity by choosing out of town social spaces. Attempts to control the contours of gay women's space are threatened by the lack of anonymity in the town, just as the town is unsettled by the presence of gay women's bodies. Nevertheless, the evidence provided by the interviewees

suggests that it is possible for gay women to create and maintain a space for themselves in small Ontarian towns.

Community

The preceding sections discussed three scales in some detail. We have argued that through their manipulation of these scales the gay women created a space for their community. The interviewees self-consciously identify themselves as part of "the community," which they also term the "gay community" and the "women's community." By this they mean that they are part of a group that is defined as a combination of gender, sexual identity, and geographical region. With the possible exception of Fiona, discussed above, their use of the term "community" does not correspond to the "imagined community" discussed by Elwood (16), Lo and Healy (32-33), and Weston (257). Instead it refers to a concrete social network of named individuals, to which access is restricted by its members. Dana regards the community as diverse: "we've got them all in every walk of life here too because Martha, she's in the Armed Forces, Sam's partner, I'm in nursing, we have a teacher, you know, so it's not, oh, and shift workers, and you know that kind of stuff." In addition, the "community" can coalesce in the most unlikely of places; Dana explained: "because how you meet people was, Gina went to a Pampered Chef party, maybe, Tupperware. And Janet was there. And Paula was there. They kind of got talking and so the next time they had their party in the summer Janet and Paula were there. Okay, so there's the next, growth of the community." The "community" is also an exclusive group:

> But we were here for almost two years before we really hooked up with them and it almost seems like you really have to kind of get called by somebody ... By invitation only ... this has blown me away, a friend of ours, somebody that we met outside of this group who just moved from Woodridge to here, is gay ... so I called up and said "Do you guys mind if I invite somebody else, a friend of mine who is gay," you know. Oh yah, yah, no problem. And I get a call back two minutes later. Umm, "we had to make sure of something. Is she definitely gay?" I said "yeah." "Is she definitely anonymous? Will she keep everything she hears here anonymous?" I said yeah, you know, that's the condition. (Fiona)

The careful gatekeeping of the "community" is designed to protect its most vulnerable members. These are the women who are or feel themselves to be at risk of violence, loss of employment, or loss of custody of their children. It also includes the married members of the community. The restrictions on the community are not, then, examples of self regulation as expression of internalized homophobia, which the earlier practices of 'de-dyking' may be. Instead, the gatekeeping is a strategic response to danger, and a conscious act of community building in that all members assume responsibility for protecting the anonymity of the group.

The women expressed pride in the fact that it is a very mobile, active, and physically competent community. While both Sam and Martha referred to routine attempts to minimize their chances of being publicly identified as lesbians, they emphasized that they do not live isolated, inhibited, and solitary lives. As Sam stated, she doesn't "hang back." All the women referred to a plethora of social activities in which they engage with other lesbian residents of Waterside. Sports in particular were identified as an acknowledged way for gay women to meet each other.

Despite the difficulties that these women identified in negotiating their everyday lives as gay women in Waterside, they argue that heterosexist and homophobic discourses and spatial practices have not prevented them from engaging in rich social lives or from developing positive self-images. As Sam made clear, being gay has been "life enhancing." Gay women, according to her, are "adventurous in spirit." She further stated that their sexuality has prompted the women she knows to "do more" with their lives, including building projects, and that she has "never regretted any minute" of her choice to remain in Waterside. She makes a link between her sexuality and her mobility, naturalizing her spatial mobility and active physical life along with that of the other gay women in the community. She sets up an explicit dichotomy with heterosexual women in Waterside. Most heterosexual women there have children (and therefore have no free time) and are in addition subject to intense surveillance by men and other women, just as the gay women feel themselves to be. Nevertheless, Sam implicitly naturalized her spatial mobility and heterosexual women's spatial immobility as a result of their differing sexuality. To fully understand the roots of the dichotomy that Sam invokes we would, ideally,

examine the socialization of her generation in Waterside into gendered differences in mobility and activity levels.

Conclusions

Heteronormative sexual discourses and their materializations in space are not just passively accepted but are also actively challenged in Waterside by gay women despite a complete lack of institutional support. The gay women create ruptures in heteronormative sociospatial relations through the very presence of their bodies. Each time the "community" gets together it creates a space at a particular scale. The interviewees suggest that they pick a scale over which they have control, such as a private home, and they control who is granted access to it and under what conditions. In this sense they effectively control what form gay women's space takes in Waterside, and the scale at which it takes place.

The title of this paper, based on Dana's remark that "you're freer if there's nobody around," points to three tentative conclusions. First, the community may have more freedom to produce gay women's space in isolated locations, away from the town and degrees of real and imagined surveillance. Second, as Dana's phrasing — "freer" — suggests, the community claims a certain, presumably shifting, degree of freedom even when there *are* people around. It may be an anonymous group but it, or at least some members of it, have an identifiable presence. Dana's remark about "nobody," although it clearly referred in context to the group holding a party at an isolated rural home, may also signal that some members of the group, such as Kelly or Fiona, have more freedom to signal their sexuality when nobody else from the group is around. Third, while these gay women, as a community, challenge heteronormativity through their use of space, this challenge is not necessarily equally intended by all members of the group. Some may consciously signal their sexuality in an attempt to unsettle the presumed sexual homogeneity of the town, while others may possibly naturalize the heteronormativity of the town, but at once challenge it through their participation in the group.

As we argued at the beginning of this paper, the small sample of interviewees means that our conclusions at this stage are tentative. Nevertheless, our research does raise a number of questions about small towns, the lives of the individual gay women living there, control over space, and lesbian communities. This particular small

town has at least one large, well-established, and active gay-women-only community. While the Waterside gay women are clearly not part of a separatist feminist community, they do utilize the rigid gender boundaries of small-town life to create a relatively safe and supportive space for women from which men are excluded. Valentine's work on lesbian separatist communities in the USA suggests that women-only communities (we would except religious orders) tend to evolve from a radical feminist critique of heteropatriarchal oppression ("Making Space" 67). Existing studies of urban or highly visible lesbian spaces do not highlight an absolute division between men and women, but instead map the effects of lesbian concentration on the landscape (Forsyth 51) or discuss how lesbians negotiate and produce urban space in relation to the practices of gay men (Adler/Brenner 25). Gillian Rose argues that feminist separatist spaces have been denigrated since the 1990s as essentialist and exclusionary, but she acknowledges that they have a long history and posits them as temporary "breathing spaces" in women's struggles to form coalitions between groups (153). Valentine assesses the failures of lesbian feminist separatist spaces through bitter conflicts over social differences ("Making Space" 69-74). Does the exclusive, continuously growing, and relatively long life of the gay women's space produced by the interviewees, therefore, offer any lessons for feminist organizing or understandings of separatism?

Our intention now is to explore these questions in continued research and to develop this work in order to think about the production of lesbian and gay women's space at other scales and to consider how these scales intersect. For instance, the work of anthropologist Jo Tacchi examines how radio sound within the home creates a degree of sociability that can link or isolate an occupant from outside social networks. Her work suggests an intriguing dimension for thinking about how scales intersect, and how the use of media creates particular kinds of spaces within the home. This is a particularly promising way to think about how geographically remote communities perceive urban lesbian communities. Similarly, our initial research provides a starting point for considering how the Canadian state, where social relations of sexuality are legislated in particular ways at the national scale, intersects with the gay women's space reproduced in small towns. Do gay women (and heterosexuals) in small towns develop their understanding of what lesbian space

looks like from Canadian sources, or do they invoke US models such as Provincetown and San Francisco? Hopefully, further qualitative interviews with a larger number of interviewees will elicit answers to these questions. So watch this space.

Many thanks to the interviewees who generously shared their time with us. Thanks to John Plews and two anonymous reviewers for their comments on this article.

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Queering "Pervert City"

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In 1997, junior hockey coach Graham James was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison for abusing Sheldon Kennedy and another unnamed player whom James coached as junior players. Sheldon Kennedy was well known as a National Hockey League (NHL) player and this, together with the fact that hockey is considered by some to be Canada's national pastime, created great interest in the incident not only among the people involved in the scandal but in the places where the abuse was reported to have happened. One of these places, Swift Current, Saskatchewan, received most of the media attention because it was here that James, Kennedy, and Kennedy's teammates achieved their greatest success, winning the Memorial Cup for junior hockey supremacy and producing a number of stars for the NHL.

While much can be written about this episode in Canadian sporting history, including how sexual abuse in sport emerged as an ethical issue worthy of attention,[1] in this paper I am interested in how representations of the James scandal by the popular media relied on a dominant cultural story (Hall; Kincaid) about sexual abuse of children and youth in dysfunctional families. I focus on how newspaper representations constructed meaning about the events,

[1] While little attention was paid to this issue before, despite frequent concerns expressed by female athletes in relation to their male coaches, it took NHL player Sheldon Kennedy's story to produce policy, handbooks, websites, hot lines, skateathons, tv movies, and other ways of dealing with these issues.

people, and place associated with the scandal from a pervasive cultural narrative that gave "form to ... our ways of seeing children, sexuality, and transgression" (Kincaid 5). Demonstrating how the scandal was represented in the media is not intended as a denial of events that took place in Swift Current. Rather, it is an attempt to make apparent how newspaper representations of these events invoked a dominant cultural story about sexual abuse in dysfunctional families and, in this particular case, represented Swift Current *as* a dysfunctional family, a complicit yet innocent bystander in the sexual abuse of junior hockey players coached by James.

Once the story broke that James had been charged with assaulting junior hockey players, and particularly once Sheldon Kennedy, by then an NHL player, came forward to talk publicly about what had happened, news media across North America became interested in Swift Current. *The Globe and Mail*, for example, described Swift Current this way:

> To understand why the James affair has hit Swift Current so hard, you first need to understand how small the city is and how big the sport.
>
> Swift Current is the sort of place where people are excited that Tommy Hunter is coming this month to perform ... It's the sort of place where people are still known by what church they belong to, where you could drive down the fiendishly cold main street last week and see a whole row of cars left running and unlocked
>
> ... In such a climate, those who play for the Broncos are local heroes who stand a chance of living the Canadian dream of playing in the NHL, feted guests of honour at fowl suppers, and community leaders with a stature far beyond their years. (Mitchell A6)

Swift Current was also described by the media as angry and betrayed (Brownridge, "Assault" A2); characterized as a town of deep shame (Gillis, "Sex Assaults" A1); and called "Pervert City" by one of my colleagues, when I indicated that that was where I was born. Swift Current was reduced simultaneously to a city of perversion and bucolic innocence: a place with "its heart broken, its shoulders slumping, every bone in its body aching as it searches within itself for answers" (Drinnan B1). As I explain, these contradictory

representations can coexist within a cultural narrative about sexual abuse in dysfunctional families.

In what follows, I first read newspaper representations of Swift Current as a dysfunctional family through a familiar cultural story about sexual abuse that highlights notions of complicity, duplicity, and innocence. However, in order to confound representations of Swift Current as a place fixed by this cultural story, I intervene with my own understanding of this place. As a queer youth living in Swift Current in the 1950s and 1960s, I was often smitten by adults who were my mentors. By interjecting some of my experiences, I hope to disrupt the cultural story of Swift Current as a dysfunctional family, as well as open up notions of authority, innocence, and sexual abuse to other possibilities. I offer my experiences not to assert the truth of this place, thus applying a different but still singular set of meanings to Swift Current and the relationships of the people who live and have lived there (Scott; Sedgwick). Rather, this is a deconstructive move. Referring to writing about her experiences with the diagnosis and medical treatment of breast cancer, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick indicates that "it's hard not to think of this ... experience as ... an adventure in applied deconstruction" (12). Sedgwick's experiences call into question neatly packaged oppositions between safety and danger, fear and hope, past and future, thought and act, and the natural and the technological and, in doing so, disrupt precise definitions of identity, gender, and sexuality (12, 13). Likewise, recounting some of my experiences of sexuality as a youth living in Swift Current, including my pursuit of my coach, has the potential to call into question oppositions between innocence and dysfunction, the normal and the perverted, and insiders and outsiders and, in so doing, disrupt the tidy stories told about sexual abuse of innocent youth in dysfunctional families (or places). I intend the intervention of my experiences to be a queer reading of this place called "pervert city," where queer suggests that "meanings ... can be at loose ends with each other" (Sedgwick 6). In turn, I hope to show that Swift Current exceeds its representations as a healthy, family town *and* its representations as a town of perversion or dysfunction.

But before proceeding with the popular media and my own reading of Swift Current, I present a brief chronology of the scandal involving James and Kennedy.

The Scandal

Graham James began his coaching career in Manitoba in the late 1970s and by the beginning of the 1980s he had become a Junior A hockey coach. He first encountered Sheldon Kennedy at a hockey school in 1982 when Kennedy was thirteen years old. In 1984, James recruited Kennedy to his Winnipeg team and, when this team was moved to Moose Jaw, James arranged to have Kennedy move with him. According to Kennedy, James began sexual contact with him not long after his arrival in Winnipeg. While in Moose Jaw, the expectation that Kennedy would go to James's apartment every Tuesday and Thursday began and continued until Kennedy was nineteen years old.

James was dismissed from the Moose Jaw team for suspected improprieties that were only revealed once the abuse story broke. He moved Kennedy with him to Winnipeg for a short time and then in 1986 he became the head coach of the Swift Current Broncos. He ensured that Kennedy joined him there. In 1986, a bus accident killed four of the Bronco players and James was credited with helping the surviving players through the ordeal (Robinson 160). In 1989, the Swift Current Broncos won the Memorial Cup with the most successful record ever in the Canadian Hockey League. Sheldon Kennedy had outstanding seasons both in 1988 and in 1989 and was named to the national junior team in 1988.

Kennedy was drafted by the Detroit Red Wings in 1989 and acquired a reputation as someone emotionally out of control. He was convicted of reckless driving and charged with drug possession, and he was traded a number of times. Meanwhile in Swift Current, James continued his success as a winning coach and gained popularity as a colorful personality. However, at the end of the 1993-94 season, James's contract was not renewed. He subsequently appeared in Calgary where he became part-owner, general manager, and head coach of the Calgary Hitmen (Robinson 164). In 1997, while Kennedy was a player for the Boston Bruins, he went public with his story.

In 1997, Graham James was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison. He was released from prison in July 2000 and, to the consternation of the Canadian Hockey Association and of many in the sporting public, James became a coach with the Spanish national team.

Reading Representations of Swift Current through Stories of Sexual Abuse

Experts in psychology, social work, and other human sciences have played a prominent role in producing a story about sexual abuse in dysfunctional families that has become familiar in Western culture (see Armstrong; Crewsdon; La Fontaine; Miller; Rush). This is a story of sexual abuse in a "'family system' gone wrong [where] each family member own[s] a piece of the problem" (Dinsmore 15). According to Pat Gilmartin, family pathology is not regarded as an "idiosyncratic behavior of a single member of that unit; rather, the family system is implicated as causing and perpetuating whatever problem that exists" (82). Family members are all implicated in the abuse as victims, perpetrators, gullible innocents, or complicit third parties (Butler).

As I have said, newspaper reporters' attempts to understand what happened in Swift Current were cast in terms of the familiar cultural story about sexual abuse in dysfunctional families. Official City information sources and outside media represent Swift Current as valuing families. The city website, for example, indicates that "Swift Current is a city of families and friends. Our continuing efforts to maintain a high quality of life and opportunity for our neighbours is only rivalled by our desire to welcome new families to Swift Current and make new friends" ("Swift Current"). Swift Current not only values family, it *is* a family, according to some. For example, Joe Arling, a hotel owner and member of the board of directors of the Broncos, was reported in 1997 to say:

> This is a community with very strong morals and beliefs. It has very strong family values and in a way, it's a family itself. To me, what Graham did was a violation of trust and position, just like priests and teachers have abused their positions. Hockey just happened to be the venue, in this case. But like anywhere, there'll be significant hurt here. No one would have expected it to happen in this community. (Qtd. in Gillis, "Hockeytown" H2)

Swift Current is a family, but a dysfunctional one. Moreover, people in Swift Current were represented as recognizing the dysfunction of the community: "One thing's certain, this farming, railway and oil community — a well-spring of dedicated, sometimes brilliant hockey players — will never feel the same about itself. Or its and Canada's favourite game" (Gillis, "James Incident" A2).

As a dysfunctional family, Swift Current was represented as complicit in the sexual abuse of the junior hockey players who lived there. In some accounts James was cast as a member of the dysfunctional family that made possible the abuse of Kennedy and other junior hockey players: "while preying on boys for his confessed sexual gratification, James could not operate alone. He had help and lots of it. Passive, blind, hopelessly naive help from those who most trusted the junior hockey coach: parents, billets, league and team administrators, and teammates" (Ormsby D3).

Many reporters and some residents of the city were reported to have thought it was impossible that no one knew that the sexual abuse was happening in Swift Current. Two residents of the Saskatchewan city were quoted as saying: "'I just can't imagine how somebody could live with these players and not try to figure out why they were spending so much time with the coach'"; "'What do you mean nobody knew? I'm sure people knew, but they just didn't do anything'" (qtd. in Gillis, "Sex Assaults" A4). Another account went so far as to surmise that the team organization refused therapy for team players after the tragic bus accident in 1986 left four players dead, because they were afraid that "the terrible truth about James' sexual shenanigans [would] surface" (McConachie B1). In these representations, Swift Current assumed the role of the mother within the dysfunctional family: the "invisible third partner," "colluding" in the sexual interaction between the abuser and the child or abandoning the child to the abuser (see Butler 102, 113). It is assumed in this conventional story about sexual abuse that abuse would not have occurred if the mother, in this case Swift Current, had not created a particular emotional climate through "commission and omission" (Butler 114).

Central to the story of sexual abuse in dysfunctional families is the gullibility of at least some family members. Reporters represented Swift Current as innocently caught up in and bewildered by the events:

> Meanwhile, the citizens of Swift Current will never understand how or why all of them came to be victims, too. But that's what happens when sexual abuse, society's dirty little secret, rears its ugly head in your community. There are good people in Swift Current, good people, salt-of-the-earth people, who are torturing themselves, trying to

> understand what it is that went on behind closed doors in their community and why they weren't able to recognize the signs. (Drinnan B1)

The trainer of the Broncos was reported to have said, "'I've been lying awake every night thinking, "Did I miss something? Were there signs I didn't see?" But there just weren't any hints'" (qtd. in Gillis, "James Incident" A2).

The familiar cultural story of sexual abuse in dysfunctional families includes accounts of loyalty of members to the abuser (see esp. Butler 121). The loyalty of some Swift Current residents to James was central to some media depictions. When faced with the allegations about James, team president, John Rittinger, was reported to have said that, "'the Graham I know was always a pleasant, humorous fellow. It's impossible for me to believe that a man of his intelligence would get involved in something like this. I couldn't be more devastated by this if Graham had died. I couldn't feel worse by this if it was my own family'" (qtd. in Todd G2). There were many letters of support submitted at James's trial by former players and administrators of the Broncos' organization (Robinson 168). This loyalty to James was interpreted as just another indication of the dysfunction of the city.

Gilmartin indicates that social-psychological explanations of sexual abuse of children in families "keeps the focus on individual families as the problem and ignores the societal power imbalances which many families mimic" (87). Much of the reporting about the James case, while differing about whether Swift Current was complicit, innocent, or both, nevertheless represented this place as an aberration among Canadian cities. Administrators of hockey sport governing bodies were also keen to make the point that what happened in Swift Current was not representative of hockey culture. Hockey authorities were quick to represent the James case as an isolated incident and not reflective of junior hockey (see Todd G2). However, accounts such as Laura Robinson's in *Crossing the Line: Violence and Sexual Assault in Canada's National Sport* document how abuse of and by hockey players may be central to hockey culture. Robinson argues that abuse in hockey is institutionalized and that abuse takes many forms, including pressure on young players to excel and conform, hazing rituals, and sexual abuse.

A common representation by the media of the James affair was that James duped Swift Current by fooling them with his charm and knowledge of hockey.

> This was a man of contradictions ... James was a pillar of the community. He was a role model. He was on the Broncos' bus that ugly night 10 years ago and he helped the community mend its broken heart, the same heart he would smash to smithereens. He picked that team up by the skatelaces and took it to a Memorial Cup championship just three years later. It was a miracle that put Swift Current on the map. Now it turns out he was the devil in disguise. (Drinnan B1)

In this representation, James is not one of the family. He is an outsider, described by one of the players' billets as "'an import to the community'" (qtd. in Gillis, "James Incident" A2). The mayor of the city at the time also distanced the community from James by indicating that, "'this is an isolated event by perhaps a deranged person. Certainly, it doesn't reflect the community'" (qtd. in Vanstone A1).

While, for the most part, the mainstream media did not link the charges of abuse to James's homosexuality, they did portray him as "a very private man, rarely seen socially" (Brownridge, "Feeling" A1). The *Alberta Report*, a right-wing, Christian fundamentalist news weekly accused other media of downplaying James's homosexuality and ignoring what they portrayed as "the known link between homosexuality and pedophilia" (Sillars 34). Albert Howlett, a Bronco supporter, shared the indignation: "'You pretty near have to put him down near the lowest class of person you can be. What he did with those boys was terrible'" (qtd. in Vanstone A1).

Many in the city were reported to have known about James's homosexuality, with the effect that reporters did not take seriously the representation of the city by one of its citizens as a naïve Bible-belt town (Mitchell A6). A former Bronco director was reported to have said that: "'There were rumors about Graham's sexual orientation, but never any suggestion he was sexually abusing players ... Innuendo, suspicion and rumour was all there was, and until someone comes forward, there's really nothing you can do. If you decided to end a coaching contract on something like that, human rights would be all over you'" (qtd. in Gillis, "James Incident" A2).

In another report, the director was attributed with the following remark: "Some of the club's inner circle suspected that Mr. James was a homosexual but they were broad-minded enough not to assume that a gay man also had a taste for the youths under his control" (Mitchell A6). That the "homophobic world of junior hockey" (Todd G2) would be so open to homosexuality stretched the limits of credulity for most reporters. One asked rhetorically, "Could it be that as long as you're winning and developing NHL stars, people look the other way? Could it be that James would have been found out long ago if he was a losing coach?" (Todd G2).

A flurry of articles identifying other 'homosexual' coaches who had been 'known' to prey on players (see Houston / Campbell A1; Spector, "Scars" A1; Stock / Crowley A1) belied the representation of James as an exception. Many of these coaches were dead and not in a position to defend themselves. Most attention was paid to Brian Shaw, former coach, general manager, and owner of the Edmonton Oil Kings and Portland Winter Hawks. The *Edmonton Journal* also carried a front-page story with pictures about Peter Spear, who died in 1988, and who allegedly abused at least one of his players (Spector, "Scars" A1). None of these accounts of homosexuality in hockey, including the disingenuous reference to looking the other way, acknowledged what many of the reporters must have witnessed: the homoeroticism of the locker room. As Brian Pronger indicates, "locker rooms are places where orthodox men like to hang around naked, talking and joking with each other" (76). In response to the revelation that James regularly showered with his players after practices, Western Hockey League coach, Mike Babcock, reported that, in the aftermath of the scandal, he and his assistant coaches had talked about whether they should continue to shower with players when the team was on the road ("Stars" E2). If there were indications of James's sexual interest in Bronco players, they may have been indistinguishable from homoerotic interactions taken for granted on male sporting teams.

The story about sexual abuse in families and family-like settings is unable to account for homoerotic behavior on male athletic teams nor can it contain Kennedy's or James's understanding of what happened between them. When asked about his willingness to go to where James was coaching after the first sexual encounter, Kennedy responded, "'Well yeah . . . I was scared sh__less . . . I knew right

after, but there was nothing I could do because I wanted to play'" ("Player's Self-Esteem" D10). Jimmy Devellano, who drafted Kennedy from Swift Current, was one of many people surprised by Kennedy's accusations because, according to Devellano, Kennedy "'always talked about Graham so sincerely'" (Simmons B1). A former Bronco vice-president said he was told that James was "doing it" with Kennedy: "'I figured that if they were doing it, they were doing it with consent'" (qtd. in Vanstone A5). Kennedy later said that he believed that James was in love with him. He also indicated that James knew what he was doing and "'he should have known that it wasn't accepted, because I had mentioned many times that I hated it'" (qtd. in Board D1). Kennedy said that he could not tell anybody because "'I was so scared to come out and admit it happened to me. I was scared to say I was with another man'" ("Learning" A2). James commented after his trial that he realized that Kennedy was not comfortable with the sex but he tolerated it because, "'he legitimately cared. Not about THAT (the sex) obviously. He cared. He knew I was lonely and you know, that sort of registered as desperation'" (qtd. in Spector, "Kennedy Disclosure" D6). When asked in an interview from prison whether he realized that what he was doing was wrong, James responded, "'when you're attracted to somebody, you're blinded, and you try to justify things, and you figure if you can do enough for somebody then somehow that makes up for it'" (qtd. in "'Caring'" K2); "'I suppose you don't think these things ... will be brought out into the general public. It's like anybody's sex life — it goes out in the general public [and] it doesn't look too flattering'" (qtd. in "James Says" E2).

Irrespective of the homoeroticism of the locker room or what James or Kennedy had to say, media representations of Swift Current and the people who live there sustained an understanding of sexual abuse consistent with conventional stories of abuse in dysfunctional families. This is a story of innocence, collusion, duplicity, and gullibility. Yet Swift Current and the events that took place there are open for other readings.

Another Reading of Swift Current

As it turns out, many of the places where the events that implicated James and Kennedy occurred were places I had inhabited under different conditions, twenty years earlier. During high school, I lived

in a house on Jubilee Drive in the northeast side of the city. This house was later sold to Colleen and Frank McBean who billeted Bronco players through the 1990s. Kennedy was one of these players.

Kennedy would have left the side door into the car park every Tuesday and Thursday evening to go to James's house. Was his room the southeast bedroom where I had spent so much time as a fifteen year old thinking about my first girlfriend? This girlfriend was eighteen, and under today's laws would be considered an adult. As I found out later, she was two-timing me with her female college coach.

Many reporters have wondered how the people of Swift Current, especially those billeting players, could not have known that a player was sexually involved with the coach. They surmised that people must have known or were too simple or naive to have guessed. I often went to my basketball coach's apartment, usually unannounced, hoping to seduce her. I was oblivious to whether the neighbors knew. My coach's careful closing of the curtains upon my arrival was reason for me to be hopeful of what might happen but, as I think about it now, she was likely very aware that some would think that a player should not be in her coach's home unsupervised at night. Only she and I were aware that the seventeen-year-old girl was pursuing the twenty-five-year-old coach. Applied to me, the story of innocence and dysfunction would have shrunk a "smart and active older adolescent ... into a child, a generic 'essence-of-child'" (Kincaid 31).

My mother did not ask me questions about spending time with my coach. Instead, my mother often helped me buy chocolate bars for her. Nor did she have much to say about the black eye my coach accidentally gave me when we were wrestling in the locker room. This black eye would have been very difficult for my coach to explain if someone had chosen to cast my relationship with her as inappropriate. In some accounts, James was accused of threatening Kennedy with a gun. James had this to say about the gun: '"There was a gun in a sense of a Cluseau-Kato type thing. He'd chase me until I could find something to stop him, and vice versa. Then we'd laugh about it. That's all there was to it"' (qtd. in Spector, "Kennedy Disclosure" D6).

Was my mother complicit in my sexual encounters with girls my own age? Was she implicated in my active pursuit of a young woman in authority who, arguably, in sexual terms was more innocent

than I was? My mother told me much later that she did not have the language to broach my sexuality with me. According to the 'familiar story,' this inability to talk about what may have appeared as an unusual relationship with my coach is evidence of the dysfunction of my family. As the titles of books telling this story reflect, silence is considered to be central to dysfunction (Butler; Miller; Rush). I had a sense then, however, that by helping me buy small presents for my coach my mother communicated her tacit approval of me.

Agonizing about what the adults should or should not have known or done cannot account for the complications of people's lives. Colleen and Frank McBean, for example, began billeting Bronco players, including Kennedy, after losing two of their sons in a tragic vehicle accident. Whether and how this tragic event affected the decisions that were made in relation to the boys in their care cannot be captured by implying that they somehow colluded in what was later understood as Kennedy's abuse. They may have been unable to make explicit what was later construed as a terrible abuse of authority by a coach whose 'victim' left his home twice a week, every week, for four years to visit the coach.

Swift Current and its people cannot be captured by stories about dysfunction and innocence, nor can the relationships between the adults and youth who live and have lived there. Many of my memories of living as a child and teenager in Swift Current reproduce this as a time and place marked by innocence, exuberance, creativity, and fun. But I know that these memories make sense to me in contrast to the heaviness that often accompanies adulthood. With little effort, however, I can also remember the stranger in the car who persisted in trying to give me a ride home when I was five; the woman who did some sewing for my mother who was found dead in the Swift Current creek; the rape of one of my sister's friends; the way the kids at school treated the children of one family because they were poor and Arab and lived in the valley; the man who turned out to be a woman who drove the "honey wagon" (the name given for the horse drawn wagon that carried the excrement from the outdoor toilets used by the people in the valley); children throwing rocks at the man with cerebral palsy who dared to try to walk in his neighborhood; what I now understand to be the racism that invaded the speech of the adults around me; or the awesome wrath of one of my teachers when I was ten because I persisted in playing hockey with the boys.

Years later, my mother apologized for not doing something more to ease what she thought must have been a horrible time for me living in Swift Current. But it was not a horrible time. Rather it was then and there that I found other girls like me and we engaged in sexual lives not remotely imagined in representations of Swift Current as a quaint, quiet family town or as a dysfunctional city complicit in the sexual abuse of its young people. Still, I am surprised by the apparent casualness to homosexuality expressed by at least some in the community during the James scandal. In the 1960s, I would have sworn that, except for those of us engaged in these thrilling subterranean practices, no one had a clue that people did these things. But at least some people did know about these activities when I lived there, including my mother, as did some during the time James and Kennedy were living in Swift Current. Yet, dominant cultural stories about families, sexuality, relationships, and innocence still circulate, making it difficult to understand events, people, and places in anything but the terms of these stories. What has changed, however, is that queer stories are being told about the relationships between people that occurred in these places. These queer stories situate dysfunction not in individuals or places but in a cultural story that simplifies complicated lives. The dysfunction of the cultural story is that it permits only two main roles, "monster and victim ... along with supporting parts for police, judges, juries, therapists, parents, friends, journalists, and lawyers" (Kincaid 30).

I want to emphasize that I am not saying that my experiences in Swift Current prove somehow that Kennedy was not traumatized by the sexual encounters he had with James. Rather, I want to show that the stories about dysfunctional families and the innocence of youth are too simple to capture the complexity of relationships, events, and people. In their simplicity, they have the effect of fixing what we can know about a place, the people who live there, and certain events in a way that is "intolerant and relentless" (Kincaid 30). My queer reading of "pervert city" renders the meaning of this place and of the events that happened there a little less tidy.

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"Veronica and Betty are Going Steady!": Queer Spaces in the Archie Comics

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Introduction

Perpetually befuddled teenager Archie Andrews first appeared in *Pep Comics* #22 (Dec. 1941), a back-of-the-book supporting feature modeled after the Henry Aldritch radio character, but by 1945 he had become so popular that publisher John Goldwater initiated an all-Archie lineup, and changed his company's name from MLJ to Archie Comics. In the half century since, Archie and his small world of friends and foes, teachers and parents, have infused almost every genre of popular culture, including radio and television programs, toys, novels, instructional materials, religious tracts, popular music, and even a Broadway musical; but comic books remain the mainstay of the Archie empire, especially in Canada, where 30% of the comic books are sold (Norton). Although the main Archie characters are teenagers, eternally seventeen, most consumers are preteens, children between the ages of six and twelve who, generation after generation, look for glimpses of their future selves in the archetypal simplicity of Riverdale; thus, Archie comics have been emblematic of teenage life for millions of preteens.

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 4-5 (2002-2003) © CLGSA / SCELG

At first glance, the Archie comics appear consistently to present a raucous, aggressive heterosexual practice as natural, universal, and eminently more important than other pursuits or interests. Consequently, we would expect that the archetypal simplicity of Riverdale — what Charles Philips calls "an idealized picture of teenage life that we all recognize but none of us quite lived" (8) — would eliminate those who do not fit into hegemonic patterns of heterosexual identity and desire, that Archie's perennial conundrum of selecting Betty or Veronica for the big dance would be meaningless or oppressive to those who would prefer to see Archie choosing Jughead, and Betty and Veronica choosing each other. However, a close reading and content analysis of select comic book stories from the 1950s to the present reveals that attempts to espouse universal heterosexual desire fail, that discourses presenting heterosexual liaisons as the sole goal of human existence are unstable and contradictory, and that sometimes same-sex desire is acknowledged, permitted, and even celebrated.

Resources and Theoretical Background

For decades, an "Archie comic" meant a slim, flat, 32-page publication containing three or four comic stories, plus various half- or full-page gags, jokes, puzzles, advice columns, fan letters, and advertisements. The decline of the comic industry in the 1970s led to the virtual demise of such "flat comics" (though they are still available in specialty shops and via subscription), and for the last thirty years Archie has appeared primarily in "digests" or "double digests," square, thick publications, with 96 or 192 pages and up to 24 full-length stories. Sturdier and more portable than the flat comics, easily carried in a purse or pocket, and offering more stories for less money, digests are especially popular as whim purchases, sold at check-out counters at supermarkets, convenience stores, and all-purpose box-stores.

To research this project, I acquired and read 207 digests and flat comics dated between 1974 and 2001, but containing stories dating from the 1950s through the 1990s. Archie Comics vigorously reprints stories from thirty, forty, or fifty years ago without annotation or explanation, but it was possible to estimate the original publication date with relative precision. Critics frequently contend that Archie comics are frozen in a prewar small-town paradise (Barrier/Williams

149), or that "those [comics] published in the 1990s look virtually the same as those published forty years earlier" (Wright 71). Yet, while the house style, with bold primary colors and uncluttered yet realistic backgrounds, remained more or less stable through the 1990s, there have nonetheless been many thematic changes. The 1960s, for instance, witnessed the proliferation of nonsensical sight-gags and psychedelic wordplay, while the 1970s favored high-school morality plays in a geographically-specific Riverdale and the 1980s saw a trend toward realistic dramas and adventures set beyond Riverdale. Contemporary clothing styles, slang, and references to music, movies, television, and current fads change moment by moment. Thus, Betty and Veronica swoon over "Pelvis Parsley" (Elvis Presley) in the mid 1950s, "Funzie" (Fonzie of *Happy Days*) in the mid 1970s; and "Boy Jonah" (Boy George) in the early 1980s. A reference to Jughead's favorite television program, *Sugarlip,* would narrow the date of a story to about 1959-61, the height of *Sugarfoot*'s popularity, and a parody entitled *Miami Nice* can likewise be dated to 1986-88, when *Miami Vice* was among the top twenty network programs.

Any comic digest will contain a jumble of fifty years of pop culture, juxtaposing Liberace and the Backstreet Boys, *The Ed Sullivan Show* and MTV's *The Real World.* But no matter the publication dates and pop culture references, one theme remains constant, and is even promoted as *the* truth of human experience: Archie will always spend Saturday night with Betty or Veronica. They may go to a sock hop, a disco, or a rave, but there will always be Saturday nights, always dates, always boys and girls coming together to celebrate their heterosexual destiny. The Archie comics appear to paint heteronormativity in bold colors.

Michael Warner coined the term *heteronormativity* to refer to the practice of organizing patterns of thought, basic awareness, and raw beliefs, around the presumption of universal heterosexual desire (xi). Heteronormativity differs from heterosexual desire in that heterosexual desire refers simply to the desire of persons of different sexes, without necessarily denying the valid existence of same-sex desire, whereas heteronormativity attempts to eliminate same-sex desire from what can be displayed, discussed, or even conceived. It infuses the very epistemology of desire until the term "man" is meaningless unless it includes "desiring women," and "woman" is meaningless unless it includes "desiring men" (cf. Richardson).

But the project of heteronormativity is doomed to failure. In her famous *Epistemology of the Closet,* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick maintains that "heterosexual" can only be constructed in opposition to "homosexual," producing a binarism central to the whole of recent Western philosophy. And even when desire must be submerged into subconsciousness and identities closeted to the point of invisibility, a cultural product is still "structured like a dream, a network of representations that encodes wishes and fears, projections and identifications" (Garber 9). In the arena of cultural analysis, we can locate the wishes and fears, the instabilities and anxieties surrounding the project of heteronormativity, and therein sometimes locate irruptions of same-sex desire. Such poststructuralist and postmodern thinking informs my reading of the Archie comics.

As Roland Barthes notes, every image is polysemous, capable of practically limitless meanings. Yet the job of comic book writers and artists is to embed the image in enough context to delimit its meanings, to "fix the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs" (Barthes 20). But signs are necessarily unfixed, especially in comic art, which is built upon inference: a few loops and squiggles, a few dialogue balloons, must suffice to establish that this figure named "Archie" is human, male, and a teenager. Anything more subtle must be inferred. "I'm practically a blank slate," a comic book character notes; "It would never occur to you what my politics are, or what I had for lunch" (McCloud 37). Or, for that matter, with whom he is in love. In order to infer that Archie is interested in Veronica, for instance, we must depend upon intertextuality, our "recognition" of elemental bonds, desires, identities, relationships, and social roles derived from other texts in the genre.

Alexander Doty finds discourses of lesbian desire between the female duos on the shows *I Love Lucy* and *Laverne and Shirley* that are present not in the script nor even necessarily in the actors' intentions, but in the dynamics of the interactions themselves, in "a place beyond the audience's conscious 'real life' definition of their sexual identities and cultural positions" (15). Likewise, while some comic characters have been self-identifying as gay for decades (Franklin), it is not necessarily incumbent on them to do so. In a comic story, an incongruity in language, an incongruity in style, or the dynamics of homosocial interaction may allow for a queer reading

of a text (see Doty 13). The humor that underlies most Archie stories, derived through irony, parody, intertextual references, and "exaggeration, artifice, and extremity" of camp (Bergman 4), is particularly amenable to illuminating the failure of the heteronormative project and suggesting possibilities of same-sex desire. I call these possibilities "queer spaces," since they occur usually without anyone explicitly affirming a gay or lesbian identity and often within a heteronormative ideological framework in which such identities are assumed not to exist.

To locate "queer spaces" in Archie comics, I looked beyond the facade of homosociality for three major textual anomalies that can suggest the presence of same-sex desire: plots driven by a character's desire to meet, maintain a relationship with, or rescue someone of the same sex; interactions between characters of the same sex that use gestures, body placement, or vocal cues usually restricted to depictions of heterosexual desire; and characters who fail to express heterosexual desire. I also looked for "gay vague" characters, those who display mannerisms or social interests stereotypically assigned to gay or lesbian persons, regardless of their heterosexual practices (Wilke).

Creating the Archie Universe: Up to the Mid 1960s

By 1956, when Dan DeCarlo became managing editor of Archie Comics, the comic book industry was recoiling from the charges made in Fredric Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), which accused them of promoting sexual hedonism, violence, and "homosexuality" (Wright 161). At the same time many social institutions, including the mass media, medicine, and education, continued to contribute to discourses that constructed "the homosexual" as a scourge of humankind and a special threat to homosocial masculinity (Terry 321-28). In response, DeCarlo eliminated the often risqué sexual situations of the comic books of the 1940s (Pustz 110) and authorized stories in which Archie, Reggie, Jughead, Betty, and Veronica functioned as a group of friends rather than as sexually polarized and potentially suspect "pals and gals." Robert J. Corber notes that texts of the 1950s are "grounded in a masculinist understanding of the needs and desires inspired by the American dream," especially economic and political dominance through homosocial competition or cooperation (29). Thus, Archie,

though still swooning over girls, is equally concerned with cars, sports, and male buddies, and several characters engage in little or no heterosexual practice: Dilton, a brain in a Lord Fauntleroy costume; Reggie, a brash practical joker obsessed with 'getting' Archie; Moose, who uses his steady girlfriend as little more than a means to exhibit dominance over other boys; and especially Jughead. Stories that did involve disputes over who was going to take whom to the big dance were often framed as avenues for masculine posturing or homosocial bonding. The frame of homosocial bonding, of course, applies also to the female figures. When Betty asks Veronica "What do you find most attractive about Archie?" she responds immediately, "You!" ("Ladies Man" 1).[1] That is, Veronica's interest in Archie is not predicated upon heterosexual desire, but upon the fun of competing with Betty.

The character Jughead is the most blatant example of the failure of early Archie comics to maintain the pretense of universal heterosexual desire. Jughead spent the 1940s as a sexist "woman-hater," forever articulating disgust over his pals' heterosexual interests. As a member of the supposedly desexualized gang of the 1950s, however, he necessarily became more egalitarian. He socialized with girls regularly, and grew especially close to Betty, giving her endless advice on how to win Archie's affection in the tradition of the 'best girlfriends' of the heroines of girls' comics. It became clear during the 1950s that he did not hate women at all — he simply did not care to date them. The absence of heterosexual practice — and a boy becoming the best source of girl-advice on boys — creates a queer space that challenges the presumption of universal heterosexual desire. Nonetheless Jughead's friends presume that his woman-hating is merely a temporary occlusion of his perceptual capacity — after all, he is constantly drawn with his eyes closed, 'blind' to the world around him. When he finally opens his eyes and discovers how wonderful girls really are, he will concede to his heterosexual destiny. As Archie states: "sooner or later every male sees the light" ("Artist's Choice" 1).

Similarly, a running gag in the *Josie* supporting stories

[1] Archie comics do not have sequential page numbers, and only since the mid 1990s have they given production credits. I can therefore cite the Archie stories only by title and date.

(precursors of the 1970s *Josie and the Pussycats*) had every teenage boy who encountered the buxom blonde Melody distracted to the point of idiocy, crashing into things, falling into open manholes, crashing their cars, and so on. But in "See No Evil," Melody is astonished when a boy on the beach pays no attention to her. The other boys laud him as a hero. "Did you ever see such a display of sheer self-control!" they cry. "He sure ain't human!" "No guy living can resist Melody!" (7). They never suggest that the boy may not find girls attractive, just that he has sufficient self-control to reign in his overpowering lust. It turns out that he has merely misplaced his glasses, so he is 'blind.' Failure to express heterosexual desire is again associated with ignorance, with 'not seeing' and 'not knowing.' Like Jughead, this boy soon 'opens his eyes': he finds his glasses, then takes one look at Melody and self-destructs with lust. While some young readers in the 1950s would accept such solutions to the 'problem' of the necessity of affirming heterosexual desire, others would surely identify with the unnamed boy's apparent initial 'lack' of interest, thus tacitly opening a potentially queer space.

Compulsory Heterosexuality: The Mid 1960s to the Mid 1980s

The sexual revolution of the late 1960s and 1970s saw an increasing challenge to the presumed normalcy of hegemonic gender and sexual practices through the women's movement, the various free love and group marriage experiments, and gay rights / gay pride movements. In reaction, Archie's heterosexual practice during the late 1960s and 1970s skyrocketed into absurdity. Ordinarily sensible and level headed, he dissolved into a slurry of testosterone at the merest sight of the girls whose bodies were beginning to fill the foreground of the comic panels. Archie pursued sports, cars, hobbies, and future careers no longer merely for their own sake, but for their efficiency in getting girls. If anyone commented upon the chaotic, often destructive intensity of his passion, he countered that to be "girl-crazy" was the natural male condition. In "The Unknown Equation," he begins with "the basics": "girls exert an obvious attraction on us boys, right?" (1).

Rarely were there comments: more often Archie's friends and parents assumed that the character's monomaniacal interest in girls was eminently sane, that the pursuit of the elusive heterosexual kiss was the only viable goal in life. In "The Andrews Family Tree,"

Dilton recounts stories of Archie's ancestors. They all just missed brilliant scientific discoveries because of their obsessive interest in girls — they failed to notice the apple falling because they were busy flirting, or they pulled the kite down from the thunderstorm to flirt more effectively. "I feel sorry for your ancestors," Dilton concludes. "They were a bunch of losers." Archie retorts, "And I feel sorry for poor Dilton! He can't tell us winners from the losers!" (8).

Also in the 1960s and on, we see an expansion of the parameters of universal heterosexual desire: characters who were excused from displaying heterosexual interests during the 1950s were now required to bounce about in jubilation, shouting "Va-va-voom!" (the standard Archie exclamation of sexual arousal) whenever they encountered a person of another sex. Overt, intense expressions of heterosexual interest were deemed necessary for full communion with human society. When Dilton begins to express heterosexual interest in "The New Dilton," his friends are relieved: "Dilt has joined the pack ... he really is one of us" (6). During the 1970s, Dilton dropped his pedantic demeanor (though remaining intelligent) and agonized endlessly over his failure to acquire sufficient girls. Reggie began dating frequently and ardently. And even though Moose had had a steady girlfriend for nearly twenty years of comic book stories, he was still criticized for being insufficiently intense in his expression of heterosexual interest: in "Potions of Love," Midge complains that Moose is "girl-shy! No confidence! Afraid to make a move!" (4).

During the 1950s, Archie Comics introduced a number of supporting strips featuring bratty preteen characters who made life miserable for their parents or teenage siblings. During the 1970s, these figures were dropped with the exception of *Li'l Jinx,* who became as obsessed with heterosexual practice as the characters in the main Archie stories. Ten-year old Jinx was torn between two boyfriends, Mort and Greg, and attempted to keep them both out of the clutches of glamorous, man-hungry Gigi. Likewise the rotund and crass Charlie Hawse claimed a lack of heterosexual interest during the 1970s, but eventually even he sees the error of his ways. In "Dear Diary," originally published shortly after the movie *Blue Lagoon* (1981), Charlie reads a romantic fantasy in Mort's diary and concludes that he knows "Brook Shield" (actress Brooke Shields). Hearts of heterosexual desire explode above his head and, panting, he exclaims to Mort "You've got to introduce me to her!" (2).

Only Jughead was excused from the necessity of expressing heterosexual interest during the 60s and 70s, but his friends were less likely to conclude that he was simply blind and would one day encounter his heterosexual destiny. His friends specifically defined his lack of interest in girls as a 'failure,' an abnormality to be tolerated at best. Furthermore, his 'failure' was, for the first time, associated with a desire for boys; that is, he formed same-sex bonds in those situations in which his peers would form heterosexual bonds. Again, Jughead's behavior creates the possibility of same-sex desire and opens queer space. In "The Loner," Jughead is invited to participate in a heterosexual double date, but he exclaims "I hate double dates! Especially with girls!" (1). Although he purports to be stating nonsense (as in his catch phrase, "Half of the lies they tell about me aren't true"), at least syntactically his *special* dislike for dates with girls implies that other sorts of dates are possible.

In "There's This Girl, See?" Jughead's friends assume that he needs some money to go on a date with a girl. His friends assume that he wants to finance a date with her. They joyfully shout "[that's] the first sign of normalcy in that weirdo" (2) and take up a collection. It turns out that the girl has failed to pay back a loan, which he needs to finance a 'date' with a boy (who is not named, since the Archie universe frowns on naming new characters). The last panel of the story shows Jughead happily walking away with his arm around the boy, initiating his 'date' while his friends bang their heads together in frustration. Jughead's behavior meets the Archie universe definition of the term "date" in every detail: a social event for two people, during which the one who pays puts an arm around the one who does not.

This presumed universality of (hetero)sexual desire, when coupled with the failure to follow it through, allows for other queer spaces in the Archie stories of the 60s and 70s. In "Common Ground," the gang is at the beach, when a boy named Cliff zooms up on a dune buggy. This will be no ordinary encounter: Archie characterizes him as "crazy," underscoring his potential danger — physical, social, or ontological. Cliff invites Veronica for a ride and, oblivious to the danger, she accepts. In the Archie universe, boys issue invitations for rides only when they want to "make time," that is, initiate a romance with someone else's girlfriend. But after a rather strenuous circuit of the beach, Cliff dutifully drops Veronica off. Then

he turns to Reggie and asks, "How about you?" (5). Reggie eagerly accepts, and the story ends with the two boys riding off together. In this story, is a ride supposed to be just a ride, with no romantic implications? If so, why did Cliff earn the description "crazy" that signals a threat to Archie's relationship with Veronica? Or perhaps he was trying to "make time" with Veronica after all, and now he has moved on to Reggie.

In "Tough Bluff," Betty and Veronica find Archie's "little black book," his list of potential romantic prospects, and hope to use it to identify their rivals. To their surprise, it contains only boys' names: "Joe, Bill, Al, Tony, Moose, Reg, Mike." They sadly conclude that it is an ordinary address book — if it does not contain girls' names, then it cannot be a real "little black book." Later, Archie explains to Jughead that he deliberately filled the book with boys' names to distract the girls from his *real* romantic interests. So what is the "tough bluff"? What is he distracting them from? If he wants to hide a list of potential girlfriends from Betty and Veronica, it is curious that he would invent a list made up solely of boys' names. His choice of boys indicates an oddly meticulous investment into the popular convention of the "little black book." New character names are extremely rare in the Archie universe, but Archie lists five here, and in addition includes only two recognizable friends, Moose and Reg ("Reggie"). Why does he omit Dilton and Jughead? Moose and Reggie are arguably the most attractive members of the gang, and Dilton and Jughead, somewhat nerdish, are perhaps the least attractive. Archie has not filled his "little black book" with names chosen at random (for a ruse) or the names of his friends (as in an ordinary address book), but has compiled a list of boys who are either the most likely objects of someone's infatuation or simply "unknown." He has gone to a lot of trouble to hide his romantic interests, unless he is hiding them in plain sight.

Universal Heterosexuality: The Mid 1980s to the Mid 1990s

During the last half of the 1980s, the AIDS epidemic made it difficult to ignore same-sex desires and practices, even in comic books. When aging Hollywood star Rock Hudson, dying of AIDS, was revealed to be gay and dying of AIDS, many fans felt curiously betrayed: Hudson had been emblemeatic of male heterosexuality, even though rumors of 'homosexuality' had dogged his career, and many of his

films were plotted around various hints of transgressive desire. But, as Marita Sturken states, when the revelations were made in the summer of 1985, "we had to accept the fact that many of our fundamental, conventional images [of heterosexuality] were instilled by someone gay" (151). The absent had suddenly become present, the unstated stated. Archie comics characters could no longer solve the 'problem' of lack of heterosexual desire in certain characters by invoking blindness or ignorance and deferring heterosexual destiny to a future epiphany. Even young readers would know that a boy who did not like girls might like boys, and Archie comics found that possibility intolerable.

An increasing awareness on the part of Archie comics that gay and lesbian identities exist can be seen in the increasingly blatant attempts at excluding them. Veronica talks about having "a wild old time" instead of the traditional "gay old time." The girls swoon over "Boy Jonah" (gender-bending pop star Boy George), but never describe his androgynous stage presence. They attend the "Horrible Rocky Picture Show" (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, where drag is de rigueur), but dress as Frankensteins and mummies, not as transvestite Frank N Furter and his crew.

In 1988, before any other children's medium broached the topic of HIV/AIDS, Archie comics began promoting AIDS education with a frequently reprinted ad. A somber Mr. Weatherbee stands before a blackboard while the gang, drawn considerably smaller than usual, look up from desks arranged in a semicircle. The minor character Chuck has replaced Reggie, perhaps because he is African-American and thus might appeal to a wider audience. The blackboard reads "Health Education" and then "AIDS is a serious worldwide problem that affects people of all ages in all walks of life" ("AIDS Education"). The choice of the word "problem" instead of "disease" is wise, since AIDS has had an impact on practically every human activity, from the cultural to the economic. The phrase "all ages" includes both teenagers (the Archie gang) and preteens (the comics' usual audience), but "all walks of life" simultaneously encodes and erases both gays and straights. The students look somber, almost frightened, except for Jughead, who is leaning back with a smirk. His smirk is significant. By 1988, AIDS was decimating gay communities, and gay people would have been particularly attuned to Mr. Weatherbee's presentation. But Jughead's smirk indicates that

he does not see himself as much at risk as his fellow students, that is, as *certainly* not gay. It is a gesture that explains that thirty comic book years of not liking girls signified a 'healthy' shyness, *certainly* not same-sex desire.

During the mid 1980s, Archie Comics blatantly attempted to defuse any reading of Jughead's character as gay. In "Genesis — the Beginning," Jughead is up late, when a beam of light emanates from his TV set and paralyzes him. He loses consciousness. The next morning he has received a facelift, and there is a curious masculine symbol affixed to his beanie. "I feel reborn!" he exclaims. "I have strange tingling sensations! I have a desire to talk to ... to touch ... my gosh! A girl!" (2). Reggie doesn't believe in Jughead's transformation and intensifies his evaluation of "women-hating" from mere deviation to pathology: "That boy is one sickie!" But Archie comes to his aid: "This is going to make him more normal!" (3). Further stories in the mid 1980s had Jughead, Archie, and Reggie recounting this experience over and over to practically everyone in Riverdale, and of course to every reader. In "Seeing is Unbelieving," Archie notes that Jughead had "either a close encounter or a mad nightmare, but it left him a self-confident, girl-loving, prowling wolf" (1). The "woman-hating" of the past is dismissed as shyness (though Jughead was never shy) or lack of self-confidence (though he was always the most self-confident of the group). In an open letter, managing editor John Goldwater noted that Jughead had "changed" (but failed to give any details), and invited comments about whether readers liked the old or the new Jughead better (Goldwater). The consensus was overwhelming: readers preferred the old Jughead. Nevertheless, the girl-loving Jughead prevailed during the next decade: he was involved in several passionate affairs and tempestuous love-hate relationships, and many stories made casual reference to heterosexual dates. Paradoxically, the girl-hating Jughead occasionally appeared; in "Bank Trouble," he saves an attractive female star from drowning, but refuses a kiss as a reward because he hates kissing girls. In its capsule biography of Jughead, the Archie Comics Website refers to his "rather abnormal dislike of girls" (Archie Comics Website).

Minor characters were similarly recast in the mid 1980s to avoid the implication of same-sex desire in same-sex dyads. Before 1986, Veronica's mother appeared rarely; her father, Mr. Lodge, was more

or less a single parent. Servants came and went, depending on the need of the story, but Smithers the butler remained constant. His attachment to Mr. Lodge transcended the employer-employee relationship. Often the two were shown sitting side by side in easy chairs, cozily discussing Veronica's latest shopping spree or enjoying Archie's latest comeuppance as equals. From 1986 on, the role of Smithers decreased, and suddenly Mrs. Lodge appeared in almost every story involving Veronica's home life.

Everybody's Gay: The Mid 1990s to the Present

The 1990s saw an economic downturn in the comic book industry, with sales declining by half (Pearson/Miller), and the demise of practically every title aimed at children. Archie Comics survived and even prospered through the strategic marketing of comic digests and the hiring of a cadre of new writers, including women and people of color, introduced by editors Nelson Ribeiro and Victor Gorelick (Archie Comics Website). They reinvented Archie Comics by experimenting with style and color, exploring odd corners of the Archie universe (with such titles as "Dilton's Weird Science" and "Jughead's Diner"), and softening the more stereotypic characters (Moose became dyslexic, not stupid, and Big Ethel, shunned for decades as ugly, became simply plain, but nonetheless hip, fun, and popular). They also moved away from the mania to make every character "boy-crazy" or "girl-crazy," positing a Riverdale where teenagers enjoy a wide variety of interests. Some stories even dealt explicitly with the possibility of same-sex desire.

In "Little Black Book" (surely a reworking of "Tough Bluff"), Betty encounters an address book, assumes that it contains a boy's romantic prospects, and is surprised to find her name missing. "There's no accounting for tastes," she thinks, "I'm a much better date than Tom Cameron or Ron Cook" (2). A moment later, she concludes that it is Veronica's "little black book," thus offering a heterosexual solution to the 'problem' of romantic interest in boys. But this solution does not affirm the universality of heterosexual desire: previously, Betty took it for granted that the book belonged to a boy, that somewhere in Riverdale was a boy who dated (or wished to date) Tom Cameron and Ron Cook; her nonchalance suggests that same-sex desire is not so out of the ordinary after all.

In "Clean Sweep," Betty notes that "every girl" wants to be swept off her feet, so Archie obliges by picking her up off the floor. Later, Jughead explains what happened by 'sweeping' Veronica off her feet. Principal Weatherbee expresses outrage over this "carrying on" (an Archie universe expression for heterosexual practice), and threatens detention for the next culprit. At that moment, Moose appears with Dilton in his arms (5). The sight of a boy 'sweeping' another boy off his feet so shocks Mr. Weatherbee that his glasses and toupee pop off, and question marks and exclamation marks appear above the students' heads. Moose explains that he is merely carrying Dilton to the infirmary after a sports injury, thereby offering a homosocial solution to the 'problem.' Again, his solution does not so much affirm heteronormativity as it leaves the question of same-sex desire in circulation: if Moose does not feel at least a minimal attraction, why would he literally 'sweep' Dilton off his feet, selecting, of all the possible ways to transport an injured chum, one that maximizes intimacy and mimics a romantic gesture?

In "You've Got to Give Her Credit," written by Hal Smith, Veronica is delighted to receive some credit cards in the mail and asks Smithers the butler to "give the mailman a big kiss for me!" He replies "I beg your pardon!" embarrassed but adjusting his tie, as if kissing the mailman might indeed be a possibility. In the next sequence, Mr. Lodge, dining with a male companion at the Riverdale Country Club, exclaims "It's like they're multiplying" (3). In the foreground, a young man with black hair and a mustache grins as he wraps his arm around the shoulders of a muscular red-haired man, who is turned toward him with a dreamy expression. Although both are wearing suits, implying a business deal, they look precisely as if they are in the midst of a romantic evening. Mr. Lodge is obviously referring to Veronica's multiplying credit cards, but as our eyes are drawn to an overt same-sex couple, we cannot help but speculate on his response to the increasing visibility of gay men in North American society.

In a self-reflective postmodern twist in "Verse Than Ever," also written by Hal Smith, Veronica is aware that she is a character in a comic book, and objects to its title, *Betty and Veronica*. She wants to be first. She argues that Betty would be better in last place, because so many words rhyme with Betty that they could therefore create poems. As an example, she recites "Break out the confetti! Veronica

and Betty are going steady!" Betty snarls "Watch it!" The exclamation point after "going steady" denotes that Veronica was finished with her rhyme, that she had intended a couplet, but with a look of sophisticated smugness, she adds a heterosexualizing coda "... with Freddy and Teddy" (3). Betty wheezes "Whew!" She is drenched with sweat and near collapse. The thought that they might be considered lovers has had a profound impact on her. While Veronica is unfazed and may even have intended the implication, Betty reacts with a veritable panic.

What are we to make of this sequence? Not entirely cognizant of the definitional boundaries of adult romantic relationships and friendships, children often confuse the two, ascribing romance to relationships that surely would not involve explicit erotic desire. If this sort of slippage is intended, Betty's reaction makes no sense. Instead, she must be aware that girls sometimes date girls, that she and Veronica could indeed "go steady." But still, the violence of her reaction is curious, especially given Veronica's nonchalance. An explanation may be found in Betty's longstanding characterization as an athletic type and a tomboy, at ease in the auto garages and workshops where she is gender-polarized as male; she is frequently advised that her heterosexual loves are stymied because she is too much like 'one of the guys.' Although obsessed with Archie and dating many boys, she rarely shares Veronica's giddiness about the male form. Indeed, she often demonstrates rather explicit same-sex interests. At the beach with Archie, she continuously points out attractive women: "Isn't that a pretty girl? Doesn't she have a gorgeous body?" ("Run for Your Life" 1). Certainly heterosexual women are permitted to notice other women, but such enthusiasm, especially in front of one's presumed boyfriend, seems perilously close to an acknowledgment of Betty's own desire. Perhaps the 'joke' in "Verse Than Ever" rang too true, highlighting a subtext in her relationship with Veronica that neither she nor the author could comfortably address. He immediately brings Archie on stage, and the story switches to slapstick.

Conclusion

During the last sixty years, thousands of Archie comics stories have introduced millions of children, as well as teenagers and adults, to a Riverdale where heterosexual desire supposedly informs every

action, every thought, every plan. But every text is open, every reading is fragmentary, every hegemony is ultimately incoherent. Even the most heteronormative boy-torn-between-girls text will see same-sex desire intrude in the form of a boy who walks off with his arm around another boy, or a girl who makes a 'joke' about going steady with her best friend. We can never conclude definitively that Jughead is in love with Archie, or that he is not, or that Veronica is in love with Betty, or that she is not. The characters exist only as lines and squiggles on a page; their thoughts, their goals, their desires must be articulated through generic conventions and intertextual references. And it is in that articulation that we can find queer spaces even at Riverdale High.

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Dominique

SERGE D. MÉNAGER (1 May 1950 – 15 May 2002)

Serge Dominique Ménager was born in the French city of Vichy where he attended school and went on to study French Literature at the University of Clermont-Ferrand in the late '60s and early '70s, graduating with a B.A. Hons, an M.A. and a D.E.A. He then started his career as a teacher in Algeria where he worked in several high schools before moving to Morocco. In addition, he taught at the University of Botswana in Gaborone and at the University of Natal, in the South African Province of KwaZulu-Natal. His published articles deal with such diverse authors and thinkers as Bessie Head, Nadine Gordimer, and Albie Sachs as well as Jean Genet. They cover as divergent themes as the trauma tormenting those of mixed blood as they strive to capture a sense of identity in southern Africa, how the works of Marcel Proust were instrumental in shaping Gordimer's participation in the anti-apartheid struggle, and the sociocultural impact of township theater.

Serge Ménager was a keen traveler, going often to Europe where he had strong personal and family links but also on academic business. He was a frequent visitor in the United States and Canada where he attended many international conferences. Canada held much charm for him and over the years, he visited Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa. His last visit to this country was to Nova Scotia where he attended the annual congress of the Conseil International des Etudes Francophones being then the African representative on this association's board.

Serge passed away in Durban, South Africa on the 15th of May 2002. He is survived by his partner of three years and the many friends he had made all over the world. This kind, witty, and generous man was an outstanding academic and gifted teacher. Many more of his texts are yet to be published; they will serve both to keep his memory alive and to pay homage to a wonderfully exciting life lived with great gusto, passion, and humor.

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torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 4-5 (2002-2003) © CLGSA / SCELG

Ce manuscrit inédit et inachevé a été trouvé dans les papiers personnels de Serge Ménager après son décés. Il s'agit d'un des nombreux originaux découverts par son compagnon dans son bureau de l'Université du Natal. Ce document brut, écrit de la main même de Serge sur un vieux carnet jauni a dû être tapé et corrigé par les soins de Vanessa M. Everson (Université du Cap) et Eric C. Levéel (Université de Stellenbosch), amis proches et collègues de Serge. Ce que les correcteurs ont décidé de nommer "nouvelle" est en fait le début d'un roman biographique s'inscrivant dans le travail de création et de recherche littéraires que Serge avait effectué depuis son adolescence et qu'il poursuivit jusqu'à sa mort. Ces quelques pages se doivent d'être lues et comprises en tant que témoignage sur une autre époque de la vie de Serge Ménager, un Serge jeune, insouciant, à l'aise avec sa sexualité et tellement heureux de vivre dans ce Maroc et ce Maghreb qu'il aimait tant faire découvrir à ses amis par ses articles, ses récits et des voyages qui enchantèrent toujours ses "invités". L'existence de Serge fut singulière et hors du commun ; celle d'un homme généreux, d'un universitaire de grand renom et d'un véritable intellectuel, c'est à dire d'un penseur et d'un partageur de savoir.

Lorsqu'il lui arrivait de raconter à quelqu'un comment nous nous étions rencontrés, Dominique reprenait presque mot pour mot ce récit que je lui ai entendu faire des dizaines de fois :

" C'était un des premiers matins où je me rendais au lycée pour aller y faire cours. C'était un lundi je crois. Peut-être mon premier lundi au travail. Personne n'était encore arrivé. Seul, devant la porte du bâtiment de l'administration, j'ai vu cette créature incroyable. Une sorte d'éphèbe, de grand escogriffe aux cheveux longs et décolorés, sans doute permanentés car sa coiffure tirebouchonnait dans tous les sens, et qui portait le plus invraisemblable T-shirt, bien trop petit pour lui, dont il avait roulé les manches découvrant ses bras jusqu'aux épaules et qui lui arrivait juste au-dessus de la ceinture d'un pantalon à l'intérieur duquel il semblait avoir été cousu tant il lui collait au cul. Un peu plus tard, j'ai eu la surprise de découvrir son ventre bronzé que découvrait chaque mouvement un peu trop haut de ses bras. C'était vraiment une apparition tout à fait surprenante et je me suis tout de suite demandé qui pouvait être cette pétasse de première classe qui avait plutôt l'air habillé pour aller faire les quais de Saône

que pour venir au lycée. Imaginez ma surprise lorsqu'il m'apprit qu'il était lui aussi professeur de français dans le bahut et qu'il y officiait depuis plus d'une année déjà. Si l'administration laissait travailler ça dans son lycée, je me suis dit que j'étais sans doute couvert pour toutes les bêtises et les fautes les plus graves qu'il pourrait jamais m'arriver de faire dans l'exercice de mes fonctions au sein de cet établissement !

Mais le plus drôle, ça a été le moment où il m'a posé cette question qui m'a beaucoup fait rire, dans mon fort intérieur tout du moins : *Êtes-vous marié ?* J'ai vraiment failli éclater de rire quand j'ai vu à quel point il était interloqué lorsque j'ai répondu par l'affirmative. De toute évidence il avait espéré autre chose. C'était à pisser de rire !

Ce qui est sans doute à pisser de rire c'est de penser que Dominique ait pu croire, ne serait-ce qu'un moment, que je ne voyais pas clair dans son jeu et que la complicité qui allait s'établir entre nous dans les jours qui suivraient cette rencontre, ne briserait pas l'image qu'il avait établie de lui-même ou plutôt que sa situation d'homme marié avait, pour quelques temps, placé comme un écran entre nous deux.

Que les choses soient bien claires entre nous. En dépit des sentiments parfois ambigus que je serais amené à décrire dans ces souvenirs, je n'ai jamais été amoureux de Dominique, ou alors peut-être par intermittence seulement, de l'image (encore une) que j'imaginais que nous projetions lorsque nous étions tous les deux. J'étais fier d'être son ami, j'étais heureux que l'on nous voie ensemble. Dire ceci me paraît cependant à la fois trop et trop peu. Ce qui nous liait était bien plus que cela et passait par le biais d'une troisième personne. Peut-être ne devrais-je pas chercher à mettre maladroitement en mots des sentiments qui, comme tous les sentiments, fluctaient, évoluaient, prenaient toutes sortes de formes variées et contradictoires. Peut-être devrais-je me contenter de raconter les faits tels qu'ils me reviennent, au fil du stylo, sans autre logique que les pulsions de ma mémoire.

Pour ma part, ma première rencontre avec lui n'eut pas lieu devant le bâtiment de l'administration du lycée. J'étais avec mon amie Malika, attablé à la terrasse de la Rotonde surplombamt la lagune. La petite ville où je travaillais depuis plus d'une année maintenant,

était située au bord de la Méditérranée qui formait dans le renfoncement où elle était située, un lagon pestilentiel sur lequel un naïf entrepreneur avait jugé bon de construire ce bar-restaurant perpétuellement désert mais d'où la vue, si l'on voulait bien oublier l'odeur, permettait, lorsqu'on était assis à la partie la plus avancée sur l'eau, d'oublier la laideur du chantier que présentaient aux regards les rues fourmillantes de Nador, pour ne voir que le bleu outre-mer et stagnant des eaux saumâtres.

Nous prenions un café, légèrement salé car l'eau de la ville, puisée dans les profondeurs du sol, était contaminée par des infiltrations venues de la mer. L'après-midi suivait son cours, rien ne laissait présager le mirage dont nous allions être tous les deux victimes.

Durant quelques secondes notre conversation se suspendit au fil d'une vision tout à fait inattendue dans le cadre de Nador. Une élégante jeune femme européenne, un caniche noir réfugié dans ses bras, passa dans l'encadrure de la porte, fière et hautaine, suivie, quelques pas derrière, par un grand jeune homme brun qui passait quasi inaperçu dans le sillage de cette apparition céleste.

— " Sans doute une des nouvelles coopérantes et son fils," me dit Malika, "tu la reverras sûrement au lycée."

Marie fut tout particulièrement mortifiée lorsque, plus tard, je lui avouai que nous l'avions prise pour la mère de Dominique.

Marie n'était donc pas la mère de Dominique, elle était sa femme. Ce ne fut que bien des années après avoir rencontré Dominique que celui-ci me confia un secret dont la révélation aurait sans doute bien plus gravement mortifié Marie que ne l'avait fait notre confusion initiale. J'étais revenu passer les mois d'été en France où il m'arrivait alors de retrouver mon ami durant les jours les plus chauds d'août. Nous étions à Lyon. Nous avions rejoint Marie dans une petite rue d'un quartier populaire situé tout de suite derrière le quai Augagneur. Ils devaient se retrouver là pour signer les papiers qui ratifieraient définitivement la procédure de leur divorce. Ce fut vite expédié. J'attendis une petite demi-heure dans la ruelle où jouaient quelques enfants arabes. Nous allâmes prendre un verre pour fêter l'occasion. Dominique fit remarquer que c'était tout de même une coïncidence extraordinaire. La présence de leur "déconseiller conjugal", ainsi qu'il me surnommait parfois, le jour même où s'achevait leur aventure matrimoniale au terme de laquelle j'avais si pleinement participé,

ne lui paraissait pas sans ironie. Après une courte station dans un café, Marie nous abandonna pour retourner à son travail. Sans doute l'irrémédiabilité de la fin de ce mariage apparut-elle soudain en pleine lumière à Dominique. Il venait de franchir un pas définitif dans son existence et il ne pouvait contempler cette progression sans beaucoup de vague à l'âme. Il venait de terminer une étape de sa vie qui lui avait été à la fois pesante et indispensable.

Ne pas épouser Marie, il ne pouvait en être question. Pas après ces longues années de passion adolescente étirées jusqu'à leur extrême limite, jusqu'au moment fatidique du départ pour un pays étranger qui risquait de signifier la fin de cette relation vécue intensément, au jour le jour.

— " Mais tu sais, moi, je ne voulais pas me marier. Ce sont les autres qui m'ont poussé. C'est la Suze, la Trotte qui ont insisté. C'est simple, c'était comme si tout le monde savait bien mieux que moi ce que j'avais à faire ! Mais moi, moi... je savais bien qui j'étais."

— "et Marie, ...elle le savait?"

— " Mais bien sûr qu'elle devait le savoir ?"

— " Tu lui en avais parlé?"

— " Oui"

— " Mais elle croyait que c'était intellectuel, bien plus que physique. Tout du moins, c'est ce qu'elle m'a toujours dit."

— " Elle n'était tout de même pas aveugle", se récria Dominique.

Ce n'était pas la première fois que nous avions ce genre de discussion. Pourtant, ce jour-là, il y avait dans son ton une véhémence que je ne reconnaissais pas. J'étais peu enclin à l'écouter une nouvelle fois me refaire son numéro d'irresponsable. Je me fis plus discret.

— " Enfin, c'est tout de même pas la Suze ni la Trotte qui t'ont pris par la main pour te conduire à l'hôtel !"

Contrairement à ce que j'attandais, il demeura un long moment silencieux.

— " Pourtant, je t'assure que j'ai tout fait. Tout."

— " Ça veut dire quoi, tout," lui dis-je, un peu exaspéré. " Tu ne lui as pas dit les choses en face. Tu ne lui as pas dit — excuse-moi Marie, on ne peut pas se marier parce...." Il me coupa brutalement la parole.

— " Mais c'était pas possible de lui dire ça.... De lui dire que chaque soir que j'allais promener le chien.... Ça recommençait." Je restai silencieux quelques secondes.

— " J'avais tout contre moi... même l'emplacement de l'appartement. J'étais à deux pas des toilettes où tous les Arabes du coin vont draguer. Je m'y pointais, avec Pocker en laisse et je me faisais enfiler pendant qu'il faisait sa crotte. Elle serait tombée de si haut si elle avait appris ça. Tous ces détails sordides.... Quand je te dis que j'ai tout fait...crois-moi, j'ai vraiment essayé. Ce que je vais te dire, je l'ai jamais dit à personne. Quelques jours avant la cérémonie, j'ai été voir le prêtre qui devait nous marier.... Et je lui ai tout raconté. Je l'ai supplié, je lui ai demandé de tout dire à Marie et d'empêcher ce qui allait se passer. J'avais une angoisse dingue. La veille même je suis retourné le voir. Il m'a dit que cela ne pouvait venir que de moi. Que je devais prendre la décision et lui parler moi-même. La veille, je te jure, je lui ai demandé d'empêcher le mariage..... mais lui parler moi-même....ça non....c'était trop. Après ça, tout a été très vite. On s'est marié dans cette cathédrale de Fourvières parce que c'était ce que Marie souhaitait. Le soir même, je suis parti pour le Maroc sans nuit de noce....non pas qu'on ait attendu jusque là pour consommer... Marie est arrivée une semaine après, une semaine trop tard. Si tu savais ce qui s'est passé en une semaine !!! Il s'en est tellement passé."

Comme c'était souvent le cas, Dominique ne resta pas longtemps sur cette évocation dramatique. Il fallait qu'il coupe court à cette révélation par quelque chose de méchant. Il m'affirma m'avoir pardonné, avoir accepté que j'avais fait ce que j'avais fait pour son bien, pour leur bien...

— "Mais tu sais, je t'en ai voulu à un moment ! Mais au moins il y a quelque chose qui me fait plaisir. Elle a pu obtenir le divorce, je m'y suis pas opposé. Mais le rêve de Marie, parce que tu connais ses sentiments religieux, c'est d'obtenir une annulation de notre mariage et de pouvoir se remarier à l'église. Eh bien ça, elle ne

l'obtiendra jamais. Et pour elle, toute sa vie future sera vécue dans le péché. Et ça,... j'en suis bien content."

Car il pouvait être méchant, comme ça, par accès. Un désir de faire mal pour mieux consoler après. Marie m'a raconté comment Dominique, encore adolescent, se délectait à torturer son petit frère jusqu'à le faire pleurer pour ensuite l'étreindre et le réconforter. Son amour pour les autres, plus il était fort, plus il le faisait payer de souffrances vives, aigues, répétées mais aussi promptement guéries qu'elles avaient été infligées. J'en fus moi-même victime mais j'en souffris moins du fait de notre relation qui n'était que platonique.

Quand je ferme les yeux pour essayer de capturer certains souvenirs trop profondément enfouis en moi, de l'obscurité surgit une image nocturne due au seul produit de mon imagination car je n'ai jamais connu cet édifice que de jour. C'est un de ces édifices comme on en trouve encore en France, un bâtiment de toilettes publiques qui trône au centre d'une place d'une petite ville marocaine, face à l'Atlantique. Bien que je n'y sois jamais entré, ce lieu a hanté mon cerveau pendant tant d'années que j'ai fini par l'imaginer avec une précision que ne m'aurait pas laissé une photographie prise par moi et regardée de temps en temps. J'y vois une longue pissotière où des hommes peuvent se soulager debout, face au mur de porcelaine blanche où l'eau ruisselle constamment ; derrière eux quelques cabinets dont les portes manquent et qui ne permettent aucune intimité. Les hommes qui viennent ici pour libérer leurs entrailles doivent le faire au vu et au su de tous. Il s'accroupissent sur les deux repose-pieds au-dessus du trou qui engloutit ce qu'ils y laissent tomber dans le bruit de l'eau qui leur éclabousse les fesses. Un robinet leur permet de se laver après la défécation. L'hiver ils retroussent leur djellabah lourde et humide, l'été leur pantalon leur tombe aux chevilles et cache les claquettes en plastique qu'ils portent aux pieds. Ca, c'est l'image de la journée que j'aurais pu aller visionner moi-même si j'avais voulu lorsqu'il m'est arrivé de passer sur cette place. Mais il y a l'image de la nuit... Elle me hante, comme je l'ai dit, j'en fais le centre du drame de Dominique alors qu'il n'y a plus de raisons que le malheur ait frappé là plutôt qu'ailleurs. Mais comme le malheur s'est dévoilé là, à Safi, l'association s'est sans doute tout simplement imposée à moi de la même manière que pour Dominique. Il avait vu un autre visage que je ne connaîtrai jamais et que ma mémoire refuse de me restituer

exactement. Je fronce le front comme les enfants qui s'absorbent dans une tâche difficile, je me concentre, je presse mon cerveau, je veux lui faire rendre cette goutte qu'il ne veut pas me donner — asséché — je ferme les yeux encore plus fort. Dominique m'apparaît dans une multiplicité de lieux et d'expressions mais aucun ne veut me livrer la clé. Alors j'invente, je reconstruis au plus près, pour vous....

Il me parle, il revient avec ces mots qui peuvent presque être les siens.

— " Il y a un hammam à Casa, c'est fabuleux, t'as pas idée de ce qui s'y passe. Bien sûr t'as toujours les quelques petites putes habituelles qui viennent pour se taper du tourisme friqué mais c'est pas comme à Marrakech, les touristes t'en trouves tout de même pas des masses à Casa. Les mecs baisent dans tous les coins. T'as une grande salle de vapeur où tu peux choisir ce qui t'intéresse. Les mecs sont tous à poil pour la plupart, tu peux donc juger de la marchandise et puis, après, tu vas dans une petite salle de repos où il ya un lit. Ce sont des petites cabines dont tu peux vérrouiller la porte de l'intérieur. T'as qu'à attendre là, t'es sûr d'avoir du travail dans les minutes qui suivent. Y'a vraiment de tout là dedans. Ça va du père de famille qui vient tirer sa crampe parce que sa bobonne lui suffit pas et que c'est pas facile de trouver une autre femme. Les pédés c'est plus facile et moins chers. T'as des ouvriers qui viennent faire dégorger le poireau, des ados qui en profitent pour tirer cinq ou six coups de suite. Tu vois, je suis sûr que c'est là-bas que j'ai attrappé cette saloperie. Dès que j'ai vu ce type, j'ai su qu'il était dangereux. C'était comme s'il était sale. Pourtant dans le hammam, il avait dû être décrassé et re-décrassé. Mais il avait quelque chose de malsain en lui. Dans les yeux et la bouche surtout, quand il essayait de m'embrasser, sa salive avait un goût répugnant. De toutes manières je déteste qu'on m'embrasse. C'est pas parce qu'on va s'envoyer en l'air qu'on doit s'embrasser comme ça. Il m'a baisé et rebaisé et je me suis senti tout de suite malade, immédiatement. "

Il aurait été complètement inutile d'essayer de raisonner Dominique sur ce point et de lui faire remarquer qu'une maladie qu'il pouvait avoir contractée plus de dix ans avant d'en ressentir les premiers symptômes ne pouvait pas révéler son origine dans un échange de bave au goût particulier. Je suppose qu'on a tous en nous cette espèce de sens intime de la connaissance de ce qui est coupable à notre égard. J'ai bien une vue tout à fait arrêtée sur l'origine de certains de mes morpions même si la variété de mes partenaires dans les semaines précédant leur apparition devrait me faire hésiter quant au propagateur. Dès la première bestiole découverte en train de se rassasier sur mon pubis, j'en trace inéxorablement l'origine avec une certitude qui me mène droit à l'individu que quelque chose (que je ne puis bien sûr pas déterminer) m'a signalé comme étant le coupable. Peut-être en rendant l'autre unique par son crime, on se donne à soi-même un peu plus de relief, un semblant d'originalité. C'est pourquoi il n'est pas surprenant que dans la marée d'amants qui lui étaient passés sur le corps, Dominique s'en soit trouvé un pour lequel il déclarait un sentiment amoureux. Celui-ci n'avait pas interrompu pour autant la boulimie de baise qui l'agitait mais il avait cristalisé sur lui un sentiment plus intense qui avait dû ressembler (mais il ne me fut donné d'en voir que quelques facettes) à ce que ses sentiments pour Marie avaient eu dans leur côté passionné, dévorant et exclusif.

Je n'ai connu Mohammed qu'une seule saison. J'ai pendant longtemps eu l'impression qu'il existait une photographie de nous trois en compagnie d'autres amis, marchant sur la plage de Karia (?) où Dominique avait loué un cabanon pour les mois d'été. Dominique et Mohammed se tenaient par la main, je riais en arrière plan avec Malika, c'était une parfaite journée de juin. Le bleu du cliché était si profond qu'on en sentait la course du vent sur la peau, les vagues s'empêtrant dans les pieds. J'étais venu passer un mois de vacances. Quelle ne fut pas ma surprise de découvrir que Dominique partageait maintenant ses jours avec ce jeune homme au visage un peu trop beau, de cette beauté presque écoeurante et qui contrastait tant avec les visages burinés et marqués que mon ami recherchait d'ordinaire. Mohammed avait un regard que je trouvais fuyant mais peut-être ne s'agissait-il en fait que d'une appréhension à l'égard de cet inconnu que j'étais et dont la venue avait dû lui être annoncée avec fracas résonnant plus comme une menace que comme

une promesse de plaisir. Mohammed devait hésiter entre le rejet de cet étranger qui d'un seul coup prenait tant de place dans la vie de son compagnon et le désir de séduire qui est toujours le plus court moyen de se rassurer sur l'inquiétude que provoque en vous ceux qu'on ne connaît pas et avec lesquels il va falloir partager un être qu'on aime. Nous ne vîmes d'ailleurs pas beaucoup Mohammed cet été-là. Je ne me souviens pas exactement de ce qui le retint à Nador — peut-être les sentiments complexes que je viens de décrire — mais je me souviens que je fus étonné du sérieux des sentiments de Dominique à son égard. Non pas qu'il ait renoncé à ses passades, je me rappelle plusieurs parties de jambes en l'air sur la plage et ailleurs avec des garçons de passage, mais parce que Dominique incluait son amant régulier dans des projets à long terme. Il voulait changer d'air et partir s'installer dans un autre coin du Maroc et il parlait de s'installer ailleurs avec Mohammed qu'il semblait bien décidé à emmener avec lui.

Peut-être après tout y avait-il bien quelque chose de fuyant dans son regard si j'en juge par le comportement qu'adopta le jeune homme après le départ de Dominique. Un an plus tard, de passage au Maroc pour un bref séjour estival, avant de me rendre à Safi où Dominique séjournait maintenant, je repassai par Nador voir un autre couple d'amis restés là. Quelle ne fut pas ma surprise de découvrir, deux étages au-dessus de chez eux, Mohammed installé avec un nouvel enseignant français qui avait remplacé Dominique. Comme le nouvel arrivant était lié avec mes amis, j'en vins à le connaître et à passer plusieurs soirées avec lui. Jamais Mohammed n'évoqua les jours de l'été précédent passés avec Dominique ; à mon départ il me chargea cependant de l'embrasser lorsque je le rencontrerais.

Dominique d'ailleurs, ne fut pas outre mesure en colère lorsqu'il me parla de la trahison du garçon. Il comprenait fort bien que celui-ci ait préféré rester dans la région de sa famille plutôt que de s'exiler à des centaines de kilomètres dans un lieu où il ne connaîtrait personne et où il serait totalement à la merci de son protecteur. Il se mettait à sa place et pensait qu'il en aurait fait autant s'il avait dû se faire entretenir par quelqu'un. Par contre, il n'avait pas de mots assez forts contre François qui avait pris sa succession. C'était lui-même qui l'avait présenté à Mohammed avant de quitter Nador. Il avait expliqué au nouveau Français son intention de partir à Safi en éclaireur, le temps de s'installer, et de faire venir ensuite Mohammed

dès qu'il aurait trouvé une maison où ils pourraient vivre tous les deux. Dominique était persuadé que c'était François qui avait tout fait pour s'attacher le jeune homme et lui faire valoir qu'il n'avait rien à gagner à partir pour ces terres inconnues. S'installer avec lui serait une solution bien plus satisfaisante.

J'ai revu François bien des années après, presque dix ans, en fait. À Paris, installé dans une vie à laquelle il avait essayé de conserver son caractère nord-africain en s'installant dans un quartier d'émigrés. Au détour de la conversation il m'apprit que Mohammed l'avait quitté pour aller vivre au Canada. Encore une fois s'était répété le schéma sempiternel du jeune homme utilisant une histoire d'amour avec un Européen plus fortuné que lui et dont il finit par se servir sciemment ou parce que c'était la pente naturelle suivie par ce genre de relation, pour échapper à sa condition insatisfaisante et s'évader vers une nouvelle vie, dans un monde qu'il espérait plus favorable à son épanouissement. François me fit d'ailleurs lire un récit qu'il avait fait de son histoire avec Mohammed. Celui-ci confirma la fuite que j'avais d'abord vue dans le regard du jeune adolescent.

Quant à la photographie, elle existe bien, je l'ai revue il y a quelques jours en passant en revue quelques-uns des paquets de clichés que je garde dans une armoire ouverte pour de rares et spéciales occasions. Elle existe bien mais je n'y figure pas. Il y a bien un couple mais ce n'est ni moi, ni Malika qui le formons, il s'agit de deux autres Français dont j'ai oublié les noms. C'est un tirage en noir et blanc, Mohammed et Dominique ne s'y tiennent même pas par la main. Pourtant, il y a quelques mois encore, alors que nous évoquions le Maroc dans un café de Roanne, il me redit à quel point il avait aimé ce garçon et comme leur relation l'avait tourmenté. Peut-être aurais-je pu contacter Mohammed lorsque je me suis rendu au Canada. Mais que lui dire ? Si quelqu'un avait dû parler de ses sentiments c'était sûrement Dominique qui ne l'avait jamais fait après leur séparation.

Vanessa Marguerite Everson's career as a university lecturer started at the Escola Superior de Agricultura, Minas Gerais, Brazil, and continued at the University of Natal at Pietermaritzburg where she had the good fortune to work closely with Serge Ménager for 15 years. Everson has translated several of Ménager's articles into English for academic journals. Ménager and Everson together translated Bessie Head's novel *Maru* into French, as well

as two novels into English — *L'Enfant ébloui* by the young gay Moroccan author Rachid O. and *Moi Mireille lorsque j'étais Yasmina* by Fadhila Sebti, the Moroccan women's rights activist. Everson is currently Senior Lecturer in French at the University of Cape Town.

Eric Levéel has been a lecturer in French since 1992 when he was fortunate to join Serge Ménager's team in the Department of French of the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. Since then Levéel has worked as visiting lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare, and with the Embassy of France in Zimbabwe as Director of the Alliance Française of Bulawayo and lecturer at Hillside Teachers' College. In 2001 Levéel moved to Botswana to work for the Alliance Française in Gaborone, before accepting a permanent position as junior lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. Levéel is currently finishing his doctoral thesis on Simone de Beauvoir's travels with the University of Natal, a project initiated and supervised by Serge Ménager and Vanessa Everson.

The Politics of Water

ROSE CULLIS

Rose Cullis is a playwright living and working in Toronto. Her playwriting credits include Baal *(Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Toronto),* Pure Motives *(The Theatre Centre, Toronto), and* That Camille Claudel Feeling *(a dance/text performance piece presented as part of the Toronto Fringe Festival). She has collaborated with visual artists, dancers, and musicians in creating an installation piece for* Shared Habitat — A Festival of Art and the Environment. *Most recently she won an award from the Harold Greenberg Fund (script development program) to develop a screenplay of her play* Baal. *Her writing has appeared in* UnderCurrents *and* The Church-Wellesley Review. *She is a member of the Stern Writing Mistresses.*

The house is leaking
A burst pipe here
and then another
Soon the wood floors are thick as blotting paper
I jam my finger into a hole in the pipe
but it's not enough

water slips across boundaries, defies the rules
of geography runs hidden and determined through
deep veins — drops through the porous surface of the earth
and creates underground rivers that swell into being
over hundreds and hundreds of years

Look down:
Two women are in a boat headed for the shore
Their paddles dip and rise and dip

Did you know our bodies are seventy percent water?
she asks me her mouth soft and sweet and wet
Her tongue it's her tongue I love, her tongue I sin with
Wishing I could possess it, wishing I could make it all mine

We wanted to live as birds construct a tender
house of straw accept the seasons of love
the inevitable ebb and tide
of our passion for one another
make a sweet and temporary home
rise together and fall apart
willingly
to love in awareness
to drink deep and let go without a trace

We had a dream of free water

And this is the story:
that I feared thirst, I wanted power,
I built dams, I held back floods,
Grasped at what we had
and turned it into a commodity —
I took our free gift our love and I made it
A token for exchange to have and to hold

But love won't yield to that kind of tyranny

We can create a loss
by accounting for what we have
in a particular way It's all too easy
to take generations of rainwater
and squander it
to direct water into tubes that drip
through a wash of poisons
till the sea feels the gap in the earth
demand a new weight, and presses in

as salty as a lover's tear

And they say that someday
wars will be fought over water

See how water can be made to yield
to a kind of measure, it can be valued
at so many dollars a litre, and sold
and suddenly there isn't enough

How come some of us have it and some of us don't?

There are shells with pointed tips as delicate as nipples
with bruised blue spirals as casual and precise
as her fingers trailing a flesh-toned interior
in my ear the pounding sea my crashing blood

Maybe if I had *had* love, I wouldn't have wanted it so badly

Coiled accounts of love lost who did what
why make a labyrinthine vortex always
partially filtered polluted by encounters
water spinning down the drain into pipes
spiked with poisons into combined sewers
seasoned with waste
till the whole frothing soup
is either hurled into the closest body of water
or filtered, treated, bleached and released

On the beaches in Toronto a sign reads "No Swimming"
I stand on a rough shore wailing into the implacable waves
A roar of sea rushes at me and stops
then tries again

The water gleams like hammered metal

Lesbian Vacation

L.M. Robinson

L.M. Robinson teaches English Literature at Nipissing University. She has published academic articles on L.M. Montgomery and Margaret Atwood. She has also published short fiction in Wascana Review.

The lesbians were arriving at the Caribbean resort that weekend, and the conversations at dinner, by the pool, on the beach were all the same. The clientele of the resort that week, all apparently heterosexuals who would not think of themselves as needing this, or any, label, had to leave their turquoise-watered paradise because lesbians had booked the resort for a week. The responses were varied: disbelief, anger, amusement, fascination. The first lesbians to arrive, before the other patrons had completely cleared out, looked pale and shell-shocked under the curious gaze of the suntanned group. The grandiose computer salesman from East Sussex sidled up to two new arrivals who ordered beer while waiting for their room.

"So, you two are lesbians, are you?" He claimed to be hurt by their disdainful response. He was also quite frustrated that he couldn't stay with the lesbians; he and his wife had to book in at the adjacent hotel for the next two nights.

"I accept *them*," he explained to me earnestly in his intelligent-sounding English accent, "why won't they accept *me*?" He seemed truly puzzled.

As they arrived, the lesbians did look stereotypical in their Birkenstocks, their fanny packs, their hockey haircuts. I almost wished they didn't look quite so "lesbian." But mostly I felt sorry for them, confronting an inquisitive resort crowd about whom they had not been warned. I felt almost as sorry for them as I felt for myself, on this supposed vacation for a commitment ceremony. The commitment lasted only two weeks after the vacation.

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 4-5 (2002-2003) © CLGSA / SCELG

Deciding who gets what after a breakup is a galling task, like forcing down cough medicine or applying iodine. Photos, CDs, pillows, linens, dishes, books, cutlery, the stainless steel mug in the bathroom that held both of the toothbrushes. His, of course.

Remarkably, as I rummage the closets of our daily lives, stirring up dust bunnies compiled primarily of cat fur and human hair, probably his, and exciting the cats by the unusual activity, I am struck by how easy it actually is, how much there has been a line between his and mine. Did we always know about the inevitable ending? Did we see into the future like weather forecasters at Environment Canada? Even the photos are so often doubles, yet I still edit the terrible pictures of me out of his growing pile. No future girlfriend, or boyfriend for that matter, will have the smug satisfaction of encountering an unflattering me. If only I could edit out the unfavorable bits of the real, unfixed, continually-moving life. Or the painful bits. You never can, of course. The unflattering tantrums, insults, tears, and accusations must be forever blazoned into the other person's memories. As much as I might try, I can't remove them, leaving behind only the gentleness, the quiet compassion, the generous love.

The photos that got the most editing were not doubles. I removed each picture of me with the sun causing me to squish up my face, with the angle making my legs look fat, with the shade swelling my nose. I put in his pile the one of me standing thigh-high in the turquoise water, squinting at the camera, flexing my left arm muscle. Flattering photo, no. But personality, certainly. My own photographic version of our life together will be of me with a double chin, grinning hideously at the camera. My own personal memories replay nothing but the insults I hurled, like softballs or Frisbees.

We went to the Caribbean, even though we were both fairly poor. We thought it would be the trip of a lifetime. We decided to have a commitment ceremony there — to exchange rings and promise to stay together always. So why am I now, a month and a half later, dividing up photos from that very trip, a ringless hand moving quickly as I decide — his, mine, his, his, mine, mine, mine ...

The resort was abuzz that week, as I mentioned, because the lesbians were coming. Seriously. All the people there with us had to leave on the same day — the Saturday — because a group of lesbians had booked the entire resort. Six hundred women altogether. The

male staff were having a bit of a vacation that week because the lesbians didn't want them socializing with the patrons, as was the norm.

It sickened me. Not the lesbians, but the bigoted, fearful responses that ricocheted around like so many tennis balls flung madly from one of those tennis ball machines. I wanted to engage with the comments, but I could feel Adam stiffen beside me each time the topic was raised. What could I say?

The day of the transition, as the assumed heterosexuals were ferried out on buses to the airport and the lesbians shipped in, I felt an ache. The lesbians looked like a lot more fun than the silicone and melanoma set with which I'd just spent a long seven days. Under the banner of the newly-hung rainbow flags, smiling women danced to loud music as they set up tables and chairs. The two main bathrooms both became women's, which appalled, amused, and bewildered the men waiting to leave, who had to walk to a different area of the resort to find a men's room. Adam used the one that had been formerly designated as a men's anyway. He would; he had just that unquestioning sense of entitlement. He thought it was all good fun.

Suddenly, I wanted to stay, even though I'd just had about the worst week of my life. This resort and this tiny country was a place of strays, of privileged white people who belonged nowhere, who purchased acceptance under a false bond of economic brotherhood. The resort compound is an artificial oasis. The country is arid, but the resort was lush with greenery and palm trees. The country is inhabited predominantly by blacks, but the only blacks on the resort changed towels, cleaned rooms, removed dishes. I had saved so diligently and spent so much hard-earned money to come burn painfully and unattractively and feel physically inadequate and overwhelmed by all the overconfident Americans. A large percentage of the staff were Canadian, like me, but I did not feel I belonged. I was an outsider here, only pretending to be included, involved, as I danced in a line with everyone after dinner, the free wine helping somewhat. Frankly, I did not want to belong. Here or anywhere. I smiled at the two black women in blue dresses as they moved quietly from room to room with their cart of towels and cleaning supplies. They ignored me. I saw myself momentarily through their eyes and that vision hurt. I wanted no part of the sports, the excitement, the

energy, the continuous thumping music. Instead, I cried all afternoon in our room while Adam went snorkeling.

Off the coast of this island, a dolphin swam with the locals and tourists and boats, and had for 16 years. The day I saw him, I sat by myself on the beach. It was one of our last days there. Adam had meandered down to make dinner reservations at the more private restaurant because we were irritated by the custom of eating our meals with so many strangers: same conversation each meal — Where are you from? When did you get here? What did you do this morning? Afternoon? Today? I also suspect that he was checking out the beautiful, already tanned, and topless sunbathing blonde, but I tried to ignore that thought. She was from Montreal, I had found out when we went snorkeling. I couldn't help but eavesdrop on her conversation with a woman from Paris.

In truth, I was going through some emotional upheaval on this trip that I tried to convince myself had nothing to do with Adam. I glanced up from my book, from my safe spot in the shade, and stared blankly at the ocean. The very ocean itself looked empty and flat. The water was the blue of cleaning solution, as if nothing could live in it. I ached even more because I was in this place where I was supposed to be happy. Then I saw a fin slice through the water, so quickly I thought I must have imagined it. I scanned the area like radar, my heart drumming. In my ignorance, I thought it was a shark fin, and I felt called to action. Should I yell "shark"? I had almost convinced myself that it was all my imagination when the fin arced up again. I saw a back this time and realized that it was the dolphin I'd heard so much about. He was accompanying a catamaran gliding in from the open seas.

I looked for Adam but he wasn't visible along the stretch of bleached sand. I picked my way across the hot beach to the wharf and walked to the very end where the dolphin frolicked. At first, I was alone, but then more and more people showed up, with a splendid variety of American accents. A Texan was the first to arrive, and I felt grateful to share the moment.

"Isn't it amazing?" I said.

"Oh sure," the man responded and preceded to tell his various sightings of the dolphin. I didn't mind. Several men splashed into the water with snorkels on; women crouched with cameras along the shore. Momentarily sharing smiles and witticisms, all these

strangers were brought together by this dolphin. Two dogs belonging to the Texan jumped off the end of the wharf and pursued the dolphin, barking as they paddled. Adam had returned to his spot on the beach by then. I shouted, wanting to include him.

"The dolphin," I pointed, "the dolphin." We were never prepared for anything, Adam and I. We didn't have the camera at the beach with us. The dolphin will have to remain a constantly moving image in my memory, not anything captured on film. No permanent record of our moment together, holding hands, eyes shining as we smiled at each other, marveling over this gift, this dolphin who was so obviously enjoying the barking dogs.

Of course, while the dolphin is treasured on this island, and motorboats have been banned to protect him because he swims too close to the propellers, one must wonder why a dolphin would spend sixteen years of his life swimming with boats and people and dogs. He's a stray. He must have been thrown out of his group, rejected, abandoned for some reason. Did he commit some dolphin crime, some indiscretion? Or was he simply not meant for relationships with his own kind? He found another group to belong to, the barking dogs, the loud, eager Americans, the chugging catamarans, a group with lesser expectations perhaps. I felt sorry for the dolphin. I wanted to tell everyone to go away. I wanted to jump in the water and cradle the gray creature in my arms. I know it's ridiculous, but it was like I could feel that dolphin's pain and loneliness and fear as he swam about the empty ocean looking for acceptance.

I felt that way all week about everything on the island. The human strays that flooded the resort with expensive clothing and bright hopes. It was a resort for singles, which we didn't understand beforehand or we might have reconsidered. Lean cats loped onto the compound at night, slurping water from the swimming pool. Numb dogs stood boldly before people, staring at their food. At two in the morning, one man attempted to eat a sausage that he'd just purchased for an unreasonable amount of money. The dog just stood there, staring. It didn't whine; it didn't beg or demand. It just stood. The man surrendered in despair and handed the sausage over, much to his female companion's delight. Indeed, that was probably why he did it. My faith in men's motivations was declining.

Adam and I were there for our commitment ceremony. It sounds strange now, and sounded strange even then, as we planned it and

talked about it. I could not bring myself to get married — too exclusive, heterosexual, patriarchal. When I was trying on bathing suits before the trip with my friend Denise, she inquired about the "commitment ceremony."

"What is that all about?" She sat in the changing room area and assessed the suits as I emerged from behind the curtains.

"I don't believe in marriage." I turned my bottom toward her, and she shook her head a bit too quickly.

"Why? Don't you love him?"

From the curtained-off space, as I struggled out of one suit and into a rather sexy bikini, I tried to explain my politics. Of course I love him. So much so that he managed to convince me to ignore my beliefs enough to agree to a "'til death do us part," romantic ceremony. I didn't feel particularly convinced that even this concession was right.

"Isn't a commitment ceremony a gay thing?" Denise interrupted.

"Exactly," I said. "Why should I have the right to marry, just because I'm heterosexual?"

"Are you?" Denise laughed, prompting me to try to explain that, in this case, I was, and that it was problematic. I should not accept heterosexual privilege.

"Ah, life's too short," Denise stated flatly in response. "Just do what you want." Her eyes widened as I emerged from the little room in my new bikini. She nodded her head, slowly, approvingly. I paid for the suit with my gold card and was ready for the South. Some privilege can obviously be overlooked in certain circumstances. And, while I refused to admit this at the time, Denise has a point. I was once a little girl who, like many, was encouraged to imagine white fluffy wedding dresses, knights in shining armor, and a big party where I would be a princess.

Because of my politics, Adam consented to a commitment ceremony rather than a marriage. Because of Adam's ability to convince, I consented to a commitment ceremony rather than sticking to my politics. Feeling both like a hypocrite and a smugly pleased girly-girl, I wore a diamond solitaire. We went to the Caribbean and exchanged rings, just the two of us, in our room, not even on the beach as we had planned. We didn't have a big party or sign a legal document; I didn't wear a fluffy dress.

Perhaps I should have.

It took him only two weeks after our return to get fed up, overwhelmed, or whatever the emotion was. He left. I'm not certain where all my anger had come from, why I preyed upon him so, each day as he returned from work. What did I expect from him? Why did I insist on the daily enumeration of his failures as if compiling a grocery list when it was obviously mine that caused the problems and drove him away?

I do think it is important to note that, previous to Adam, I had been in a couple of lesbian relationships after a lifetime as a heterosexual. What happened? How did Adam suddenly become my life partner — for three years? How did I default to heterosexuality again? I really thought it was so simple; I really did. I fell in love with him. *It is all about the person not their gender*, I could say philosophically, worldly wise and assured: *identity is fluid*. I couldn't understand the gay community's — my community's — sense of betrayal, their eye-rolling scorn. And Adam was so supportive, marching with me at Pride, encouraging my attendance at women's dances, Take Back the Night rallies. Only now as I pack up his things, do I see how many rainbow flags, lesbian humor books, artwork from former lesbian lovers are scattered throughout the apartment. I realize now that I never actually relinquished that former identity, unusable with Adam. I clung to it like an empty perfume bottle that seems too pretty, too cherished to throw out, or like a favorite T-shirt that you can take on and off at will. As if anything could be that simple.

Adam and I spent just about every second of our vacation together, even though we didn't get along at all. I demanded reassurance from him for vague insecurities, such as the cellulite on my thighs, the size of my breasts, my lack of tan. In this place with these people, these things suddenly mattered. Bewildered, he retreated from me. I nursed my wounds and cried. He did consent to go off snorkeling by himself once or twice. I'd gone the first time, not thinking about my lifelong fear of the water. I was attempting a new laid-back version of myself — easygoing, taking things as they came. It really wasn't working, this version of me, but, in the spirit of trying, I trekked down to the scuba shack, got fitted up with snorkel gear, and boarded the catamaran. I didn't know how to snorkel, having diligently avoided water sports for thirty-four years, my whole life. It didn't occur to me what I was about to do. I was willing to be flexible, but I was completely unprepared for what that meant.

The catamaran stopped over a coral reef way out in the ocean. The island was visible, far off in the distance. We were to jump into the water, snorkel gear squeezing our noses, forcing us to breathe through a tube — the sound of deep labored breathing. The fins on my feet caused me to panic — how do I stay afloat? Adam showed me how to point them down, "like a ballerina," a metaphor I liked; it encouraged me to be lighthearted, girlish. Move them slowly. I did. Good. Okay, I could do this. Then, the snorkel gear came over the eyes and nose. Fit the mouthpiece in — bite it. Okay. Now, put your face in the water, just so. Okay? Okay, I nodded.

When I said I was unprepared, I understated the case. I could never have been prepared, even though I spent my childhood on the ocean — the cold, Canadian Atlantic one — and watching Jacques Cousteau on television. When I swim in natural waters, I keep my head above the water and try never to think about what might be underneath the surface. This activity now expected of me was at odds with my whole approach to survival. I was now required to look underneath the surface and, moreover, to revel in the beauty of it.

For the few seconds I managed before utter panic conquered me, I did marvel. I glanced down into the depths, taking a huge gulp of air as I put my face into the water, because instinct told me to do so, even with the mouthpiece fixed between my teeth. Suddenly, I was floating far above a tremendous mountain range, fish darting colourfully, like birds, along the crevasses far below. A world existed here, invisible to most people most of the time, unthought of, unexplored, but always beckoning beneath the surface. Most amazingly, it resembled the world on the surface, as if there was really no difference at all, just one of atmosphere, of medium. I was not ready. All I could hear was my own labored breathing. I was aware of my struggling legs, the miles of water between me and land, in any direction. I panicked. I wanted safety.

As I coughed and struggled onto the boat, I tried not to cry. I tried to save face by being playful about my fear. I talked about it far too much after that, at dinner, around the pool; while everyone else discussed the arrival of the lesbians, I nattered on about my fear of snorkeling. Other patrons reassured me, suggested I take lessons in the shallow water, agreed that diving right in at first might have been a bit overwhelming. Uncharacteristically, Adam kept silent.

There was a world under the surface that I knew about now, a fascinating world that my fear would not allow me to access. I was stuck on the surface, it seemed, barred from exploration by my own inability to trust myself, to trust my capacity to stay afloat no matter what, my breath, my fluttering legs, my waving arms. These were the things I thought of as I watched the lesbians transform the resort, as I waited with my luggage and my heterosexual partner. I was silent and tired, ready to return home to familiarity, to the safety of normalcy. I wanted the comfort of unquestioning routine again. I didn't want to have to think anymore about the black women cleaning the rooms, the wealthy white patrons, or the incoming lesbians.

There are no pictures of me and Adam snorkeling. At least I don't have to edit them. I like to think I would try it again, if given the opportunity, although I have no desire to return to a tropical paradise. Instead of succumbing to fear, next time I would start out in shallow water, much more slowly, so that I wouldn't shoot back to the surface, condemned to bob there helplessly like a piece of waterlogged driftwood.

What Daphne wrote Georgia

TRISH SALAH

Trish Salah (salahp@yorku.ca) *is a doctoral student in the English Department at York University. Her dissertation engages questions of libidinal and rhetorical economy as they pertain to the representation of transgender figures and transsexual politics. She is the author of a collection of poetry,* Wanting in Arabic *(TSAR 2002).*

(From *Wanting in Arabic)*

I

What a heart is, is forever at risk. Reborn to you,
I know this, and to that condition, consent.

In your eyes, disclosed, a singular deprivation:
your want is turned to passion, it is steeling.

And when we turn to boys, rare with thirst and trust
that our becoming might remain ours

you threaten, giddy and rudely, you promise
to devour me roughly, to take me wholly inside.

Under your mouth and in your hands, I become again,
so protean as to survive that, more, to grow wild and lovely.

Beloved, consider a carefully cultivated flame.
Of how it is that I want, with you.

II

How shall we make our way between Jerusalem, Misra, Beirut?
Before time falls upon time, loose sheaf of translucence.

Do not tell me the day is gone, and the night is gone;
between them, love lies like a kiss, the word's cataclysm.

You avoid promises, warding curses, bad fortune.
Your opacity is an achievement I should marvel at,

or, emulate. So the future might not notice,
your touches are that light.

III

What now? You might ask or or I
may, some may, wanting caution or

your glance, enduring this insistent
remoteness, our common discourse:

the timeliness of friendship, or
the banality of roses, of structures

of revenance or romance…Christ,
How childish! We declaim, superior

too, and from our past selves, sundered.
Surrender, our best bet, for a future.

No, not in love, any thing but
Any other thing will do.

IV

I do not know how you came to dwell in this,
a room as low as my heart to the ground.

I do not own this room, or, in your dwelling,
a body with rumored tears, to comfort, to hold.

I do not own this tomb, or, pretend to. You,
do I ask but your consent to be generous, with time?

How is it this room is filled with bodies? Their skins
full up with sand. Forget that.

I do not know, if you came to bury here, why-
Could we not leave the past the future, now?

Ferial Mirage (Fata Morgana)

Trish Salah

She awoke to an appetite for narrative. Wanted to know who was a memory machine. Who was a memory. She was in a bed and she was entwined and twinned with, and she was nearly thought (the moon) she was nearing the moon. Two in a bed and the Witch, was it? Under the moon, heavy breasted, and plunged into it. It was only scary. What recursive thought isn't? She awoke to the moon, full and flaccid, stinking of drunken sex, sweet with it, like a child.

The romance is always two in bed and in another room, another. Some fey thing you thought you cast off, full. Under the moon, your familiar, you're twinned with her, cursive and strung out. Halfway across the city, or, its architecture. Your restlessness at six a.m., an appetite for water or memory, the sweat of it. You have the feeling of a wolf. Feral idylls, ferrous. The taste of lightning in your mouth. A moony child, switched in the night.

Two in a bed and through the window a gray line where dawn will come. It allows silhouette: trees, clouds, horizon. Her eyes on her lover rapt, knotted in Celtic shadow: silhouette. Who she was wakened to, her appetite? The feeling of a wolf or a child behind the door you locked. Or, eagles wrapped around my neck, at the collarbone, martial. Love with its histories of war and open to the band of light, a little hopeful music, at the horizon, the willingness of light, its capacity to diffuse, to allow others, palest blue, a yellow awning of dawn.

A witch, sucking her tit, beautiful as her familiar, and the precise articulation, the immediacy of tree branch silhouetted, black veins with an upward reach. (Old bones sucked, at the root.) Love against

the dawn, sienna dissolving slate. Here with the bones of trees we're still in night, but the mist's uneven line speaks of how day may come through trees; they're horizon. It's a winter night anxious for day. Two in a bed are debating with dreams, which to allow. Which to wake to? Children under foot, whitening. Resentful? Too long with a pillow over her head.

Smothering is something you can't argue with bones. The past is the past and children should not die under foot, in the pretty jaws of a witch. Outside the sky is plunging trees. Clouds enjoy her sleeping smile. She is mindful of snow on the tracks, widening distance, a capacity for depth. With colors coming as inevitably as old lovers do, or not, when you are in danger, or asleep. Out another window, the city sky line feeling its own: blue thinning of darkness. Split root, your old man love is walking the rounds. The chill air is working its way every where like smoke into sky. Where diffused, every dawning is refused. A fey turn to the south. Like memory, like children. Its matter made from radiance, and your concern for freedom.

Where her freedom was concerned, the witch had her aversion to trains, trials, of thought that might ask of her uncertain lightness. She got out of bed, distracted with her moon and an appetite for water. Memory flood the dawn with others. Dawns she had cast off, not unkindly, but with an instinct for survival, and now? It was all comparative and her love enjoyed her sleeping smile. Her teeth hurt.

The city was lightening in the west and still she felt refusal from the moon. Full, and indifferent, the cut on her thumb from dinner the night before. Acid with having you, and unable to sleep. She was pulled a cloud's distance. (Once, there were others: old man law, that bad dad, and even courtly romance). She was aware of the necessity of certain fictions, more certainly of their failing. Often, she flattered herself, she was above all that. There were gulls in the widening distance and as a lover, as someone with some measure of dignity, of freedom. What galls at early dawn, pulling, as she wakes to snow, a little hung over, and dishes to be washed. Never the less she prized her freedom. Like a thief in the night. Love demands that, and one needs to be able to work, and *then*, or *until*, the backward glance. A certain distance (a collect call from Messina, or Tennessee).

Fiction will do that for you. More, if you are a beautiful girl, as she was, and determined to be.

I swept over you before I came downstairs, and said sorry, not for leaving but for the before. My restlessness in bed and your sleep interrupted by the moon, which was being insistent with me. A fey child, locked outside and scratching, leaving a certain sickness in my mouth. One tries to be fair.

Last night, putting on my beautiful girl face, and playing with my hair, you are sweet to me. I need some water. I meant to say: she woke with a blood on the narrative, a fairy bias. Or was it mechanic? The taste of it, ferrous in her mouth, and the feeding of the dawn on night, nearby. How do you sleep through that? Luminous and plundering sleep, whole breaks of color, ask the impassibility of light. Where gold comes through palest, crimson tendrils, mauve surrounds, and palest, gold comes through. The sky and last night's party, all those politicians, all that red wine. It was only the nightmare of the last time that kept us in fiction. A certain distance. Overcome. We play it. For one moment, one of us, anyhow. The sun came up. Time to wash.

She awoke to an amber flush, gaudily more so. A less offensive word for Marrano, as if that could take the sting out. Deeper ocher, deeper maroon. The winds were at her and what they carried. Eagles' silhouette intruding with a sharpened edge, and her perception pierced with it.

Feet

TAMARA MAGGIO

Tamara Maggio (tamstaar@yahoo.ca) *was born and raised in Montréal and moved to Calgary in 1996 to further her studies in art. She trained formally in painting, but recently adopted photographic and digital processes as part of her work. She has exhibited her work in several shows, including two solo exhibitions. She has a BFA from the Alberta College of Art and Design and is interested in pursuing future studies on the psychology of aesthetics.*

Artist's Statement

I am an observer fascinated with the human body. I consider myself to be an expressionist and a feminist. I also see myself as being a dreamer.

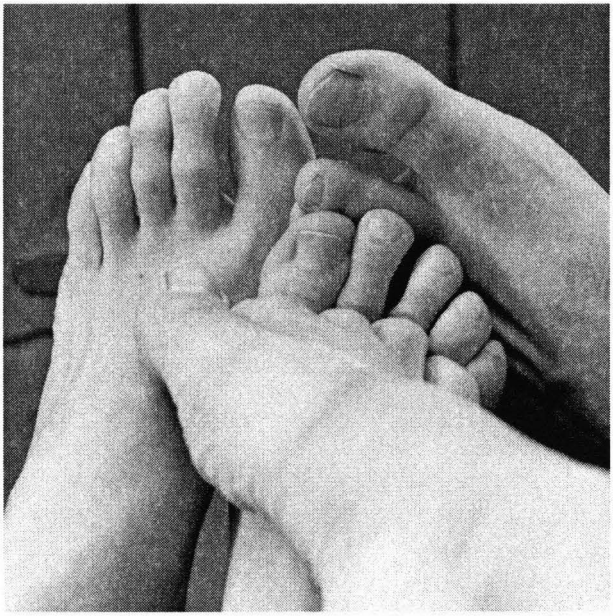
My photographic work is about the human body. I use the human body as a tool, just like a camera, to express my ideas. I am inspired by its forms, lines, and volumes. I use sheet metal as the support for my photographs. The metal is also a metaphor for the skin. I clean and polish the metal, but I like to let some imperfection show. These imperfections represent scars, hair, moles, birthmarks ... Metaphorically, the metal becomes a second skin.

I like working with metal because it is a nontraditional material to combine with photographs. I find metal to be very cold and unforgiving to work with. The smoothness and coldness of the metal is a visually pleasant contrast to the warmth of my photographs. Because the photographs are printed on transparencies, the color of the metal shows through. The color of the metal then becomes the color of the skin.

I like the idea of taking closeup photographs of the human body. I like to get very close to my subjects. I believe this makes my photographs more personal and intimate.

My work is strongly influenced by the work of Betty Goodwin, Genevieve Cadieux, and Bev Tosh. I feel that I can relate to their work, their ways of thinking, and their ways of working. I connect with the ambiguity of Cadieux's images. My idea of second skin is closely related to that of Goodwin's work. Tosh's work simply takes my breath away. Her work reaches me really deep inside and inspires me greatly.

At the present moment, my work is relatively small. Two feet by four feet is the biggest. I find that working with smaller formats makes me physically closer to my work. I strongly feel that the physical presence of my body in my work is noticeable to the viewers. Since my work is best viewed close up, the personal space of the viewer is mixed with the space of the work, which makes my work even more intimate.



A Fine Line: Being an Out Transsexual Woman

TERI JANE URSACKI-BRYANT

Teri Jane Ursacki-Bryant is an Associate Professor in the Haskayne School of Business at the University of Calgary. She has taught international business there since 1990. Her research interests focus on Japanese executive management practices, Japanese-Canadian trade and other Asian management issues. After struggling with transgender issues since childhood, she initiated physical preparations for gender reassignment in January, 1998, began living as a woman in June, 1999, and underwent gender reassignment surgery in June, 2000. Her life is the subject of an instructional video entitled "A Transgender Journey: Workplace and Lifestyle Management." Since writing this article she has married the partner referred to in the concluding paragraph.

I started cross-dressing when I was very young. I told no one until I was in my mid 30s, when I disclosed my status to a few close friends and relatives and to my Dean. By that time I was venturing out in public quite often. I knew there was always a risk that they would hear something 'through the grapevine' and I wanted to control what they heard. For the most part, though, I felt there was no need to tell others.

Once I was able to begin preparing for a full-time transition to living as a woman, I really had no choice about being out to everyone around me. I was staying in the same workplace, so it was unavoidable that all my colleagues would know about my transition. I spent a lot of time preparing them, having one-on-one meetings with over a hundred people. Some of these meetings lasted as much as two hours, as I outlined what was going to happen and responded to questions. My colleagues were very supportive.

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I had students who had me for one course as a man and then for another the next year as a woman: there was no keeping the secret from them! I did not discuss my personal life in class, but I did prepare a variety of ways that students could access information about what was going on. I prepared a handout with background transgender information that was available from several sources around the Faculty, created a web site, and obtained the agreement of a volunteer who was able to respond to any student enquiries. I also offered to discuss matters personally outside of class hours with anyone who wanted to do so and later had an article about myself published in the Faculty's student newspaper. In class I did not discuss my situation at all: I simply alluded to it elliptically and pointed out how people could find out more if they wanted to. My students seemed to react well: my student evaluations remained high and my classes remained near capacity.

I also informed my neighbors, who took the news well. I had made a habit of cultivating good relations with them by shoveling snow, raking leaves, cleaning up the alley and so on, and this stood me in good stead when I needed a little understanding.

At first I thought that in the broader community everyone would know I was a transsexual woman due to my height (6'3") and general physical experience. I saw no real downside to being open in private fora, such as groups of students or caregivers. I definitely didn't want mass media attention. However, at one point I was put under considerable stress by the *Calgary Herald*, which outed me in its pages shortly before I began living as a woman.

As things turned out, the physical changes from my cosmetic surgeries and other procedures have meant that few people identify me as a transsexual woman unless they know already or are told. This confronted me with a dilemma: should I just lay low and preserve my acceptance as a woman or take the risk of drawing unwanted attention and speak out? Even speaking in private risked attracting the attention of the media, which tends to deal with such issues in a rather sensationalistic manner. For a while I contemplated stopping my speaking engagements. A major worry for me was the reaction of possible suitors. I knew I wanted to find a life partner, and I felt the more public I was, the more difficult it would be for him to deal with having a transsexual partner.

In the end I decided to continue speaking, at least for now. The reaction I get from audiences tells me I have a message that people appreciate hearing, and I have now met a wonderful partner who is very supportive and completely open to me speaking in public (he has even attended a panel discussion I participated in). Many transgendered people have told me they think it is very important to have 'out' transgendered people in visible roles to show that it is possible to have a successful and productive life. I speak openly about my situation to classes of students studying sexual issues and groups of people who may have to deal with transgendered people in the workplace and I maintain an extensive web site that gets hundreds of hits a week and attracts a steady stream of transgendered people seeking advice. I also tell most of those who are close to me, such as friends, ministers, etc. For me the issue involves walking a fine line as I try to contribute to the education of society and fulfil my responsibility to the transgendered community while at the same time preserving some semblance of privacy.

Ballroom Birthday Bash

DJINN FISSURE AND SILKE R. FALKNER

djinn fissure has a B.Sc. and LL.B., had her own law practice, has written a novel, worked as the sole staff member of an NGO, and created a web site on abuse at www.hotpeachpages.net *that has become a major world resource. She is currently preparing to launch a web design company. Silke R. Falkner is Associate Professor of German at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research focuses mainly on Early Modernity and issues relating to identity.*

djinn: Even 10 months ago, if someone had told me I'd want a ballroom dance for my next birthday party, I'd have thought they were crazy. I couldn't waltz, let alone fox-trot, samba, or tango. Sure, I'd always harbored a secret wish to ballroom dance, and even pretended that someday I'd actually get around to taking lessons, but there was invariably that major barrier that seemed insurmountable — I'm a woman, and I wanted to learn the 'man's' part. Yet another limitation inflicted on me by the straight world. I carried on dancing 'freestyle.'

Silke: In 1998, I had the opportunity to visit a Lesbian Tango Bar in Berlin — sensual music, bodies, movements in an all-women environment. Not knowing how to tango, I could only sit and watch, but that was pleasant enough. And that wasn't the only time in my life where not knowing standard dancing became an issue. I grew up in Hamburg where the rumored annual "Lesbenball" attracts women who don formal attire and know the steps. But I don't live in Berlin or Hamburg, or even Montréal any more, where I know lesbians also don't have to look too far to learn ballroom dancing. No, I live in Saskatoon where the one gay bar has its entrance in a back alley. Sure, there's a ballroom dancing club with over 1,300 members and numerous classes for various levels and styles, but it's

for straight couples. What are lesbians to do when the instructor says "men over here and women over there"?

djinn: So there we were, both of us wanting to learn, but apparently stymied. Then we heard that a woman in Saskatoon had once taught a ballroom dancing class for gays and lesbians. So we came up with the idea of getting a bunch of people together who wanted to learn, finding out who that teacher was, and offering her a ready-made group willing to pay her. I'd like to report that our plan worked perfectly, so that those of you in the hinterlands of Canada secretly aching to learn ballroom dancing (and I know you're out there) could take heart and try the same approach. But we never actually got a chance to implement our idea. Instead, believe it or not, at the very next community dance that same instructor passed out business cards announcing an upcoming ballroom dance class for gays and lesbians.

Silke: Of course we signed up for the class right away, and we've taken three or four more since. Each class consisted of four two-hour long sessions on consecutive Sundays, plus a potluck supper at the instructor's house after the last session. The instructor was concerned there wouldn't be enough people in the first class to make it worth her while, so we promoted it to everyone we knew. One of the couples we knew wasn't all that excited about the idea initially, but for some reason they finally agreed to try it out. Immediately after the very first lesson, they were both totally enthusiastic, to the point where the four of us have gotten together almost every Wednesday night for the last eight months in order to practice between classes.

djinn: There were an awful lot of unexpected bonuses. I thought it was just going to be about learning something new, but it was fun, too. It was great quality couple time with Silke away from the kids, our social circle expanded to the point where I wonder if we even had any friends B.B. (Before Ballroom), and the enjoyment I get out of going to a community dance has increased immensely. We dance almost every dance now, I actually pay attention to every song that is played, and I even make requests. I don't just dance with Silke anymore either — I like teaching the basic samba and rumba steps to complete strangers, and they seem very happy to learn.

Silke: Now, whenever we hear any music anywhere, we always ask ourselves, "What could we dance to that?" It's surprising how many 'pop tunes' one could polka to.

djinn: It hasn't all been smooth sailing, though. Right off the bat, we had to agree who would be the 'Lead' and who would follow. My refusal to be the 'Follow' under any circumstances should have meant it was a nonissue, but for some reason Silke wanted rational, logical reasons included in the decision-making process. I think I came up with some good rationalizations, but even months later, somehow I still feel obligated to justify the outcome.

Silke: Tell me again why I can't be the 'Lead.'

djinn: Silke even had a special dance skirt made and I've bought a pair of dance shoes. We get a real kick out of dressing up for community dances, as if we were at a competition. We both wear the same color and we lean toward the theatrical in matching the theme of each dance — red for Valentine's, green for St. Patrick's Day, formal for New Year's, and so on. We always generate a lot of attention.

Silke: And now that I've invested in a whole new wardrobe, femmy and all, and have taken on a dancing persona as a 'Follow,' we're determined to continue with lessons. Unfortunately, the teacher we've had so far isn't able to offer more than beginners' classes because of numbers, so we decided we'd just have to get our courage up to join the intermediate level at the aforesaid 'hetero' ballroom dancing club.

djinn: Joining a straight group wouldn't only mean that we'd be dancing together as a lesbian couple in front of a whole lot of straight people. Dance instruction theory strongly advocates experience with multiple partners, so we can expect that the instructor will regularly ask us to change partners.

Silke: djinn doesn't think the straight men will hesitate at all to dance with me, but whether I'll want to dance with them is another issue.

djinn: And I have the reverse problem. I have no hesitation about dancing with straight women, but will they be comfortable with me

as a Lead? Thankfully our 'Wednesday Nite' dance buddies decided to sign up too, so we know at least we'll have them to switch with if no one else.

Silke: And more good news: apparently this year, for the first time, the posters advertising the 'straight' ballroom dancing club say "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Friendly" at the bottom, and apparently the registration forms ask whether you are a Lead or a Follow, instead of man or woman. It looks like it won't be as hard breaking new ground as we thought.

djinn: As for my recent birthday, I had the best birthday party I can remember. (And no, I'm not too old yet to remember any of the others.) We cleaned out the garage, decorated it with garlands of lights, had a half barrel of beer and coolers on ice and a table groaning with food, and we waltzed, jived, rumbaed, sambaed, tangoed, and two-stepped the night away with two other lesbians, two-transgendered women, and two gay guys. Between us we knew 30 different dance steps. What a blast!

Silke: We're thinking of applying for a dance-hall licence for our garage.

He Said / She Said: Personal Narratives on Same-Sex Marriage

JOHN D. MACBRIDE AND TRACEY RICKARDS

John MacBride completed his Masters of Education at Brock University in 2000 and is currently a professor in the Faculty of Business at Seneca College in Toronto. Here, he teaches marketing, personnel, retail theory, advertising, computer graphics, drawing, retail interior design, and the history of design. John's research interests include the development of new curricula that incorporate Web technology and mobile learning experiences for students, the application of Web technology to portfolios, and the implications of this for learning and development. He is also a practicing artist with work both in private and in public collections.

Tracey Rickards graduated from the University of New Brunswick, Faculty of Nursing in 1986, worked in Toronto for four years, and in 1990 moved back to Fredericton where she lives with her partner and their four children. She is currently pursuing her M.A. that focuses on the experiences of women coming out later in life. She is interested in understanding what factors contribute to the delayed acknowledgment of sexual orientation. In 2003, Rickards received the Chris Landry Memorial Scholarship, a Lambda Foundation for Excellence award for her research on lesbian health care issues.

At no time in Canadian history has the battle for same-sex marriage been a hotter topic. Recent legal challenges to the federal definition of marriage have resulted in equal recognition for gays and lesbians in the institution of matrimony (see EGALE). Many gays and lesbians took to the streets on Pride Day 2003 to celebrate their newfound rights and freedoms (Galloway). Yet not all members of the gay and lesbian communities welcome the right to marry. Victor Dwyer states that our pursuit of heterosexual institutions like marriage and adoption have taken the fun, and the fire out of being gay. After all, was not the plan of 'gay

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 4-5 (2002-2003) © CLGSA / SCELG

liberation,' as it was called not so long ago, to forge an exciting new world different from the world of straights? This new world was to bear the stamp of those brave queers, transvestites, and street kids who pelted raiding police with rocks and high heels at New York's Stonewall Inn in 1969, thereby launching the modern gay-rights movement. Are we not the same ones who, in 1981, marched hundreds strong through the streets of Toronto following raids on the city's gay bathhouses — and the largest mass arrests in Canada since the FLQ crisis — demanding our right to have anonymous sex when and where we felt like it? (42).

Certainly, the issue of same-sex marriage has threatened to divide the gay community. Andrew Sullivan argues:

> The gay movement has ducked this issue primarily out of fear of division. Much of the gay leadership clings to notions of gay life as essentially outsider, anti-bourgeois, radical. Marriage, for them, is co-optation into straight society. For the Stonewall generation, it is hard to see how this vision of conflict will ever fundamentally change. But for many other gays — my guess, a majority — while they don't deny the importance of rebellion 20 years ago and are grateful for what was done, there's now the sense of a new opportunity. A need to rebel has quietly ceded to a desire to belong. To be gay and to be bourgeois no longer seems such an absurd proposition. (Par. 8)

William Tierney argues that Sullivan takes an assimilationist perspective: an argument that assumes we must convince the majority that gays and lesbians are no different than they are, entitled to the same rights under the law. While Tierney does agrees with Sullivan about equal rights, he offers a cautionary note about assuming that we are all the same:

> Is there any evidence that groups who are discriminated against have a better chance to lessen their stigma and attain their rights if they act as the mainstream does? ... If similarities are to be accepted as a cultural good, does it mean that I ought to strive to erase from myself any differences from the norm? And again, rather than simply desiring to finagle an invitation to the table, should we not be more concerned about who's handing out the invitations and what we have to do to get invited? (50)

For gays and lesbians wishing to marry, there remain many questions. Why would we want to participate in a ritual that is coined by some as an ancient and disreputable heterosexual institution? Will same-sex marriages carry the same responsibilities (and possible encumbrances) as heterosexual marriages? Will we negotiate an improved definition of marriage for ourselves that can be supported by our entire community? Will same-sex marriage stratify our community even further? The following narratives chronicle the experiences of two couples, one gay and one lesbian, who had same-sex commitment ceremonies prior to the recent successful court challenges. In these personal narratives, the authors address how and why they proceeded down the aisle, despite any legal recognition of their ceremonies. They also address how their 'marriages' affected their family and friends. These stories attempt to capture their motivation, memories, and mishaps in their quest to marry.

He Said

In June 1999, I married my partner in a same-sex commitment ceremony on national television. It was nonetheless an 'intimate little affair' involving about 65 of our closest friends and family. The decision to get married brought with it many reactions — both positive and negative — from our friends, family, and the community at large.

I had proposed to Corry, my partner, about a year earlier while we were visiting friends in Montréal. We discussed at length our reasons for wanting to get married. They included a desire to have our community support and stand up for our relationship: to give it the same recognition and legitimacy that heterosexual couples enjoy. We also wanted to get married in order to publicly express our love and commitment to each other. Weddings are an opportunity to celebrate a relationship and we wanted to take full advantage of the opportunity.

They say weddings bring out the best and the worst in people, and ours was no exception. Our close friends rallied round, volunteering to do everything including catering the dinner, drafting speeches, making corsages, and organizing separate stags. One friend insisted on becoming our 'bridal registry' (against our objections). We were not in this for the gifts, although I must say they were

fabulous. We found ourselves in the enviable position of having to turn down offers of help.

But other reactions were not so positive. We found ourselves having to explain to our families why we wanted to get married (we feel quite comfortable using the term regardless of its legality). The invitation sparked a number of unexpected reactions. Corry's brother and his sister-in-law needed to have a phone conversation with us about why we were getting married and what the service would look like. We avoided the temptation to tell them it was a nude ceremony where we would all pop 'e' at the end. Corry's parents wrote us a lovely letter explaining why they could not attend due to religious reasons. My father met with us to tell us that although he was happy we were together, he felt he could not attend on principle. My mother, annoyed with my father, attended on her own. My brother and his wife never responded to the invitation, prompting me to contact them for an answer. Their response was an uncomfortable, "We don't think so."

The national television experience came when we discovered that the Life Network was looking for a same-sex couple for their *Weddings* series. We talked about why we would want to air our vows through such a public venue. In the end, we felt that the visibility could provide some good for people struggling with the same issue. We contacted the producer, Karen Wooley, and set up a screen test. We were a bit surprised when Karen later contacted us to say we would be the first same-sex wedding on their series.

When the show finally aired in July 1999 (Wooley), reaction to it was extremely positive and quite unexpected. The very next day, people started stopping us on the street to congratulate us. Two little old ladies chased Corry across the Toronto Eaton Centre in an attempt to wish him well. People we had not seen in years sent us emails and notes of congratulations. We were caught off guard by the exposure that the episode gave us: we never imagined that so many people actually watched this show. To complicate matters, the episode continues to air unabatedly in reruns. Karen finally admitted to us that it is one of their more popular episodes.

Our getting married did result in a shift in our friends' and families' attitudes toward us. While they were always supportive of our relationship, they now treat us as a family unit, something permanent and fixed. Interestingly enough, my father, despite his objections to the marriage, began to treat Corry as a son-in-law.

There was also some negative fallout. Many of our straight friends tried to transplant their view of heterosexual marriage onto our relationship. (I sometimes wonder if they were trying to figure out which one of us was the wife.) They seemed concerned if one of us went somewhere without the other. (I promised to love and support Corry forever, not be joined to him at the hip.) They frowned if we seemed too familiar with other men. (God forbid you ever broach the subject of nonmonogamy with them!) These issues seem to have faded as they have watched our relationship grow and flourish.

The same cannot be said of the gay community at large. There are many people in the gay community who view long-term gay relationships with an air of suspicion. A year after our wedding, Corry was accosted in a gay bar while out with friends. He was asked in a snide tone, "Where is your partner? Is it over already?" There are others who feel we are caving in by engaging in so-called antiquated heterosexual rituals. While they are more than entitled to their opinions, I do not feel I need to be lectured to while out for the evening with friends.

Most of the positive comments we received came from women, both lesbian and straight. The few snide comments we received came from gay men.

The most negative reaction we received was a series of harassing and threatening phone calls. During the first wave of reruns, we began to get calls in the middle of the night threatening us with violence. The police suspected that it was a result of the television exposure, but they were never able to apprehend a culprit.

If asked if we would do it all over again, I think Corry and I would reply with a resounding "Yes!" The emotional bond between us continues to grow stronger with each passing year. Despite the lack of legal status, we consider ourselves married in our eyes and in the eyes of our friends and family. Now that we have won the right to legally marry, we will go to get the little piece of paper. But recreate another ceremony? I think not. Okay, maybe a *little* celebration ...

She Said

We were married in an evening ceremony, filled with romance and gentility, surrounded by friends and family. The only word to describe it is "magical." The positive emotions and unconditional support were

astounding to the point that for me, they were a tangible entity. I wasn't nervous but rather excited, as marrying Carla was the most 'right thing' that I had ever done in my life. The celebration afterwards was indeed the best that I had ever attended. Everyone was high on the joy and meaningfulness of the evening. Everywhere I looked people were smiling.

The ceremony itself was the culmination of much planning, consulting, and soul searching. It was in August that I asked Carla to marry me. As I remember it, I fumbled around the words "join me in a commitment ceremony" or "let's have a joining ceremony" or "would you commit to me?" Regardless, I loved this woman and wanted to let her know that it was important to me that I both share my love for her with our friends and family and ask them for their affirmation of our relationship in some sort of a special event.

We began telling people of our plans to have an 'event,' and what I noticed was that each time the words would vary slightly, as if they were not the right words and I was not privy to ones I wanted to use.

During a Christmas shopping expedition I found a book on the discount table of a local bookstore about the journey to the altar for two men. It seemed serendipitous to have found it. As it turned out, this highly emotional book provided clarity. These men had so many hurdles to get over in order to have their ceremony the way they dreamed it could be. At some point they decided that this joining was as important to them as marriage had been to their siblings. "Marriage," that seemed to be the operative word. Why couldn't they call it a wedding? And so they did.

After much discussion with Carla about the legitimacy of our relationship, I decided that I would begin to call this event "our wedding." I had already had a wedding, having once been married in a heterosexual union. This time neither the government nor the church, a cruelty that I continue to fight against, would sanction our union. I was going to call this "our wedding" because I could see no logical argument that would make me believe that my wanting to spend the rest of my life with Carla and to have that relationship given the seal of approval in front of our family and friends was any less real than the same beliefs and wishes of a heterosexual couple. It was not long before Carla was using the same terminology, telling me she also felt it important.

So began the excitement and confusion and endless list of decisions needed to create a ceremony that would be what we had always wanted for a wedding.

We had to tell our children first. I have four children: Kelly (15), Jeremy (12), Ted (10), and Hilary (7), to whom Carla has become the other stable parent in their lives. At supper one night we began the discussion of our desire for a wedding, and asked for their feedback. My precious Ted, who is always thinking ahead of the game asked, "But Mummy, who's going to wear the wedding dress, and can I wear a tux?" Once we had all stopped laughing, it was decided that we would set our wedding for the evening and make it a formal event.

We began asking our friends for their input at our annual New Year's Day party. To our pleasure they were all extremely thrilled about our wedding. Along with the wedding came the excitement of dressing up, organizing a shower, and copious offers: "What can we do to help?"; "We want to be a part of this!" It seemed to mean a lot to them that we wanted, and indeed intended, to take part in what had traditionally been a heterosexual right. There was no assumption that our wedding would be steeped in all the other roles, posturing, and hierarchies often found in a heterosexual marriage.

The wording of our invitation seemed very important and took a great deal of time to agree upon. Why we stressed over it I am still pondering, as we sent the invitations out only to our friends and family, who all knew the depth of our love for each other.

The next step for Carla was to write a letter to her father, who was living in Denmark. Her relationship with her father (or, for that matter, the rest of her family) is distant. Her mother passed away over 20 years ago and, since Carla has no siblings, her father and two aunts are her only biological family. Needless to say I was aghast that she wrote a letter, included our family picture and said, "So Dad, this is my family." Nothing more, nothing less! "Is that all?" I asked, "No further discussion of who you are or how you came to this place?" "No need." And so it was that Carla relayed to her family that she was both lesbian and had this family of which she was an integral part.

To top it off, a month later Carla sent her father an invitation to our wedding. By this time I was going crazy. "Just like that?!" was my response. I guess, in retrospect, it came as no surprise that Carlo,

Carla's father, called from Denmark one morning to tell me he was excited and on his way for the wedding. I called Carla at work to inform her that her father was on his way. "He's what?" came her response. When I think back on that moment I become quite emotional. This man, who saw Carla once every ten years or so, and wrote letters about 4 times a year, felt it important enough, real enough, and legitimate enough to make the long trek from Denmark at the age of 78, for his daughter's wedding.

And so began the outpouring of love and support.

My family gathered from Toronto, Halifax, and Vermont. There was never a hesitation on their part to participate, just a clear assurance that this wedding was no less important than my previous one; in fact this one was more meaningful.

We met with Nancy, the minister of our church, the Unitarian Fellowship of Fredericton, to book the sanctuary and to ask that she perform the ceremony. She gave us many suggestions about what to include in the ceremony, and encouraged us to write the ceremony ourselves, to include what was important to us.

Unfortunately, she was waiting on a date for medical treatment and so asked us to consider a second person to perform the ceremony in the event that she was not available: "After all, you don't really need me, anyone could perform the ceremony." These words stick with me, as it was one of the most important details of my wedding. If I couldn't have my union sanctioned by the state I was at least going to have it performed by somebody who had the authority to marry two people. As it turned out, Nancy's treatment date came sooner than expected and, well on the road to recovery, she was thrilled to be able to be a part of our ceremony.

The details fell into place, including the issue of where to have the reception. A dear friend of ours offered her beautiful house, and we could not have been more grateful to her. We asked several of our dearest friends to read during the ceremony; the children embraced with enthusiasm the prospect of reading in front of the congregation; and one of our best friends agreed to give 'the toast to the brides.' Tuxedos were rented, dresses fitted, and new shoes purchased. All was set for a wonderful ceremony.

On the day of our wedding we awoke to the most brilliant, sunshiny day in March. What more could we ask for? We spent the day performing the last minute details and getting increasingly more

excited. Flowers arrived at the house from friends unable to attend, accompanied by notes carrying loving encouragement and enthusiasm.

At last it was time to dress and make our way to the church. I was overcome with the positive vibrations and the fabulous karma that was being generated by the guests. The ceremony was far better than we had hoped. The minister had us sign a 'certificate' that she had created on her computer. This little piece of paper means more to me than anything else we received as wedding presents. She said that although she wished that the certificate were legal, she knew that our 'wedding' was as legitimate as any other she had performed.

Our children commented on the fact that Carla was now 'legally' their other mother and could they refer to her as such? This small act of innocence touched Carla deeply, although she had already been acting as their other mother.

The party raged on until the wee hours of the morning. People ate, drank, danced, and acted as if they never wanted the evening and the magic to end. Certainly I did not want it to end. Weeks later friends and family were still commenting on how much fun they had had and what a lovely evening it had been.

My relationship with Carla feels stronger and more secure than any other relationship I could imagine. We have based our union on values we hold with great fervor. Now that the government has finally legalized same-sex marriages, I will marry my darling again and accept the marriage certificate with PRIDE.

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Adult Interdependent Relationships: Alberta-Style Equality for Same-Sex Couples

Craig Stumpf-Allen

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In January 2002, the Alberta Government began a consultation on issues in family law. While the original plan was to consider topics such as spousal support, child support, and guardianship, the discussion was broadened to include the controversial issue of how to extend equality to same-sex couples. After numerous court decisions in Alberta and elsewhere in Canada, the government knew they had to change the law to treat same-sex couples on par with their opposite-sex counterparts. The Family Law Reform Project was to solicit opinions on alternative models on how to meet constitutional requirements and assist the government in drafting legislation to be introduced later that spring.

Legal and Legislative History

Alberta has been struggling with the issue of equality for gay, lesbian, and bisexual Albertans since before the Delwin Vriend decision at the Supreme Court in April 1998. After Vriend, a teacher at a Christian college, was fired because of his sexual orientation, he attempted to file a complaint with the Alberta Human Rights Commission. He was refused on the grounds that sexual orientation was not a protected ground under the Alberta Individual Rights Protection Act (IRPA). After a seven-year legal battle, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that sexual orientation was analogous to

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 4-5 (2002-2003) © CLGSA / SCELG

other grounds included in section 15 of the Charter, the equality guarantee. The IRPA therefore violated the Charter and accordingly sexual orientation was to be read into the Alberta statute. Members of the Alberta government considered using the Notwithstanding Clause of the Constitution to avoid complying with the Court's decision. In the end, however, the government chose to do nothing. They did not invoke the Notwithstanding Clause – nor did they amend the IRPA in the Legislature, a failure some considered an important statement about the government's lack of commitment to equality.

The issue of how to treat same-sex couples came to the fore on the national stage as a result of the M v. H ruling by the Supreme Court in May 1999. After the break up of a lesbian relationship, one partner sued the other for support. M argued that by failing to include her relationship in its spousal support provisions, the Family Law Act of Ontario violated section 15 of the Charter, because same-sex relationships like hers were not much, if any, different than opposite-sex relationships. The Supreme Court agreed, and the government of Ontario was forced to change its laws to recognize the equality of same-sex relationships.

Following this decision, several provinces (including Quebec, Ontario, BC, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland) and the federal government introduced legislation to create equality for same-sex couples. These laws have in common that they extend marriage-like rights only to couples in conjugal relationships, and they apply equally to common law couples of the same or opposite genders. Most define a time requirement of one to two years that couples must cohabitate before they are eligible to receive benefits. Nova Scotia was alone in creating a domestic partnership registry. This allows couples to bypass the waiting period to qualify for equality.

Alberta's Family Law Reform Project

Unlike other jurisdictions, Alberta made no legislative changes in response to M v. H. However, in April 2001 the Court of Queen's Bench ruled that the Intestate Succession Act violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by excluding same-sex couples. The Court case revolved around the sudden death of Larry Sand, a man without a will. According to the Intestate Succession Act, when there is a

spouse and children, an estate is split among the spouse and children. However, because the deceased was in a same-sex relationship and the law did not recognize his partner, Brent Johnson, as a spouse, Sand's children were his sole heirs under the law at the time. Johnson challenged the law and was successful. The government was given nine months to change the law (until January 2, 2002).

When the Johnson v. Sand decision was made, the government had already begun plans for a review of family law. This review was to cover several areas, including spousal support, child support, guardianship, custody and access, and court jurisdiction and powers. There was some talk of expanding the review to consider how to deal with the issue of extending equality to same-sex couples. However, as late as July 2001, Justice Ministry employees were unsure whether the issue of same-sex couples would be included in the consultations (Booth). The Courts had already indicated that same-sex couples must be treated equally.

By October 2001 the government had determined that the Family Law Reform Project would definitely be broadened (Steed). While the Courts had made the need for equality clear, Alberta was considering alternative models of how to achieve this goal. The hope was to have public consultations started by the fall of 2001, as the deadline for the correction of the Intestate Succession Act was January 2, 2002. However, in November 2001, the government applied to the Court to delay the deadline for implementation of changes to the Intestate Succession Act until July 2, 2002. The government indicated it was delaying due to a need for more time to conduct the Family Law Review. They wanted to change the law as part of the wider review. The Court granted an extension of only three months, to April 2, 2002. The decision was that if the government needed more time based on their consultation process and could give evidence of that need, they could reapply for a further extension.

The Alberta government did not formally launch the Family Law Reform Project until January 10, 2002, a full nine months after the Court's decision on Intestate Succession and nearly three years after the Supreme Court's decision in M v. H had indicated the direction in which Canadian governments must move. Alberta proposed something no other province had tried, extending marriage-like benefits to people living in platonic relationships. Immediately, critics

identified risks to this approach (Simons). There is a different quality of relationship between two people in a conjugal relationship and those living platonically. Extending the law in this way was seen as imposing responsibilities on those who may not desire them and could result in a flurry of lawsuits as people test the boundaries of the new legislation. As well, this approach was seen by many gay activists as trying to minimize the reality of same-sex relationships by hiding them in a haze of "interdependent relationships." Finally, some critics identified costs as a concern, as pension and workers' compensation benefits could be paid out to persons other than spouses.

The Project included the opportunity for members of the public to complete questionnaires on paper or on the Web, a public opinion poll, focus groups with randomly selected Albertans, single parents, and adolescents, as well as technical focus groups for legal and nonlegal professionals with special interests in family law (Chance). According to the government, this final group included some gay and lesbian individuals and organizations.

Later that month, the Alberta government, faced with a lawsuit by an anonymous employee in a same-sex relationship, extended pension benefits to same-sex partners of its top civil servants. This decision was made in the face of a Court case from October 2001 that was about to be released. The government amended the regulation to replace "spouse" with "pension partner." The term "pension partner" would only apply to persons in conjugal relationships. At the time of the decision, the Finance Department indicated it would be looking at other pension plans once the Family Law project was complete. The preference in this case would have been to wait, but the Court challenge forced the government to speed up the process.

A month after the extended deadline to amend the Intestate Succession Act, the government passed Bill 29. This Bill altered the act to include a definition of "Adult Interdependent Partner," a person in a conjugal relationship with the deceased.

Bill 30: The Adult Interdependent Relationships Act

The provincial government introduced Bill 30, the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act, at the same time as Bill 29. Bill 30 differs in several ways from the omnibus bills passed by other

jurisdictions. First, the qualifying time is significantly longer: three years. However, like Nova Scotia, Alberta chose to allow couples to skip that process by signing a written adult interdependent partnership agreement. Second, Alberta was alone in choosing to extend marriage-like rights and responsibilities to people living in platonic relationships. The definition of Adult Interdependent Partners includes several variables, some or all of which may be present in any relationship. Conjugality is one of those variables, but is not a necessary condition to qualify.

The determination of whether two people are "adult interdependent partners" is based on several variables:

- whether it is a conjugal relationship;
- the degree of exclusivity;
- the conduct and habits of the persons regarding household activities and living arrangements;
- the degree to which the persons present themselves as an economic and domestic unit;
- the degree to which legal obligations are formalized;
- the extent to which contributions have been made to each other's well-being;
- the degree of financial interdependence;
- the care and support of children;
- and the ownership, use, and acquisition of property.

As well, couples must have lived together for at least three years, have a child together, or have signed an Adult Interdependent Partner Agreement.

While at least sixty laws have been identified as including a reference to (opposite-sex) spouses and thus as discriminatory to same-sex couples, only nine of those laws are altered by this Act. These fall into three general areas:

- laws dealing with the death of a person, such as the Intestate Succession Act (which would be amended for a second time to be in line with the new definition);
- laws for dealing with the breakup of a relationship, such as the Matrimonial Property Act;
- and the Change of Name Act, which allows spouses to take one another's surname.

The definition of Adult Interdependent Partner is based on the model introduced in the Family Law Reform Project. However, the

final report on this project has not yet been released. It is not clear whether the majority of respondents supported the use of this model or what arguments were made for and against it.

Analysis

Because the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act deals with two very different types of relationships, conjugal and nonconjugal, the benefits and drawbacks must be considered for each separately.

For same-sex couples, this Act does not provide full equality. As mentioned above, the Act amends only nine laws, out of approximately sixty that refer to spouses. Some laws of significance that are not covered include:

- the Alberta Evidence Act, which prevents spouses from being compelled to disclose any communication made to one another during the marriage;
- the Employment Pension Plans Act, which allows pension benefits to be payable to spouses and common-law spouses, including after the death of the contributing spouse;
- the Health Insurance Premiums Act, which allows opposite-sex couples to receive family coverage and thus be covered by the partner's work benefits;
- the Human Tissue Gift Act, which allows a spouse to donate the organs of a deceased person;
- and the Widows' Pension Act, which provides a pension to low income widows and widowers, between ages 55 and 64.

The definition of who can be considered Adult Interdependent Partners also does not provide full equality for same-sex couples. They must live together; if they cannot, due to work or other considerations, same-sex couples cannot qualify. As well, the variables that define adult interdependent partners include the consideration of exclusivity. This is not a requirement for opposite-sex couples and would disqualify some same-sex couples. Another variable is the degree to which the couple present themselves to the community as an economic or domestic unit. If the couple cannot be public for whatever reason, they could lose their rights under this Act.

As well, Julie Lloyd, human rights lecturer and lawyer for Brent Johnson and the senior civil servant in the pension case, compares

the creation of a new status for same-sex couples to separate water fountains for whites and nonwhites. "The same messages of 'otherness' and inferiority are conveyed, and the same type of discriminatory attitudes are condoned and perpetuated" (Lloyd 3). This argument is supported by the Act itself. While the Act states that "it is recognized in Alberta as a fundamental principle that marriage is a union between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others," it makes no mention of same-sex relationships (*Adult Interdependent Relationships Act* 1). As Brian Mason, a New Democrat MLA in Edmonton, said in the Legislature, the Bill "is an attempt to pretend that gays and lesbians don't exist in this province" (*Alberta Hansard* 1288).

For people in platonic relationships, who have signed a lease together, bought a computer together, or share living expenses, this Act could produce unintended and unanticipated results. After the death of one, the other could make a case for primary access to the estate; following the end of cohabitation, a case could be made for support. In most cases, two people living together in a platonic relationship do not expect to have obligations to one another that would extend past the end of the relationship. This Act could result in some nasty surprises. Furthermore, if the Act is amended to include laws that are so far excluded, the possibility of surprise obligations becomes even greater. For instance, the income of a roommate could prevent a single parent from receiving day care subsidies that allow her to work.

There is also the question of why the government is expanding the rights and responsibilities of marriage to platonic relationships. Was there a demand for this? Without the final report of the Family Law Reform Project, this question cannot be answered. However, it does seem clear that more work must be done on this aspect of the law to protect platonic partners from unintended and undesired obligations.

Finally, in late May 2002, following the introduction of Bills 29 and 30, the province changed regulations for five more pension plans. Again, this was in response to a Court challenge. And again, the definition for pension partner included only couples in conjugal relationships. Therefore, the degree to which the government is sincere about wanting to extend marriage-like rights and responsibilities to people in platonic relationships is unclear.

What Next?

As Mason said in the Legislature, "the strategy of this government regarding the obligations to gays and lesbians in Alberta has been to delay, delay, and further delay again." He continues: "Let's be clear. While the government delays, real people lose out economically, socially, and emotionally" (*Alberta Hansard* 1288).

Based on a long experience of fighting the Alberta government for equality, gay and lesbian individuals, couples, and families in Alberta know they cannot count on the government to act on any issue related to their rights unless forced to do so. Couples to whom nonamended laws apply will have to continue to seek justice through the Human Rights Commission and the Courts. In fact, following a successful complaint to the Human Rights Commission on Health Insurance Premiums, and the government lack of adherence to the Commission's order, the Commission will be taking the government to Court on behalf of the complainants in the fall of 2002. Similarly, a decision is pending from the Human Rights Commission on employment benefits for same-sex partners of government employees.

The Legislature will reconvene in November 2002 and debate on Bill 30 will proceed at that time. It may be that the government will introduce amendments to the Bill to extend it to some or all of the fifty laws that are so far excluded. Unfortunately, the failure of the Act to treat same-sex couples on par with their opposite-sex counterparts will mean that even if the government amends all laws, the legal battles will not end. And for Albertans living in platonic relationships, those battles may just be beginning.

Addendum

Since this article was written, Bill 30 has been passed in an amended form. While many more Acts have been amended to include adult interdependent partners, the definition remains the same, as do many of the concerns raised in this article. Most sections of the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act will be proclaimed June 1, 2003.

The government continues to fight human rights complaints by its staff for same-sex spousal benefits.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Kristy Harcourt, Julie Lloyd, John Plews, Chris Samuel, and Mark Stumpf-Allen, for their insights and comments on the Family Law Reform Project, Bill 30, and this article.

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Breaking the Silence on LGBTQ Issues in Saskatchewan: An Interview with Don Cochrane

ANDRÉ P. GRACE

André P. Grace (andre.grace@ualberta.ca) *is an inclusive educator whose current SSHRC-funded research focuses on welfare and work issues for queer teachers in Canada. At the* Breaking the Silence *Conference in Saskatoon in 2001, he met conference founder Don Cochrane* (don.cochrane@usask.ca). *Professor Cochrane is Department Head of Educational Foundations in the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. In 2000 he received the Doug Wilson Award for his significant contributions to improving the quality of life for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons on the University of Saskatchewan campus.*

> In the case of gays, history and experience teach us that the scarring comes not from poverty or powerlessness, but from invisibility. It is the tainting of desire, it is the attribution of perversity and shame to spontaneous bodily affection, it is the prohibition of the expression of love, it is the denial of full moral citizenship in society because you are what you are, that impinges on the dignity and self-worth of a group.
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> — Judge Albie Sachs, Constitutional Court of South Africa, 1998, as quoted in *Crimes of Hate, Conspiracy of Silence*, Amnesty International (vii)

I attended my first *Breaking the Silence* Conference at the University of Saskatchewan in March 2001. I expected a conference where university interest groups deliberated with community interest groups about LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) issues and concerns. I encountered that energizing scenario, plus another disconcerting one that reminded me how LGBTQ educational and cultural work takes place at the dangerous intersection of the moral and the political. I reflect on my conference experience in the following narrative vignette:

Breaking the Silence:
Making Queer Visible,
Confronting the Denial of Full Moral Citizenship

On the weekend of March 17, 2001, more than one hundred LGBTQ persons and straight allies came together for the 4th annual Breaking the Silence *Conference at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. We assembled in the Quance Lecture Theatre in the College of Education to share, dialogue, and deliberate as a spectral community of educators, community activists, and cultural workers who work at the intersections of sex-and-gender differences, education, and culture. Each time we entered the education building, we had to run the gauntlet of a small group of homophobic 'Christians' who provided us with one more experience of hell on heteronormative earth. They carried placards that slandered us with phrases such as "Sodomy will destroy our school systems"; "Jesus Christ can heal the homosexual"; and "Don't let sodomy ruin our children." Maligning phrases like these demonize LGBTQ persons in a scourging, exclusionary, defiling 'Christian' language that suggests that we are sick, deviant, and disgusting perpetrators of abomination. Inspired by Old Testament narratives like* Romans I, *such scurrilous, heteronormalized 'Christian' language is the abomination.*

In effect, the socially repulsive goal of these 'Christians' is to deny us the prospect of full moral citizenship. Despite the anger and rage that the encounter with them stirred in me, it was worth running their gauntlet. Not only did it remind me why I had come to Saskatoon, it also made me appreciate the passion and exuberance of the inclusive community that I found inside the education building.

Maybe someday conferences like Breaking the Silence *won't have to exist as an oasis in the midst of the social and cultural exclusion that LGBTQ citizens experience every day. Maybe someday all LGBTQ persons will be safe — physically, psychologically, emotionally — from homophobic 'Christians' who fuel an LGBTQ/straight binary and demean LGBTQ differences with their dismissal, denial, and denigration of those they other as deviant and disturbed. Maybe someday we will be considered full citizens, whole persons, real Canadians. I am hopeful. I witnessed the power of LGBTQ people and straight allies at* Breaking the Silence *in Saskatoon. I witnessed people in community engaged in a human and civil rights movement. I saw people smiling, hugging, speaking*

out, and creating dialogic and deliberative spaces. I heard them talking about inclusive education and community work that transgresses heteronormative exclusion. I heard them commit to taking incremental actions to raise LGBTQ visibility in homes, schools, colleges, shopping malls, and other sociocultural sites where heterosexism is visible in word, action, and representation. I reveled to be there in this sharing and nurturing space, a space where I was one proud queer and inclusive educator.

The 2001 Breaking the Silence Conference proved such an exhilarating experience for me that I decided to make attending this annual event a spring ritual. Meeting Don Cochrane at this conference was a highlight for me. I remain inspired and heartened by the commitment of this educator-activist who continues his work to enhance LGBTQ human and civil rights in Canadian education and culture. As a straight ally, Don has been a risk taker in his transgressive educational and cultural work that helps LGBTQ persons to have presence and place in his university and province. I have truly enjoyed getting to know Don, and I was pleased when he made the trek to Edmonton in Fall 2002 to attend *Sex-and-Gender Differences, Education, and Culture II*, an annual conference complementary to *Breaking the Silence* that we host in the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta. Don lives out a public pedagogy of respect and care in his life, work, and teaching-learning interactions. In the interview that follows, I ask Don to trace the genesis of *Breaking the Silence*. Over the course of the interview he discusses his own emergence as an LGBTQ-inclusive educator, and he provides insights and pointers for those who wish to engage in work that recognizes, respects, and fosters LGBTQ differences in university and community settings.

André: Don, at the 2002 conference we celebrated the fifth anniversary of the *Breaking the Silence: Gays and Lesbians in Our Schools* Conference. This was an important milestone. As everyone sang "Happy Birthday" and shared cake, there was a sense that the annual conference was making a difference. What was it like in the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, before the conference and other initiatives to profile LGBTQ issues and concerns?

Don: Let me begin by noting that an amendment to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code in 1993 guaranteed our province's teachers equality of employment opportunity irrespective of their sexual orientation.[1] Of the province's more than twelve thousand teachers, we can speculate that at least a thousand are lesbian or gay. Yet, only a small handful is openly out. At best, the majority of these teachers experience a high degree of social alienation; at worst, they fear losing their economic livelihood, the human rights code notwithstanding.

Despite the amendment, straight colleagues continued to sit on the sidelines. They did not get involved in LGBTQ issues. "Why?" I wondered. There were many reasons. Some thought that homosexuality is a religious matter or a 'choice of life-style.' Others regarded it as a mental illness, even though the American Psychiatric Association had expunged homosexuality from its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) in 1973.[2] Some saw it as 'their battle, not mine.' Others claimed that they did not know any lesbian or gay teachers, and so, did not know whom to help. Still others ducked responsibility, claiming the college should wait until society as a whole resolves the issues.

These are roughly political reasons — one might say, "rationalizations." I guessed that fear played a major role in professional inaction. Many liberal straight educators were afraid of being 'tainted' if they supported their lesbian and gay colleagues. Some older members of the profession remembered the price paid by 'nigger lovers' during the civil rights movement in the 1960s; supporting 'fags' would fall into the same category in the 1990s. Still I wondered, "What would straight educators need to support a cause that would be sanctioned by their province's human rights code and backed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?"

André: Obviously, the inaction of many colleagues affected you. Could you speak further to what spurred you to become more personally involved in addressing LGBTQ issues and concerns?

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[1] See Section 16.1 of The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code (Saskatchewan).

[2] The American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association both declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973 (see Katz; and Norman Institute).

Don: As a philosopher of education, I have always been interested in the intersection of ethics and education, and so our failure to address the obvious repression of lesbians and gays in our university and in our schools had puzzled me. Although I could pose important ethical and practical questions, I knew that I was part of the problem. It was hypocritical of me to view teachers with disdain if I did nothing to raise these challenging issues with my own colleagues and students. Indeed, I was probably more culpable: I was a university professor protected by tenure, yet I was as silent as the rest. I was not proud of my own inaction. But what would I say, and where, and with what authority? My trepidation was only outstripped by my ignorance! Nothing in my own education had prepared me to break my own silence.

André: But you did break your own silence! How did you overcome these hurdles and get started?

Don: My first step was to create a course on lesbian and gay issues in education, and so began one of the most important and rewarding journeys of my life. I began by meeting with a small group of lesbian and gay students from a campus club, almost to seek their permission. I figured that if they would not approve the idea, the idea would be dead in the water. To my surprise, they were very supportive. They promised any help they could offer. Why was I surprised? Perhaps I had been too influenced by 'appropriation-of-voice' critics. I had heard of bad scenes at some other Canadian universities. These students seemed to appreciate that someone — indeed anyone — would raise these issues at their university.

Buoyed by this support, I started a crash self-education program in lesbian and gay issues. Eventually I organized my material under these general headings:

1. Introducing lesbian and gay courses in the university
2. Lesbian and gay teachers
3. Lesbian and gay students
4. The inclusive curriculum (with special emphasis on health education, literature and language, and physical education)
5. The inclusive library
6. The challenge to counselors

Looking at the course today, I wonder what all the fuss was about when our department sought approval from faculty. It was as if approving the course would result in the walls of our college imploding. A few colleagues opposed the course altogether, and several others, harboring fears, pleaded for more time. After some lively discussion, the course was approved handily. When the meeting ended, supporters gathered for hugs; we knew we had done something good that day. In my thirty years in the academy, I had never experienced hugs after a faculty meeting!

I taught the course for the first time in 1996 with seventeen students of whom slightly more than half — as it turned out — were either lesbian or gay.[3] I prayed my students would not quickly discern my lack of confidence and my limited knowledge. I was a long way from "discovering my own voice." For their research papers, I insisted their topics focus on our Saskatchewan experience. I argued that we knew plenty about what was going on in Los Angeles, Boston, Toronto, and so on, but virtually nothing about our own experience at home. Late in the semester when students were submitting first drafts, I realized some of the work was of exceptional quality. During a coffee break, I exclaimed to a group of students that the results of their research should reach a larger audience than simply their professor. "We should hold a conference!" I exclaimed. And *Breaking the Silence* was born!

André: So that's how the Conference came to be. What has it been like since that pivotal event?

Don: At the close of our first conference, I declared rather boldly that this would not be a one-time event, that silence benefits the repressive status quo, and that we were in it for the long haul. I had little idea what would be involved in this declaration of faith! After five conferences, we have gained much confidence and valuable experience. It is for others to judge whether or to what extent we have been successful. Perhaps most importantly, we have learned that there is much latent support 'out there,' much more than we had ever imagined. People, we believe, need a path to channel their

[3] See Cochrane in the "Works Cited" for the current iteration of the course.

positive beliefs, values, and commitments. The conference seems to have provided that space.

Several months before the fifth conference, I was asked by our education students' society to conduct an extracurricular workshop with the title "Why Are Straight Teachers So Silent in Defense of Their Lesbian and Gay Colleagues?" The event might seem trivial, but in our college it was rather remarkable. Seven years ago, no one would have dared or even have thought to ask. Back then issues surrounding lesbian and gay teachers and students were locked in a dark heterosexual closet, and no one knew where to find the key. In a politically progressive but socially conservative province such as Saskatchewan, we can say we have come a long way since 1996.

André: So after five successful conferences, you have no doubt learned a lot. What have you learned that you can share with others who want to do similar work in their own universities?

Don: Let me offer some 'how-to-do-it' suggestions:

Get Administrative Support: From the start, seek official approval for your LGBTQ proposal. In our case, the central administrative committee in our college gave our idea its blessing. Thus, all of our letters and posters could claim college of education sponsorship.

Set Up an Advisory Board: From the outset, create and make good use of an advisory board with wide representation. This is not only important for legitimacy, but also because it is these very people who have a wealth of ideas and contacts. Your board meetings become an important setting for sharing information and building coalitions, a benefit we never thought of at the start. In our case, advisory board members came from PFLAG (Parents, Family, and Friends of Gays and Lesbians); our college student society; the campus gay, lesbian, and bisexual center; faculty from the college and across the university; the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; teachers; and counselors.

Involve Senior Administration: Include administrators in your conference. They can bring official greetings, thank a speaker, or

chair a panel. Symbolically, this is important, but these tasks also give your leadership a sense of ownership and shared achievement. (They need these outlets, too!) Later, when your conference has a sound track record, they will take genuine pride in noting your success in annual reports, at council meetings, and in speeches to various audiences.

Invite Guest Speakers: After our first year, we were emboldened to add a keynote speaker on the Friday evening before the Saturday conference proper. You need someone who will draw a crowd, and such persons normally command a hefty lecture fee. Our experience has been that such fees are negotiable, and that once the speakers learn what you are trying to accomplish, they will cut a deal that is much to your benefit.

Anticipate Opposition and Use It to Your Advantage: If you are doing some things right, you will attract the right wing! They may picket your conference, but this can be used to good advantage. All of those attending will know as they pass by the demonstrators that the 'problem' is real. Your straight participants need this reminder, especially. Notify your campus security well in advance. They will help to keep your conference safe.

Invite Community Stakeholders: Invite the stakeholders in your city and provincial educational systems to play a part in the program. A place on a panel is ideal. If they have something to contribute, you will have given them a bragging platform; if they waffle, it will be obvious to all. Invite them back next year to present a progress report.

Create Spaces for LGBTQ Voices: Early in each program, find a way to inject the voices of those who have suffered under heterosexist and homophobic oppression. If students and teachers do not think they can do this openly, record their voices and broadcast them over an auditorium sound system. Place empty chairs on the stage where they might have been seated if they were not living in fear. Curiously, their voices will be much more powerful when disembodied.

Create Spaces to Share LGBTQ Research: At first, I thought we would never be able to fill a whole one-day program with

interesting presentations. We have never had a problem though. There is interesting work going on 'out there,' but few places to present it. Your venue becomes an outlet. After a couple of years, people begin to do research of various kinds with your conference in mind.

Invite the Media: We have found the media to be very sensitive and responsive. We treasure the relationships that have grown up over the years. Once they know you are there, they will call on you for comments and leads between conferences.

Think about Venue Suitability: Lastly, a word about location and costs. The university has great advantages. For many, it is neutral ground. A school board or teachers' association will not appear to be sponsoring, or 'promoting,' lesbian and gay liberation. Thus, teachers and administrators can attend more freely. Given that the university has a mandate to promote the open and rational discussion of controversial issues, the site is ideal. As there are many ways to cut costs on a campus, a conference can be relatively inexpensive. We have now run five on a shoestring. Our registration costs are very low, yet our nose is still above water.

Interview Postscript

Educators who take up LGBTQ struggles for human and civil rights hook their inclusive educational and cultural work to teaching as a vocation and to education for transformation. They are passionate and committed cultural workers who act as vigilant advocates for LGBTQ students and teachers. Don Cochrane is such an educator and cultural worker. In his teaching and in his work with the annual *Breaking the Silence* Conference, he continues to build awareness, to increase LGBTQ visibility. He demonstrates that teaching is both a pedagogical and political task requiring "the capacity to fight for freedom, without which the teaching task becomes meaningless" (Freire 4). As we take up this task "we study, we learn, we teach, we know with our entire body. We do all of these things with feeling, with emotion, with wishes, with fear, with doubts, with passion, and also with critical reasoning" (Freire 3). These words capture the dynamics of Don's involvement as well as that which he nurtures in participants in every *Breaking the Silence* Conference.

Indeed, listening to Don and watching him in action, I am reminded of Paulo Freire's (1998) notion of tolerance. This Brazilian critical educator — someone who focuses on matters of democracy, freedom, social justice, and ethics in everyday practice — maintains that tolerance is the quality that teaches us to live with difference, to respect it, and to learn from it. For Freire "tolerance is not co-existence with the intolerable ... Tolerance requires respect, discipline, and ethics" (42). Thus tolerance is about more than recognition of difference or even a passive, civil living with it. Rather, tolerance is about intersecting the cultural circles of different lives, coming to terms with difference as a sociohistorical construction, interrogating the politics of difference, and valuing and fostering difference in order to make cultural democracy a lived and everyday experience. Don's work incorporates this understanding of tolerance, and his initiatives — including *Breaking the Silence* — live it out.

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Stephen Guy-Bray. *Homoerotic Space: The Poetics of Loss in Renaissance Literature.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. x + 265pp. $60.00 (Cdn). ISBN 0802036775.

GARRETT P. J. EPP (University of Alberta)

The term "Renaissance" is largely out of critical fashion, but Stephen Guy-Bray makes it matter here. His intriguing book deals with the cultural rebirth of a classical elegiac mode in early modern England, and with the "homoerotic space" that this mode opened, and can still open, for writers and readers alike. The literary mourning of men by men, he argues, provides a socially safe means of celebrating homoeroticism: "By testifying to the fact that what he documents has come to an end, the poet can declare his distance from the potentially dangerous story he tells while in substituting a poem for a homoerotic attachment he grants that attachment a textual survival" (22); this in turn grants to later readers a means of articulating such attachments, and such losses. On the other hand, Guy-Bray's use of the term "Renaissance" in the book's

title is also misleading, since two of the book's five chapters deal only with the classical sources, to the exclusion of "Renaissance Literature." These chapters provide necessary background to the rest of the book, and are interesting in themselves. Still, it seems ironic that a book that uncloset past readers and imitators of classical literature, or at least their reading practices, should itself hide a closet classicist. In the "Renaissance" chapters (one of which, incidentally, deals at length with the Italian Castiglione's Latin poetry before moving on to Surrey and Milton), Guy-Bray occasionally neglects to translate individual Latin words and phrases on which his argument depends, which might put off some potential readers, including more than a few students of early modern English literature, and more still of the history of sexuality. And this would be unfortunate, since the book has much to offer even, or perhaps especially, to those with "no Latin and less Greek."

While the homoeroticism of Virgil's second eclogue is well known, even infamous, that of the *Aeneid* remains a surprise to surprisingly many. In his Introduction Guy-Bray notes, "I concentrate on the most famous classical texts precisely because they are the most famous: they have been most often read, studied, and used as models for literary composition; indeed, they are the basis for later ideas of the classical tradition and, to some extent, of homoeroticism" (5). However, more readers now know Virgil's work by reputation and allusion than have actually read it — in translation, much less in Latin — and fewer still have read the idylls of Theocritus. Now, far more than in early modern England, "Latin is a 'safe' language that is only understood by the educated" (4); however, it is no longer "the language of sexual knowledge" (4, quoting Bruce R. Smith), and its sexual secrets have largely fallen beyond safety into total darkness. Analyzing these classical works alongside their early modern descendants, both famous and obscure, written both in Latin and in English, sheds light all around. Guy-Bray does a service to classicists, as well as to early modern scholars, in demonstrating how those earlier works were later read, and used, both to open up and to regulate homoerotic possibility.

It is much to Guy-Bray's credit that, despite his subject matter, all of which concerns sorrowful loss, this is not a morose book. Still, one might wish for more than the occasional flash of his dry wit here, since he uses it to such excellent critical advantage. Take, for

instance, his discussion of sexual metaphor in Milton's Latin elegy for his friend Charles Diodati: "the most obvious reason for using sexual metaphors to describe a relationship is that the relationship was or is sexual ... I propose to give Milton the benefit of the doubt and assume that he and Diodati were lovers" (119). Guy-Bray's argument does not depend upon any such assumption; indeed, he later discusses the poem's insistence on Diodati's virginity (129-30). However, by proposing the assumption, he allows the reader of Milton not only a laugh, but also the same homoerotic possibilities that Milton and his contemporaries would or could have found in the classical works that so clearly influenced their work. That is, he opens up a "homoerotic space" for the modern reader and scholar in some seemingly unlikely places.

Like its primary source material, this book is a personal response to a particular time and particular events. In his Postscript ("one motivated partly by my desire for a happy ending" 6), he writes, "the rise of the AIDS pandemic has strengthened the connection between homosexuality and death" (217) — a connection evident in all the works he deals with here, from the poetry of Theocritus and Virgil to the plays of Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher. When he argues, in relation to the *Aeneid*, "that one of the lessons Renaissance writers learned from the ending of the poem is that death is the price paid for the embrace of two men" (84), he is also making an argument regarding present readers of ancient and early modern poetry. However, this same lesson is one that the book seeks to supplement or subvert. While the *Aeneid*, like a wide variety of other works across time, suggests that "the price of male beauty is death" (69), poetic beauty grants a form of immortality. The book thus ends on a celebratory note, with a return to a work discussed at the outset: "As I see it, Theocritus's point is that love between men is something that occurs in all places and at all times and is passed on orally: by poetry and by kissing" (224). Guy-Bray's book embraces the past in order to bring past embraces between men to life in the present.

Tom Warner. *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. 430pp. Ill. Index. $95.00 (Cdn). ISBN 0-8020-8460-2.

CHRISTOPH LOREY (University of New Brunswick)

Contrary to common perception and government newspeak, Canada's record as a guardian of human rights is neither long nor particularly clean. As any minority group can readily testify, bigotry and intolerance, injustice and oppression have been a constant element throughout most of Canada's history. Tom Warner's *Never Going Back* is the story of how one of the most tenaciously victimized groups — those who love, and make love, differently from what a heartless majority perceives to be the norm — organized and learned to fight back. This enormously important study, written by one of Canada's most experienced gay activists and cofounder of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario, chronicles the complex history of queer activism and organizing on a national scale, covering a period of over thirty-five years. In contrast to the title of his book, Warner deliberately avoids the use of the term *queer*, using instead the more limiting phrase "lesbians, gays, and bisexuals" throughout his near encyclopedic account of what he calls the "lesbian and gay liberation movement." The author does, however, show an extreme sensitivity to the many different needs voiced by individual sexual identity groups, and he makes every effort both to include and debate the range of issues that have informed queer activism in Canada over the past three decades, particularly in terms of race, religion, class, health status, and location.

Never Going Back is well structured, well written and highly readable. In thirteen chapters, grouped into three main parts each reflecting distinct historical periods, Warner investigates the ongoing struggle of sexual minority groups to achieve positive recognition, liberation, and equality. The book begins with an analysis of the emergence of lesbians and gays as a visible and identifiable community and culture prior to 1975, covering the social transformation in the 1960s prior to Stonewall, the amendments to the Criminal Code in 1969, and the growing consciousness and community building in the early 1970s. The author continues with

an exploration of the conservative backlash during the following decade, caused by the rapid expansion of lesbian and gay communities in many parts of Canada, and with an examination of the dissent raging within activist groups over such central issues as the promotion of queer sexuality, social and political strategizing, and the perpetuation of sexism. This part also tackles the early impact of AIDS and the subsequent radicalization of queer activism and politics. The final section focuses mainly, but not exclusively, on the ongoing challenges of provincial human rights legislation to include sexual orientation in nondiscrimination clauses.

Recent studies on lesbian and gay advocacy have mostly concentrated on the barrage of legal challenges that have been launched since 1985 and sought to analyze individual equal rights achievements. David Rayside's *On the Fringe: Gays and Lesbians in Politics* (1998), Kathleen Lahey's *Are We 'Persons' Yet? Law and Sexuality in Canada* (1999), Miriam Smith's *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada* (1999), and Bruce MacDougall's *Queer Judgments: Homosexuality, Expression and the Courts in Canada* (2000) may first spring to mind, but others could easily be added to the list. What sets Warner's work apart here is his unbending focus on crucial liberationist issues, including among others the fight against recurring state repression in the form of ongoing police harassment, targeted censorship, and pornography legislation. Convinced that equality-seeking as a strategy for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals has nearly run its course, Warner argues persistently that it is necessary to continue with sexual liberation activism, which has fallen short in recent years in favor of the struggle for nondiscrimination and equality legislation. In Warner's eyes, equality-seeking activism has downplayed, if not negated, "the very real differences that exist between heterosexual and homosexual sexuality and relationships" (235). But successes on the equality issues front have not succeeded, the author warns, in eradicating homophobia and heterosexism precisely where both are most dangerous and pervasive — namely, in the domains of state regulation and law enforcement. Positive acceptance of same-sex sexuality "as a natural and normal alternative equal in all respects to heterosexuality," Warner concludes, "continues to be very much a minority view" (355) that has not yet infiltrated society at large.

The book's shortcomings are few, though some of them are truly annoying while others may merely alienate a few overly picky

academic readers. The weakest part of the study is Warner's badly flawed historical sketch in the very first chapter of section one, "From Oppression to Liberation: Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals in Canada Prior to 1975." In a truly spectacular, horrendously imprecise historical sweep, the author goes back to Roman times in order to dig out the very roots of (sexual) oppression. Unfortunately, this time-lapse from Justinian civil law to thirteenth-century measures against lesbianism in France to Victorian notions of sex and marriage does little to enlighten the reader; at best, it perpetuates a number of false perceptions concerning same-sex sexuality in terms both of its cultural significance and of its history of repression, views that linger stubbornly in the gay and straight presses alike and that tend to muddy contemporary debates on human sexuality and sexual liberation. Furthermore, Warner often remains vague where precision would be essential, and goes into lengthy detail where a brief summary would have sufficed. Important court challenges are inadequately annotated, making it difficult to read up on the subject. Leading civil rights victories on the international front, such as same-sex marriage laws in Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands, are reduced to "consenting-adults amendments ... in some European countries" (57), leaving readers ignorant about significant changes affecting civil liberties policies of the European Union. The history of the continuing internationalization of queer activism and the forged connections between Canada and countries other than the United States are completely disregarded, creating the impression that Canadian queer activism operates in a vacuum. At times, senior political and religious leaders who fought against queer activism are identified only by their title or position (e.g., "a liberal candidate, later a senior cabinet minister, who told ..." 76) and are quoted from secondary or even tertiary sources, making it difficult to verify the accuracy of their (usually venomous) statements.

Granted, Warner is not a historian, and we should not forget that he writes deliberately from the standpoint of an activist who was and still is an integral part of the movement he sets out to describe. Taken as a whole, *Never Going Back* is both a timely tribute and an invaluable resource, as well as an urgent reminder that queer activism is as important today as it has been in the past.

Terry Goldie, ed. *In a Queer Country: Gay and Lesbian Studies in the Canadian Context.* Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2001. 314pp. $23.95 (Cdn). ISBN: 1-55152-105-9.

LAURA M. ROBINSON (Nipissing University)

Emerging from the conference "Queer Nation?" at York University in 1996, Terry Goldie's edited collection of essays is a fascinating exploration of the intersections between queerness and Canadian nationality. The queer community has often sought a collective identity through the metaphor of nationhood, and, in his introduction, Goldie situates the overarching project by suggesting that "queer" is often equated with American. This volume is an opportunity to make it a Canadian identity as well. Indeed, from perspectives as different as those of literary theory and sociology or anthropology and film studies, many of the contributors make connections or set up a parallel between Canadian and queer identities, seeing both as multiple and diverse.

Goldie follows his introduction with his own article "Queer Nation?" in which he explores the extent to which Canada can be seen as queer, stating: "If any nation is queer enough to accept a queer nation it must be this one" (25). Yet, Goldie relies on a familiar comparative tactic that lauds Canadians often at the expense of Americans: "Canadians are at once less flamboyant and yet more respectful of variety than their American neighbours" (9). The other authors repeat Goldie's hopeful claim that "the multi-cultural nation is the queer nation" (24). Elaine Pigeon's article on Michel Tremblay's *Hosanna*, for instance, suggests that homosexuality radically challenges traditional conceptions of the nation, possibly leading to a "new, postmodern community" (48).

Goldie's interview with Lynne Fernie, the codirector and writer of *Forbidden Love: The Unmasked Stories of Lesbian Lives*, is a compelling journey into a deeply thoughtful and creative mind. Fernie describes her own work as a "cross-pollination of popular culture with lesbian history, feminist art and film theory" (53) and delineates the compromises and negotiations undertaken in the making of the film. Like many of the other contributors, she rather optimistically states that "queers of all types are being commercialized, if not mainstreamed" (55), giving the sense that gayness is not only becoming economically profitable, but accepted.

Wesley Crichlow's "Buller Men and Batty Bwoys" examines the connections between the daily life of gay Black men from Halifax and African-Caribbean gay men living in Toronto, showing the pressures on these men to conform to Black masculinity or suffer the term "race traitor" (76). He compellingly argues that the attempt to construct a Black national identity works to erase gayness. Similarly, through an examination of legal and social history, Michelle K. Owen argues that "the family," as a traditional construct, elides queerness and suggests not only that families "headed by same-sex couples 'normalize the queer,'" but also that they might "queer the normal" (87).

Both Pauline Greenhill and Zoë Newman analyze the intersection between sexuality and ethnicity. Greenhill discusses the Festival du Voyeur in Winnipeg that parodies the Franco-Manitoban Festival du Voyageur. She claims that "the metaphor of ethnicity could apply to queer culture, and that sexuality could be a mode for cultural pluralism" (105). Newman suggests that the "bisexuality wars" that infected a social activism group — which she calls Jewish Feminist Action — exposes the necessity for and yet the limits of rallying behind an identity. The issue of bisexuality challenged the cohesiveness of the ethnically-aligned group, and the group fragmented.

Through his analysis of Canadian queer cinema, James Allen suggests that Canada and queer are both intercultural rather than multicultural, since they consist of many coexisting identities ("queer and male and black and Canadian" [141]). bj wray looks at national citizenship as an ongoing performance that is continually open to resignification, as demonstrated by her analysis of the performance art of the Lesbian Park Rangers in Banff Alberta. That citizenship is performance suggests that it can be rewritten to include lesbian subjectivity, wray concludes.

Andrew Lesk's article on John Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse* takes a different tack on the issue of Canadian queerness. While Glassco makes a claim for his sexual ambiguity, Lesk finds that Glassco's project upholds rather than challenges the homophobic norm. Moving from literary criticism to a more anthropological approach, Gordon Brent Ingram takes his reader on a walking tour of BC's Wreck Beach, "one of the largest, gay male nude beaches in the world" (190). While acknowledging some of the problems with

Wreck Beach and denying its status as a "queer utopia," Ingram still presents an idealized vision of "a remarkable place of peace and tolerance" (204).

Gary Kinsman is the sole writer in the volume to refute, directly and adamantly, the belief that Canada is a queer nation, or is in any way hospitable to queerness, and his article emerges as the most compelling and powerful. Kinsman recounts how gays were perceived as threatening to national security and claims that "Canadian state formation has been an anti-queer project, a project of heterosexual hegemony" (210). His argument is that, "Instead of queer nationalism, which like Canadian nationalism constructs some as 'others,' we need to construct new ways of organizing without queer, national, racial, or class oppression, a new queer-positive socialism" (227).

The final three articles add to the collection's range. Catherine Nash looks at lesbian residential areas in a mid-sized Canadian city and suggests that gender and class are the key issues for where lesbians live, rather than sexuality. Andrea N. Frolic suggests that fashion conveys ideology in Toronto's Gay Pride parade, although she rather optimistically asserts that "In a Queer world, people would be free to don, alter, and cast off selves as easily as they do clothes because there is no 'real' self, only performances of self" (279). Thomas Waugh ends the collection with his analysis of four Canadian movies and asserts that one should "bracket the national" in an attempt to locate and celebrate an urban identity that transcends other identities (301).

Commendably, Goldie has compiled an impressive and important volume of diverse articles, approaches; and voices. The collection as a whole is marked by a strikingly optimistic refrain; Allen's words are typical of the sentiment: "It seems very Canadian to be queer, and very queer to be Canadian" (144). Such optimism and the importance of conducting work such as that collected by Goldie, of course, have never been more pertinent considering the not always so hopeful material conditions of some gays and lesbians in Canada. Around the time this collection was published, Aaron Webster was beaten to death in Vancouver's Stanley Park for being gay. While the work here was completed before Webster's death, this tragedy calls into question the belief that Canada is as benevolent and tolerant as it seems to construct itself. Indeed, the academic quest

for a utopian, queer Canada is wiser not to overlook the homophobic elements that also make Canada and Canadian identity what they are. It is sometimes too easy to assume that Canada is hospitable to queerness because of its policies of tolerance and human rights, when rather what is needed is a deconstructive critique of Canadian national identity and even "multiculturalism" as ideals. Regardless of how far we still have to go to becoming a queer country, Goldie's collection certainly points toward hope for the future.

Gloria Kropf Nafziger, ed. *Home Truths: Lesbian Mothers Come Out to Their Daughters*. Edmonton, AB: Rowan Books, 2001. vi + 106pp. $16.95 (Cdn). ISBN 0-9685257-5-X.

Erica Renata de Souza (State University of Campinas, Brazil, and York University[1])

This all-Canadian anthology is a celebration of the relationships of lesbian mothers and their daughters embodied in histories and poetry. The work presents unique histories of life, pain, and discovery. All the women whose writing features in this collection have one thing in common: they are all mothers who abandoned a heterosexual life-style and had to learn how to unite mothering and homosexuality. There are true stories about family, homosexuality, and, above all, love among women: biological mothers, adoptive mothers, step mothers, and their relationships with their daughters, partners, and sexuality. Each history tells us how these women made mothering and love walk together in various configurations, and how oftentimes the relationships with their daughters were badly affected by homophobia in society. To differing degrees, the women present depictions of supportive daughters, partners, ex-husbands, daughters' boyfriends, and parents-in-law; they also introduce us to the prejudice of relatives and communities.

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[1] Ms. de Souza is a visiting scholar in lesbian mothering. Her research is supported by the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP).

In many cases the women's process of coming out to their children was accompanied by the anguish of seeing their children's sadness and suffering because of the breakup of the heterosexual marriage.

Kathy Frey tells us about her difficulty in naming herself as a lesbian. During this process — which she describes as painful — she decided that talking to her child about "it" was something that could wait for the future, for she wanted to protect her daughter from being harmed in her childhood. But the woman with whom she was involved took the initiative without her consent, and so she had to deal with the situation much sooner than she expected.

Susan presents the beautiful letters that she exchanged with her daughter in order to clarify some points eight years after the fact of her coming out. Her daughter's very sensitive replies tell how hard it was for her to deal at once with the concept of homosexuality, her unpopularity at school, her father's new marriage, and her struggle to "prove" her heterosexuality at school.

Jacqueline Dumas found that she saw a stronger daughter arising from her (Jacqueline's) coming out. Yet she also reflects on the irony that her lesbian friends' indifference to her daughter made her child experience "the same erasure" that she always felt as a lesbian.

Margaret decided in her teens that she would not be a mother, but then one day she met Anne and Mary, a girl born with Down syndrome. From that point on her preconceptions were put to the test and eventually she began to see herself as a mother.

For Martha, coming out was a difficult process that was overshadowed by the breakup of a relationship. "I think that it was, and is, much harder for them to watch me struggle in relationships than it is for them to handle my sexual identity" (38).

After a year and half of living as a stay-at-home mother, Anne Moore realized that she and her daughter needed more from life, that she needed an identity of her own. She explains how she left her daughter with her ex-husband, but became her child's rock and reference, until the day her daughter met a homophobic boyfriend.

B. shares the history of her eight-year blended family as a lesbian mother who has a transgendered male as the father of her three children and a woman as a partner. She suggests that her daughter grew up in a stressful environment filled with the struggle to deal with the new blended family, social pressures, and the "teenage questioning of individual sexuality" (67).

Elizabeth Anne comments on the education that she and her husband gave their daughter, which was rooted in Christianity and also in the belief "that differences are to be celebrated" (70). After separating from her husband and calling herself a lesbian, she felt compelled to tell her daughter the truth.

For twenty years K.S. denied her homosexuality, and as part of this process she became an alcoholic in her late teens. After coming out to her daughters, she noticed her oldest daughter starting to drink in order to handle her mother's sexual orientation. However — in contrast to Anne Moore's history — K.S.'s daughter's boyfriend played a positive role in her daughter's acceptance of her partner.

Gloria Nafziger found herself cut off from her daughter's friends and lost her church community. Nowadays, her daughters have two homes, one with their father and the other with their mother and her partner, and two church communities in which different perspectives on homosexuality give "different levels of comfort" (87).

Dona denied her homosexuality from the age of fifteen, when she had her first and only lesbian experience, until the age of fifty-three, when she came out to her daughter.

Mary Anne Moore told her daughter that she was adopted in the same gradual way that she came out to her.

And Debbie Culbertson, like other women in this book, writes that her coming out news came at a difficult time for her daughter, along with the end of the marriage and the loss of her father's daily presence. She encountered a supportive daughter, but nowadays Culbertson has realized — similarly to Anne Moore and B. — how social pressure leads teenagers to desire a "normal" family.

Home Truths is an invitation to a walk with some brave women down a road of pain and reward, love and (in)comprehension, "belonging and separation" (iv). It is also a book for all of those who want to broaden their understanding of the combined concerns of mothering and homosexuality. Above all, it is a celebration of life narratives, valuable to anyone interested in the diversity and complexity of human relationships.

Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell. *Just Married: Gay Marriage and the Expansion of Human Rights.* Doubleday Canada, 2002. 288pp. $34.95 (Cdn). ISBN 0385658958.

Rev. Charles M. Bidwell (University of Alberta)

Can you imagine a wedding with police protection? Kevin and Joe experienced that and plenty more. They tell us everything in this topical book. It is a combination of a documentary of recent events in Toronto, which have implications for the rest of us in Canada, and an autobiography of this gay couple that is deeply involved in a very public, media-intense marriage. It recounts the drama from the Reverend Brent Hawkes's inspiration to challenge the inequality of marriage as being the exclusive privilege of heterosexual couples, through the experiences of the two couples involved in this challenge, to the subsequent political and legal consequences. It also provides an overview of the legislation prior to this challenge and of the struggles and achievements regarding equality in the courts — in spite of the conservative Christians using religion as a political and social weapon against people who do not share their beliefs.

Of course, there is no solid agreement in the 'gay community' that we should marry, and marriage currently has a miserable performance record. But the key issue is that we have equal recognition with mixed-sex contracts and with that the choice to marry or not. Kevin and Joe take turns in this book to document the chronology of events that led to their decision to participate in the historical act of announcing the banns – a first for Canada and the Americas – and its subsequent effect on their personal and professional lives. Laced with quotes from the media of the day, this documentary is enlivened with their personal accounts and reflections. Aptly titled, *Just Married: Gay Marriage and the Expansion of Human Rights* is part autobiography and part current history and contemporary social commentary. It is a first-hand view of a courageous couple and their experience of coming out of the security of anonymity and facing the glaring exposure of the media. It is also a gripping tale of how they faced the religious conservatives who sense that granting equality creates a threat to heterosexual coupling. As an ordained clergy in the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), I was pleased

to see true Christian grace in action as they and the Reverend Hawkes engaged their opposition with "soul force" techniques of nonviolent resistance (see <www.soulforce.org>).

The saga continues in the courts and in the federal and provincial responses. Our lives are going to be touched by this event and it is wise to have the perspective that this book gives its readers.

Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd. *Feminist Theologies for a Post-Modern Church: Diversity, Community, Scripture.* New York: Peter Lang, 2002. 264 pp. US$29.95. ISBN 0-8204-5572-5.

Ralph Carl Wushke (Toronto School of Theology, Emmanuel College)

Lorraine MacKenzie Shepherd's book testifies to the impact of postmodern methods in the theological academy. Diverse feminist approaches, poststructuralism, postliberal approaches and postcolonial theory are all shaking up the preconceptions exemplified by the historical critical method, which held sway in biblical interpretation for several generations.

Shepherd locates herself as a lesbian feminist pastor/theologian of the United Church of Canada (4). Interestingly, she does not choose the queer construction for her work, although she might be tempted to do so, insofar as it draws on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identity and experience in church and society. Intersecting identities, another topic of interest to queer theorists, is also a significant subtheme in the book. Her raw material is the work of theologians, three of whom — Mary McClintock Fulkerson, Kwok Pui-lan, and Kathryn Tanner — have an affinity for germinal thinkers who have inspired queer theorists: Judith Butler (55), Jacques Derrida (89), Michel Foucault (108), Gayatri Spivak (81), and others.

In the first part of her book, Shepherd competently summarizes and critiques the work of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Fulkerson, Kwok, and Tanner. All four have responded to the problems of theologies in modernity, including the claims to objectivity, false universalism (15), sexism and patriarchy (or "kyriarchy" in Schüssler

Fiorenza's vocabulary) (18), Eurocentrism and colonialism (79), dualism (110), and reification of identities (112).

Shepherd examines her sources' responses to modernism through the lenses of theological method, revelation, power, and authority. Although her approaches to the four scholars differ, they are similar enough to provide helpful comparisons. Throughout the book, Shepherd makes reference to how each of her sources might have a liberative effect for those on the margins of power for reasons of class, race, sexuality, or gender identity.

The overview of Schüssler Fiorenza's critical response to modernism traces two decades of evolution in her thought. Shepherd sees Schüssler Fiorenza's hermeneutics of suspicion and rhetorical criticism of scriptural texts by faith communities, especially the "ekklesia of wo/men" (a term that seeks to honor "the multiple identities of women and oppressed men" 22), as key elements in her effort to locate revelation within the struggle for freedom and dignity by communities of people, rather than within a text (39).

Where Schüssler Fiorenza seeks primary accountability with the "ekklesia of wo/men" Fulkerson's poststructural response to modernism plays to the academy. Referencing her work to biblical scholar Stephen Moore (53) — whose work resonates with the thought of Michel Foucault (54) and Judith Butler (55) — the 'sins' of modernism include the assumption of a stable transcendental intent, which might be elucidated from the text, and the stable subject as author or reader of the text. Fulkerson wants to build a hermeneutic that will honor the diversity of women readers who read biblical text diversely; the standard by which multiple readings might be judged are the "community's canon" (65). For Fulkerson, the performance of scripture (65) in a faith community whose members are aware of their own "location" will enable them to "attend to the other," which might include being challenged by the other with a greater degree of "agapic love" (71).

Kwok's East Asian and multifaith heritage lead her to propose a postcolonial multifaith hermeneutic. The Jewish and Christian scriptures must be read alongside, and informed by, the sacred writings of other faith traditions. Also for Kwok, "God's truth" can be revealed in the context of the lives of oppressed people whenever liberation is *enacted* (89). Shepherd disagrees with Kwok's Derridian "rejection of a prior unmediated presence behind the text" (89) and

believes the Word, while not the text itself, can be revealed in the engagement between community and text. Kwok also draws on Korean *minjung* theology, or theology from the view of the common people. She does not want a Western use of *minjung* to continue a colonialist pattern of homogenizing all "the masses" but rather to point to the multiple and intersecting identities of those who engage scripture and enact its liberative intent (95,101).

Tanner takes up the unenviable task of finding the "radical, liberative potential" in mainstream tradition (108). For Tanner, modernism has sterilized the tradition itself with its dualism and essentialism, which ultimately allowed totalitarianism to arise in Western societies. To traditional notions of "God's transcendence and God's universal providential agency" (114), Tanner offers a postliberal response. She argues that a radical commitment to God's transcendence *and* providential agency has the potential to create a new basis for our relationship with plants, animals, and the Earth (128), and can lead to a healthy "non-idolatrous self-esteem" (129) that counters individualistic hubris and honors the other.

The second part of Shepherd's book offers two practical applications of her work. The first is a critical assessment of the nearly half-century of theologizing on marriage and human sexuality by the United Church of Canada. The second is her contribution of a "more adequate feminist theological method" (216), "a braided approach" (11) based on the insights of her sources. Shepherd's analysis of the United Church of Canada's marriage and sexuality statements offers valuable insight for church and human sexuality historians and for anyone doing theological or ethical work in this area in our time. Shepherd does not condemn those who worked on these statements — which were progressive for their time — but points out how these documents and their genesis would have been ethically and theologically richer had their authors had access to the resources that she has at hand. Shepherd shows how the United Church documents have a modern, liberal bias since they use historical critical biblical methods and defer to science. The authors of these reports (except the one from 1988) did not have access to such concepts as the possibility of multiple meanings in biblical texts, suspicion that the race, gender, and location of the authors might affect the content of the reports, respecting "the other" as a valued source of insight, and mining the liberative strands within the United

Church of Canada's own tradition. Shepherd thus highlights how several postmodern feminist methods could genuinely enrich the process of making theological statements in regard to sexual orientation and gender identity, and beyond.

This book is of practical use to those who study theology, ethics, or biblical text in a postmodern key. Shepherd does not set her sources against each other, but rather tries to see the best in each one based on her location and goals. Building on her respect for her sources, Shepherd "braids" their contributions into a feminist theological method of her own. She has made a valuable contribution in synthesizing the work of four diverse feminist theologians and elucidating the usefulness of their methods for theologizing on sexuality and gender identity in the Canadian context. One hopes her work will influence both the academy and the current generation of church theologians and ethicists whose statements affect the lives of queers in Canada and elsewhere.

Bruce MacDougall. *Queer Judgments: Homosexuality, Expression and the Courts in Canada.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. 360pp. $60.00 (Cdn); $24.95 (Cdn). ISBN: 0802009514; 0802079148.

Julie Lloyd (University of Alberta[1])

In *Queer Judgments*, Bruce MacDougall explores an important and timely question. The goal of the book is identified in the introduction: "This book is concerned with expression of and about homosexuality and how the courts have been implicated in that expression. Its subject is the way in which judges in Canada, particularly in the period 1960 to mid 1997, have constructed homosexuals and homosexuality and how they have betrayed their assumptions about both in their decisions" (3). That is, the book is not about the outcomes of court decisions; they have been fairly

[1] Julie Lloyd is also a private practitioner who has represented and continues to represent queer clients.

favorable in recent years. It is about the language employed by judges and the manner in which the language betrays stereotypes and assumptions held by the judiciary and related to queer litigants. Judges, MacDougall observes, play an important role in securing equality rights. Judges interpret, apply, and change laws. Beyond this more obvious function, judicial decisions influence attitudes in Canadian society. Real equality will not be achieved unless the judiciary, along with other institutions, reflect on the direct and indirect consequences of their language and the message such language conveys.

As a practitioner, I picked up this book with much anticipation. The task identified by MacDougall is one that is critical to counsel, critical to litigants. What might lie between the ears of a judge is a question that occupies my mind and the minds of other counsel when preparing strategy, presenting facts, and preparing legal argument.

The second chapter seems the meat of this book and in its second half especially examines different aspects of the stereotyping engaged in by the judiciary. MacDougall does, in this analysis, set out various examples of judicial decisions betraying certain destructive stereotypes. In a line of decisions regarding employment benefits, Judges are shown to evince, for example, the view that same-sex relationships are something less than, and perhaps even alien to, heterosexual relationships. Other decisions betray the stereotype that queers are obsessed with or defined by sex while still others, ironically, betray a judicial attitude that would desexualize our relationships. Same sex couples are found in some decisions to be more akin to siblings than to heterosexual couples.

MacDougall also highlights an interesting intersection of stereotypes that arises often in judicial decision. Homosexuality is seen as utterly unnatural and at the same time highly seductive. It is held that children, and indeed the public at large, should be insulated from homosexuals to avoid the danger of conversion. Finally, MacDougall illustrates — perhaps the most bedeviling of all stereotypes — the monolithic quality attributed by judges to homosexuals. Homosexuals are treated as a group, a group whose members are indistinguishable from one another in the manner of their lives, their conduct, their values, and their opinions.

This chapter concludes with prescription. First, judges must become aware that they do indeed carry stereotypes and must avoid

the mindless application of their content. Second, counsel and litigants must avoid perpetuating these views in the facts and argument they put before the court lest they risk muddying the waters for the litigants to follow.

The fourth chapter, entitled "Homophobic Expression," also has some interesting observations of judicial stereotyping as it arises in decisions of different courts. Homosexuality is too often mindlessly and improperly paired with an implication of violent conduct. Given the incidents of violence visited against homosexuals, it is most inappropriate, MacDougall argues, that the judiciary abide or perpetuate any suggestion that homosexuals are any more (or any less) violent as a group than heterosexuals. MacDougall also analyzes the judicial receptivity to the defense called "homosexual panic," identifying that the underpinning of such defense is pure homophobia. Thankfully, this defense has not been successfully employed for some years in Canadian courts. The examination of the sources of the judicial receptivity remain, however, a helpful and interesting caution to judges and all of the blinding effect of prejudice.

The balance of the book is less satisfying and seems often misplaced within the goals established at the outset.

Chapter Three, entitled "Silence in the Classroom," focuses on the implications of the reasons of McClung, J.'s issued as a majority decision of the Alberta Court of Appeal in *Vriend* v. *Alberta*. McClung, J.'s words were indeed vicious and inappropriate and would clearly, as MacDougall described, create a chill among any potential queer litigants who might consider seeking redress in the courts. The reasons of McClung, J., however, had little jurisprudential currency even when they were written. The decision was little more than the strangled cry of an antediluvian jurist sinking further and further into the gurgling bog of progress. Further, while the decision did deal with the dismissal of a teacher, and thus tangentially the issue of education, the litigation was brought to challenge the exclusion of sexual orientation from Alberta human rights legislation. This chapter did not provide much guidance regarding the manner in which judicial decisions have betrayed attitudes relevant to education issues.

Chapter five deals with "outing." It is an interesting examination of the question of whether litigants should be able to sue a person

who 'outs' them. MacDougall concludes that courts should deny relief and that litigants should decline to pursue such actions. He reasons that the success of such claims could only be predicated on the proposition that homosexuality is 'wrong.' If homosexuality were as neutral as, say, left-handedness there would be no question but that outing could not be an actionable wrong. MacDougall's analysis and conclusion are indeed thought provoking. This chapter, however, too seems misplaced given the express goals of this book. There is much theory, much argument and prescription, but there is very little of the descriptive agenda identified as the book's goal.

While containing many valuable insights, interesting observations and compelling cautions, the book failed to satisfy this reader. Perhaps my disappointment was due in part to the lightening pace of judicial progress in the past years that MacDougall does not cover. The book's scope stretched only to cases decided in mid 1997 and there has been much jurisprudential water under the bridge since then. In addition, judicial attitudes have been profoundly influenced by the 1998 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Vriend* and that of *M.* v. *H.* in 1999. Decisions issuing from the courts after these two decisions have a much more positive tone and employ much less unfortunate language.

Beyond the dated quality of this book, which is unavoidable given the pace of change in judicial attitudes, my disappointment also lies in its failure to accomplish the goal it set itself. I had hoped for more analysis of the content of the judicial mind as betrayed by judicial reasons. The book contains rather little of the descriptive and focuses instead on theory and prescription. As a result, the book takes on a rather turgid and congested quality as the reader searches for the promised content.

John Grube. *God, Sex and Poetry.* Toronto: Dartington Press, 2002. 79pp. $12.95 (Cdn). ISBN 1-894130-01-4.
Norm Sacuta. *Garments of the Known.* Roberts Creek, B.C.: Nightwood Editions, 2001. 96pp. $16.25 (Cdn). ISBN 0-88971-178-X.

JOHN STOUT (McMaster University)

These two recently published collections of poetry by John Grube and by Norm Sacuta are both very worthy contributions to the development of a poetry and poetics grounded in the complexities of gay male experience in Canada. Different as these two collections are in most respects, they both offer intriguing takes on gay subjectivity and culture.

John Grube (born in 1930) has taught at several colleges and universities in Canada — most recently, at the Ontario College of Art, from which he retired in 1992. Grube is known as an inspiring Creative Writing instructor and the poems in *God, Sex and Poetry* demonstrate both his skilful control of language and his concern for bringing the realities of queer life out into print. For the most part, Grube structures *God, Sex and Poetry* through alternating short, witty lyric poems with longer, narrative ones, many of which are autobiographical. Sex and spirituality — considered either separately or together — run through the collection as leitmotiv. Although Grube is seriously interested in spiritual matters, his approach to religion is most often ironic, even humorous:

> Metanoia
>
> We are all
> Spies of God
> in some
> absolutely
> divine conspiracy.
>
> Perhaps flirtation
> with Him
> should be
> a slow
> hesitation waltz. (34)

In other poems, such as "The Ring" and "Mother," Grube explores autobiographical episodes with poignancy and tenderness. The verbal dexterity of *God, Sex and Poetry* entertains and provokes reflection, while the more personal poems strike a strong chord of empathy in the reader.

Born in 1962, Norm Sacuta was raised in Edmonton, attended UBC and also lived in England for three years in the 1990s. The dust jacket to *Garments of the Known* informs us that "It was in England that he was exposed to the politically charged atmosphere of the Sexual Dissidence and Cultural Change Program at the University of Sussex, and it was there that much of the poetry in this collection was formed." Sacuta highlights the queer ascendancy of his book of poems with a quote from Djuna Barnes as the epigraph: "There is no truth, and you have set it between you; you have been unwise enough to make a formula; you have dressed the unknowable in the garments of the known."

These are mostly narrative poems in which Sacuta arrives at a deepened understanding of experience through poetry's processes of indirection and distillation of emotion and time. Some of the poems in this collection that I enjoyed the most are set in Alberta — a region of Canada that most queer readers would expect to be inhospitable territory for queer subjects. Sacuta makes Alberta a gay space in such poems as "Morning After the Rodeo (Calgary, 1998)," "gay in stock's time (for Stockwell Day)," and "Alberta Pick-Ups." Celebrating friendship and acting as a witness to the deaths of friends is a recurring preoccupation in the collection. Sacuta's poems are accessible and satisfying.

Both of these collections of poems make a significant contribution to the textual exploration of 'out' queer lives. I hope to read further volumes of poetry by both these writers.

Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibalis, eds. *Homosexuality in French History and Culture*; *Journal of Homosexuality* vol. 41, nos. 3/4. New York: Haworth Press; Harrington Park Press, 2001. 293pp. US$59.95; US$24.95. ISBN 1-56023-263-3; 1-56023-262-5.

JOHN STOUT (McMaster University)

This substantial volume of essays provides a wealth of material on queer histories in France, from the Renaissance to the present. The articles were written mostly by men and focus mainly on gay male history, although a few female contributors, and a few essays on lesbian history, are included. The contributors are both French and non-French specialists in history and culture. All the essays in the book appear in English.

In their introduction, editors Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibalis point out that most of the current research on queer French history is being conducted by non-French scholars. They note an apparent lack of interest in LGBTQ history in France: "gay and lesbian history has ... entered the academic mainstream in many countries, although not in France, or at least not until very recently" (2). Indeed, in France, lesbian and gay identities tend to be relegated to the domain of "la vie privée." This problem — the French closet — is an obstacle facing Queer Studies in France.

All of the articles included in Sibalis and Merrick's book are informative and worth reading, and a few of them seem to me to be outstanding examples of scholarship that will help change the field of French Studies. In particular, Marc Schachter's article on Montaigne's love for Étienne de la Boétie, Lewis Seifert's "Masculinity and Satires of 'Sodomites' in France, 1660-1715," and Susan Lanser's "'Au sein de vos pareilles': Sapphic Separation in Late-Eighteenth-Century France" deserve high praise.

The diversity of topics and historical periods covered in this volume is impressive. Clearly, there is substantial material here for scholars in the field of French Studies to explore and incorporate into their own research and teaching. Although an increasing number of colloquia and publications on LGBTQ literature and culture in France have been happening in recent years, French Studies in general has been slower to recognize the importance of such research and teaching than have many other fields in the Humanities and

Social Sciences. One hopes that the publication of volumes of essays such as *Homosexuality in French History and Culture* will act as a catalyst to increased interest in queer French Studies, both in Canada and elsewhere.

Erica Fischer. *Aimée & Jaguar: A Love Story, Berlin 1943.* Translated from the German by Edna McCown. Los Angeles and New York: Alyson Books, 1998. 274 pp. Ill. US$12.95. ISBN 1-55583-450-7.

ANGELES ESPINACO-VIRSEDA (University of Alberta)

On one level, *Aimée & Jaguar* recounts the "Love Story" of two women in a troubled time. Lilly Wust (Aimée), a German mother of four boys and the wife of a Nazi, and Felice Schragenheim (Jaguar), a young German-Jewish woman trying to hide her identity from the Nazis, fall in love in Germany in 1943. But readers looking for straightforward lesbian romance will be surprised. Journalist-author Fischer adds another dimension to the story by incorporating many of the protagonists' documents, letters, poetry, and diaries and the recollections of friends and family. Fischer's work thus crosses the boundaries between biography, history, and fiction and frames the lovers' perspective between multiple voices. It is the resulting ambiguities that question the nature of sexuality, oral history, the truth of memory, and the lovers' story itself that make *Aimée & Jaguar* so interesting.

Pivotal to the story is Jaguar's arrest, incarceration, and forced labor in a series of Nazi prisons and concentration camps, and Aimée's impassioned efforts to help her. Their correspondence, often smuggled through the prisons by various people won over by Jaguar's warm personality, is extremely moving. It conveys the women's love and commitment to each other as well as the desperation and torment suffered by prisoners and their loved ones on the 'outside.' When Jaguar is captured and sent to Theresienstadt the author conveys a love that seems to transcend the limitations of physical separation. In this way, *Aimée & Jaguar* resembles a universal love story. In

fact, sexual orientation is secondary to the theme of love and devotion and it is only the malicious comments made by disapproving relatives and acquaintances, as well as Nazi interrogators, that convey to the reader that Aimée and Jaguar's was hardly a 'normal' relationship for the place and time.

Fischer never reveals how she, or the people in the book, conceptualize lesbian sexuality. Aimée's apparently eager participation in heterosexual relationships, including extramarital affairs with men, and her delayed sexual interest in women, begs the question of whether or not she would have been regarded as, or regarded herself as, a 'true' lesbian, a bisexual, or a 'naturalized' lesbian. This is central to whether or not their relationship can even be termed 'lesbian.'

Clearly, Fischer was limited by her subject's reluctance to provide explanations for many of the gaps in her story, and the author expressed frustration in trying to understand Lilly's postwar distance from lesbianism: "Why did she have to reject Helene [a suitor] and marry the horrible Willi Beimling? Why didn't she dare to step back into life in the seventies, when the lesbian scene in Berlin was in full swing?" (270). These suggest that sexuality is not a discrete entity but rather that it exists within a context complicated by, and intertwined with, other factors — personal, social, economic and historical — that limit and complicate choices and, as a result, confound simplified categorizations. Ironically, Fischer's decontextualization of lesbianism suggests the importance of considering contexts.

Yet, Fischer offers a limited insight to the social and historical conditions of same-sex relationships between women under National Socialism. By comparison, the oral histories and biographies about German lesbians by Ilse Kokula and Claudia Schoppmann are much more deliberate in capturing what life was like for lesbian couples during the Nazi era.

Fischer's casual treatment of sexuality leads to confusion about the book's objective. Since lesbianism is secondary to other themes, it is unclear whether the book is intended to make a claim for homosexual rights, as one would assume from the plot, or to condemn the persecution of Jews instead. Jaguar's persecution was not a result of her lesbianism (the Nazis did not expressly persecute homosexual women in quite the way they did homosexual men), but rather her

Jewishness and alleged resistance activities. Whereas Fischer's epilogue carries a passionate message about individual responsibility against human injustice, her discussion is about the Holocaust and "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia, with no mention of, and hence no call to action against, other human rights violations such as those based on sexual orientation.

Historians will also be frustrated by the fictionalization of sources that results from Fischer's adoption of an omniscient narrative voice. Although the author reproduces substantial excerpts from interviews, she also makes claims about individuals' thoughts and feelings that are more akin to conjecture. For example, Fischer states that "Günther Wust was thunderstruck ... Perhaps it was his fault, perhaps she [Lilly] simply needed a firmer hand" (38). This cannot have been Günther's recollection since he did not survive the war to tell his story, but Fischer's embellishments are presented in an authoritative fashion, blurring the distinction between history and fiction.

Yet this tension between fact and fiction is one of the things that makes *Aimée & Jaguar* so interesting. Fischer allows discrepancies in testimony to stand in contradiction to one another — for instance, the question of whether or not Aimée had a picture or bronze relief of Hitler in her living room. This becomes particularly important when Fischer presents Aimée's overzealous embrace of Judaism after the war. Was Aimée anti-Semitic before falling in love with Jaguar? Did guilt and shame over possible Nazi sympathies prompt Lilly's conspicuous silence about the years prior to her love affair? These inconsistencies remind the reader of the constructed, and perhaps even deliberately manipulated, nature of memory and history.

On the other hand, it is these inconsistencies and manipulations that ultimately call the love story itself into question. For instance, Fischer creates suspicion around Aimée's motives for her zealous pursuit of linens, a Persian lamb coat, and other items, bequeathed to her by Jaguar, although it is up to the reader to decide if Aimée was driven to this out of greed, grief, or grim necessity. Less subtly, Fischer contradicts the impression that Aimée and Jaguar had an everlasting love when she baldly states: "I don't believe that Jaguar would have stayed with Aimée" (271). In the epilogue, Fischer reasonably concludes that "Aimée's story is full of holes" (270).

Thus, although *Aimée & Jaguar* is neither a traditionally narrated love story, nor a conventional academic history, the book draws its strength from the questions generated by the mixing of these genres. For those willing to overlook or even relish the book's ambiguities and its lack of historical methodological rigor, Erica Fischer's work is a thought-provoking exploration of a complex *human* relationship that raises questions about the subjective nature of memory and the construction of the past.

Information

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torquere

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

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Acknowledgments / Reconnaissances

For helping to finance this project, the Executive and Members of the CLGSA / SCELG; for accounting assistance, Kris Calhoun; for expert guidance and consultation with French, Claudine Potvin; for generous support over the last five years, Charles Bidwell, Piet Defraeye, Donald Cochrane, Michael Eberle-Sinatra, Jim Ellis, Joerg Esleben, Lise Gotell, Stephen Guy-Bray, Thomas Kemple, Steven Kruger, Ann Martin, James McNinch, Dorrit Naaman, Heather Tapley, Monique Tschofen, Raleigh Whitinger, Cathy Van Ingen, Nick Zwaagstra.

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Printed in Canada / Imprimé au Canada

CN ISSN 1488-5182

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

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