torquere

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

vol 6
2004

torquere

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

Volume 6
2004

Special theme issue:
Memorializing Queers / Queering Remembrances

Guest editor: Sharon Rosenberg

ISSN 1488-5182

CLGSA wishes to acknowledge its tremendous debt to current President, OmiSoore H. Dryden (UBC), for her hard work, tenacity, and extraordinary dedication. You have faced the seemingly insurmountable task of rescuing this association, which now owes its future to your vision.

Volume 6 **torquere** 2004

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

memorializing queers / queering remembrances

Table of Contents *Table de matières*

Memorializing Queers / Queering Remembrances: Encounters with Loss and the Problematics of Identity

SHARON ROSENBERG

Sharon Rosenberg is Assistant Professor in the Theory / Culture focus of the Department of Sociology at the University of Alberta. She is co-editor, with Roger I. Simon and Claudia Eppert of Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma *(2000) and co-author, with Ann Braithwaite, Susanne Luhmann and Susan Heald of* Troubling Women's Studies: Pasts, Presents and Possibilities *(2004).*

> It may also be true that the surest engagement with memory lies in its perpetual irresolution . . . which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name and to what end.
>
> — James Young (21)

As I deliberate on how to introduce this special issue of *torquere*, I have in mind two moments, both from the last year, the juxtaposition of which animates something for me, and I hope for you, of what is at stake in memorializing queers and queering remembrances.

I am standing at the Vancouver AIDS Memorial with my lover, on a few days' break from winter and the academic term. As we are carefully reading the inscription and taking in the listing of names, two runners, a man and a woman, jog by. They slow down; she touches one of

I am teaching a fourth-year undergraduate course on queer theorizing. About halfway through the course we are doing a section on AIDS memorializing, reading about the AIDS Quilt, the politics and problematics of representation, and viewing films that take up these

the names as she passes. A simple gesture, perhaps, but one that strikes me then and still as marking something crucial about why memorials matter. What I read in her fleeting touch of a name cut into steel is an expression of remembering as a practice of living; that is, while the memorial (as all monuments of its kind) risks becoming read over time as static and of little note to those who pass by, it can also work as a touchstone, an address to the living to remember as part of what it means to continue living, after and in relation to a death. In that moment, what I got a glimpse of (I think; after all, this is my reading) was something of how the individual dead can be kept . . . not so much "alive" but as a presence. On these terms, the individual dead are a mattering, part of the dailyness of living rather than to be conjured simply on special occasions (anniversaries, birthdays, at vigils for other dead, and so on).

issues in both documentary and fiction genres. Part way through the discussion, one of the students hesitantly says she doesn't understand why we are looking at issues of AIDS representation in a course on querying sex, gender and sexuality. I am surprised and ask if she can say more. She asks, what does AIDS have to do with gay men? I ask if other students also have this question and it turns out that she's not alone, many share some sense of not knowing what all this is about. In class, I attempt to offer some historical understanding. Afterwards, I am left gaping, shocked by the dissonance of a question that is reasonable for my students and largely unimaginable to me. What I get a glimpse of is how hard it is to keep the dead as a mattering, particularly when there is no personal relationship to sustain that bind, particularly when these dead are largely, still, disavowed.

> Identity. Identification. Social bindings. Names. Matterings. Memories. Loss. Othering. Distance. Dehumanization. Violence. Indifference. Normativities.
>
> Generation?

Words that tumble into my mind, out of my fingers, as I think on these two moments and what I/we may learn from their juxtaposition about "remembering queers and queering remembrances." For, in such naming, I am endeavouring to put into play

two orientations at once: (i) to make a (partial) memorial archive of those who identify themselves or who are identified as "queers" (recognizing this is neither a stable nor coherent identificatory production); and, (ii) "to queer" the ways in which memorializing is thought, practiced, sustained, produced and lived. While the former project is more familiar to many, the latter may not be so easily encountered. Its significance lies for me in the kind of articulation that Donald Hall offers, in which "queering" is understood to "pose a particular threat to systems of classification that assert their timelessness and fixity." He continues: "It may not destroy such systems but it certainly presses upon them, torturing their lines of demarcation, pressuring their easy designations" (14). Hall has in mind systems of classification that produce and organize sexuality and desire; while these are obviously of interest in this special issue, so too are the classifications, demarcations and designations that produce and delimit contemporary thought on memorializing loss. Hence, you will read across these pages, for example, troublings of distinctions between history and memory (Stein), mourning and melancholia (Dickinson, J. Davidson), personal and collective trauma (Wright).

So who are the queers who are written into memory, onto these pages? Not surprisingly, but horrifyingly, you will again and again encounter the spectre of those gay men who have died from HIV/AIDS. Indeed, there is barely a contribution to this special issue that does not either substantively feature memorialization of such men or mention these deaths as a haunting reminder. In an effort to recognize these losses as a particular kind, and not conflate them into equivalence with all other losses engaged across these pages, I have organized the scholarly articles into two parts: articles in Part A focus substantively on AIDS memorialization and politics; in Part B, other losses and associated memorial practices are featured.

You will also encounter here some queers by name: Clive Boutilier (Stein goes on a search for this gay man deported from the U.S. in 1968) and Tom Waddell (Olympic medal winner and founder of the Gay Games, featured in J. Davidson's analysis). Other names are fictionalized, but come off the page as textured and nuanced figures (Bell introduces us to "Billy Vance" and Alley to "Arrowsmith"). Two of the contributors put themselves on the page as subjects of autobiographical consideration and inquiry (Wushke

and Wright). Then there are the "queers" identified by broad category: lesbians and transgendered women at Toronto's Pussy Palace (Blair), sisters who dance for their dead brothers (Dickinson), gay games' athletes (J. Davidson).

If that snapshot offers some sense of the queers who are being remembered here, what characterizations of "memorial queer(y)ing" will you come upon? Dickinson poses one of the most difficult, but for that, pressing, demands of this collection: to queer who we think are "our brothers" in the wake of homophobic killings. That is, what he compels us to grapple with is that our identifications and extensions of care cannot only be to the gay and transgendered men who are murdered, as, he so pointedly puts it, by "straight men." He insists we must come to terms *also* with what it means that these killers too are "our brothers," part of the human in this time and place. Bride takes us in a different direction, asking us to consider the provocative possibility that cruising and gay public sex in the vicinity of an AIDS monument may be read not as "desecration" or "transgression" of what is normatively assumed to be sacred space, but as a particular, complicated practice of remembering. In the process, she queers dichotomies of life and death, grief and pleasure, present and past. Wright picks up on the complicated intertwinings of such terms (thought through the particular complexities of living with trauma), offering us a text that is both itself a memorial archiving of his life as a gay man and activist *and* a discussion of archiving Bear History for which he has been a leading American figure. What Wright brings to the fore, also, are questions of "generation" and how they press on us differently—particularly in relation to the AIDS pandemic and its legacies.

In the second section of scholarly articles, Stein opens precisely with such gestures to generational differences, especially in relation to the very notion of "queer" as both an identity marker and a way of approaching history. Stein troubles the norms of historical interpretation, relations between past(s) and present(s), and the status of "evidence," presenting us with a complicated, unstable—and for these reasons—exciting rendering, not only of his historical subject *per se*, but also of the very project of writing history queerly. J. Davidson reads history also—this time not from the perspective of an historian but through a psychoanalytic reading of the Gay Games and their memorial practices and associated attachments. Davidson

queers both psychoanalytic and memorial readings in this analysis, asking us to consider the workings of psychic investments at an organizational (rather than singularly individual) level and their effects for loss, mourning and "moving on." What she poignantly calls our attention to is that memorial pride is complexly caught up in historical shame, queer(y)ing any simple dichotomy of these terms. Blair brings this section of the special issue to a close, by also focusing on loss—in this case a loss that was threatened but that did not occur when charges against the Pussy Palace organizers in Toronto were dismissed. Through an engaged reading of gay bathhouse literature, and a particular attention to a queer(y)ing of "sight" and "evidence," she speaks to the complex ways in which the loss that wasn't nevertheless animated a series of public responses to the Pussy Palace raids and its aftermath.

In the creative writing and local knowledge sections such queering of memorialization continues, with contributions from Alley and Bell, D. Davidson and Wushke respectively. Alley's beautiful and poignant story troubles facile distinctions between love, anger, loss and attachment, while Bell calls a queer and sharp attention to the utter inadequacy of academic institutions for what they cannot see and render, most awfully, unintelligible. D. Davidson's reflections too reveal traces of anger as she grapples with her own history of AIDS education, and particularly the practices of what I might call "memorial activism," as these are brought to the fore through her engagement with the AIDS Quilt. Wushke's hermeneutic / therapeutic engagement with a 1975 photograph gives us queered insight into the workings of interpretation (his own and those he imagines of others') as markers of gender and sexuality are read and reread for (new) understanding.

The particular queer(y)ing that I would like to offer, in part inspired by those authors have already shared with me, is concerned with the very pairing that is at the heart of this issue and its call for papers: namely, the pairing of practices of remembrance with practices of identity and identification. This is not an unusual binding in late modernity, rather it is exemplary (as we well know, for example, from Holocaust memorials to the monumentalization of Ground Zero). Nonetheless, it is, as scholars and practitioners of memory continuously point out, a binding that is apparently necessary (yet problematic), imperative to imagine ourselves away

from (yet difficult to do so). Indeed, I was particularly drawn to the idea of this special issue precisely because I felt that the notion of queer(y)ing might offer something in the way of opening up the complex and complicated ways that loss, identity, identification and memorializing are caught up with each other. On the one hand, I anticipated that a notion of queering would direct us away from commitments to and expectations of stabilized identity categories (as it has for a number of the authors featured here); on the other hand, what remains clear is that enactments of queer (as identity and/or accusation) must continue to matter to the hows and whys of loss, indifference, death, violence, and the stakes of remembering. Grappling in the midst of this dilemma, I want to suggest that a queer(y)ing of memorialization (theory and practice) might alert us to a series of particular troubles that demand attention. Five in particular strike me.

First, we might ask after, as Judith Butler does, the limit of the name (or even an image) to conjure the dead. She enquires: "Do names really 'open' us to an intersubjective ground, or are they simply so many ruins which designate a history irrevocably lost? Do these names really signify for us the fullness of lives lost, or are they so many tokens of what we cannot know . . .?" (Rev. 69). What Butler astutely captures for us here, I think, is the very complicated matter of naming the dead as a practice of remembering. On the one hand, such naming is crucial—not least in situations, for example, in which people are murdered as "nameless" representations of an identity category stained by hatred. Inscribing the name of the dead, designating them as individuals, may also be utterly crucial for those who are still the living, for whom the name works as an intersubjective and felt recall (I am reminded here of the woman who I observed passing the Vancouver AIDS Memorial). On the other hand, when the names do not mark for the living a previously known or loved person, they risk becoming not so distinct from the very unapproachable, untouchable, numbers that they are hoped to give embodied texture to. The question becomes, perhaps, when the names are listed under or as part of an assumed identity category (e.g., those who have died from AIDS), what kind of memorial relation is conjured between the living and the dead—particularly for those who do not have prior affective connections to these names?

Following this thought, we might also be concerned by the ways in which identity categories bind the living to the dead on limited and delimiting terms; such that, in its broadest and most reductive brush, for example, living gays are assumed to have a particularly charged memorial relation to dead gays and those living who do not identify as gays are assumed to have a distant or less authentic or less binding relation to those dead (Stein offers us some thoughts here). On such terms, dichotomies tend to reign (victim vs perpetrator, gay vs straight, innocence vs evil), such that dead and living are singularized and regulated into *a priori* categories that leave little room for grappling with how queerness, for example, is necessary and yet insufficient to facing loss, death and its lingering effects–for all, albeit differently (as Dickinson reminds us). Such issues are particularly charged when we start to think across "generations," as the living turn not to the dead who were known to us in life, or among whom we shared some sense of community, of being in a particular time and place, but toward a dead unknown to us—for whom we have come after, we were not born when they were living, they are no longer who we think of as "us" (Wright offers us some sense of this dissonance).

Third, attention might also be drawn to the ways in which practices of "collective" remembering in late modernity tend to be marked as the responsibility of specialized institutions (e.g., memorial museums) and specified dates (e.g., AIDS Remembrance Day), particularly in social formations that are oriented primarily by the forgetting "necessary" to progress (Gross). As Wendy Brown reminds us, "ours is a present hurtled into the future without regard for human attachments . . . a present that dishonours the past by erasing it with unprecedented speed and indifference" (142). In the midst of such a hurtling present, we build monuments, museums, memorial walls and benches, in the hopes that they may slow down something of this time, such that what and who has been lost is given a presence, a marker, a place of mattering. And yet, as James Young has long reminded us, the risk is that such memorial practices become part of the landscape, memorial benches become just another park bench, "relieving us," in his words, "of the memory-burden we should be carrying" (127). The question then becomes how to engage such practices differently, such that they animate remembering rather than allow for a sense that the stakes of remembering are settled by stone

(or steel or cloth) repositories that will do the work of remembering for us (recognizing that "us" is a complicated evocation too).

Caught in the force of late modernity's speed and indifference, it is little wonder (but of deep concern) that identity comes to matter in rigid ways, with violent effects. As Butler again argues, in her more recent work, it is imperative to critically "evaluate and oppose the conditions under which certain human lives are [made] more . . . grievable than others" (*Precarious* 30). She suggests we must do this not out of some sense of moral righteousness, but because we are as much formed by those whom we grieve for socially and publicly, as by those whose deaths are disavowed because they are rendered less than human (46). While Butler is speaking specifically here to the twined avowals and disavowals of deaths in post 9/11 America, her words resonate in the context of this special issue also. For, to take seriously her position is to reckon with how the deaths of queers not only press on, leave enduring marks of pain for living queers (where spatial and identicatory proximities may be closer), but also all of us. We see such extensions of mattering, for example, in the case of particularly horrific and made-public deaths—Mathew Shepard, Brandon Teena, Aaron Webster readily come to mind here. Yet this is not a general and guiding orientation–I note, for instance, that no papers were submitted to the call for papers on remembering the disappeared women in Vancouver (although mention is made in Dickinson), partly, I suspect, because for all of the ways in which some of us understand queer and queering as markers of troubling, they are not (still) readily read that way.

This points me toward the remaining risk in the fraught intertwinings of identity and identification, loss and memorializing: the complex relations between "mourning" and "activism." Largely still understood in a dichotomous relation (as the feminist call following the Montréal massacre exemplified, "*first* mourn, *then* work for change"), what's clear from the papers offered here is that these modes of being, these orientations to life and death, are far more intertwined than the dichotomy allows for. As Donald Crimp concluded years ago, what is necessary is "mourning *and* militancy" (149). And yet this "and" is not so easily rendered in daily practices–when the psychic demands of mourning and facing loss seem at odds with the relational and material demands of "acting up" for a different world (see J. Davidson for a particular take on this dilemma). In the

mire of and between these pulls, there are risks that another demand is demanded: namely the demand of identity. That is, "to be" queer means "to remember queer" means to "act-up queer" in ways that may neither recognize nor help us to reckon with how grief, loss and sadness work–individually and in social formations. As Butler may prompt us to ask, in yet other deliberations on these matters (and as Blair and Bride pick up on), how might loss be constituted such that it is reckoned with as a necessary condition for community? (Afterword 468) How then might we imagine and realize a different relation between mourning and activism?

As my parenthetical gestures indicate, not each of these risks is featured in each of the papers that follow, nor could they be. Rather, specific risks become more and less tangible for authors as they endeavour to work with thought and passion, rigour and connection, in making meanings and offering us provocative deliberations on the doubled moment of remembering queers and queering remembrances. Working with each of the authors, reading across the papers brought together here, I am profoundly reminded that to remember those who have passed, to memorialize their loss, and to open the present to the demands of the dead are complex, complicated and enduring labours. To my mind, and as explicitly expressed on some of these pages, such labours are marked by and expressed through mutable intertwinings of thought, practice and affect, in which love tackles with grief, attachment with guilt, shame with pride. The journal issue you hold in your hands, finally, some two years in the making, is an expression of such labour–mine, but, more importantly, that of the contributors and those others (monument makers to judges, dancers to athletic organizations) who compel authors' thoughts to the page.

Working with these papers, I feel myself increasingly drawn to the idea that a particular care and attentiveness to the dead and their memorialization might be imperative to the possibilities for living otherwise than we have. Authors offer us different and not necessarily compatible characterizations of that care and attentiveness–and for that I am both grateful and excited. I hope you too will find here ideas, thoughts, naming practices, wonderings, contemplations, theorizings that touch your own in ways that may surprise, shock, open, and engage curiosity as we each grapple with what holds us here and draws us out toward what else there may be.

As guest editor of this special issue, I extend my gratitude for the support, encouragement, patience and thoughtfulness of many people. My first thanks go to John Plews and Heather Zwicker, the editorial backbone of *torquere*. John was superb in his capacity as former editor, offering generous guidance and assistance particularly through the early stages of the process. Heather has been a wonderful source of support, encouragement and humour throughout and I am especially grateful for her astute proofing-eye! Kathryn Payne handled the creative writing contributions with care and Ellen Whiteman provided technical assistance when time was tight. My gratitude to the anonymous reviewers, each of whom gave timely and considered response. I especially offer my deep thanks to each of the authors whose work is featured here: for your patience, for your generosity of engagement with suggestions from myself and reviewers, and for the thoughts you have shared that have produced such an opportunity to think with and alongside you. I am also thankful for a course release, supported through a University of Alberta SAS Grant, which was partly used to help me bring this issue to completion. And, finally, my gratitude to J. for patiently loving me through the last months of producing this issue and for risking the big leap.

This issue would not have made it to production if it were not for the work, sense of responsibility, and careful attention of Bobby Noble and OmiSoore Dryden. My deep gratitude to them both and particularly for Bobby's hands-on attentiveness. If this is the last issue of *torquere* to be published, it is fitting that it be a memorial marker of what they have made possible from so many ruins.

Edmonton
Spring 2005

Works Cited

Brown, Wendy. *Politics out of History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Butler, Judith. "Afterword: After Loss, What Then?" *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. 467-473.

———. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Violence and Mourning*. New York and London: Verso, 2004.

———. Rev. of *Spirit in Ashes*, by Edith Wyschogrod. *History and Theory* 27.1 (1988): 60-70.

Crimp, Donald. "Mourning and Militancy." *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1989. 129-149.

Hall, Donald E.. "Introduction." *Queer Theories*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003. 12-16.

Gross, David. *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000.

Young, James. *The Texture of Memory*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993.

Brothers' Keepers, or, The Performance of Mourning: Queer Rituals of Remembrance

PETER DICKINSON

Peter Dickinson is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Simon Fraser University. He is the author of Here is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Literatures of Canada *(U of Toronto P, 1999), and editor of* Literatures, Cinemas, Cultures, *a special issue of the journal* Essays on Canadian Writing *(#76, 2002). Recent essays have appeared or are forthcoming in the* Canadian Journal of Film Studies, Modern Drama, Screen, *and* Biography.

> One cannot hold a discourse *on* the "work of mourning" without taking part in it, without announcing or partaking in death, and first of all in one's own death.
>
> — Jacques Derrida, "By Force of Mourning" (172)

> What grief displays ... is the thrall in which our relations with others hold us, in ways that we cannot always recount or explain, in ways that often interrupt the self-conscious account of ourselves we might try to provide, in ways that challenge the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control.
>
> — Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* (23)

> But it may well be that theatre and performance respond to a psychic need to rehearse for loss, and especially for death.
>
> — Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex* (3)

In her recent book *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler picks up the threads of an argument first sketched in her *Antigone's Claim*; with some political urgency, especially in the wake of 9/11, she asks how one moves beyond the preoccupation with individual human agency implicit in the question, "What *makes for a grievable life*?," to a recognition that "[l]oss has

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 6 (2004) © CLGSA / SCELG

made a tenuous 'we' of us all" (20; emphasis in original). Acknowledging the terrible and terrifying effects of violence to which sexual and other minorities are routinely subjected, Butler nevertheless posits that

> each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies—as a site of desire and physical vulnerability, as a site of publicity at once assertive and exposed. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure. (20)

For Butler, then, the more important question becomes how we "transform" or "translate" (to use her words) this loss into a new social ethics and political responsibility, reconfiguring a "model of the human" that accounts for the "you" in "me," and that bears witness to the fact that "I am as much constituted by those I do grieve for as by those whose deaths I disavow, whose nameless and faceless deaths form the melancholic background for my social world" (46, 49).

In this paper, I want to build on Butler's insights here and elsewhere (especially in *Antigone's Claim*), theorizing the political responsibility and social vulnerability that specifically attend queer rituals of remembrance, as well as some of the masculine—and masculinist—teleologies at the heart of these rituals. How do I grieve for the "man" lost in "human," when it is mostly straight white men who have insisted historically that the latter category is one whose loss as a mode of address must be rehearsed over and over again by all the rest of us? How could I ever call such a man my brother? I explore these and related questions by stressing both the *performative* and the *local* applications of a queer theory of mourning. As such, I preface my paper with a brief survey of some spaces of remembrance that in many respects constitute "a landscape of memorialization"[1] particular to Vancouver, and that thus serve as the immediate backdrop to my thinking about the larger issues circulating in the

[1] I borrow this phrase from Sharon Rosenberg, who coined it in correspondence with me about my paper. I am extremely grateful to Sharon for the guidance and engaged colloquy she has provided on my work, and on the work of mourning more generally, throughout the course of revising this paper.

ensuing pages. In suggesting a "nervous mutating catastrophic reach" to these spaces, and the traumatic events they commemorate, a reach that extends beyond Vancouver and, more importantly, my own immediate experiencing of them, I am structuring my paper along the lines of the model for "performative writing" adopted by Peggy Phelan in her brilliant book *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*. There, Phelan notes that "[p]erformative writing is an attempt to find a form for 'what philosophy wishes all the same to say.'" She continues:

> Rather than describing the performance event in "direct signification," a task that I believe to be impossible and not terrifically interesting, I want this writing to enact the affective force of the performance event again, as it plays itself out in an ongoing temporality made vivid by the psychic process of distortion (repression, fantasy, and the general hubbub of the individual and collective unconscious), and made narrow by the muscular force of political repression in all its mutative violence. The events I disclose here sound differently in the writing of them than in the "experiencing" of them, and it is the urgent call of that difference that I am hoping to amplify here. (11-12)

In the main sections of this paper, then, I am likewise seeking to amplify a difference, focussing on four specifically theatrical performances of mourning in order to note how their respective Vancouver stagings speak both to my own evolving memorialization of the city in which I live, and to a communal history of queer witnessing whose narrative lacunae are precisely what constitute the act of memorialization itself. As Butler puts it, "I tell a story about the relations I choose, only to expose, somewhere along the way, the way I am gripped and undone by these very relations. My narrative falters, as it must" (*Precarious Life* 23). To this end, I look initially, and most extensively, at the performance work of Margie Gillis and Paula Vogel, women who have both lost biological brothers to AIDS (Christopher Gillis and Carl Vogel, respectively), and who, moreover, have both sought to memorialize their brothers' lives in specific works of art: Gillis in the solo dance piece *Torn Roots, Broken Branches* and Vogel in the Obie Award-winning play *The Baltimore Waltz*. The public performance of bereavement by these two women, its ritual repetition, is not, I argue, a narcissistic

capitulation to grief—as Freud's notion of melancholia would have it—but rather an acknowledgment of community, a symbolic representation of collective struggle in response to an unprecedented social crisis, one that allows for the sharing of loss and the ritualization of remembrance as a precursor to organization and a demand for change.

Here, in theorizing the performance of mourning *contra* Freud, I will be drawing primarily on the work of two of his more important contemporary interlocutors. In particular, I will be using Butler's influential notion of "gender melancholia," as she has developed and refined the concept over the course of *Gender Trouble*, *Bodies That Matter* and, most recently, *Antigone's Claim* and *Precarious Life*, and as she has used it to (re)read Freudian (and Lacanian) psychoanalysis in order to demonstrate that homosexual cathexis must precede ego identification and the successful resolution of the Oedipal complex. This will aid in unpacking how performative memorialization overlaps with queer kinship in the texts by Gillis and Vogel. Relatedly, I will also be working from the model for social praxis on offer in Douglas Crimp's important essay "Mourning and Militancy," which takes as its central premise (one that I share) the absolutely necessary connection between mourning/remembrance and activism, especially in the context of the queer community's responses to the AIDS pandemic and decades of unabated anti-gay violence.

I conclude my paper with a very brief analysis of two queer plays which each, in their own way, seek to memorialize—in order to attempt to make sense of—the murder of Matthew Shepard. Terrence McNally's *Corpus Christi*, an intensely homoerotic retelling of the Biblical passion story, was the subject of bomb threats and picketing when it opened at the Manhattan Theatre Club in the fall of 1998. Following Shepard's murder in October of that year, McNally included a preface in the published version of the play that makes a direct link between the crucifixion of the play's fictional gay protagonist, Joshua, and that of the real-life Shepard. Moisés Kaufman and Tectonic Theater's *The Laramie Project* is based on interviews with residents of Laramie, Wyoming in the immediate aftermath of Shepard's killing; a dozen or so actors voice the words of more than fifty distraught, angry, uncomprehending, and media-weary citizens—as well as their own—in an effort to tell the story of this community and, in the words of one resident/character, "say

it right" (100). The play was recently made into an HBO movie with a who's who of high-profile Hollywood stars.[2]

Both plays are large ensemble pieces that eschew explicit focus on the homosexual victim-as-martyr in favour of a dissection (McNally allegorically, Kaufman documentarily) of the community that produced his homophobic killers. These men, equally our brothers, how do we remember them? I attempt to answer this question by first focussing on a key theatrical convention employed by each play, and then by returning to my opening framing discussion of the specific orientations of queer remembrance in Vancouver via references to local stagings of each play in 2002 (i.e., Hoarse Raven's production of *Corpus Christi* at Festival House in May and Studio 58's production of *The Laramie Project* in October). There, I will offer some final Butlerian remarks on mourning and melancholia—and what remains "unspeakable" in each—within the context of the Vancouver queer community's determined efforts to remember Aaron Webster, killed by gay bashers in the same park from which an AIDS Memorial has been barred as unsuitable.

The Landscape of Remembrance

This last point refers to a particular confluence of the local and the performative that has necessarily influenced the writing and revising of this paper. I am speaking of the completion (in July 2004) and dedication (on 1 December 2004, in a ceremony that coincided with World AIDS Day) of a long-planned, and long-delayed, memorial to British Columbians who have died of AIDS. The site of the memorial is Sunset Beach West, along a grassy and lightly treed knoll at the foot of Broughton Street and Beach Avenue, in the heart of downtown's West End and a short walk east of English Bay and the Stanley Park seawall. Its design consists of a series of 20 steel panels, each close to a metre in width, cut into and winding through the adjacent landscape like a ribbon unfurling in the wind. The memorial's foundation, like Maya Lin's famous Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, DC, follows the natural grade level of the site, resulting in a height ranging from 0.75-1.5 metres (see figure

[2] *The Laramie Project* (2002). Directed by Moisés Kaufman. Written by Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Project. Produced by Declan Baldwin. New York: HBO Home Video, 96 min.

1). Again much like Lin's design, the panels that comprise the Vancouver AIDS Memorial have been laser cut with the names of those who have died from the disease, signifying "their absence from our lives" (Vancouver AIDS Memorial). Small holes have been placed next to each name so that mourners and visitors to the memorial might leave flowers or other tokens of remembrance for lost loved ones. Finally, the following stanza from Spanish-American writer George Santayana's 1896 commemorative verse "To W.P." scrolls above the names, at the top of the memorial:

> With you a part of me hath passed away,
> For in the peopled forest of my mind
> A tree made leafless by the wintry wind
> Shall never don again its green array.
> Chapel and fireside, country road and bay,
> Have something of their friendliness resigned;
> Another, if I would, I could not find,
> And I am grown much older in a day.
> But yet I treasure in my memory
> Your gift of charity, your mellow ease,
> And the dear honor of your amity;
> For those once mine, my life is rich with these.
> And I scarce know which part may greater be,—
> What I keep of you, or you rob of me.
> (*Sonnets and Other Verses* 61)

Despite the performance of civic harmony that attended the official ground-breaking ceremony for the memorial in May 2002, and that was likewise featured prominently at the official dedication ceremony in December 2004, public goodwill surrounding the project has not always been very much in evidence. Nor was Sunset Beach, chosen only after an especially arduous and acrimonious two-year public consultation process in June 1998, the site originally proposed for the memorial. Indeed, when the then fledgling AIDS Memorial Committee, working in an ad hoc manner under the auspices of AIDS Vancouver and the Pacific AIDS Resource Centre, first approached the Vancouver Parks Board in 1996 about installing a public monument to the memory of those who have died from AIDS, they proposed a site adjacent Ceperley Park, near the Second Beach

entrance to Stanley Park. This proposal was endorsed by the Parks Board at an in-camera meeting in November 1996. However, when word of the planned memorial and its proposed location leaked to the press, there was an immediate public outcry. Ostensibly, debate centred around the *lack* of public consultation surrounding the process, but various media polls conducted during the period repeatedly suggested that what people most objected to was the choice of Stanley Park as the site for the AIDS Memorial—and precisely because the spot was deemed *too* public (see Fraser).

Ceperley Park, a highly trafficked part of Stanley Park, popular with both locals and tourists alike, and home to a playground and picnic area frequented by young children and families, was deemed inappropriate for a memorial to AIDS victims. Wasn't it enough that the area was annually turned into the start and end point for the Vancouver AIDS Walk every September? A more discreet location should be found for a permanent memorial. Of course what remained unacknowledged throughout this public discourse on the discourse of publicness was that the woods just north of Ceperley Park are highly trafficked in another way—namely, as a late-night cruising ground for gay, bisexual and otherwise identified men seeking sex

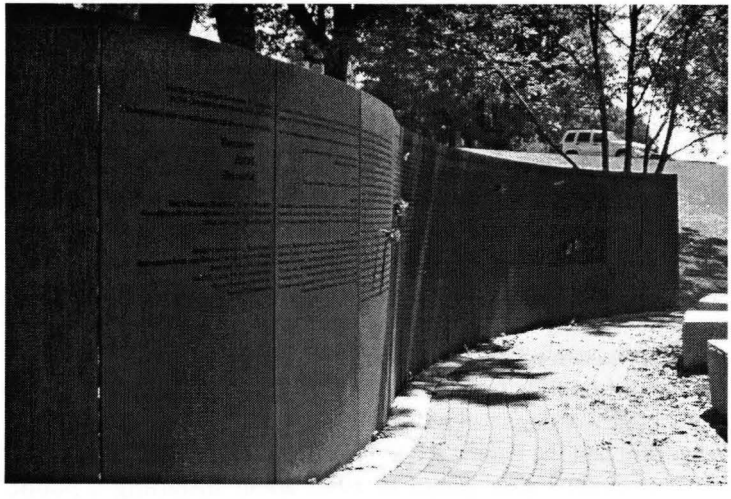


Figure 1: Vancouver AIDS Memorial, Sunset Beach, Vancouver
(Photo © Peter Dickinson)

with other men. In the homophobic equation of "gay sex = AIDS" that frequently subtended the debates around erecting a memorial at Ceperley, what remained palpable—even when unspoken—was the feeling that the gay community wished to flaunt itself in broad daylight yet again, that it was somehow rubbing normal Vancouverites' (and, indeed, the world's) noses in a killing field of its own making, one that had best remain hidden away in the dark. Never mind that the killings that go on in this field in Stanley Park under cover of darkness, killings that remain un- or under-memorialized within Vancouver public discourse, have nothing at all to do with the human immunodeficiency virus, and everything to do with "normal" boys who carry baseball bats—a point to which I will return at the end of this essay.

Vancouver's recent history has been particularly vexed on the subject of public memorials. For example, the fallout attending the December 1997 unveiling of artist Beth Alber's *Marker of Change* memorial in Thornton Park, commemorating the lives of the fourteen women murdered by Marc Lepine at Montreal's École Polytechnique eight years earlier, rehearsed in many ways the same debates around intentionality and appropriateness that have characterized the AIDS Memorial. The conservative local press, led by *Vancouver Sun* columnist Trevor Lautens, and North Vancouver Reform Party MP Ted White, were particularly aggrieved by the fact that the Women's Monument Project (a feminist collective working out of Capilano College overseeing the design competition, fundraising, and eventual installation of Alber's sculpture), like the AIDS Memorial Society of Vancouver, saw the *Marker of Change* not merely as commemorative but also as explicitly educative, a way of focussing immediate local attention on the ongoing global phenomenon of male violence against women (see Lautens; Duncan). Clearly the memorial was meant as a feminist indictment of men, the argument went, and, as such, could not be seen as representative of a spirit of shared remembrance in any way. In this regard, critics pointed to the phrase "for all women who have been murdered by men" in the memorial's dedication plaque as unnecessarily provocative.

That same year, Vancouver resident Don Larson angered many in the First Nations community when he spearheaded a campaign to create a monument honouring the memories of the women (many of them Aboriginal sex trade workers) who began disappearing from

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DES) at a statistical rate of approximately two per year in the early 1980s, a phenomenon that was met with what now seems willful inattention on the part of police and the local media.[3] Despite the fact that the First Nations community had for several years been staging a public performance of remembrance and a call to action for these same women in the form of a "smudge ceremony," accompanied by demonstrations held each Valentine's Day (see Kelley), Larson—who is white—went ahead and unilaterally commissioned the design of a memorial boulder. The boulder was installed in CRAB (Create a Real Available Beach) Park—3.5 hectares of reclaimed land along the waterfront at the foot of Main Street, in the heart of the DES's skid row (a memorial bench was dedicated separately in March 2000). The fact that the monument's dedicatory inscription appropriates a traditional First Nations' "form of address ['All my relations'] ... used to begin or end a prayer, speech, or story" (Bold et al. 24) only added insult to injury. In the wake of Robert Pickton's arrest and arraignment on charges of murdering fifteen of the more than 60 women currently identified as missing (see note 3), and as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists alike have begun to exhibit with increasing frequency memorial installations to the murdered and disappeared women,[4] family members have begun to discuss—and argue about—plans for a new permanent and official monument.

---

[3] In their article "'How Might a Women's Monument Be Different?,'" Christine Bold, Ric Knowles, and Belinda Leach discuss in more detail the public debates that greeted both Alber's *Marker of Change* and Larson's efforts to remember the missing women from Vancouver's DES, situating those debates within the context of a larger project about feminist memorialization in Canada. Despite substantial evidence and ongoing pressure from the local community and relatives, Vancouver police refused throughout the 1980s and most of the 1990s to acknowledge a connection between the missing women from the DES, or to entertain the possibility that a serial murderer might be preying upon them. It was only in 2001 that the police, in conjunction with the RCMP, set up a special Missing Women Task Force; a year later, in February 2002, Robert "Willie" Pickton, a 53-year-old pig farmer from Port Coquitlam, was finally arrested in connection with the case. A terrible irony is that Pickton had been in police custody back in 1997 on charges of stabbing a local prostitute; however, the charges were stayed, and Pickton was released (see Joyce; "Vancouver's legacy").

[4] See, for example, Rebecca Belmore's mixed media installations "Vigil" and "The Named and the Unnamed," which were shown in her solo show *The Named and the Unnamed* at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery in Vancouver from October-December 2002, before traveling to the Art Gallery of Ontario; see, as well,

More recently, Vancouver veterans reacted with outrage when, in the summer of 2003, a loose coalition of youthful protestors wishing to focus attention on homelessness, poverty, and City Hall's repeated delays in converting the abandoned Woodward's Building to social housing, set up an impromptu squat at Victory Square, site of the cenotaph commemorating British Columbians who lost their lives in World Wars I and II. The veterans saw the squatters' actions as a desecration and a violation of public memorial space devoted to the preservation of the past; they also worried that the protest would delay plans by the city to renovate and spruce up the memorial site in time for November Remembrance Day activities. For their part, the squatters argued that their occupation of the square constituted a different kind of (re)memorialization, a protest against the city's active forgetting of its spatial present (see Fong). Ironically, when forced by a police injunction to vacate Victory Square, the protesters split their forces, with half decamping to CRAB Park, and the other half to Thornton Park.

"The Protocols of Mourning"

At the heart of these debates are some fundamentally difficult and necessarily polarizing questions about public memory, memorialization, and mourning: Who gets to publicly remember, for whom, where, in what ways, and how? What constitutes an appropriate (there's that word again) display—psychically, materially—of mourning? When does respectful remembrance cross the line into social activism? And how are all of these rituals further complicated by what Marianne Hirsch and others have called the phenomenon of "postmemory" (see especially Hirsch's *Family Frames*), in which the "performance" of remembrance via internet sites, television shows, and other media technologies designed to remember for us, produces a constant—though necessarily simulacral and ersatz—condition of reminiscence and retrospection that signals not so much a felt connection with the past (including the very recent past) as a profound *dis*connection from it? For Andreas Huyssen, this globalized penchant for instant memorialization—in everything from hurried architectural

---

Kati Campbell's textile installation "67 Shawls," which was shown as part of a group show called *Talking Textile* (which also featured work by Belmore) at the Richmond Art Gallery from December 2003-January 2004.

competitions to rebuild Ground Zero in New York City to more populist expressions of remembrance, such as roadside displays of flowers marking the site of a car crash—has, paradoxically, produced what he calls a "culture of amnesia," whose primary symptom is the "atrophy" of historical consciousness, aided and abetted by a high-tech "media world spinning a cocoon of timeless claustrophobia and nightmarish phantasms and simulation," in which there is "nothing to remember, nothing to forget" (*Twilight Memories* 7, 9). However, as Richard Cavell has recently pointed out, Huyssen's argument is profoundly "normative": "there are good memories and there are bad memories for [Huyssen], and bad memories usually tend to be associated with populist expression—what one might call 'history from below' as opposed to the official or institutional histories most often valorised by the state" ("Histories of Forgetting" 2).

Although Huyssen has since revised his take somewhat in his book *Present Pasts*, even there his critical perspective "is guided by the conviction that too much of the contemporary memory discourse focuses on the personal" (8), especially with respect to episodes of trauma. Such sentiments issue from the statist view that nations, for example, primarily build public monuments to—and organize museums around—great events and great men. These spatial aids to memory (what Pierre Nora has theorized, in the French context, as *les lieux de mémoire*; see his three-volume study of the same name), so the theory goes, in turn help citizens remember iconographically, ensuring that, in the present, we will not forget the past, lest we repeat its mistakes. But this somewhat naively holistic and ameliorative view of historical memory as a collective cultural repository from which humanity progresses forward is, it seems to me, undercut by precisely the more populist, impromptu, localized, and, yes, performative forms of memorialization that Huyssen eschews from his analysis. Take, for example, a queer ritual of remembrance such as the Names Project Memorial Quilt, and its relation to how bodies (as opposed to monuments) re-member space, be it the space of a national government capital or the space of history. What the formerly semi-regular unfurling of the quilt on the grounds of the National Mall in Washington, D.C.[5] demonstrated most vividly was that

[5] The Quilt, which now comprises some 45,000 panels, weighs more than 54 tons, and covers approximately 1,270,350 square feet (or roughly the equivalent of

recovering a narrative of collective memory need not be at the expense of all of the individual bodies and personal stories subsumed within that narrative; nor must memorialization's pedagogical function be separated from its political one.[6] Each vibrantly sewn and personalized panel seeks to preserve individual eccentricities and encapsulate the life story of its memorial subject, lest his or her death fade into a roll call of anonymous statistics about AIDS' human toll. At the same time, the display of this individual *privation* is undertaken in a highly theatrical, ritualized, and intensely *public* manner: each panel is laid out for viewing in an intensely choreographed manner as the names of persons who have died from the disease are read out by alternating participants at a microphone. Carried out in the shadow of a nation's ultimate folly (the hyper-phallic Washington Monument), just a short distance away from the rows of indistinguishable white crosses at Arlington National Cemetery and from the equally white seat of world democracy from which issued the edict "Don't ask, don't tell," such a memorial project is a defiantly personalist resistance of the attempts by governments to muzzle and displace grief through monumentalist abstraction. The Quilt insists not only on telling, but also on showing; it is a performance of mourning that doubles as a political occupation. As Elinor Fuchs notes in a 1993 article originally published in *American Theatre* (and reprinted in her book *The Death of Character*), the whole idea of the Quilt,

> combining monumentality with patchwork, expresses at once the scale of the leaping world AIDS crisis and its assault on humanist faith in order and social continuity. Pastiche and defiant disunity are by now familiar hallmarks of the postmodernist artwork, but here they are returned to a humanism which insists that this exuberant life not be forgotten. In the way it remembers, the Quilt is more relaxed, more inclusive, more sensual, more human, more *theatrical*

---

47 football fields if laid end to end), was last displayed in its entirety in October 1996. While portions of the Quilt continue to tour the U.S. and the world, for obvious logistical reasons there are no immediate plans to assemble and display the whole thing again; see the AIDS Memorial Quilt website at www.aidsquilt.org.

[6] On this point, see especially the essays collected in Roger Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert, eds., *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*.

> than anything previously imagined in the protocols of mourning. (196)

I want to link up what Fuchs singles out here as the Quilt's inherent "theatricality," its necessary "imaginativeness," with Huyssen's speculative hand-wringing about the "cultural amnesia" that he sees as a worrisome by-product of such memorial projects. At a physiological level, of course, the cognitive condition of forgetting must in some senses always precede, even prompt, the cognitive condition of remembering. That is, an irony that seems to be lost on Huyssen is that we can only remember something that we have first forgotten. And how do you remember that which official or institutional histories of the sort privileged by Huyssen have refused to record, and thereby literally make impossible to forget? I overstate my case, to be sure, but I do so in order to make an important point about the necessarily performative nature of queer rituals of remembrance and mourning. Phelan puts it this way: "[a]s an art form whose primary function is to meditate on the threshold that heralds between-ness, theatre encourages a specific and intense cathetic response in those who define themselves as liminal tricksters, socially disenfranchised, sexually aberrant, addicted, and otherwise queerly alienated from the law of the father. Queers are queer because we recognize that we have survived our own deaths" (16).

When hate crimes against queers go unreported, when the names of gay men and lesbians killed in Nazi death camps are nowhere to be found at the Holocaust Memorial at Yad Vashem,[7] when the archiving of gay life—let alone gay death—has been and continues to be so scant and piecemeal, how does one remember? One remembers by sewing a piece of fabric onto another, by staging kiss-ins and die-ins at public institutions in major urban metropolises, by placing flowers and placards and talismans in a fence in Wyoming (for a Matthew Shepard) or along a forest path in Vancouver (for an Aaron Webster), by writing plays and choreographing dances for lost

---

[7] This is not meant to deny the efforts of other memorializations of the Holocaust, both from within and without the queer community, to record this history of persecution. See, in particular, the permanent special exhibit at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. on the "Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals, 1933-1945"; and Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's documentary film *Paragraph 175*.

brothers. In the absence of built monuments, queer acts of remembrance, witnessing, and mourning necessarily become ritualized through performance, just as they per force get linked to local manifestations of grassroots activism. Indeed, a key element of the organizational success of groups such as ACT UP, AIDS Action Now, Queer Nation, and Outrage! over the past two decades has been their recognition of the co-extensiveness of activism and memorialization, and their ability to adapt the performance of each to a specific situational context. A march and rally in New York, a charity concert in London, a candlelight vigil in Toronto or Vancouver: at some level, with each event, street theatre segues into social protest, just as the mourning of an individual loss helps to clarify the "fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility" of our participation in a "political community of a complex order" (Butler, *Precarious Life* 22).

Thus, in much the same way that Fuchs has examined how the Quilt necessarily sunders "mourning's ancient links to church, family, class and state" and "re-imagines a connection between politics and the sacred" (197), I want now, in the remainder of this essay, to turn to an analysis of the post-AIDS rituals of grieving, remembrance, art, and social activism in two other performative contexts: dance and theatre. In so doing, I want to link up Butler's theorizing of the relationship between mourning and (queer) kinship with a notion of vigilant remembrance that is both situationally contingent and relationally binding—if not always politically transformative. Christopher Gillis, Carl Vogel, Matthew Shepard, Russell Henderson, Aaron McKinney, Aaron Webster: how am I connected to these men? Why is it incumbent upon me to remember them? How, to use Butler's language, does the rehearsal of their deaths, or the deaths they caused, both constitute me and the other in me? And how does it undo me (see *Precarious Life* 22-3)?

Queer Kinship: Gillis and Vogel

Following the 1993 death of her brother, Christopher, who was himself a member of the Paul Taylor Dance Company in New York, Margie Gillis added two new pieces to her staple of solo dances: *Landscape*, a stark meditation on impending death choreographed for her by Christopher from his hospital bed, and *Torn Roots, Broken Branches*, a frenzied outpouring of grief that she herself created. In

the first, Gillis enters the stage down right. She wears a simple white shift reminiscent of a hospital gown and is dragging a bare tree branch on the floor behind her. A solitary strip of torn cloth has been tied to one of the branch's outermost limbs, and before the piece is over Gillis will add another. As the haunting sounds of an Edvard Grieg composition rise and fall, Gillis begins her long painful walk across the stage, progressing slowly, in halting and unsure steps. Her movements, normally Duncanesque in their expansiveness, are here tiny and contained and precise. Indeed, Gillis's solidity as a dancer, the generous shape of her arms and legs, makes the frailty of her gestures in this piece even more powerful and poignant; when, in the middle of the stage, she stumbles and falls, for example, we know that something more inevitable and inexorable than mere gravity is weighing her down. Near the end of *Landscape*, Gillis glances back over her shoulder, measuring the distance she has travelled, trying to bridge the gap between where she has come from and where she is going. The psychological and spiritual isolation that Christopher Gillis has attempted to convey with this piece is encapsulated in this one brief moment and the effect is devastating—knowing this, devastated herself, his sister, Margie, picks up the branch and continues on her journey, exiting the stage upper left.

The image of the broken branch is what links Christopher's vision of his own death with Margie's performance of her mourning. Brother and sister's respective choreographic styles, however, could not be more different. In *Torn Roots, Broken Branches*, the dull grey backdrop of *Landscape* is replaced by one that is blood red. The piece begins with Gillis in the middle of the stage, hands covering her face, dressed head to toe in black: black hat, long-sleeved black bodice buttoned to the throat, full-length black skirt—a formal funereal shroud that will serve alternately as a prop and a shield, parts of which Gillis will gradually shed, throughout the next four minutes. To the keening wail of Sinéad O'Connor's "I am Stretched on Your Grave," a contemporary arrangement of a traditional Irish dirge, Gillis performs her own dance of mourning. As the song picks up speed, particularly in the closing fiddle section, so too does Gillis, whirling about in faster and wider circles, shaking her skirts and hair in fierce fury, her pain and anger and guilt registering ever more profoundly, ever more clearly, on her face—in the wild look of her eyes, the tight clench of her jaw. To label the combined effect as

cathartic does not nearly go far enough in describing what both Gillis and the audience have been through by the end of the piece. (I speak from experience, having attended a dance recital by Gillis in Vancouver in 1994 at which both *Landscape* and *Torn Roots, Broken Branches* were performed.) Indeed, as with Gillis's iconic predecessor in the dramatization of sisterly grief, Antigone, cathartic release is arguably replaced by something more akin to empathic identification. And this, to allude to my opening epigraph from Derrida, constitutes the "force" of each sister's mourning, as well as the force of her protest—a point to which I shall shortly return.

Let me speak first, though, to Paula Vogel's *The Baltimore Waltz*, which, as she states in her "Playwright's Note," was written as a direct result of her brother Carl's death from AIDS in 1988. The published play-text reprints a hilarious and touching letter from brother to sister regarding the former's wishes for his memorial service, and Vogel's dedication reads "*To the memory of Carl—because I cannot sew*" (101). The play, which premiered at New York's Circle Repertory Company in 1992 (and received a local Vancouver production the following spring courtesy of Pink Ink Theatre), is set in a Baltimore, Maryland hospital. While sitting in a starkly lit waiting room, "Anna" imagines a final journey to Europe with her brother, "Carl," who is slowly dying in another room from AIDS-related pneumonia. It is this dream voyage that comprises most of the play, and in it Anna, and not Carl, is sick, having contracted Acquired Toilet Disease or ATD, a fatal illness spread through contaminated potty seats that seems to afflict mostly single female elementary school teachers. Having learned from Anna's doctor about the experimental research of one Dr. Todesrocheln, a Viennese urologist, and having packed, upon the instructions of his old university pal, Harry Lime, his childhood stuffed rabbit, Carl whisks his sister off to Europe for what she thinks will be a final fling, but what he hopes will result in a cure.

In a swift progression of 30 short scenes Anna and Carl hop from Paris to Amsterdam to Berlin to Vienna, all the while trailed by a shadowy figure referred to in the text only as the "Third Man," a composite character who has the disconcerting habit of metamorphosizing, depending upon the specific locale, into either a potential lover for Anna or a possible enemy for Carl. In these scenes Vogel skewers every conceivable stereotype and convention, from

the linguistic trials of American tourists to the new age wisdom of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross:

CARL: Calm down, sweetie. You're angry. It's only natural to be angry. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross says that—

ANNA: What does she know about what it feels like to die?! Elizabeth Kubler-Ross can sit on my face. (114-15)

The production notes for *The Baltimore Waltz* call for a lavish, wildly varied, and deliberately clichéd musical score. And, as with Gillis's performance, dance becomes the carapace both of a brother's death and a sister's mourning. In the final three scenes, for example, Vogel carefully choreographs the climax and rapid denouement of the play around the hackneyed violin strains of three successive Strauss waltzes. In the first of these scenes, a conscious homage to the climactic confrontation between Orson Welles and Joseph Cotten in the 1949 film version of *The Third Man*, Carl and his friend-turned-nemesis, Harry Lime, "*waltz-struggle*" for Carl's stuffed rabbit on the Prater ferris wheel in Vienna. Harry eventually gives Carl a final, and presumably fatal, push and "*waltzes off with the rabbit*" (128). In the next scene, the urine-swilling Dr. Todesrocheln asks a frightened Anna "WO IST DEIN BRUDER?" before transforming before her eyes into the Baltimore doctor from the play's opening scene. Anna, suddenly realizing that she is now "awake," rushes to Carl's bedside, only to find him "*stiff beneath a white sheet*" (130). To the tempo of "The Emperor Waltz" Anna tries to revive her dead brother, but to no avail. In the play's closing sequence, however, we are briefly transported back to the realm of fantasy. As the stage directions read, "*Softly, a Strauss waltz begins. Carl . . ., perfectly well, waits for Anna. They waltz off as the lights dim*" (132). This final tableau, reminiscent as it is of the scene near the end of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*, where Prior is permitted one last dance with Louis (114),[8] is of course doubly encoded with meaning. The waltz, traditionally a dance of courtship, is here inverted as the

[8] A further connection between the two plays is that actor/director Joe Mantello originated the roles of Louis and Carl in the initial New York productions of *Angels in America* and *The Baltimore Waltz*. Mantello also directed the New York premiere of Terrence McNally's *Corpus Christi*, discussed below.

danse macabre, in which Anna is literally partnered with death in the form of her brother, their rehearsal of a familiar, repetitive, and circular twostep a moving attempt on Anna's—and Vogel's—part to forestall the return to "reality" that Freud, for one, sees as the normative end point of the work of mourning.

In his essay "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud distinguishes between two types of mourning. What he labels so-called "normal" mourning manifests itself initially in individuals as opposition to the abandoning of libidinal attachment to the deceased or lost object, but whose work is eventually completed through first the hyper-cathecting and then the detachment of "memories and expectations . . . bound to the [lost] object," resulting in a return to "reality" (244-45). By contrast, the so-called "pathological" condition of mourning, what Freud refers to as "melancholia," arises essentially from a narcissistic prolonging of libidinal attachment, or ego-identification, with the lost object (see 250 and ff.). As Freud pithily summarizes, "In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (246).[9]

Following the Freudian model, then, Gillis's addition of *Landscape* and *Torn Roots, Broken Branches* to her repertoire, her apparently *compulsive repetition* (to allude to another of Freud's famous theories) of them on stages across the world, suggests that she is performing "melancholia" rather than "mourning." Even the lyrics of O'Connor's song—"So I'm stretched on your grave and will lie there forever/If your hands were in mine, I'd be sure we'd not sever"—are suggestive of deeper-than-"normal" attachment. So too with Vogel. In her "Playwright's Note," she states that she began writing *The Baltimore Waltz* as a way of exorcising her own personal demons *vis-à-vis* guilt about not accompanying her brother on his last tour of Europe. But while Freud insists that melancholia "is marked by a determinant which is absent in normal mourning" (250), he also never defines what "normal" signifies in this context (nor even what a return to "reality" might look like). Indeed, as Butler has argued, it is melancholia which is in fact constitutive of normative social relations within Western culture, a process which sees

[9] To be sure, as Butler notes, Freud was not always consistent in his theorizing of the differences between mourning and melancholia. See Butler, *Precarious Life*, 20-21; and Freud, "The Ego and the Id."

heterosexual genders, for example, institutionalize and memorialize themselves precisely through a *refusal* of mourning, that is, through the renunciation of the loss of homosexual genders as "a possibility of love" (*Bodies That Matter* 235).

Butler's theorization of heterosexual gender identification as a kind of melancholia, in which unresolved same-sex desire is internalized as a prohibition that precedes the incest taboo, has been articulated in different ways across the body of her work, including most representatively *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*.[10] However, it is in *Antigone's Claim*, via her reading of Sophocles' play (structurally the concluding part of his *Oedipus* trilogy, but, crucially in terms of chronology of composition, the first part to be written), and its treatment in Western philosophical discourse, that Butler demonstrates most forcefully how gender melancholia has helped structure and hierarchize kinship patterns in our society, patterns whose markers of exclusion only fully emerge in death and the performance of mourning. And, in whose normative constitution we also, per force, witness a perverse negation, or non-consummation of the family romance: as Butler puts it, "Antigone, who concludes the oedipal drama, fails to produce heterosexual closure for that drama" (*Antigone's Claim* 76). At the same time, the prohibition against incest enacted in Sophocles' play, according to Butler, is really something of a red herring. What is more important is how that prohibition has symbolically come to be memorialized as standing in for other socially taboo, morally denigrated, and juridically invalid relationships, modes of gender expression, sexuality, and ways of being and loving in this world, ways that continue to be placed outside the bounds of the normalized nuclear family and the human, and thus subject to social scrutiny, regulation and policing by the state:

---

[10] See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 63ff; and *Bodies That Matter*, 235-6 and ff. See, as well, the following comments by Gayle Rubin in "The Traffic in Women": "... the incest taboo presupposes a prior, less articulate taboo on homosexuality. A prohibition against *some* heterosexual unions assumes a taboo against *non*heterosexual unions. Gender is not only an identification with one sex; it also entails that sexual desire be directed toward the other sex. The sexual division of labour is implicated in both aspects of gender—male and female it creates them, and it creates them heterosexual" (180). And this from Monique Wittig: "the straight mind continues to affirm that incest, and not homosexuality, represents its major interdiction. Thus, when thought by the straight mind, homosexuality is nothing but heterosexuality" (*The Straight Mind* 28).

> When the incest taboo works *in this sense* to foreclose a love that is not incestuous, what is produced is a shadowy realm of love, a love that persists in spite of its foreclosure in an ontologically suspended mode.... Do we say that families that do not approximate the norm but mirror the norm in some apparently derivative way are poor copies, or do we accept that the ideality of the norm is undone precisely through the complexity of its instantiation? For those relations that are denied legitimacy, or that demand new terms of legitimation, are neither dead nor alive, figuring the nonhuman at the border of the human. And it is not simply that these are relations that cannot be honored, cannot be openly acknowledged, and cannot therefore be publicly grieved, but that these relations involve persons who are also restricted in the very act of grieving, who are denied the power to confer legitimacy on loss. (*Antigone's Claim* 78-9; emphasis in original)

To put this in more familiar contemporary terms, what if today Antigone were attempting to mourn the death of her common-law husband, a former step-daughter from a second marriage that had ended but with whom she was still close, a gay male friend she cared for throughout a prolonged illness, her lesbian lover? In this respect, the force of Antigone's protest, like Gillis's and Vogel's, comes through the staging of their *private* sisterly grief in very *public* acts of ritualized remembrance, acting out, and up, performing the personal as political as a direct intervention against a state-sponsored discourse about who can and cannot be mourned, about what, to use Butler's phrasing, remains unspeakable, and unspeakably violent, about any encounter with difference (see *Precarious Life* 48-9). As Phelan remarks, Antigone and—lest we forget—Ismene, both equally caught, in their different ways of mourning, between life and death, point "to a different form of theatre sisters might one day invent. Such a theatre would be more precise than Sophocles's or Lacan's about the distinction between desire and love" (16).[11]

---

[11] In their remarks on Sophocles's play, both Phelan and Butler are drawing on and revising Lacan's famous reading of *Antigone* in his *Seminar VII*. For Lacan, Antigone bridges not only the divide between life and death, but also between the imaginary and the symbolic, her defiance of Creon and the law of the father in death a necessary consequence of her tainted birth.

Moreover, as Douglas Crimp has pointed out, "for Freud, [mourning] is a solitary undertaking" (236); at no time does he conceive of it as a shared activity. And it is on this account that I consider the works by Gillis and Vogel to challenge fundamentally the standard Freudian model of mourning. This is also where the concept of performance becomes crucial. For performance, it seems to me, whether we are using the term in a "theatrical" or "theoretical" (i.e. Austinian-Derridean-Butlerian-Sedgwickian speech act) sense, always requires an audience. Gillis's and Vogel's *public* performance of their bereavement, like Fuchs's description of the public displaying of the Quilt, their invitation to audiences to join the dance, as it were, is not capitulation to the singular oppression of grief, but rather an acknowledgment of community, a symbolic representation of collective struggle in response to an unprecedented social crisis, one that allows for the sharing of loss as a precursor to organization and demand for change.[12]

And yet, as Crimp has also pointed out, while collective public mourning rituals have their own affective and even political force, "they nevertheless often seem, from an activist perspective, indulgent, sentimental, defeatist—a perspective only reinforced . . . by media constructions of [both mourners and mourned] as hapless victims" (234). Crimp casts aside Freud's interdiction that "any interference with [mourning is] useless or even harmful" (Freud 244), and argues instead for an active—and *activist*—channelling of grief and loss into the forceful mobilizing of the tenuous collective social body that AIDS has per force made not just of the queer community, but of us all:

> We can then partially revise our sense . . . of the incompatibility between mourning and activism and say that, for

[12] In this regard, it is important to remember that the dance and theatre communities have been at the forefront of mobilizing in the fight against AIDS: think of the DIFFA Dance and Design Project or Equity Cares/Broadway Fights AIDS in New York; think of Dancers for Life or Theatre Cares Week here in Canada. Likewise, I think that it is also important to note, especially within the context of the argument set forth at the outset to this paper, that I attended and was profoundly moved by local performances of the above works by Vogel and Gillis (in 1993 and 1994, respectively) precisely at the height of my volunteer involvement with the AIDS community in Vancouver. See, as well, in this regard Marita Sturken's *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*, which likewise discusses Freud's dismissal of "the role of collective mourning" (201) within the context of the "conversations with the dead" enacted through the AIDS Quilt.

> many gay men dealing with AIDS deaths, militancy might arise from conscious conflicts *within* mourning itself, the consequence, on the one hand, of "inadvisable and even harmful interference" with grief and, on the other, of the impossibility of deciding whether the mourner will share the fate of the mourned. (237)

As I have already intimated, my only revision to Crimp's comments here would be that I think it's important, in true Greek fashion, to extend the "shared fate" of mourning (and the militancy it might inspire) in this context beyond "gay men dealing with AIDS deaths." What the work of Gillis and Vogel teaches is that every remembering self is inextricably connected to the production and circulation of larger patterns of cultural memory; no act of remembrance can occur without a simultaneous act of empathic identification (meaning, in this context, projecting one's consciousness into the subjective experience of another in order to attempt to comprehend that experience). In *Torn Roots, Broken Branches* and *The Baltimore Waltz*, a sister uses the language of words and the language of the body to reconfigure time and space, imagining herself into the experience of her brother's death, which must also in some senses be her own—and, just as importantly, our own. In the process, the performance of mourning transforms into a performance of protest. In the words of Jill Dolan, Gillis and Vogel are using "the emotion theater inspires to move people to political action, to desire reconfigured social relations, to want to interact intimately with a local and a global community" (90). This harnessing of emotion to action, or even activism as Dolan notes in the subtitle to her book, is what's key. In this sense, it is important to distinguish empathy from what Kushner has identified as the bugbear of catharsis, which, in a neat little capitalist equation, involves an initial expenditure of emotion for a guaranteed return of transcendence ("Notes" 22). By contrast, empathy implies some sense of relationality on the part of producer and consumer (or actor and spectator), an acknowledgment that both are in the event, that the liveness of theatre creates a space in which we can collectively "engage with the social in physically, materially embodied circumstances" (Dolan 90). SILENCE = DEATH, the ACT UP activist slogan, like the performances of Gillis's dance movements and Vogel's play, gives voice to our rage and anger and profound sense of loss; but its rhetorical power, again like the

work of Gillis and Vogel, is ultimately choric rather than ventriloquized, encouraging us, inducing us, moving us, to lend our voices to the clarion call for action. We are all our brothers' keepers; and we could all do with sisters as keenly vigilant in reminding us of this point as Gillis and Vogel.

Melancholic Spectatorship: McNally and Kaufman

Terrence McNally's *Corpus Christi* recasts the Biblical passion play as a coming-of-age story, set in the small Texas town of the playwright's birth, with the role of Jesus as an initially socially leprous and later progressively more charismatic gay youth named Joshua, who spreads the gospel of love with his "chosen family" of twelve gay brothers, including his sometime lover Judas. Previewing at the Manhattan Theatre Club in late September 1998, the play, by virtue of its subject matter and not least because of the bomb threats, hate mail and picketing that greeted its premiere, became a proleptic and de facto memorialization of and performative mourning for Matthew Shepard when the latter's beaten body was found tied to a fence outside Laramie, Wyoming six days before the play's official opening on October 13. Lest we not see the connection, the playwright himself makes it explicit for us in the preface to the published version of the play: "Beaten senseless and tied to a split-rail fence in near-zero weather, arms akimbo in a grotesque crucifixion, [Matthew Shepard] died as agonizing a death as another young man who had been tortured and nailed to a wooden cross at a desolate spot outside Jerusalem known as Golgotha some 1,998 years earlier. They died, as they lived, as brothers" (vi).

The play's central theatrical conceit is that it makes explicit the performative scaffolding of such narrative and historical equations by having the actors in the company "assume" their characters' roles on stage in front of the audience. With house lights still up, and while members of the audience are still finding their way to their seats, thirteen male actors, clad identically in white shirts and khaki pants (blue jeans in the production I saw), slowly make their way to the stage as if for a casual rehearsal rather than an actual performance, pausing to chat with one another, greet members of the audience, check the props table, and limber up with various physical and vocal exercises. At a pre-arranged signal, one of the actors steps forward and speaks directly to the audience, announcing that the story he

and his cast mates are about to tell is an "old and familiar one," one we've "all heard over and over, again and again," but that "bears repeating": "The playwright asks your indulgence, as do we, the actors. There are no tricks up our sleeves. No malice in our hearts. We're glad you're here" (1). We then watch as this same actor, who will shortly assume the role of John the Baptist, calls forth each of his fellow actors in turn, blessing them first by their real names before rebaptizing them by the name of one of Joshua / Jesus' twelve disciples.

On a raked proscenium stage, such as the one at the Manhattan Theatre Club, the effect of this opening would, I imagine, be disconcerting enough. In the intimate confines of Festival House, on Vancouver's Granville Island, where I saw Hoarse Raven Theatre's production of the play in May 2002 (see figure 2), the whole thing felt painfully voyeuristic: a spare studio space devoid of a raised stage, fixed seating, or anything even remotely resembling wings, means that actors and audience are quite literally on top of one another and—as McNally has staged things—wont to bump into each other in queuing to get into the room. Indeed, it left me, at certain moments, longing for the return of theatre's invisible fourth

Figure 2: The cast of Hoarse Raven Theatre's Vancouver production of *Corpus Christi*, May 2002 (Photo © David Cooper; reprinted by kind permission)

wall. This is, of course, precisely the point. In watching this play, as intensely moving and romantic and erotic as so many parts of it are, we are meant to feel uncomfortable, to question whether or not the performance has started, whether it has ended, who precisely is part of the action, whether the actors are playing a version of themselves or their characters or both, and how precisely we in the audience are meant to respond to such alienated and alienating transformations.

Something similar takes place in Moisés Kaufman and Tectonic Theater Project's (TTP) play, *The Laramie Project*. Famous for its documentary-style approach to historical moments in queer history, the company had previously scored an unexpected international hit with *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*. For *The Laramie Project*, which opened at the Denver Centre Theatre Company in February 2000, members of TTP travelled to the Wyoming town, then recently and unwantedly memorialized via the international media as the redneck locus of Matthew Shepard's brutal murder, in order to conduct interviews with its traumatized residents. A narrator who speaks directly to the audience (as, indeed, do all the "characters" in the play) opens by summarizing the process of its creation:

> On November 14, 1999, the members of Tectonic Theater Project traveled to Laramie, Wyoming, and conducted interviews with the people of the town. During the next year, we would return to Laramie several times and conduct over two hundred interviews. The play you are about to see is edited from those interviews, as well as from journal entries by members of the company and other found texts. (Company member Greg Pierotti 5)

The last line of this passage highlights an important feature of *The Laramie Project*'s docudrama—or, more properly, dramatized documentary—narrative aesthetic. That is, the TTP actors, in addition to impersonating on stage the various real-life residents of Laramie whom they interviewed, turning each into a "character" (in both the conventional dramatic sense of playing a part and the broader sense of conveying an individual's distinctive traits or eccentricities through manner of speech, mannerisms, style of dress, etc.), must also deal with the fact that the play likewise turns each of them into a character. This becomes all the more apparent if one attends a production of the play that is being performed by any company or cast other than

the original TTP ones. Such was the case when I caught a performance of Studio 58's production of the play in October 2002 (see figure 3). A respected actor training program affiliated with Vancouver's Langara College, Studio 58 presented audiences who attended its brilliant staging of *The Laramie Project* with the spectacle of student-actors playing professional actors playing real people, some of whom, as has been the case with many productions of the play across North America since its premiere, could potentially have been in the audience watching their surrogate-selves on stage on any given night.

The use of the narrator throughout the play to introduce both the speech of the actor-characters and the resident-characters is also integral in orienting—or disorienting—the audience's relationships with the action being portrayed on stage. It is akin to Brechtian quotation, in which lines are spoken not as if they were being spontaneously improvised but rather almost in the manner of reading a report. This distancing effect means that we, in the audience, are compelled not to judge the person doing the speaking but rather the words he/she speaks, and the larger social attitudes these words betray. In terms

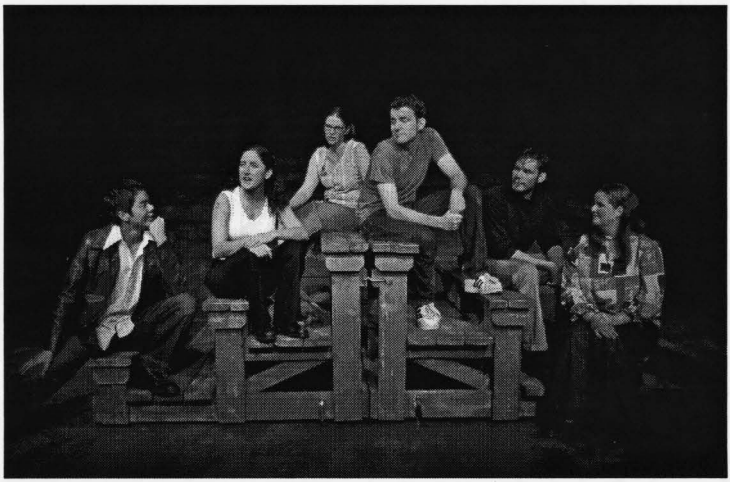


Figure 3: Members of the cast of Studio 58's Vancouver production of *The Laramie Project*, October 2002; Left to right: Nick Ko, Rebecca Auerbach, Rachel Robillard, Ben Geldreich, Dan Thomas, and Debbie Love (Photo © David Cooper; reprinted by kind permission)

of the work of memorialization and the performance of mourning operating in *The Laramie Project*, such a structural device again functions in two ways—on the one hand, disabusing potentially smug audience members of many of the prejudices they may have held towards the residents prior to the performance, and, on the other, dramatizing the important educational process that the actors themselves must go through in confronting their own preconceptions about the individuals they were going to interview or portray.

In short, McNally and Kaufman, following from Brecht's famous theorization of the Alienation-effect's application to the technique of acting, are asking each actor who speaks their words to "invest what he [sic] has to show with a definite gest of showing," whereby gest refers to "the mimetic and gestural expression of the social relationships between people of a given period" (136, 139). In so doing, these two queer playwrights are, like Brecht, urging both actors and audiences to adopt "socially critical" attitudes: "In his exposition of the incidents and in his characterization of the person [the actor] tries to bring out those features which come within society's sphere. In this way his performance becomes a discussion (about social conditions) with the audience he is addressing. He prompts the spectator to justify or abolish these conditions according to what class [or gender or sexuality or race or nationality] he belongs to" (Brecht 139). "Look what they did to Him. Look what they did to Him," the actor playing James the Less addresses the audience at the end of *Corpus Christi*, coming "out of character" and gesturing to the naked body of Joshua crucified on a cross. The actor's Brechtian transposition of his speech into the third person and the past tense here (see Brecht 138) lets neither the actor playing Joshua nor us in the audience off the hook, as it were. Looking in this context becomes precarious—reinforced by the fact that, in the production I saw, all of the other actors exited the studio shortly after this point as the house lights once again came up, leaving the audience to gaze upon the twisted body of the actor playing Joshua for what seemed to be an excruciatingly long time, wondering this time whether the "performance" was over and, if so, whether we should clap or continue to sit in stunned silence. Similarly, in the Epilogue to *The Laramie Project*, the actor playing TTP company member Greg Pierotti playing gay Laramie resident Jonas Slonaker frames the question "What's come out of this?" (and presumably this applies

in equal measure to the play we are currently watching / reading and to the murder of Shepard memorialized by it) in terms of a juxtaposition between first and third person, past and present:

> Change is not an easy thing, and I don't think people were up to it here. They got what they wanted. Those two boys got what they deserve, and we look good now. Justice has been served. The OK Corral.... The town's cleaned up, and we don't need to talk about it anymore.
>
> You know, it's been a year since Matthew Shepard died, and they haven't passed shit in Wyoming ... at a state level, any town, nobody anywhere, has passed any kind of laws, antidiscrimination laws or hate crime legislation, nobody has passed anything anywhere. (99; second ellipsis in original)

Both speeches force us to interrogate in the present how we have memorialized similar scenes of trauma—in this case, most pertinently, but by no means only, anti-gay and lesbian violence—and our respective identifications or disidentifications with both the "Him" and the "they"—not to mention the "we" and the "you"—of such scenes.

Here I want to link up my all-too cursory redaction of the structural conventions of these two plays to the theoretical ruminations on mourning undertaken in connection with Gillis and Vogel. I suggest that part of the social discussion we in the audience are being asked to engage in by the performers has to do with critically unpacking the complex codes of masculinity operating within the heartland of rural America, and, more specifically, analyzing with whom, in the ritualized violence that all too frequently accompanies the articulation of those codes, we empathize when we mourn. Here, too, I want to bring in the work of JoAnn Wypijewski, who in a 1999 *Harper's* article entitled "A Boy's Life" has written what I believe to be the most critically astute analysis of Matthew Shepard's murder, wading through "the quasi-religious characterizations of Matthew's passion, death and resurrection as patron saint of hate-crime legislation" to zero in on the "everyday life of hate and hurt and heterosexual culture" that constituted the "psychic terrain" of Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, Shepard's murderers (62). Following from Wypijewski, then, it seems to me that the crucial question posed by *Corpus Christi* and *The Laramie*

Project (albeit retrospectively in the case of McNally's play), is why is it that, in the ritual re-membering of this hate-crime (in the media and elsewhere), Shepard, as passive sufferer, automatically becomes representative of *all* homosexual people, whereas McKinney and Henderson, as violent aggressors, are always discussed in terms of their *individual* predispositions towards delinquency? Why, in other words, aren't McKinney and Henderson seen, why aren't they remembered, as representative of the attitudes of a larger patriarchal-heterosexist culture, a "socially instituted melancholia" that, to adapt Butler, prescribes "how the condemnations under which one lives [e.g. to be gay is to be less than human] turn into repudiations that one performs [e.g. it is alright to kill what is not human]" (*Antigone's Claim* 80)?[13] A similar sentiment is expressed toward the end of *The Laramie Project* by Father Roger Schmit, the Catholic priest whose own attitudes queer TTP writers and cast members Leigh Fondakowski and Greg Pierotti were wont to prejudge upon their initial meeting; Schmit notes:

> I think right now our most important teachers must be Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney. They have to be our teachers. How did you learn? What did we as a society do to teach you that? See, I don't know if many people will let them be their teachers. I think it would be wonderful if the judge said: "In addition to your sentence, you must tell your story, you must tell your story." (89)

Or, as the "Actor Playing Judas" says about his own character at the close of *Corpus Christi*, "Sometimes I mourn for Judas, too" (80).

Other Brothers

The Vancouver premieres of *Corpus Christi* and *The Laramie Project* in 2002 were all the more compelling because for many of us in the audience the brutal murder of Aaron Webster was still so fresh in our minds. At 2:30 am on Saturday, 17 November 2001, the naked body of 41 year-old Webster was found by his friend Tim Chisholm battered and bleeding in a parking lot near Second Beach in Stanley Park. The victim of a vicious gay bashing, he died a few minutes

[13] That our society largely rejects this kind of memorialization is indicated by the negative reaction, noted above, to the inscription "for all women who have been murdered by men" on Beth Alber's *Marker of Change* monument.

later in Chisholm's arms as ambulance paramedics tried to save him. The next day, at an impromptu rally at the corner of Denman and Davie Streets, members of the gay community listened as police and politicians labelled the death a hate crime and vowed to act swiftly to apprehend the perpetrators (see Zacharias). In February 2003, a nineteen-year-old male suspect was finally arrested in connection with the crime. Seventeen at the time of the attack, he could not be identified, and pleaded guilty to manslaughter in juvenile court in July. On 18 December 2003 he was sentenced to two years in custody and one year house arrest, the maximum penalty Judge Valmond Romilly could issue; Romilly explicitly labelled Webster's murder a hate-crime and berated Crown prosecutors for not trying the case within this context. Another juvenile who also pleaded guilty to manslaughter was likewise sentenced to a maximum of three years in custody on 21 April 2004 (see "Second youth"). Ryan Cran and Danny Rao, two adults also charged in connection with the case were tried together in December 2004, with BC Supreme Court Justice Mary Humphries sentencing Cran to six years in jail for manslaughter and acquitting Rao due to lack of credible evidence. The verdicts, together with Humphries' repudiation of Romilly's previous characterization of Webster's murder as a hate crime, outraged the queer community and prompted renewed protests (see Bellett).

As part of the community programming around Studio 58's production of *The Laramie Project*, Langara College organized a one-day public forum on gay bashing and hate crimes legislation, an issue that has been much in the air in local queer circles since Webster's murder, and especially since Judge Romilly's surprisingly forceful comments. To paraphrase Wypijewski once again, to the extent that "hate-crime laws symbolize a society's values" (74), they can be viewed as a form of cultural memory work, a process of belatedly representing in juridical discourse a hitherto actively forgotten fissure in the social fabric of a community (note, in this regard, how relatively recently anti-gay violence was included under the purview of hate crime legislation in Canada, and how most American states have no legal mechanism to recognize such violence as even constituting a hate crime). This notion of belatedness points, in turn, to the fact that what hate-crime legislation actually memorializes is the crime itself, not the culture of hate and violence that produced the crime in the first place. To this end, Wypijewski notes, with

characteristic bluntness, that such legislation "means nothing for life and, because its only practical function is to stiffen penalties, everything for death"; it also means, in the specific context of gay-related hate crimes, where "it's always the sexuality of the victim that's front and center, not the sexuality of the criminal or the undifferentiated violence he took to extremity," that "straight people are off the hook" (74, 75). Similarly, as Judith Butler argues in *Excitable Speech*, proponents of hate speech regulation, in focussing on the injury such speech causes to the abjectly governed and agentless individual addressee (be it a woman, a queer, or a racial minority), tend to ignore the ways in which their arguments relocate notions of "sovereignty" and "universality" within a speaker, who not only says what he means, but whose utterances are immediately memorialized by others as simultaneously demarcating and overstepping the borders of what is acceptable. Even more pertinently, for Butler, proponents of hate speech laws fail to recognize how the iterability of such speech is to a large measure coextensive with and institutionalized within much official "state speech" (102).

Towards the end of *Antigone's Claim*, the text that I have been using as my main critical touchstone throughout this paper, and which comes as close as any recent treatise I can think of in articulating a socially relevant theory of queer remembrance and mourning, Butler notes that what remains "unspoken" in Antigone's grief for her brother Polyneices is her shared grief for her "other brother[s]," Eteocles and, not least, Oedipus, both arguably responsible not only for the "crime" of Polyneices' death, but also for the "crime" of Antigone's defiant public mourning of that death. As Butler puts it, "The 'brother' is no singular place for her, though it may be that all her brothers (Oedipus, Polyneices, Eteocles) are condensed at the exposed body of Polyneices, an exposure she seeks to cover, a nakedness she would rather not see or have seen" (79). Likewise, it seems to me that in our vigils for the Aaron Websters and the Matthew Shepards of this world, for the Christopher Gillises and the Carl Vogels, for all our "named and unnamed" queer brothers and sisters lost prematurely to violent death or disease, or simply the violence of heteronormative historiography, we must be as, if not more, vigilant in our remembrance of the un- or underexposed melancholic keepers of that history, our "other" brothers. For, if part

of what is enacted in queer rituals of remembrance and queer performances of mourning is a speaking of the unspeakable, then it is incumbent upon those of us who undertake such rituals to utter the silence, to outer the active forgetting, to counter the willful amnesia at the heart of heterosexual melancholia: that, to adapt Wypijewski one last time, Aaron Webster and Matthew Shepard, and Brandon Teena and Sakia Gunn,[14] not to mention the murdered women from the École Polytechnique in Montréal and from the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver, died not because they were queer or feminist or prostitutes, but because their killers were all straight men. And it is this disavowal of brotherly love (of the self, of the same, of the other) at the heart of masculine identity formation that, above all, our culture must mourn.

Works Cited

The AIDS Memorial Quilt. <www.aidsquilt.org>.

Bellett, Gerry. "Attacker gets six years for role in fatal beating." *Vancouver Sun* 9 February 2005: B1, B6.

Belmore, Rebecca. *The Named and the Unnamed.* Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver. 4 October–1 Dececmber 2002.

Bold, Christine, Ric Knowles, and Belinda Leach. "'How Might a Feminist Monument Be Different?'" *Essays on Canadian Writing* 80 (2003): 17–35.

Boys Don't Cry. Dir. Kimberly Pierce. Fox Searchlight, 1999.

The Brandon Teena Story. Dir. Gréta Olafsdôttir and Susan Muska. New Video Group, 1998.

Brecht, Bertolt. "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting which Produces an Alienation Effect." *Brecht on Theatre: The*

[14] Brandon Teena (aka Teena Brandon), a 21-year-old preoperative transgendered man from Lincoln, Nebraska, was, along with Lisa Lambert and Philip Devine, murdered on New Year's Eve 1993, by former friends Thomas Nissen and John Lotter when it was discovered "he"—at least in the eyes of his homo- and transphobic killers—was in fact a "she." Kimberly Pierce's award-winning narrative film *Boys Don't Cry*, starring Hilary Swank, chronicles the story, as does Gréta Olafsdôttir and Susan Muska's documentary *The Brandon Teena Story*. Sakia Gunn, a 15-year-old New Jersey lesbian returning from a night of partying in New York City with her girlfriend, was stabbed to death at a bus stop adjacent to Newark's busiest intersection by 29-year-old Richard McCullogh in May 2003 after she rebuffed his sexual advances (see Smothers).

Development of an Aesthetic. Ed. and trans. John Willet. London: Methuen, 1964. 136–47.

Butler, Judith. *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*. New York: Columbia UP, 2001.

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

———. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

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

———. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso, 2004.

Campbell, Kati. "67 Shawls." *Thinking Textile*. Richmond Art Gallery, Richmond. 5 December 2003–15 January 2004.

Cavell, Richard. "Histories of Forgetting: Canadian Representations of War and the Politics of Forgetting." Forthcoming in *Mémoire de guerre et construction de la paix*. Ed. Serge Jaumain. Bruxelles: Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2005.

Crimp, Douglas. "Mourning and Militancy." *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*. Eds. Russell Ferguson et al. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990. 233–45.

Derrida, Jacques. "By Force of Mourning." Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. *Critical Inquiry* 22.2 (1996): 171–92.

Dolan, Jill. *Geographies of Learning: Theory and Practice, Activism and Performance*. Middletown, CN: Wesleyan UP, 2001.

Duncan, Ann. "Politics threaten massacre tribute." *Montreal Gazette* 10 Sept. 1994: I5.

Fong, Petti. "Veterans demand tenters end Victory Square protest." *Vancouver Sun* 17 July 2003: B3.

Fraser, Keith. "AIDS wall's site at issue." *Vancouver Province* 1 Dec. 1997: A2.

Freud, Sigmund. "The Ego and the Id." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. 19. Trans and ed. James Strachey. London: Hogarth, 1961. 12–66.

———. "Mourning and Melancholia." *The Standard Edition*. vol. 14, 1957. 243–58.

Fuchs, Elinor. *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996.

Gillis, Margie, perf. *Landscape*. Chor. Christopher Gillis. Vancouver Playhouse, Vancouver. 17 March 1994.

———, perf. *Torn Roots, Broken Branches*. Chor. Margie Gillis. Vancouver Playhouse, Vancouver. 17 March 1994.

Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997.

Huyssen, Andreas. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003.

———. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Joyce, Greg. "Pickton hearing adjourned until June 30." *Vancouver Sun* 24 April 2003: B4.

Kelley, Caffyn. "Creating Memory, Contesting History." *Matriart* 5 (1995): 6–11.

Kaufman, Moisés, and members of Tectonic Theater Project. *The Laramie Project*. New York: Vintage, 2001.

Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1993.

———. "Notes about Political Theater." *Kenyon Review* 19 (1997): 19–34.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-60*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Trans. Dennis Porter. New York: Norton, 1992.

The Laramie Project. Dir. Moisés Kaufman. HBO Films, 2002.

Lautens, Trevor. "Monument against too many." *Vancouver Sun* 24 June 1993: A13.

McNally, Terrence. *Corpus Christi: A Play*. New York: Grove, 1998.

"Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals, 1933-1945." Special exhibit. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Washington, D.C. <www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/hsx/>

Nora, Pierre, ed. *Les Lieux de mémoire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1997. 3 vols.

O'Connor, Sinéad. "I am Stretched On Your Grave." By Phillip King and F. O'Connor. Arranged by Sinéad O'Connor et al. *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*. Chrysalis, 1990.

Paragraph 175. Dir. Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman. New Yorker Films, 1999.

Phelan, Peggy. *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: 'The Political Economy' of Sex." *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. Ed. Rayna R. Reiter. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975. 157–210.

Santayana, George. "To W.P." *Sonnets and Other Verses*. New York: Stone and Kimball, 1896. 60–63.

"Second youth connected to Webster beating sentenced to three years." *Vancouver Sun* 22 April 2004: B2.

Simon, Roger I., Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert, eds. *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

Smothers, Ronald. "Man arrested in the killing of a teenager in Newark." *New York Times* 15 May 2003: B4.

Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1997.

Vancouver AIDS Memorial: A British Columbia Landmark of Hope and Courage. < www.aidsmemorial.ca>

"Vancouver's legacy of horror, shame." *Toronto Star* 13 Jan. 2003: A6.

Vogel, Paula. *The Baltimore Waltz. In Women Playwrights: The Best Plays of 1992*. Eds. Robyn Goodman and Marisa Smith. Newbury, VT: Smith and Kraus, 1993. 99-132.

Wittig, Monique. *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

Wypijewski, JoAnn. "A Boy's Life." *Harper's Magazine* September 1999: 61–74.

Zacharias, Yvonne. "Gays demand action in wake of brutal killing." *Victoria Times-Colonist* 19 Nov. 2001: A12.

"Remembering Well": Sexual Practice as a Practice of Remembering[1]

KATE BRIDE

Kate Bride is a provisional doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's.

> If catastrophe is not representable according to the narrative explanation which would 'make sense' of history, then making sense of ourselves and charting the future are not impossible. But we are, as it were, marked for life, and that mark is insuperable, irrecoverable. It becomes the condition by which life is risked, by which the question of whether one can move, and with whom, and in what way is framed and incited by the irreversibility of loss itself.
>
> — Butler (472)

Cawthra Park, located in the heart of the Church-Wellesley neighborhood of Toronto, is occupied by local adults, children, homeless people, gays and lesbians, dog walkers, sunbathers and mourners. It is also the home to the Toronto AIDS Memorial. An expandable monument of names,[2] this memorial was constructed in remembrance of those who have died of AIDS in the Toronto area (Silversides 2003), and, by night, has become a venue for gay public sex. The multitude of activities that take place in this park raises questions about space, the function of memorial sites, and the work of remembrance. For, the co-existence of the AIDS Memorial and public sex suggests that the memorial has become a

[1] Many thanks to Ursula Kelly, Jen Gilbert, and Sharon Rosenberg for their insights and suggestions towards this paper.

[2] Since 1996 the AIDS Memorial Committee has been adding names to the memorial plaques of those who died in the previous year.

space in which people are mired in the larger dialectics of life and death, pleasure and suffering, health and moral regulation, sex and illness.[3]

While any relationship between public sex and memorial practices is normatively constructed as contradictory, I will suggest here that public gay sex (particularly when the encounter occurs in the vicinity of an AIDS Memorial) may be understood as a practice of remembering those who have died of AIDS. To think about remembering as contested, as multiple, as complex, we can think about life and death alongside each other. Rather than regarding the AIDS Memorial as a structure that does our remembering for us (as will be discussed later in this paper), perhaps it would be more instructive to think about the memorial as a site of the work of memory, that the memorial incites memory, and makes possible new practices of remembering (including, one could argue, sex).

Key questions arise when thinking about public sex and remembrance: What is, might be and should be the memory of AIDS? What is at stake in remembering AIDS, for those who have died and for those who are still living? The controversy over public sex around the Toronto AIDS Memorial puts into relief the tremendous affective weight of such questions. In fights over the "appropriate" displays of remembrance, we might also ask, what is the work of remembering the losses of AIDS? By way of exploring these questions, I begin by offering some of the texture of the debate concerning the policing of public sex in Cawthra Park, elaborate an analysis of the relations between queer space, Toronto's gay village, and the Toronto AIDS Memorial, and end with an exploration of sexual practice as a practice of remembering. By exploring what is at stake in the relationship between identities, sexual practice, issues of space, and loss, there are countless possibilities for grappling with new forms of remembering that consider the deep complexities of loss in our time.

---

[3] Such dialectics have played out, in part, through public debates. For example, I sat in on several community meetings in 1996 where there were strong feelings on both sides of the public sex debate. The debate–to ignore the practice of public sex behind the AIDS Memorial or to try and put an end to it–was set as an either/or binary, leaving little room to consider the complexities of the relationship between public sex and memorialization.

The Toronto AIDS Memorial: The Texture of the Debate

During the early to mid-1990s the debates surrounding gay public sex[4] in Cawthra Park seemed to mostly take place in community meetings, between people on the street, at social events. The most recent debates to evolve over what are "acceptable" kinds of behavior in Cawthra Park are many, and branch out from Cawthra Park and the Toronto AIDS Memorial to other known cruising spots within the city of Toronto. The spring and summer of 1999 was a particularly turbulent year for debates over the appropriate use of Cawthra Park, after a two million dollar Community Action Policing (CAP) initiative had police in the Toronto area monitor the kinds of behaviors taking place in parks. The CAP initiative, its aim to reduce crime in green spaces, and to enforce a so-called "anti-sex crackdown," "identified a number of parks all over the city that require[d] some intensive cleaning–also some parks where very clear inappropriate activities were taking place" (Smith 1). Nancy Smith, urban safety consultant and head of an audit that took place in Cawthra Park before the CAP initiative began, said: "Look, this activity is going on in the park–people having sex in bushes, people doing drugs" (in Smith 2). The goal, she says, was to "physically clean it up, and clean it up in terms of having appropriate activity" (in Smith 2). The "clean up" would mean cutting down trees and shrubbery behind the AIDS Memorial and installing spotlights. In this regard, acts of public sex and drug use might be seen as urban design problems where the removal of foliage and shedding more light on the situation would presumably "cure" "inappropriate" behavior.[5]

---

[4] I realize that the notion of public sex is in itself not unproblematic. As David Bell points out, "In terms of the location of the sex act... it is taking place in public space: the park, the public toilet,... But in terms of the identities of the participants, their knowledge of each other, and the wider 'public' knowledge of the activities that go on in a private setting, public (homo)sex can be very private, only attracting attention... when the police or queerbashers target a particular site for their own kinds of nocturnal activities" (306).

[5] On the evening before the CAP initiative was to begin, former Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman "revealed that it [the CAP initiative] wouldn't take so much as a nip out of violent crime" (in Smith 5). However, Lastman argued "it should be a criminal offence to dispose of a used condom in a city park" (5). The public discourse on a "clean-up" of city parks took hold–in a moment, Lastman's comments criminalized the unspoken world of homosexual activity, public sex. Cawthra Park, a venue for sexual practice, was thus also regarded as a venue for restraint and control.

The policing of so-called "inappropriate behaviors" is not specific to Cawthra Park. As Eleanor Brown suggests, "Police have always harassed cruisers, at High Park, Cherry Beach, in Cawthra Square Park, and elsewhere" (3). Writing in Toronto's *Xtra!* at the time, Tyrone Newhook also reported that those caught engaged in sexual activity at a popular nude beach on Toronto Island were being arrested. This was so, even though, "For years, the secluded strip of sand and shrubbery on Toronto Island has been popular among gay men and lesbians. It was the site for Toronto's first gay Pride picnic in 1971" (1). Lieshout provides a broader framing here, suggesting that

> 'Impersonal,' 'casual' or 'anonymous' sexual contacts had and still have a bad reputation among the majority of people. It is the kind of sex that violates notions of romantic love, steady relationships or longterm commitment, ideas which are widespread in our culture... That this kind of sex is pursued and enjoyed as an end in itself seems shocking... Public (homo)sexual encounters are contrary to conventional morality and (therefore) to legal rules. (in Bell 307)

The relationship between (public) gay sexual activity and "appropriate" public behaviors in city parks (and other public sites) is a difficult one to say the least, infused as it is with perceptions of normativity, deviance and criminality. Read through the lens of moral regulation, those engaged in "public" sexual practice are seen as partaking in a seedy underworld far removed, in fact entirely separated from, normative notions of private and public behaviors. What is glossed here is how such sexual practices might be inextricably linked to notions of counter-normative and queer sexual identities, sexual communities and sexual politics (Bell 306). Hence, policing continues and heteronormative principles reign.

Although Cawthra Park was one of the many sites of the CAP initiative, city officials felt the park demanded its own special focus. After complaints from local residents that Cawthra Park was attracting too many "undesirables" (cruisers, teens, homeless people, drug users and prostitutes), police ordered a two-hour safety audit of the park. In two hours city officials were to determine, based on the complaints of a few, how to "deal" with the problems of public sex, prostitution, and drug use in the park. People whose residences face the north side of the park constituted the majority of the complainants cited in the safety audit. Eleanor Brown summarizes

some possible resolutions offered by local residents for pushing out the "undesirables":

> They include cutting back some of the lovely thickets by the AIDS Memorial. The comfy window sills along the north wall should be embedded with sharp nails. Or at least blessed with decorative barriers... everything should be flat; trees should be skinny, with all the lower branches cut off, so as not to obscure the line of sight... Residents say they can't sunbathe because of the scary types hanging around the fountain. (2)

Some public perceptions about life in the park are clearly foregrounded by notions of what is acceptable behavior in public (definitely not sexual behavior), and extend notions of private space. Jonathan Dollimore offers some explanation here, reminding us of Foucault's assertion that in the modern period sex became definitive of the truth of our being (222). As he explains, "As such, sexuality in its normative forms constitutes a 'truth' connecting inextricably with other truths and norms not explicitly sexual" (222). This is one of the reasons why, according to Dollimore, sexual deviance is found threatening: "in deviating from normative truth and the 'nature' which underpins it, such deviance shifts and confuses the norms of truth and being throughout culture" (222).

Queers have been prodding at such expressions of normalcy for a long time, making meaning out of difference, finding new ways to live meaningful lives in the face of an ever-powerful heteronormative state. Brown reminds us, "gay men cruising create safety. Prostitutes at every corner mean there's women watching. Kids sneaking a drink aren't your enemy. The homeless are not stalkers" (Sept 23, 1999 3). Moreover, as Bell suggests,

> public forms of sex actually involve a redefinition of privacy... The freedom not to have to be 'out,' not to have to subscribe to any identity or community, marks the cruising ground as the very site of this redefinition; the site of 'insecure privacy and selective publicity' for those who cruise it and use it, with 'private sex' taking place in 'public space.' (308)

Public sex (specifically gay public sex) and other expressions of queer life might be seen as powerful signs marking a continued queer rethinking, in this case, of sexual practice, in an effort to disrupt

heteronormativity and, as already suggested, to make meaning out of difference. Thus, the CAP initiative–to "clean up" inappropriate behaviors, to force out "undesirables"–is just one of the ways that discourses about public space not only regulate particular behavior, but also, work to "erase differences and to limit the forms of expression we have available to us" (Adams 230).[6] Working against such practices of regulation and dismissal of people's lives, I want to turn now to a more focused exploration of what is at stake in the relations between queerness, community, and space.[7]

Queer(ed) Space: Toronto's Gay Village and The Toronto AIDS Memorial

From developing blueprints to building parks, memorial sites, and other kinds of public spaces, planners, artists, and others think specifically about the ways that visitors will use these spaces. From relaxation and picnicking to quiet remembering, public spaces are constructed as meant for some behaviors and not others.

The debates over the "appropriate" use of Cawthra Park are a prime example, asking us to look at the ways notions of morality and sexuality make meaning out of local geographies (Adams 218). In their book on queer space, *Place and the Politics of Identity* (1993), Michael Keith and Steve Pile suggest that it is important to acknowledge that space can be queered or unqueered, depending on the activities and identities expressed at any particular moment. The authors suggest and reinforce, time and time again, the idea that space is fluid and that "we" cannot count on leaving a space only to find it secure upon our return. In other words, we must not be surprised to find that the park we played soccer in yesterday is host to various other kinds of activities, including encounters of a sexual kind, today.

---

[6] Of all the debates I encountered in my research, none was harder to read than that of the story of Jearld Moldenhauer. In the late summer of 2003 Moldenhauer discovered that the memorial birch tree that he had planted in Cawthra Park for the late James McPhee had been removed by a city worker (in Smith 3). Moldenhauer saw an anti-sex crackdown that went beyond the confines of Cawthra Park. Having recently visited High Park, another known and well cruised spot for gays, Moldenhauer said: "Enormous areas of large trees have suddenly disappeared – clear-cut... I don't think this has anything to do with safety" (3).

[7] Saying this, I keep at the fore that there is no such thing as a coherent queer self, and that being queer is definitely not a unitary experience.

As Adams asserts, "Places, in and of themselves, have no meaning. Without human activity and social discourse, a particular park, alleyway, or commercial amusement centre is no more 'immoral,' 'romantic,' or 'sexually charged' than another" (219).

The gay village of Toronto, the context of Cawthra Park and the Toronto AIDS Memorial, is a clearly marked space of queerness, its boundaries extending as far as the symbols of gay iconography travel. No single sign creates this space, but their accumulation, a manifestation of the impulses of many individuals, marks certain streets as queer in this particular neighborhood where signs and flags proclaiming "gay pride" are an integral part of the landscape. Christopher Reed suggests, "queer space is space that is space in the process of, literally, taking place, of claiming territory" (64). In this light, the personal (how people identify in the space), the conceptual (how people think about the space) and the physical (the space itself) are inextricably linked.

The physical / visual markers of Toronto's gay village tend to correspond with other European and North American cities' queer spaces. For instance, common to many of the larger queer communities in cities are storefront displays, which respond to the presence of significant pedestrian traffic. In Toronto, as in other queer neighborhoods, like New York's Greenwich Village and Christopher St., or San Francisco's Castro District, discos and bars line the street and present obvious and distinct queer locations with symbols of queer culture (rainbow flags, pink triangles, "queer positive" graffiti, stickers, banners). Less visible are the equally important student groups, social service and political organizations, clubs, and other non-commercial venues where many of us came to constitute our sexuality on the basis of a certain understanding of "community."

The difficult concept of "community," which in Toronto's gay village ideally embraces those who identify variously as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and/or transgendered, makes the gay village, in part, a refuge from the prejudices and ignorance of society at large. However, as Iris Young points out, not addressing the idea of "community" with a critical eye is problematic:

> The ideal of community privileges unity over difference, immediacy over mediation, sympathy over recognition of the limits of one's understanding of others from their point of view. Community is an understandable dream, expressing

> a desire for selves that are transparent to one another, relationships of mutual identification, social closeness and comfort. The dream is understandable, but politically problematic... because those motivated by it will tend to suppress their differences among themselves or implicitly to exclude from their political group persons with whom they do not identify... moreover, [it] is an unrealistic vision for transformative politics... (in McDowell 128).

Like remembrance, we must encounter notions of community in complex terms as best we can, otherwise we run the risk of other kinds of losses–for example, lost dreams tied to a sense that the members of my community will always want, act, and desire the same ways as I. Like the notion of community, it is important to acknowledge that queer space is contested space; the terms of inclusion and exclusion are the subject of heated and on-going debate, as the controversies surrounding the AIDS Memorial amply illustrate.

However, rather than interpreting this conflict as an indication of how queer communities are fractured, we might also suggest that passionate arguments are necessary to vital neighborhoods and communities. As Lippard suggests, "Like the places that they inhabit, communities are bumpily layered and mixed, exposing hybrid stories that cannot be seen in a linear fashion, aside from those 'preserved' examples which usually stereotype and oversimplify the past" (24). Community, for Lippard, doesn't mean understanding everything about everyone and resolving all the differences; "it means knowing how to work within differences as they change and evolve" (24).

The Village

Located within Toronto's gay village is the 519 Church St. Community Centre, around which the gay village has developed since the early 80s. It is seen by many as the political and social *heart* of the community. Affectionately known as "the 519," the centre is a place where one can go for lunch in the cafe, attend an AA meeting with other queers, go to a gay square dance, take in an art show or a seniors' coming out group, attend a riding association meeting for the Liberal Party, go to a transgendered youth group or a Toronto Girl Guides meeting.

The 519 sits at the curb side of Church Street, holding Cawthra Park to the side and behind. It is as if the 519 holds the space of the

park in its arms, off the street in safety. Cawthra Park hosts a wide variety of activities, including tai chi classes in the warmer seasons, a day care, sports activities, a no-leash zone for dogs, meeting places and living spaces for homeless people, lunch destinations for local workers, nighttime cruising, and a space to collectively mourn. The park can be seen to be a "renovated space," a space that is continually under construction with all its comings and goings. The facade of windows that line the north edge of Cawthra Park gives one the sense of being in an unfinished living room looking out on the world. To belong, one need only stand on the inside of the windows. While, of course, this metaphorical image is highly utopic, we might also remember that the inside is an illusory construct and not without its own conflicts (residents continually complain that the dogs ruin the landscaping of the park, public sex is fiercely practiced and policed).

The intersections of space and identities that I am touching on here are most clearly articulated in the confluence of queerness and identities in the domain of AIDS work, which has so significantly shaped our sense of the gay community. In their collection of essays titled *Mapping Desire*, David Bell and Gill Valentine suggest that:

> ... the emergence of organized political groups of people with AIDS has forced issues of health and illness into a public visibility which threatens traditional assumptions of privacy and public heterosexual privilege. The struggle against the stigmatization of AIDS has forced many gay men and lesbians to reject the relative pleasures of the closet...for a radical insistence on the right to be 'queer' on their own terms in public. (23)

Indeed, this emergence can be seen in Toronto, with AIDS organizations, public health and educational clinics scattered through the village and beyond. The Wellesley Hospital, just a few blocks to the east of Church St. (the main commercial section of the village), for example, was the first medical institution in Toronto to initiate a sensitivity training program that would teach staff how to detect when a patient has been beaten up or bashed as a result of homophobia. Voices of Positive Women, an organization that focuses on women living with HIV/AIDS, is located on Church St., and while it does not exclusively serve the lesbian community, its location in the gay village suggests the intimate connection between AIDS work and gay life. It is this connection between AIDS and the gay community that led to the AIDS memorial being erected in Cawthra Park.

The Toronto AIDS Memorial

The first AIDS Memorial, located within the boundaries of the park, was conceived in 1988 by activist and educator Michael Lynch. During a 1987 trip to Washington, DC, to attend The March on Washington, Lynch visited the AIDS Quilt and Vietnam Veterans Memorial; both sites strongly influenced his desire to enact a memorial project in Canada (Silversides 161). "During a Christmas 1987 visit to California, Lynch also had long discussions with gay historian Allan Bérubé, who had made his own video of the AIDS Quilt and encouraged Lynch's efforts to "enact common mourning" (161). In a 1988 article Lynch confirmed his plans to move forward with an AIDS memorial, asking: "Are we ready for communal naming, once and for all, to replace dehumanizing numbers?... An old cliché motivates me a lot these days. It goes: 'That they shall not have died in vain'" (in Silversides 161). Inspired by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Lynch advocated for a memorial to make speakable and visible the lives lost and the silence surrounding the disease:

> for the thousands of HIV positive persons, anti-AIDS practices in employment, insurance, immigration law and community responses contribute to reinforcing the silence... This context of silence has shaped much of the strategy to fight AIDS. Community AIDS organizations have insisted on Making AIDS speakable and visible. (in Silversides 229)

The AIDS Memorial was erected by Lynch and friends in the early morning of Pride Day 1988. In a magazine article published after the unveiling of the first AIDS Memorial, Lynch's friend Gerald Hannon wrote:

> We all joke that it is as tasteful as only a dedicated group of homosexual decorators could make it. Inside, past the great vases of flowers at the entrance, you wander down a quiet hallway of pale greens and blues and mauves, soft earth colours set off by the startling white of support ropes, by evergreens, by the achingly blue sky. Each panel carries a list of names, each name carefully inscribed in silver ink on a small placard. (in Silversides 172)

There were 200 names on the memorial when it was unveiled at noon, and by 7pm another 100 names had been added (in Silversides 173). In his diary that evening Lynch wrote: "'they filed through slowly, almost single file, with such barely held in emotions... I cried a lot just watching others cry'" (in Silversides 173).

In 1990 the AIDS Memorial Committee[8] called a design competition for a "permanent" memorial to be located in Cawthra Park, and in 1991 the design of Toronto-based architect Patrick Fahn was chosen, endorsed by Toronto City Council.[9] Unveiled in June of 1993, the memorial is comprised of fourteen pillars, each 2.45 metres high. Affixed to each pillar are stainless steel plaques onto which are engraved the names of those who have died of AIDS-related illness. Beginning in 1996, the AIDS Memorial Committee took action to ensure that suitable space be available for all names. Indeed, this continues to be the case today. As new pillars and plaques are needed, room will be made. The memorial site includes a small growth of mature trees that line the back end of the memorial as it forms a semi circle, the pillars and plaques are often decorated with flowers, notes, and burning candle jars left by loved ones.

Re-Presentations: Sexual Practice as Remembering

So far I have outlined some of the debate concerning public sex in Cawthra Park and have tried to draw relations between queer(ed) space, Toronto's gay village, and the AIDS Memorial. As I begin this next piece on sexual practice as remembering, the questions of what is the memory of AIDS, what is at stake in remembering AIDS for the living and, what is the work of remembering the losses of AIDS, are central. These questions open the grounds for new ways of thinking about loss and remembrance in relation to the Toronto AIDS Memorial.

In thinking through the difficult relations of loss and remembrance there is a logic that says if we are to move into the future, traumatic history—in this instance, countless losses to AIDS—must

---

[8] The AIDS Memorial Committee, formed by Lynch in 1988, takes care of spring clean-up, planting flowers around the memorial site, organization of the AIDS Vigil every Thursday before Pride Day, and the yearly addition of new names to the memorial.

[9] Lynch was a major force behind calling a design competition for the construction of a permanent AIDS Memorial in Cawthra Park, suggesting that the Memorial would perform a number of critical functions: "It gives a focus for personal and public grief. It counters the silencing and denial, the isolation and rejection..." (in Silversides 230). Less than two months before his death, Lynch adjudicated the competition for the design of the permanent Toronto AIDS Memorial (in Silversides 234).

be "dealt" with, put into their place in history. The manifestation of "laying our losses to rest" shows itself, often, in the form of a monument, what Lippard might refer to as a "preserved" story of loss—static, unchanging, cemented. Pierre Nora (1989) notes that the emergence of such memorializing initiatives, in one form or another, "involves settling scores with the past" (4). Perhaps the drive behind such pervasive practice, as Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert suggest, is that the pedagogical justification of remembering loss promises that if we learn the lessons of history we will avoid repeating the mistakes of the past (2). However, as emergent and differing groups continue to memorialize losses on a national, community, and personal scale, mass violence, discrimination in many forms, wars, and other terrible injustices continue to ravage societies.

In other words, an acknowledgement of past traumas and injustices through particular representations of loss and trauma does not equal a remembrance of the past that offers hope for a different future. Following Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert, learning the lessons of the past through remembrance practices is hardly enough (2). Rather, they suggest the need to develop "remembrance pedagogies" that entail a (re)enactment of the tellings of traumatic histories (7). In the case of reading the AIDS Memorial, such pedagogies may be understood to

> encompass not only (a retelling) of the story of another but also the *story of the telling of the story*. What this signals is the struggle to work through one's own affiliations with the differences from the "original" narrative or memory one is engaging, a working through that takes into account the particularities of the space/time of one's engagement, the particular investments one brings to remembrance, and the continuities and discontinuities one enacts in relation to it. (7)

What these writers are signaling—especially important for an encounter with the Toronto AIDS Memorial—is the complexity with which every story of loss must be encountered. What might it mean to understand sexual practice as a practice of remembering? How does space matter? Who and what is being remembered when remembrance takes the form of public sex? How does the publicness of the sex matter?

The Toronto AIDS memorial was placed in a space that was known to host gay public sex. This history has not been displaced by

what some regard as the "sacred" space of the memorial. Indeed, gay men continue to engage in sex under the (literal and metaphorical) threat of HIV infection at this site. As Cindy Patton suggests, "The ways of being within sexual cultures are difficult to articulate, their processes of acculturation—their practices—are to some extent unspeakable, unformalizable" (142). While the moral majority regards cruising as proof of gay men's pathology, I want to argue for the *co-existence* of public sex and a memorial to public sex (since AIDS is also inextricable from all so-called deviant sexualities) as a sign of hope that, after Patton, is "unformalizable." In a sense, the coexistence of these practices may allow us to reckon with the ways sex has been linked to death and illness without collapsing these terms. It is the co-existence of the memorial and public sex that makes Cawthra Park a contested memorial site, that is, a site that contests the grounds of heteronormative moral regulation.

This understanding of the memorial—as a site of memory, disavowal and resistance—is in contrast to traditional theories of how monuments function. The traditional assumptions regarding memorials and memorial sites are that they remember for us, as Pierre Nora has suggested; that is, they have come to be regarded as "displacements of the memory they were supposed to embody... once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember... in shouldering the memory work, monuments may relieve viewers of their memory burden" (in Young 5). Rather than regarding the AIDS memorial as a structure that does our remembering for us, perhaps it would be more instructive to think about the memorial as a site of the work of remembering.

The AIDS memorial was conceptualized as a "permanent"[10] monument to those who have died from AIDS—on Lynch's terms, to make visible and speakable lives lost and the social ramifications of HIV/AIDS—and thus works to preserve a remembrance of the dead. However, remembrance in the form of public sex suggests that other kinds of memorialization or commemorative practices run parallel to the more sedimented functions of a memorial site.

---

[10] Permanent in the sense that the foundational structure sits in the park, but not permanent in the sense that new names are added to the plaques annually, hence the memorial changes every year.

Certainly public sex could account for the improvised and embodied practices that both mark the losses of AIDS and hold onto a feeling of hope for the future—not for the future to be post-AIDS necessarily, but a future that still allows for a freedom of sexual practices. How AIDS loss is faced is a new "difference" (in this case, among the living in relation to the dead) within queer community, a difference that needs to be grappled with and engaged in ways that other differences (e.g. how one understands one's self as embodied in relation to sex/gender/sexuality) have been and continue to be faced.[11]

One complex encounter with a story of loss, one new difference of remembering in light of AIDS, manifests itself in relation to the protests concerning public sex in Cawthra Park. There is a message in sex education that suggests that if gay men stop having public sex in the trees behind the memorial, they will not acquire HIV. In other words, in refraining from public sex, there is some evidence that something has been learned—and that to use the park as a space for public sex is to refuse what has (not) been "learned."[12] However, the linearity of this argument suggests that gay desire is a death wish—if you want to live, do not engage in public sex (presumably unprotected sex)—leaving no room for the possibility that public sex may be protected sex. Protection, however, is not the point I am getting at; rather I am interested in the ways public sex is always assumed to be unprotected, that is, always deviant sex. The publicness of public sex does matter and recalls Dollimore's assertion that "such deviance shifts and confuses the norms of truth and being throughout culture" (222). Re-posing the question, what then are the losses to AIDS?, demands that we think about the complexity of sexual practice after AIDS, the ways that public sex is connected to resistance (to heteronormativity), to expressions of pleasure and desire, and multiple losses of an "unformalizable" sexual culture.

Another difference related to the "safer sex" narrative that has developed in Western society over the years calls into question what it means that an HIV-negative man and an HIV-positive man engage in sexual practice (whether anonymously or not). As Walt Odets

---

[11] Thanks to Sharon Rosenberg for this clarity.

[12] Thanks to Ursula Kelly for this insight.

suggests, articulating a difference for some in queer community that has been grappled with to some extent,

> To reject HIV-positive gay men as a group, or a particular man because he carries HIV, raises serious psychological conflict in many men. It is a decision that necessarily entails the rejection or denial of positive feelings and identifications with one's community and with innumerable individuals. This fact, obvious to most gay men, is by mainstream American [Western] standards both radical and almost incomprehensible. (166)

The above brings forth the point that particular (normative or "mainstream") ways of thinking about intimacy, sex and AIDS (by no means mutually exclusive) do not work for many queers struggling to live in the shadows of loss. Judith Butler's insight with which I opened the paper is helpful here:

> If catastrophe is not representable according to the narrative explanation which would "make sense" of history, then making sense of ourselves and charting the future are not impossible. But we are, as it were, marked for life, and that mark is insuperable, irrecoverable. It becomes the condition by which life is risked, by which the question of whether one can move, and with whom, and in what way are framed and incited by the irreversibility of loss itself. (Butler 472)

After and in the midst of such losses to AIDS, making complex sense of ourselves in queer community is to enact what Simon, Rosenberg and Eppert refer to as the "continuities and discontinuities" that we perform in relation to loss (7), whether taking part in a vigil, visiting the memorial on the anniversary of a friend's death, eating lunch on the steps of the memorial and attending to its presence, or having sex behind/on/in the vicinity of the memorial.

In his article "Melancholia and Moralism," Douglas Crimp suggests that, "If following Foucault, a central tenet of queer theory has been an analysis of, and resistance to, normalizing technologies of power" (201), then, conversely, it is possible to think about some monuments as normalizing technologies of memorialization. That is, when a monument or memorial site (and the actions that surround it) are positioned to stand as representative of only one aspect of a loss, this is normalizing and works to shut out all other kinds of grief related to that loss.

My relationship to the AIDS memorial in Cawthra Park, so far, is one that is marked by loss of friends and friends of friends who have died due to AIDS; a "community" that continues to struggle with the ravaging effects of HIV/AIDS; a "community" that continues to feel the impact of homophobia on a day-to-day basis. A deeper look into the Toronto AIDS Memorial must have us see that some perceptions of monuments and memorializing practices can and do function as normalizing practices of power that refuse multiple stories, multiple rememberings of loss due to AIDS, and often foreclose complex psychic processes involved with remembering our dead and our experiences of loss and trauma.

Remembering Well

In facing and coming to terms with loss, Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert evoke the remarkable notion of "remembering well." "Remembering well" is "a remembering that humbles any design to master the past and requires a serious reflexivity rooted in a recognition that the historical character of one's partial and mediated remembrance is contingent and thus can always be otherwise" (7). Remembrance, they suggest, is "a means for an ethical learning that impels us into a confrontation and 'reckoning' not only with stories of the past but also with 'ourselves' as we 'are' (historically, existentially, ethically) in the present" (8). To remember well is to read with complex frames, to learn to live with loss, to trace who and what stories are made to matter. Remembering well is a way of "dwelling in history that keeps open remembrance as a promise of hope" (Simon 10). As such, remembering well constitutes an ethical practice, an ongoing relationship to the past and the present, offering possibilities for change. The relationship between remembering well and public sex might be seen as a new (re)investment in thinking about life and death alongside each other, unencumbered by "mainstream" narratives that shame and oppress.

Loss changes us, diminishes our lives in significant ways. In the present and growing presence of death due to AIDS all around us, and with no end in sight, remembering well means encountering the dead—whether in the form of a vigil, monument, quilt, or sex—through our "continuities and discontinuities" with them. Neatly packaging what it means to remember the losses of AIDS into a particular monument or memorial site will continue to lead us to

not talk about the pain of our losses. Gay men, I am arguing, go cruising, among many other things, as part of what it means to mourn. As Simon Watney suggests, this is the complex nature of queer community, and it is inseparable from the epidemic in its midst (169).

For Michael Lynch, the AIDS Memorial was to offer a focal point for personal and public grief, to work against the silencing, denial, isolation and rejection that so many people living with HIV/AIDS experience(d) (in Silversides 230). At the core for Lynch was that the AIDS Memorial might also function as a support for the development and existence of what he called a "community of grief." The AIDS Memorial's

> identifiable presence contributes directly to the communal awareness that is necessary to lessen the great sufferings ahead for many people... over the next decades, the suffering of the ill and the surviving will be diminished by the AIDS Memorial. In it, a community of grief takes form. The struggle against the silence and suppression gets a focus. (Lynch in Silversides 230)

Lynch's profound sense of a "community of grief" can be seen as an aspect of remembering well and brings back around hope for the future in making visible the relationships and intersections between loss, community, identities, space, and other aspects of the everyday. As Butler points out, "Loss becomes condition and necessity for a certain sense of community, where community does not overcome the loss, where community *cannot* overcome the loss without losing the very sense of itself as community" (468). A "community of grief" might be seen as a promise of hope, an environment where facing loss becomes a part of our selves, of what it means to live in the world, with our losses.

Conclusion

Representations of loss that memorial sites try to hold, created out of our shared experience, will go on functioning in much the same way, if allowed to do so. What I hope to have raised here is some of what is at stake in grappling with the question of how works of public art / architecture help us or fail to help us remember. The Toronto AIDS Memorial, read as situated in the dailyness of people's lives, may challenge the normative understandings of remembrance. This reading of the Toronto AIDS Memorial suggests that difficult experiences

will never go away, that monuments and memorial sites cannot remember for us, and that we are compelled to think about what it means to live with loss on a daily basis (a vital component of remembering well). In this time of AIDS it is urgent for us to ask ourselves what we want to remember and how. Now more than ever, it is incumbent upon us to keep open conversations about the relationship between memorialization and sexuality. New ways of remembering (as public sex) may help us face the challenges that arise, respecting and promoting new ways of remembering, taking notice of the imperative to radically recognize difference and remembering well as a relation between past and present, dead and living.

Works Cited

Adams, Mary Louise. "Almost Anything Can Happen: A Search for Sexual Discourse in the Urban Spaces of 1940s Toronto." *Studies in Moral Regulation*. Ed. Mariana Valverde. Toronto: Centre for Criminology and Canadian Journal of Sociology. 1994. 217–255.

Bell, David. "Perverse Dynamics, Sexual Citizenship and the Transformation of Intimacy." *Mapping Desire*. Eds. David Bell and Gill Valentine. London: Routledge, 1995. 304–317.

Bell, David and Gill Valentine, eds. *Mapping Desire*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Brown, Eleanor. "Next on the List." *Xtra*! 26 Aug (1999): 20 pars. 18 July 2004 <www.xtra.ca/site/toronto2/arch/body265.shtm>.

Brown, Eleanor. "A Scarey Night in Cawthra." *Xtra!* 23 Sept (1999): 21 pars. 18 July 2004 <www.xtra.ca/site/toronto2/arch/body293.shtm>.

Butler, Judith. "Afterword: After Loss, What Then?" *Loss*. Eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. 2003. 467–474.

Crimp, Douglas. "Melancholia and Moralism." *Loss*. Eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. 2003. 188–202.

Dollimore, Jonathan. "Post/modern: On the Gay Sensibility, or the Pervert's Revenge on Authenticity." *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*. Ed. Fabio Cleto. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999. 221–236.

Keith, Michael and Steve Pile, eds. *Place and the Politics of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Lippard, Lucy. *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*. New York: The New Press, 1997.

McDowell, Linda. "City Life and Difference: Negotiating Diversity." *Understanding Cities: Unsettling Cities*. Eds. John Allen, Doreen Massey and Michael Pryke. London and New York: Routledge, 1999. 95–136.

Newhook, Tyrone. "No More Sex." *Xtra!* 22 Apr. (1999): 19 pars. 19 July 2004 <www.xtra.ca/site/toronto2/arch/body160.shtm>.

Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire". *Representations 26* (1989): 3–20.

Odets, Walt. *In the Shadow of the Epidemic: Being HIV-Negative in the Age of AIDS*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.

Patton, Cindy. *Last Served?* London: Taylor and Francis, 1994.

Reed, Christopher. "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment", *Art Journal* Winter (1996): 64–70.

Silversides, Ann. *AIDS Activist: Michael Lynch and the Politics of Community*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003.

Simon, Roger I. "The Paradoxical Practice of *Zakhor*: Memories of "What Has Never Been My Fault or My Deed"." *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*. Eds. Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg and Claudia Eppert. Lanham and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000. 9–26.

Simon, Roger I., Sharon Rosenberg and Claudia Eppert, eds. *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*. Lanham and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

Smith, Vern. "'Fixing' Cawthra Park." *Xtra!* 23 Sept. (1999): 42 pars. 18 July 2004 <www.xtra.ca/site/toronto2/arch/body294.shtm>.

Young, James E. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993.

Tangled Memories of a Wounded Storyteller: Notes on Bear History and Cultural Memory

LES WRIGHT

Les Wright is a long-time gay activist / scholar, committed to understanding and promoting progressive social change. He is a publisher of the on-line journal Verisimilitude, *and is at present Associate Professor of Humanities and English at a small New England college.*

Teaching Trauma

Every spring term for the past twelve years I have taught a course called "The Literature of Death and Dying" to mostly undergraduate majors in funeral management and bereavement studies programs. I begin the course by fleshing out the following: aspects of the dying process and conceptualizations of death (one's own, that of a family member, friend, or a stranger's); the varieties of trauma, loss, and grief; survivorship; how individuals experience and give meaning to death, whether experienced as imminent or as an abstraction. We then broaden the focus to embrace collective experiences of death and dying, and the course escalates the degree and scale of trauma and loss, visiting case studies drawn from the pandemics of AIDS and the Black Death, twentieth-century warfare, and the Shoah, concluding with sublime meditation on nuclear annihilation.

As the students progress, overcoming culturally conditioned taboos against talking openly and freely, even "irreverently" about death, they soon realize death and dying are often mostly about us as the survivors of others' deaths, as sentient beings contemplating our own mortality, as complex, spiritual, feeling individuals interconnected with others living and dead. Whether framed in terms

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 6 (2004) © CLGSA / SCELG

of psychology, philosophy (including religion and spirituality), politics, social activism, or critical analysis and theory, we each, individually and collectively, must engage with creating meaning. Death, given its seeming finality, is an ultimate other we must all confront. However, the legacy of Western thought teaches us that death is the opposite of life, and has, more thoroughly than any other culture elsewhere in time or place, removed the facts of death from everyday life. The result is we confront death and dying as the ultimate trauma.

In his study *God is a Trauma*, Greg Mogenson asserts, "whatever traumatizes us becomes our parent" (64).[1] Used as a medical term, "trauma" originally referred to the blow which caused injury. Later, it became associated with the injury, and "not to the state of mind that ensues but to the event that provoked it" (Erikson 184). Sociologist Kai Erikson clarifies contemporary common usage of trauma, emphasizing how people react to a stress or blow (physical or psychological), rather than to the event itself. The traumatic quality we note ensues from the damage experienced.[2] Most important to Erikson's definition, and to its application here, is his expansion of the concept: " 'trauma' has to be understood as resulting from a constellation of life experiences as well as from a discrete happening, from a persisting condition as well as from an acute event" (185).[3] Erikson concludes his broadened definition of trauma, by suggesting that

> one can speak of traumatized communities as something distinct from assemblies of traumatized persons, sometimes the tissues of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of mind and body, ... but even when that

---

[1] We may follow Mogenson's lead and set aside for present discussion defining or debating "God"—the idea is the dialogue that becomes possible with the emergence of I-Thou duality, whether it be the soul in conversation with an (imagined) divine presence or the psyche's internal dialogue with itself (-which-is-not-itself).

[2] Clinical psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman (1992) articulates the signs and symptoms of trauma as reactions to violence, including memory repression, an internalized state of terror, emotional disconnection (as well as numbness or hyperarousal), and expands helpfully on the experience of protracted, repeated, and compound traumatic experiences and their effects.

[3] Viktor Frankl, in developing and implementing logotherapy, clearly subscribes to this understanding. His accounts of his personal journey, and of his clinical practice working with fellow Holocaust survivors, are documented in the acclaimed classic, *Man's Search for Meaning*.

> does not happen, traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos—a group culture, almost—that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up. (185)

Erikson's understanding of traumatized communities is particularly important for my considerations here, especially when we further note that the act of recalling certain memories can become a painful and retraumatizing experience in itself. Anthropologist Allen Young offers a medical-scientific perspective on what he terms "phylogenetic memory," whereby the neurological trace of an event of pain (which creates a memory) is recalled or reenacted periodically, to the degree that it becomes "equivalent to what is called an instinct" (254). As he continues,

> [p]ain and fear have been normalized, turned into memories with which the individual can now make his way in the world ... [T]he meaning of memory is turned inside out, and transformed into a recognizably modern phenomenon: an affliction through which pain and fear colonize and degrade the sufferer's life-world. (258)

Or, as gender theorist Judith Butler puts it, the wound of sexual otherness is that we are "condemned to the social death of extra-normativity" (in Salih 3).

Tangled Memories

In what follows, I seek, in part, to account for and delineate parameters of some intersubjectivities of the traumas of social death as male homosexual, social death as (homosexual male) person with AIDS, the death of the (Castro) clone. This essay is then comprised of two projects of bear history: a personal remembering on my part, as well as a cultural project of memorializing, each documenting for the future what came before and after the birth of bear identities. I seek here, through the very act of recalling to memory, not to extract a rational, linear narrative structure out of a complex, multi-layered web of memory, but rather to document the processes of remembering. In my quest to create a forum for all bear voices to be heard and to collect, document, or preserve all comers, I seek to anticipate and disarm the inevitable historical revision involved whenever lived experience is shaped and interpreted for those who were not present.

In her seminal study *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*, Marita Sturken wrestles with the relationship between individual and collective memory, the differently selective remembering and forgetting of cultural memory, and how all this informs what becomes recorded as (official) history. Key to her understanding is how dominant, controlling power or culture can strategically "forget" painful or unhelpful events. Sturken observes that cultural memory is "shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbedded with cultural meaning" (3). Memory itself, Sturken observes, is "a narrative rather than a replica of an experience that can be retrieved and relived" (7).

Similarly, in my own work I have wrestled with the social practices implicated in power dynamics, or what Sturken calls "technologies of memory" (10), as these are involved in evaluating the already elusive and fluid cultural memory of bears as a sexual sub-subculture—before they arrive as gay-mainstream cultural history. To create a public memorial requires a complex process of extricating, extrapolating, and even inventing a clarity and a certainty of knowledge, which always come after the facts of the event. Above all, my goal has been to capture as many snapshots of the first moments of this new bear community as possible. Hence, the "tangled memories," which were so essential to the texture of the original scene of trauma, become altered and watered down by the process of being named, organized, and constructed for deployment to an audience. Therefore, while the sometimes disorienting effect the reader may encounter here is intended, the artifact (this article) is also an original experience recreated in a manner approximating its formation.

My Biomythography: Toward a Personal Archive of Feeling

My "Literature of Death and Dying" course is designed as both an ultimate amusement-park ride for the intellect and an intense, intimate walk with me through the devastated psychic landscape of my life's history. I interweave deeply personal experiences into the fabric of the course of instruction, without ever communicating the private sources explicitly to my students. It is of course unknowable to the students that they are experiencing my "biomythography." This term, of course, is derived from poet, novelist, and lesbian-feminist activist

Audre Lorde (1934-1992), who classified her (slightly fictionalized) autobiography *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* as a "bio-mythography." In this work, she gives voice to the great pain of her life struggle as a poor working-class woman of Afro-Caribbean descent, as a pre-Stonewall-era lesbian, as a wife and mother in a biracial marriage—in short, as an individual living on multiple social margins. Lorde countered the narratives of dominant society with new self-generated narratives, of mythic effort and proportion, as an act of liberation—as a necessary responsibility for survival, her own and that of others like us. Lorde becomes in this process a kind of living repository of the cultural memories of an entire generation. Whereas the "tangled memories" of trauma survivorship were thoroughly investigated first among Holocaust survivors (for example in the work of Viktor Frankl), Lorde infused similar insights into the social deaths that are the effects of race, gender, and sexual power relationships in the United States.

In the process of developing and teaching my course, I acquired valuable insight into my own survivorship. I am a survivor of many more things than one could guess lurk out there in the world: of incest and childhood sexual abuse, of rape, of alcoholism and drug addiction, of homelessness and destitution (twice in one lifetime!), of AIDS—both as a long-term survivor living with the disease since 1981 and of the "Gay Holocaust." What else can one call the annihilation of one's entire world? In the 1980s, most of my acquaintances came from the fellowship of gay AA. I lost nearly all of my friends, acquaintances, and neighbors to AIDS. I lived in San Francisco's Castro Street District[4] at the time and witnessed the mass dying off of my neighbors, my neighborhood, my community. Nearly everyone I knew, including friends living in other gay enclaves across the US and Europe, gay activist and gay-scholarly allies, succumbed. By the time Rock Hudson appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine and AIDS was suddenly news to Middle America, my safe and happy gay ghetto had been reduced to epidemiological and psychic rubble, and I was waiting for the Grim Reaper to ravage me with disease and disfigurement, to rip me from the claws of life.

[4] For further understanding of how I have conceptualized the significance of the Castro District, see Wright (1999).

Since then I have lived in a parallel-America universe. In the classic trauma-survivor's sense of living in two times—of "now," but also always of "then," in the profoundest moment of trauma—I have become a cultural survivor, orphaned from my cultures of origin, forever a citizen of Susan Sontag's "gray kingdom."[5] By the late 1980s, I had also acquired an experience of social death, stemming from long-term unemployment and subsistence-level survival (with the help of a few friends), living on General Assistance as I completed my doctoral dissertation, and graduating to "permanent disability" status, thanks to the generosity of the federal government, the Social Security Administration, and a pittance SSI check.

Subsequently, when I found myself back in the workforce and holding down a steady job in suburban Boston in 1993, I jumped at the chance to develop and teach a course on death and dying. I did this as a survival strategy: to put intellectual distance between myself and my life experiences, to begin to digest this sequence of events intellectually and emotionally, and to give shape to and create meaning for what I had lived through. This has become a life project for me, starting with my early interest in creating gay history and gay culture in the 1970s, to pursuing a double professional existence involved in grassroots gay history in San Francisco while studying European high culture at Berkeley, then by attempting to fuse these interests in attempting a dissertation[6] on the impact of AIDS in shaping gay cultures in the US and Europe, and finally culminating in examining gay bears, a phenomenon in the midst of which I found myself as it sprang up in the psychic ruins of AIDS-devastated gay San Francisco in the 1980s.

I determined to devote myself to chronicling, documenting, and exploring the emergent bear community. Above all, as a journalistic eyewitness, as an anthropological participant observer, as a critical

---

[5] Susan Sontag opens her essay "Illness as Metaphor" with a discussion of citizens of the gray kingdom, a place where people who become sick metaphorically go, in exile from the living world of healthy people. I explored the real-life dimensions of finding myself living in this metaphorically constructed parallel universe in an unpublished essay I composed in 1989, in which I described what it was like to be living in San Francisco as a person with ARC at the height of the AIDS crisis.

[6] The dissertation, as envisioned ideally, has proven to be a lifelong project, and one which has been evolving with the "vicissitudes" of time. An early study for it appeared in article format (see Wright 1992).

analytical member of this incipient community, as a grassroots-based oral historian, I eagerly embraced the challenge. I had become deeply disaffected—another item to add to my psychic trauma list—by the dramatic recasting of the (radical) gay liberation movement of the early 1970s into the (assimilationist) gay rights movement of the 1980s. As my generation's hippies transformed into 1980s yuppies, so too my gay-radical compatriots just as quickly became respectable "good gays." It was but a logical progression when queer national activists gave way to queer-conformist consumers, and the corporate media began touting "metrosexuality."

My Own Private Bear History Project

During the mid-1980s something was percolating in gay San Francisco. The phenomenon of "bears" broke into my consciousness when I returned to the City in 1989, after spending a year on the East Coast in my first-ever professional position as a visiting lecturer at a small, smart, rural liberal arts college.[7] It had been a thoroughly miserable year for me, away from anything and everything gay. I had envisioned it as a sabbatical year away from AIDS, a chance to escape the daily impact of living in the Gay Holocaust. In the end, it proved a terrifying experience—so far away from anyone who understood my epidemic-ravaged world—indeed, in a place where revealing my HIV status simply gave locals "legitimate" motivation to shun me. I obligingly made myself "invisible," retreating into the isolation of my trauma. Later, back in San Francisco, I sought to re-engage with life, to take charge of living with HIV and (what would prove to be but the first attempt) to mourn the loss of vision of what my life was supposed to be (something, *anything* other than what it had become). I attempted to reinsert myself into life through companionship with my new-found bear friends, and I sought to wring for myself a new vision.

Doing bear history, then, began for me as a project of trauma resistance. When I began recording my observations about the phenomenon of bear sexual subculture in San Francisco in the 1980s, I sought to capture history as it was happening, and to prevent what

[7] I describe some of this experience, in terms of returning to my family home and dealing with clashes between my blue-collar sensibilities and the normative class values of an elite institution in Wright (1999).

Milan Kundera calls "organized forgetting" (in Sturken 7). At the time, I did not grasp, nor could I have grasped, the complexity or the subtle difficulties involved—the impossible task of completely separating personal memory from collective memory, personal experience from collective experience, or how foreboding the task of extrapolating a consistent narrative that might pass muster as official historical record.

During the 1970s and 1980s, I matured intellectually in parallel to the practices of creating, discovering, and inventing GLBT history. Such practices have been developed in the face of ongoing historical erasure. In a mere twenty years, the bear subculture has exploded across the international queer scene, traversing at least three distinct generations of bears, so as to be radically transformed into both more complex variations and almost a caricature of what it began in opposition to. "The writing of a historical narrative," Sturken observes, "necessarily involves the elimination of certain elements" (8). I had a profound personal sense of having been "forgotten," over and over again myself, and I was not about to allow this new birth to which I was a witness be lost in the morass of the massive loss of collective memory caused by the AIDS epidemic. I am unabashedly still a GLF-generation[8] activist, for whom "gay" still connotes a radical/progressive, queerer than "queer" political concept and utopian vision. In the moment of their emergence, bears in the San Francisco queer culture were a first and last instance of this gay utopia.

What Is a Bear?

Setting aside the problematic of whether to speak of a bear "community," "cult," "subculture," or "movement," much of the vitality of the bear phenomenon arises from its undefinability. Simply put, a bear is a gay male who has tended to self-define by two distinct categorical aspects: (1) a preponderance of male secondary sexual

[8]The Gay Liberation Front was organized out of the spontaneous Stonewall riots in New York City in 1969, and emerged as a radical political force, giving voice to a gay sexual-liberationist vision that aligned sexual outsiders with the resistance politics of the era—women's liberation, black pride, the anti-war (in Vietnam), and others. While "gay" included homosexual men and women, it was implicitly pan-sexual in theory. Within ten years, "gay" had elided into "white, middle-class, urban male," "assimilationist," and "AIDS-infected," none of which had been anticipated, nor could have been foreseen in the earliest days.

characteristics (beard, body hair, and girth, especially as it is typically distributed across the male torso) and/or (2) an essence of mind, spirit, personality, or sexual-politics that sets the self-identifying bear apart from normativizing contemporary gay mainstream values. In 1997, when *The Bear Book: Readings in the History and Evolution of a Gay Male Subculture* was published, I was able to summarize a decade of bear community internal contestation thus:

> it is impossible to answer the question "What is a bear?" in any definite way, beyond the array of connotative associations in our culture, suggesting a large or husky body, heavy body hair, a lumbering gait, an Epicurean appetite, an attitude of imperturbability, a contented self-acceptance of his own masculinity (however that may be defined). The debate, generally framed as bear-as-image versus bear-as-attitude, is as unresolved as ever. (21-22)

Five years later (in 2002), Ron Suresha iterated the same paradigm shift in masculinity that I had observed in *The Bear Book* (1997) and *The Bear Book II* (2001), and observes further that bears are more than "rejection of the rejecters." In *Bears on Bears* he points to a deepening of the mythic turn, a connection between self-identifying bears and non-bears alike. He reads this connection as speaking to

> our need to connect with the natural world, to the lost ancient myths, to the rhythms of the sacrificial hunt and the renewal of hibernation, to the protective nurturing of the Bear (Earth) Mother, and the heroic activity of the Bear-son warrior. (xvii)

The self-contradictions of bear identity grow only more glaring with the passage of time. The more categorically defining the predominantly North American, white, middle-class male homosexual bear-as-image appears to become, the more the creative, thoughtful, visionary, non-North American, non-English-speaking, non-hegemonic visions and practices of the former bear-as-attitude have become remarginalized. The collective historical memory has undergone a profound forgetting and revision, not unlike the fate of Harry Hay[9] and the early Mattachine Society.

---

[9] See Stuart Timmons' biography *The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (1990) or Hay in his own words in *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of Its Founder* (1996), edited by pioneering gender anthropologist Will Roscoe.

Bears as Sexual Refugee Camp

In the first moment of bear-identity formation in the early to mid-1980s, at least in San Francisco, self-identifying bears found like-minded companions through a localized social-sexual nexus. The daily street carnival that Castro Street had become during the 1970s had disappeared virtually overnight. In its stead, a scared, traumatized, predominantly gay male population saw a whole world disintegrate ("lifestyle" blithely leaves out the material, emotional, and intellectual agencies of community and social adhesion). Fear of the unknown concretely meant fear of infection and death, causing the sexual subculture to shut down almost completely. Gay bars, clubs, and business owners died rapidly. People stopped going out, businesses plummeted. The bathhouses were closed. In short, the gay boom town went bust, and most gay men feared gay community itself would disappear permanently.

It is vital to understand, from today's perspective, how overwhelming and total was this moment, when it looked like the gay world had reached cataclysmic annihilation. It was into this world that some gay men found, or rather invented, reinvented, themselves as (self-identifying) bears, as a strategy to cope with and move past the historical moment of trauma. It was a time for feeling one's way out of the metaphorical darkness, back into community, back into sexual connection and social adhesion. It was an opportunity to jettison the baggage of failed past experiments.

Several years later, when I suddenly and unexpectedly found myself on a figurative ledge, out of and far away from the maelstrom, I felt moved, inspired, grateful in the way that trauma survivors often are, to have survived. I wanted to do something to honor the experience that I and others had survived and to create a worthy meaning from the ruins. As someone who had long lived the political axioms "the personal is political" and "the private is public," I sought to realize the experiment to create an archive and document a history that was both intensely personal and quintessentially communal—my own private urban queer bohemia.

Since founding the Bear History Project (BHP),[10] I have pursued both a path of collating, documenting and preserving, as well as a

[10] <URL: www.bearhistory.com>.

path of actively creating, bear culture. Until now I have sought rigorously to function simultaneously on both levels—to retain my own private sense of bearness, while being open to any and all fellow bears, energetically seeking out as many different voices as possible. I imagined it would be left to future generations to cull out what they would find to be, or wish to have be, representative of *their* bear history. I now seek to articulate private contexts and visions which have also shaped this enterprise, to explore, with guidance and insight from Ann Cvetkovich, in her *An Archive of Feelings*, the (albeit highly subjective) confluence of personal and collective trauma and the public historical aspects of bear culture.

For me beardom was about gay liberation, all over again. When I had been living, learning, and practicing emancipation politics in Germany during the 1970s, I digested the unfolding social movement in the United States. Radical European politics were informed by the politics and theories of the spirit of May '68, which meant that my incipient radical politics were as well. The Marxist-oriented left-wing of German gay emancipatory politics was deeply informed by both the French intellectual spirit as by American-style GLF, as imported by film-maker and gay activist Rosa von Praunheim.[11]

My first place of centering, one which exists nowhere in the real world but rather suspended in my consciousness, between gay radical German politics and an American Gay Liberation Front utopian vision, occurred when I read Carl Wittman's "Refugees from Amerika: A Gay Manifesto" (reprinted in McCaffrey). Immediately, I translated it into German and brought it to our local iht [*Initiativgruppe Homosexualität Tübingen*] for discussion.

In the 1960s, Wittmann had been a leader of the radical left-wing Students for a Democratic Society, who moved to San Francisco where he worked as a labor organizer and, as a result of his experience with leftist homophobia, came out. In 1970 he wrote his gay manifesto. He articulated a leftist critique of heterosexist society, arguing, "we know we are radical, in that we know that the system we're under now is a direct source of oppression, and it's not a

[11] North American readers may find basic background information in Paul Berman's *A Tale of Two Utopias*, as well as the English translation of Rosa von Praunheim's *Army of Lovers* (1980), originally published as *Armee der Liebenden oder Aufstand der Perversen* (1979).

question of getting our share of the pie. The pie is rotten."[12] He urged gay people to come out as an act of personal and societal liberation, and he articulated a vision of San Francisco as a gay ghetto, a refugee camp to escape the oppression of America.

And so, in 1979, I fled Germany, and heteronormative society *in toto*, to seek community in Wittmann's refugee camp—San Francisco's Castro District. Little did I know nor could I have anticipated what a crass commercial endeavor it would be, nor how fixing up run-down and abandoned neighborhoods would escalate into an insatiable urban real estate redevelopment engine that, thirty-five years later, has placed the cost of urban living out of the hands of all but the wealthiest minority. Nor did I anticipate the increasingly conservative thrust to political conformity, which, by the time I had reached the shores of San Francisco, had transformed into assimilationist political conformity and the socio-sexual conformity of the Castro Street clone. Coincidentally, I was manifestly at the Castro clone demographic dead center—26, 5'9", 29-inch waist, wearing 501 jeans and flannel shirts. But, on the inside, I could not have been more alien. Where was the sexual democracy I had expected: men and women of whatever non-conformist bent, coming in every shade, shape, color, and persuasion, united only in our radical vision of community? Like many an immigrant before me, I was bewildered and dumbfounded to find myself more of an alien—a sexual alien—than ever before. I had come home, and my house (like Odysseus's) was filled with strangers. And, as I was about to rudely discover, I was plummeting to the depths of full-blown alcoholism and drug addiction. All the neat gay urban homesteads and, by turns funky, campy, or chic gay businesses looked very peculiar from my vantage point as an unanticipated 26-year-old gutter drunk.

* * *

[12] Quoted in "Don't Worry, Honey, Your Roots Aren't Showing" by Karen J. Hall. Wittman's "Refugees from Amerika: A Gay Manifesto" was originally printed in 1970, reprinted in the gay underground press across the US in 1971, and reprinted in *The Homosexual Dialectic* (1972). I was in correspondence with Wittman when he was living at the Wolf Creek commune in Oregon editing RFD magazine, and I was an activist in Tübingen. He later moved to North Carolina, and succumbed to AIDS in 1986.

Arthur Frank notes that the wounded storyteller has been in our cultural memory since ancient times, pointing to the ancient Greek Tiresias, as well as the Biblical figures of Job and Jacob. Each of them experienced anguishing wounding, from which they derived their power to speak the truth and to be heard. Frank focuses on the truth stories that ill people can tell, and how the "ill person who turns illness into story transforms fate into experience" (xi-xiii), thereby transforming the sick person as passive victim of illness into the active shaper of one's own healing. Frank identifies three types of narratives that the wounded storyteller may relate: the restitution narrative (illness as a temporary setback on the path back to health), the chaos narrative (illness or wounding that engulfs and has no end), and the quest narrative (whereby illness becomes the disabling contingency that leads to insight and "control of a higher level") (Frank 126). Quest narratives are very popular, and are the ones most frequently written down and published, in collections of memoirs, manifestos, and other personal testimonies.

A central component of the recovery process in Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve-step programs is a daily recounting of "recovery stories." Each person who finds his or her way into the rooms of AA is obligated to construct a narrative of a three-phase path to recovery. It includes a "before" ("bottoming out"), a transformative "moment of clarity" ("came to see"), and an "after" (the path to sobriety), the hopefully uninterrupted and continuing narrative of life in sobriety. Recovery is contingent upon embracing a new social identity: "being sick," suffering from the disease of alcoholism.

A fundamental recovery strategy of the "drunk-alogue" is to give the newly "ill" individual a means to extract himself from a chaos narrative (of being unable to control one's drinking) with a quest narrative (getting sober was about discovering a whole new way of conceiving of living), which is framed as a restorative narrative ("being restored to sanity," in the language of AA). Though no one is ever "cured," as one progresses, heals, or gets better in sobriety, one's personal narrative changes. The drunk-alogue is flexible and one is encouraged to continually re-evaluate one's understanding of the past in light of new insight. The person in recovery modifies his or her drunk-alogue, to recast personal history, so as to reflect newer insight and better understanding.

I have long thought of gay coming-out stories along similar lines. Life before and after the moment of intimation, of accepting a truth about oneself as a gay person, has made much sense to me when thought of this way. The after portion, to my sensibility as a Stonewall/GLF-era gay man, automatically includes a growing political conviction, by which one is compelled to become an advocate for social change. (Of course, this is the same model of narrative whereby right-wing Christians are also "reborn": see Mellon.) While I first became conscious of the healing strategy of the recovery narrative through AA, I have become even more struck by its structure at the heart of gay coming-out strategies. Having come out alive, as gay, and, later, as sober, it seemed natural to come out as a PWA, and, later still, as a bear. In the 1980s, bears were typically gay men who came out twice—the first time as gay, the second as a bear. Today, the concept of bear has become fundamental, and younger teenaged males may come out as a bear (wherein bear replaces gay as the basic identity category). Others may come out as a bear, after coming out in some other way, and then negotiate the category of bear as "not only male gay," for example, as a bear of color, or as a transgendered, bisexual or lesbian bear.

I originally debuted as a "sober leather bear." What makes my story different from most bears', whether in the 1980s or today, is twofold. First, I got sober before bears happened, so being a bear was anteceded by sobriety—I could become a bear because it could be a sober identity for me. Secondly, I was conscious of being HIV-infected (indeed, I had fully expected to have died from AIDS) before bears ever came into being; I could become a bear as a gay man with HIV. What for me has been so disorienting and demoralizing has been the evolution of bears, along the hippie-yuppie fault line, into a category whereby being sober and having HIV are now qualities that separate me from, rather than bond me with, other self-identifying bears. Now, I am a bear with a difference, a queerly queer bear—I am a trauma bear. I live, and I have lived for many years now, with the double sense of time of the trauma survivor, even exponentially doubled vision. I am always in the moment of the trauma *and* in the present moment. On one level, time is forever frozen; on another it hurdles unstoppably forward. I have changed identities and traveled under new, sometimes false, passports several times in my life. After

all, is not the United States the society where everyone is not only free, but frequently exhorted to "reinvent yourself"?[13]

Archiving Fluid Cultural Spaces

As research librarian and leathersex historian Rob Ridinger highlights, in his "Things Visible and Invisible: The Leather Archives and Museum," much if not most of the reclamation project of defining, recording, documenting, and archiving gay and lesbian history has focused on "significant individuals, organizations and communities, with the collection and preservation of such materials early recognized as a priority by gay and lesbian information professionals" (2). Ridinger points out that such collecting has drawn upon materials "easily recognized" as a priority, such as community newsletters, newspapers, histories extrapolated from public documents and other written records (as epitomized by Jonathan Katz's ground-breaking *Gay American History*), and oral histories taken from recognized leaders and other noted individuals representative of the visible segment of the gay and lesbian community.

Ridinger both explains and justifies the need for a separate leather/levi and S/M ("leathersex") museum and archiving program. Even as gay and lesbian historians, anthropologists, and other social scientists laid the groundwork for modern gay and lesbian historiography, including documenting then-current gay and lesbian history in the latter third of the twentieth century, the already extant leathersex community was frequently overlooked by the newly-

---

[13] For example, recall Michael Valentine Smith, in Robert Heinlein's science fiction cult classic *Stranger in a Strange Land*, which explains that on Mars, when a place became too filled with experiences, the inhabitants simply picked up and moved on, and settled in a fresh, new place, free of past experience. I read and reread this book several times as a young teenager. I am thinking too of Steven Spielberg's film *Artificial Intelligence*, in which a similar sense of double vision is related, specifically in terms of a child abuse survivor. As a recreation of the tangled memories and desire of the trauma victim, the film logically ends with the mecha (robot) boy-as-Pinocchio at the feet of the Blue Fairy, eternally desiring to be reunited with his "mother." Spielberg adds a Hollywood happy ending, whereby the Blue Fairy grants the mecha boy "a perfect day" with his mother. This ending infuriated many abuse survivors in the audience, but reveals the publicly-sanctioned, permissible discourse, which requires such pain and loss be stricken from the record. It is precisely this life-destroying sanction Audre Lorde wrote in defiance of. My essay is both a documentation of and part of the actual process through which I have been learning how to transcend the impossible double vision—certainly not through the simplistic wish-fulfillment of Heinlein's Martian.

emergent "gay-mainstream" historians. Interestingly, even as "gay and lesbian" was expanded to "GLBT" or "queer" (and the terms may be understood as complementary or identical with each other, depending on the historical or theoretical perspective), to recognize and call for "minority" or "cultural diversity" histories (notably African-American, Latino/a, Asian-American, and others), the leather/levi and S/M, or learthersex, or radical sex communities remained marginal to the national project.

The leather community, which has its roots in immediate post-World War II American society, developed independently of the institution of the gay bar, the primary gay "safe" space prior to Stonewall-era activism. The leather community spaces were more typically temporary, ad hoc spaces, such as motorcycle-run sites and campgrounds, and privately owned facilities, all of which helped to keep leather spaces less vulnerable to harassment. While leather bars have existed since the post-war years, the ad hoc spaces and private facilities often remain primary leather community spaces to this day.

While gay activism became increasingly articulated and organized around altering public, legal, and medical boundaries to include (or assimilate) gay men and lesbians into mainstream society, the leather community offered "clear and simple definitions of identity, setting forth acceptable standards of behavior and guidelines" for social relations that "emphasized the recognition, valuing, and respecting of seniority and experience" (Ridinger 4). In short, the leather community has traditionally been inward- and initiation-focused, and has traditionally expended much energy on developing a tight-knit social group, all of which are hallmarks of minority communities that seek to peacefully coexist with a larger dominant society. The analogies—to Jewish, African-American, Chinese-American, and other minority cultural structures—make transparent the American-ness of these social negotiations, as well as their cultural-minority status. At present, the leather community remains proudly, even fiercely, independent, while individual leatherfolk and leather community organizations are deeply intertwined in GLBT community at every level.

On the contrary, bear, as a gay, bi, trans, lesbian or queer identity, remains virtually unknown in American mainstream society. It is curious that even at the time of this writing, some twenty years after the emergence of self-identifying bears within the GLBT, queer, and

leather communities, bears remain essentially invisible at the level of public discourse or cultural-political recognition. Bears, it seems, are rarely mentioned, and, if they are, the remark often contains some sense of incomprehension or bemusement (the oddness of a bear identity), or some form of social disapproval (fat, hairy, older, ugly gay men "doing" bear "drag"). Bears remain on the margins of gay-mainstream society (as they represent the undesirable "real" in the face of "ideal" gay male beauty), even as they continue to assimilate to the standard bearer of a new normative "straight gay."

That said, by 2005 (at the time of the publication of this article), no one, it seems, can remember a time before there were bears. Bear social organizing followed structural development similar to the leather community's—a separate, parallel subculture, of fluid, temporary, ad hoc spaces, including early innovative use of cyberspaces—and have continued to hold a similar cultural-minority status, on the margins of gay-mainstream community and with a not-unproblematic relationship to the leather community. At some times and in some places, bear and leather communities overlap profoundly. Elsewhere, bear and leather are self-defined antitheses to each other, both marginal to the mainstream, and at times, either or both may vie for and assert status as a core element in a local gay-mainstream community arrangement.

As Ridinger notes at the outset of his account, a fundamental problem in gay and lesbian history preservation work is "that a subject must be recognizable and capable of definition before the basic parameters of research can be set" (2). An obvious challenge for me in attempting to take snapshots (in Foucault's sense of cultural history as archaeology) of bears-in-formation has been having to create some arbitrary working parameters. Designated "bear spaces" (such as private social and sexual spaces, cyberspaces, bear bars or bear nights at local leather bars) helped—or, perhaps, forced—individuals to identify as bears or to at least develop a working definition for the identity.

I have always explicitly employed the term "self-identifying bear." Experiencing the rise of a bear identity makes it impossible not to be aware of the construction of social identities. Anyone within or aware of gay history is also acutely aware of the politics of identity labeling: one is hyperaware of never knowing whether to use "gay" or "GLBT" or "queer," or is struck by the intense American-ness of

the sensitive preoccupation of cultural-minority identity labeling. Indeed, if anything, "bear" strikes me as a last wave in sexuality-as-ethnicity identity politics. Self-identifying leaves open space for the individual bear to negotiate his (or her) parameters of "bear."

Bear identify has been divided by two opposing tendencies—are bears about fetishizing secondary male sexual characteristics or are bears about redefining what it means to be a (gay) man, i.e., bears as "laid-back," "gregarious," "nurturing" or relatively "attitude-free"? Embedded within this simple bipolar opposition (as it is thought of and popularly applied) we find another cultural-political dynamic. The former stance brings us both into realms of leather community concerns (sexual fetish as a component of social identity and practice), and gender and sex politics (the relationship between biological and cultural definitions of male gender). In the latter side of the polarity, we find an even more complicated blurring of how we distinguish between male (biological), masculine (qualities ascribed to men's appearance and behavior), and previously unnoticed differences between heteromasculine normativity and its queer (such as the "straight gayness" of clones[14]) variations. In either case, being a bear has everything to do with rethinking or revisioning "masculinity."

In this sense, "bear" shares much in common with "leather." The leather community has consciously and actively explored and reset the boundaries for defining, among other things, "masculinity" within its culture. The nascent bear community has done so as well. Bears fetishize facial and body hair, but in a different way from the leather community, and clearly in a different way from gay-mainstream community, where a clean-shaven face even full-body depilation, is at present a base line standard for measuring sexual desirability. To have a fat or obviously untamed or unregulated body is be a "failure" as a gay man. The physicality of "bear" has also challenged the (often media-driven) gay-mainstream value of body-as-commodity, whereby not just sexual desirability but social recognition *per se* is contingent upon conformity to a "fit body" standard. Self-identifying bears have claimed the non-conforming masculine or male body as the primary physical site of their implicit cultural sex and gender politics. The assertion of bearish bodies arose

---

[14] See Martin P. Levine's *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone.*

as conscious refutation of "clone" and "twink" models of beauty, and occasionally of "good gay" or "consumer queer" values and fashions (urban, white, upwardly-mobile middle-class).

However, as the notion of bears has permeated queer culture and media and reached a greater level of acceptance, bears have increasingly acculturated to gay-mainstream values. "Musclebears," "A-list bears," and those more formally recognized as "superior" through celebrity (bear contest winners, magazine cover models, objects of flattering gossip in electronic and print media) signal the transformation of the bear phenomenon into a structured and self-regulating community assimilating into the gay-dominant value paradigm. However, in the millenial decade, the fad of "metrosexuality" made plain the problem of social "acceptance" of gay men by mainstream society. Everything positive (and stereotypically) gay becomes viewed as a taste, a sensibility, a mannerism, to be embraced and adopted by straight people. Metrosexual men dress, talk, comport themselves, and in general create the illusion of "being gay"—everything except expressing homoertoic desire. Bears may be seen as the exact obverse—reasserting sexual desire as primary to sexual identity.

During its first ten years and the second decade of bears (1994-2003), the Bear History Project itself underwent dramatic transformation. As the size and nature of bear community archiving became far more than a single person, with volunteers in the field, could handle; as technological changes (rise of the Internet and web-based communication) rendered the original methods of data-gathering antiquated; as the underlying cultural and political and historical concerns took clearer shape; and, as the project of the *Bear Books* necessitated an additional intervention of visual collecting and analysis—it became clear the BHP would need to reinvent itself (or rather, that I would need to rethink the BHP). The next steps included establishing a permanent repository at Cornell University's Human Sexuality Collection[15] for the BHP, the creation of the Nashoba Institute, which serves as an umbrella for several related but free-standing components, and the formalizing of Nashoba as non-profit organization,[16] which makes it a legitimate body capable of applying for and receiving grant monies and other institutional support for its work.

---

[15] Further information available at <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/HSC>.

[16] The Nashoba institute became a 501c3 non-profit organization in 2003.

Bear Archives of Trauma

Thus far, I have attempted to untangle and demarcate some of the personal and private traumas which have both drawn me to the margins of society and to marginal cultures. I have passed lightly over traumas related to the effects of homophobia (and erotophobia) on gay and queer men, in favour of focusing on traumas of AIDS upon gay and queer community, arguing that bears were born, in part (and only in part), into this historic scene of AIDS trauma as a consequence and response. What motivated much of the early bear-identity social formation may be ascribed to coping with symptoms of trauma; at least this was the case for myself and the bears to whom I was most strongly drawn to psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, sexually.

Sharing Ridinger's observations about the "suppressed and traumatic histories" of marginalized sexual communities and their archives constructed from "ephemeral and unusual traces," Cvetkovich affirms that "in the absence of institutionalized documentation or in opposition to official histories, memory becomes a valuable historical resource, and ephemeral and personal collections of objects stand alongside the documents of the dominant culture in order to offer alternative modes of knowledge" (8). While, as I have mentioned, there is significant overlap between leather and bear communities, beyond HIV/AIDS, much of the unarticulated trauma that draws at least some bears into bear community is very different from that of the leather fraternity. While the leather community has often been stigmatized by the gay mainstream because of the social opprobrium placed on many forms of sexual fetishes embraced and celebrated by the leathersex community, the stigmatizing, and therefore traumatizing, difference for bears can be summed up in one word: "fat."

Bears wrestle with the problems of being a man (we lack meaningful analysis of the significance of gay male masculinity—the "man" part of gay man). Bears wrestle with the problems of being fat, of being "damaged goods" in a culture of complete self-commodification. And, perhaps most of all, bears, wrestle with a unique conundrum, hinged as they are (to borrow from Cvetkovich) "between systemic structures of exploitation and opposition and the felt experience of them" (12). What still awaits a systematic analysis is the phenomenon and trauma induced by gay-on-gay homophobia. Fat gay men suffer the same sort of discrimination that (straight) fat

women do. In a sexual subculture where looks are even more important than in mainstream society (because so much of it is about having sex), being sexually rejected—actively or passively, by being rendered invisible—constitutes a double trauma. Not only is one's choice of sexual partners greatly reduced, but one's entire *raison d'être* is rejected. In a society that has categorically defined homosexual men as "failures" as men, there can be no greater failure than to enter the gay world, only to find oneself being rejected as a "failed" homosexual (i.e., sexually desirable, sexually realized) man. In this context, Cvetkovich's insight is particularly underscored: "[i]n its unorthodox archives, trauma resembles gay and lesbian cultures, which have had to struggle to preserve their histories" (8).

From Bears to Non-Hegemonic Masculinities

The Bear History Project had originally been dedicated to traditional archival work—collecting bear-related publications, magazines, newsletters—as well as collecting and recording oral histories. The BHP has also gathered clipping files on bear-related topics, such as beards, body hair, bears as totemic symbols, bear celebrities from mass media and pornographic gay media. The approach chosen was the classic bottom-up perspective, both because I was a participant observer at the time and because that perspective seemed to embrace the very spirit of bearish enterprise.[17] In the 1990s, the second wave of bears brought massive community-building: bear-exclusive clubs, events, media, rules of dress and behaviors.

This accelerating process of transformation occurred faster than the BHP could keep up with. It became impossible to continue to gather and hold print documents, as, by and large, print-format club newsletters ceased being produced. There was a new crisis in how to document and preserve web sites and online newsletters. The sheer volume of online published material became overwhelming.[18] The

---

[17] Much of this has been recorded in the two volumes I edited, *The Bear Book* (1997) and *The Bear Book II* (2001).

[18] Perhaps the most comprehensive web source for bear culture may be found at wwww.resourcesforbears.org, administrated by Bob Donahue. Fragments of the original Bear History Project may be accessed at www:bearhistory.com. One of the earliest bear clubs to organize and that is still in existence is the Bear Buddies of Toronto, at www.bearbuddiestoronto.com. More than a dozen bear-identified clubs were active across Canada at the time this article was completed. Although all links

nature, function, and activities of the multitude of bear clubs posed another problem. And, the consolidation of a normalized, or gay-mainstream-assimilated, bear value system radically transformed the public face of the bear community. It also profoundly altered the very nature of "beardom." The emergence of a bear celebrity hierarchy completed the transformation of bears—not just into an insider community within the gay-mainstream culture, but also a painful two-class social order. For some bears to be insiders, others msut be outsiders.

As the bear community has radically grown and transformed, and moved in many new directions, the BHP has had to be rethought and redeveloped. Much of the baseline archiving work now needs to be done on-site throughout the bear community, by individual bear clubs and other grassroots groups. The work of the Nashoba Institute is a discussion for another time and place. For our purposes here, it is significant as it demonstrates a concrete instrument through which the bear archive-as-trauma project has worked its way to a logical conclusion. It demonstrates a way in which the chaos narrative of living bear history in the moment of making has led to the construction of new quest narratives.

Provisional Conclusions

A full two years has passed between the time I received a note of positive interest from editor Sharon Rosenberg[19] to write something about bear history as queer memorialization, and completion of the final manuscript. The bear phenomenon continues to gain ground as a gay mainstream identity, and that identity continues to solidify as a predominantly white, middle-class, male homosexual (and to a lesser degree, bisexual) phenomenon. The gap between fantasy ideal bears (capital-B bears) and everyday "average-Joe" bears (small-b bears) more readily maps onto the gaps of gay mainstream society. The

---

for the very popular Ours Montréal Bears club appeared inactive at the time of publication, active Montreal and Quebec bear groups include the dinner club Le G.R.R.R.R. A OURS de Montréal (http://www.upbear.com) and the Generation X club (http://genxbears.org/montreal).

[19] I wish to express my deep gratitude to Sharon Rosenberg, who could have had no inkling what a profound, transformative effect her invitation to contribute an understanding of my work would have on me personally or professionally.

experimenters, dreamers, and sex and gender innovators of bear-derived or bear-identified sensibilities have also proliferated, primarily through the far-reaching and anonymous effects of the Internet.

To my surprise, shock, and dismay, I became painfully aware of how much I had attached myself, personal values and sense of identity, to bear identity. The shock and dismay arose as bears went, at least in the publicly visible segments, in directions I had no desire to go myself. This has proved an enriching experience in observing how communities and societies function and develop, and in this sense bears have gone the same way as every other subculture or community I can call to mind. Similarly, it has been a very instructive first-hand experience in understanding the limitations of identity politics.

As I have worked my way through to understanding my own guiding beliefs and principles, for example as a radical egalitarian, as a relatively privileged (because) white multiculturalist and (because) male feminist, as an internationalist (with very US-American feet of clay), as a victim-survivor, I have slowly, painfully, and with large servings of humble pie learned my own limitations. I have healed victim-survivor wounds at long last (child abuse, AIDS, social marginalization). I experienced illness, nervous collapse, and the loss of a career vision in these past two years—all sparked, in part, by the self-inventorying this article necessitated.

The bear history work—my bear history work—is done. It is now the work of many others, who have very different stories to tell. Queer as one, queer as many, symbolize reality and the work that activists and historians must do. My path is now not one of contestation, but one of acceptance. I am bear unique unto myself, as I am queer in a multicultural community. I am finding a rebirth of my political activism through spiritual activism. What is important are not my words, but my actions.

Works Cited

Berman, Paul. *A Tale of Two Utopias*. New York: Norton, 1996.

Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003.

Erikson, Kai. "Notes on Trauma and Community." Ed. Cathy Caruth. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995.

Frank, Arthur W. *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*. Chicago: U Chicago, 1995.

Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning*. New York: Washington Square, 1985.

Hall, Karen J. "Don't Worry, Honey, Your Roots Aren't Showing." *Syracuse Peace Council Newsletter* 710 (2002). 26 September 2004 <http://www.peacecouncil.net/pnl/02/710/710GLBT Pride.htm>.

Heinlein, Robert A. *Stranger in a Strange Land*. New York: Putnam, 1961.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic, 1992.

Higgs, David, ed. *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Levine, Martin P. *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone*. New York: New York UP, 1998.

Lorde, Audre. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. Freedom, CA: Crossing, 1982.

McCaffrey, Joseph A., ed. *The Homosexual Dialectic*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972.

Mellon, John C. *Mark as Recovery Story: Alcoholism and the Rhetoric of Gospel Mystery*. Urbana, IL: U Illinois P, 1995.

Mogenson, Greg. *God is a Trauma: Vicarious Religion and Soul-Making*. Dallas: Spring, 1989.

Nelson, Emmanuel S., ed. *AIDS: The Literary Response*. New York: Twayne, 1992.

Praunheim, Rosa von. *Armee der Liebenden oder Aufstand der Perversen*. Munich: Trikont, 1979. [Translation: *Army of Lovers*. London: Gay Men's Press, 1980.]

Preston, John, ed. *Hometowns: Gay Men Write About Where They Belong*. New York: Dutton, 1991.

Ridinger, Robert B. Marks. "Things Visible and Invisible: The Leather Archives and Museum." *Journal of Homosexuality* 43.1 (2002): 1–9.

Roscoe, Will, ed. *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation In the Words of Its Founder Harry Hay*. Boston: Beacon, 1996.

Salih, Sara, ed., with Judith Butler. *The Judith Butler Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors.* New York: Anchor, 1990.

Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering.* Berkeley: U California P, 1997.

Suresha, Ron Jackson. *Bears on Bears: Interviews and Discussions.* Los Angeles: Alyson, 2002.

Timmons, Stuart. *The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement.* Boston: Alyson, 1990.

Wright, Les. "San Francisco." *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600.* Ed. David Higgs. New York: Routledge, 1999. 164–89.

Wright, Les. "Clinton, NY." *Hometowns: Gay Men Write about Where They Belong.* Ed John Preston. New York: Dutton, 1991. 137–51.

———. "Gay Genocide as Literary Trope." *AIDS: The Literary Response.* Ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson. New York: Twain, 1992. 50–68.

———, ed. *The Bear Book II: Further Readings in the History and Evolution of a Gay Male Subculture.* New York: Harrington Park, 2001.

———, ed. *The Bear Book: Readings in the History and Evolution of a Gay Male Subculture.* New York: Harrington Park, 1997.

Young, Allan. "Suffering and the Origins of Traumatic Memory." *Daedalus* 125.1 (1996): 245–60.

Crossing the Border to Memory: In Search of Clive Michael Boutilier (1933-2003)[1]

MARC STEIN

Marc Stein is an Associate Professor of History at York University in Toronto. He is the author of City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972 *and the editor-in-chief of the* Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History in America.

For more than a decade, I have been searching for Clive Michael Boutilier, who was deported from the United States to Canada in 1968. Boutilier's forced migration took place approximately 18 months after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against him in a decision upholding the constitutionality of a 1952 U.S. law that provided for the exclusion and deportation of aliens "afflicted with psychopathic personality," a phrase interpreted to apply to "homosexuals" (*Boutilier*).[2] What began for me as a graduate school seminar paper written within the framework of U.S. gay history has become the foundation of a larger and queerer book project that

[1] For their assistance, encouragement, comments, and suggestions, I thank Henry Abelove, Margot Canaday, Christopher Castiglia, Elizabeth Emens, Joyce Murdoch, Jorge Olivares, Christopher Reed, Tim Retzloff, Sharon Rosenberg, Marian Smith, Siobhan Somerville, *torquere*'s anonymous readers, my many research assistants, and the niece of Clive Michael Boutilier. My research on Boutilier and *Boutilier* has been supported by York University and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

[2] The Supreme Court announced its decision on 22 May 1967, but according to Immigration and Naturalization Service File A10 082 545 Boutilier was deported on 10 November 1968. I thank Marian L. Smith, Historian, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, for supplying me with this information. The delayed deportation may reflect the post-ruling developments discussed below.

juxtaposes the Court's "conservative" ruling in *Boutilier* with its "liberal" rulings in abortion, contraception, interracial marriage, and obscenity cases during the 1960s and 1970s. The book will explore the development of a classed, gendered, and racialized heteronormative legal regime in the United States and will do so through analyses of legal doctrine, movement strategy, and public reception. Yet even as the nature of my work has changed, I have remained drawn to Boutilier's "story" and have felt compelled to remember him. In this essay, I reflect on why this has been the case, taking the risk of self-critically examining my memorializing motivations. After introductory comments on queer memory, I describe my search for Boutilier, revealing in the process some of what I learned about him. Then I take an inventory of my interests, concluding with thoughts on the performance of queer remembrance.

Queer Memory

First I want to distinguish between the project of memorializing queers and the project of queering remembrance. In the last decade, the term "queer" has been used in multiple ways (Duggan, "Making It"; Stein, "Preface"): sometimes as a synonym for "lesbian and gay," "lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT)," or a longer list of terms; sometimes as a word that has had historically specific meanings in particular cultural contexts; sometimes as a concept that refers to sexes, genders, and sexualities that are dissident, resistant, subversive, or transgressive; and sometimes as a way of highlighting desires, practices, and identities that do not line up in normative ways. "Queer" can also refer to the rejection of coherent, fixed, and stable categories of sex, gender, and sexuality and to modes of analysis and types of processes that challenge the dominant (as in queering the state, queering the classroom, etc.). Comparing a recent generation of queer students to previous generations of lesbian/gay students, Henry Abelove has written:

> Typically, the queers criticize the trope of marginalization that organizes many...[lesbian/gay] historical narratives; they resist the representation, relatively usual in these narratives, of persons as distinct, separate, and individual beings with deep subjectivity, who are capable of original and decisive action; they wax indignant whenever they find that these narratives figure persons as achieving authenticity through

> sex; and they worry about the way most of these narratives are framed by the nation-state. To put their position differently, they are interested in destabilizing identity in virtually every sense in the past as well as in the present, and they want the performance of that destabilization to be always primary. (54)[3]

On one level, then, memorializing queers can refer to the process of remembering anyone from the past who can be identified as queer (using any of the definitions in circulation). But the notion of queering remembrance more usefully refers to the process of remembering in queer ways. In this case, it is the remembering that is queer, and not necessarily that which is being remembered.

So what would it mean to remember in queer ways, why would we want to do this, and what might we gain and lose in the process? Abelove's queer students presumably would resist a memorialization that reads as follows:

> Clive Michael Boutilier, a respectable Canadian gay man deported from the United States for being gay, is a hero, a man who worked hard, attended church, and was close to his family; who was marginalized by the United States, which wanted to deport him, but who nevertheless fought back, taking his groundbreaking case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. The fact that he lost his case should in no way diminish his courageous accomplishments in the historic struggle for gay rights. We celebrate his life and mourn his loss.

How might we remember Boutilier differently? Textual memorials such as obituaries and oral ones such as eulogies conventionally depend on coherent and chronological life narratives, and they typically imagine family, education, work, leisure, religion, and community service as the key features of lives fully lived or tragically cut short. These narratives encourage traditional forms of mourning and celebration, not postmodern performance, critical commentary, and disorderly destabilization (Capozzola, Crimp, and Harris). What

---

[3] As an undergraduate I studied with Abelove at Wesleyan University. My years at Wesleyan (1981-85) correspond to Abelove's lesbian/gay generation, though I did not identify as gay while there.

might a queer remembrance of Boutilier look like and what purposes would it serve?

Searching for Clive

Though I never met Boutilier, I first encountered stories about him in the early 1990s when I was researching, as part of a project on local lesbian and gay history, the Philadelphia-based Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS). The HLRS, which essentially was a front organization for a sexually radical faction of the homophile movement, funded and supported Boutilier's litigation (Stein, *City* 226-286). Reading through hundreds of pages of court records, psychiatric reports, and social movement materials, I imagined that I was catching glimpses of Boutilier, but longed to know more. Many of these texts produced, selected, arranged, organized, highlighted, and transformed pieces of information to construct a life narrative that supported particular judgments (just as the following account is constructed to support my arguments).[4] According to the preponderance of evidence in these documents, many created in the constrained circumstances of legal proceedings, Boutilier was born in 1933 in Sheet Harbor, Nova Scotia. The second oldest child and oldest son in a farm family with six children, he dropped out of school at age 13 to help support his family. At some point in the next several years, Boutilier's parents divorced and his mother married a U.S. citizen. Boutilier was first admitted to the United States as a permanent resident in 1955, at age 21. He resided in the States (as did his mother, stepfather, and several siblings, nieces, and nephews) through 1963, when he applied for U.S. citizenship and revealed to a naturalization examiner that he had been arrested in New York City in 1959 on a sodomy charge, later reduced to assault and then dismissed when the 17-year-old complainant failed to appear in court. In 1964, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) investigator James Sarsfield interrogated him. The resulting affidavit was submitted to the Public Health Service (PHS), which certified that Boutilier was "afflicted" with "psychopathic personality" at the time of his

[4] Except where otherwise noted, the following paragraphs draw on the case record for *Boutilier*, available on microfilm in major U.S. law school libraries, and an audiotape of the oral arguments before the Supreme Court, available at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

admission to the United States and therefore was subject to deportation.

According to the affidavit, when Sarsfield inquired about the acts that led to his arrest, Boutilier responded, "I inserted my penis in his rectum and had an orgasm.... [L]ater I put my penis in his mouth and had a blowjob." Boutilier affirmed that the actions had been mutually "voluntary" and said he did not recall the other person's name. Next Sarsfield asked about his sexual experiences in Canada. Boutilier reported that his "first homosexual act" took place when he was approximately 14 years old and occurred with a man who was about 40: "We had planned a hunting trip and I stayed at his home [in Pictou County] that night, his wife was away, and we shared the same bed. He tried to put his penis in my rectum. He didn't succeed but a flow of sperm came from his penis on my clothing." Boutilier told Sarsfield that his next homosexual act took place about two years later, in a public park in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where a man in his 30s (whose name he did not know) gave him a "blowjob." He then reported that between the ages of 16 and 21, he had "homosexual" sex ("all blowjobs") three to four times a year and sex with women three or four times. Asked about his sexual activities after moving to the United States, Boutilier claimed that he had sex with men three to four times a year and beginning in 1959 shared a Brooklyn apartment with Eugene O'Rourke, with whom he had sex two or three times a year. According to Boutilier, the last time he had sex with O'Rourke was about eight months earlier and the last time he had homosexual sex was about four months after that. The final questions dealt with Selective Service and the draft. Discussing why he had been classified 4F in 1957, Boutilier declared, "I'm homosexual." Sarsfield then asked, "Did they just accept your statement that you're a homosexual?" Boutilier replied, "After filling out the forms and asking the questions, I was sent to see a psychiatrist and as a result I'm classified 4F." Asked if he had anything further to add, Boutilier declared, "I plan to seek medical help and I guess that's about it. Due to the finances I couldn't get around to get this medical help before this."

Was all of this information accurate, authentic, honest, and truthful? There is no way to know. Boutilier's lawyers were not present at the 1964 interrogation but Robert Brown, who had represented him in the 1959 sodomy case, and Blanch Freedman, a

radical lawyer affiliated with the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born, represented him at a hearing before a Special Inquiry Officer in 1965. At this stage they submitted into evidence letters from two psychiatrists whom they had arranged for Boutilier to see (and who concluded that he was not psychopathic). From the start, Boutilier's lawyers and psychiatrists seem to have been doing what they could to present a sympathetic portrait of their client, whom they depicted as a good farm boy, devoted to work, family, and church, and honest to a fault. Boutilier's statements operated in similar ways, suggesting that he had been victimized by an older man and indicating that he had had sex with both women and men, had not sold or purchased sex, had almost always had sex in private, had engaged in homosexual sex infrequently, had formed a stable and domestic relationship with another man, had told the truth when questioned, and had been interested in medical help. Insofar as these strategies of respectability were functioning in larger environments of social prejudice and legal discrimination, it helped that Boutilier was male, masculine, white, Christian, and Anglophone.[5]

With the help of Brown and Freedman, Boutilier took his case to the Board of Immigration Appeals, which ruled against him in 1965, as did the Second Circuit Court of Appeals (in a 2-1 decision) in 1966. By this time, Boutilier and Freedman were receiving financial and legal support from the HLRS. Boutilier's appeal was heard by the Supreme Court in 1967. In their briefs, his lawyers highlighted additional information in attempting to create positive impressions of their client: Boutilier had worked "steadily" as a building maintenance man and "responsibly" as an attendant / companion to a mentally ill man; his social activities included attending mass and going bowling; he had moved back in with his mother and stepfather (who lived in the same building as O'Rourke); several of his family members were U.S. citizens, his mother was a nurse, and two of his brothers were in the U.S. military. Here it helped that Freedman was apparently married, straight, and maternal, which effectively heterosocialized and domesticated her client. One of the psychiatric letters emphasized the pain the INS had caused:

---

[5] On strategies of respectability, see Mosse and Stein, *City* 200-286. On prejudice and discrimination within the U.S. immigration system, see Luibheid and Ngai.

> Boutilier was cooperative during the interview but appeared extremely tense and anxious. As soon as he began to speak and from time to time throughout the interview his eyes teared. His initial spontaneous outburst was to the effect that the proceedings against him over the past six years were forcing him to make bank loans and for the first time in his life he was unable to financially cope.... The patient's present difficulties obviously weigh very heavily upon him. He feels as if he has made his life in this country and is deeply disturbed at the prospect of being cut off from the life he has created.

Beyond their efforts to elicit sympathy, Boutilier's lawyers argued that the 1952 law was unconstitutionally vague; they contended that the legislation did not intend and could not have intended to exclude all people who had ever engaged in homosexual acts; that homosexuality was best defined as a matter of conduct rather than character; that medical science no longer regarded homosexuality as intrinsically psychopathological; and that Boutilier had been deprived of his rights because he had never been examined by the PHS. In the end, however, the Court ruled 6-3 to uphold Boutilier's deportation and the law on which it was based.

Throughout the legal proceedings, Boutilier and his supporters could not fully control the impressions they created and the uses to which information about his life would be put. The evidence about his youth fit within a conventional family migration narrative, but also within psychological narratives that linked homosexuality with absent fathers, broken homes, and divorce. One psychiatrist depicted Boutilier as a son who had stood up to his father in conflicts with his mother, but this played into the stereotype that homosexuals are mamas' boys. Drawing on Boutilier's account of his first homosexual experience, some lawyers and judges described Boutilier's role as "passive," some viewed the encounter as "involuntary," and one psychiatrist wrote that Boutilier had been "seduced." When discussing his subsequent activities, Boutilier used vernacular language ("blowjobs") but the lawyers and judges preferred more formal terms ("fellatio" or "oral sex"), engaging in acts of translation with class and educational connotations. A psychiatrist wrote that Boutilier's sexual experiences before 1959 were "usually initiated" by "older men" and he "never sought out homosexual contacts or

relationships on his own"; in contrast, the Supreme Court concluded that in these years Boutilier became an "active participant" in homosexual encounters. Boutilier's lawyers described the evidence of his homosexual activities in Canada as "meager" and one judge wrote that Boutilier had engaged in homosexual sex on a "quite infrequent" basis; however, the government's lawyers claimed the evidence was "overwhelming," they argued that Boutilier had engaged in homosexual sex on a "regular" basis, and asserted that the INS did not pursue cases involving "sporadic" homosexual acts. The Supreme Court concluded that Boutilier's homosexual condition had existed over a "continuous and uninterrupted" period of time. Meanwhile, some highlighted and others downplayed the evidence of his heterosexual activities in Canada. And while Boutilier was never asked and never volunteered information about his heterosexual activities in the United States, some suggested that he had become exclusively homosexual while others claimed that Boutilier easily moved between heterosexual and homosexual interests (and abstinence).

Other information supplied by Boutilier was also subject to interpretation, translation, and appropriation. Answering questions about the incident with the 17-year-old, Boutilier told Sarsfield, "I inserted my penis in his rectum and had an orgasm," but the Second Circuit Court referred to this as "anal sodomy" and the Supreme Court did not describe the specific sexual acts. Boutilier said the sex he had with the 17-year-old was "voluntary" on both parts, but accounts that referred to his partner's age and the "sodomy" and "assault" charges created an impression of something more sinister. As for his more recent experiences, the information that Boutilier supplied suggested multiple possibilities that were not mutually exclusive: he had formed a relatively stable and monogamous relationship with O'Rourke, he had engaged in sexual activities with anonymous partners while living with O'Rourke, he and O'Rourke had been non-exclusive sexual partners (with or without their shared knowledge and agreement), he and O'Rourke had broken up when the latter learned about his other sexual partners, and he and O'Rourke continued their relationship after he moved back in with his parents (if he really did).

Moreover, the legal record included conflicting and contradictory information. Most sources indicated that Boutilier first had same-

sex sex when he was 14 years old, but one psychiatrist said he was 16 when this occurred. Boutilier told Sarsfield that his father had died "about 1957" and apparently told his psychiatrists this as well, but Freedman later corrected the record to indicate that his father had died in 1959. Although no source made this point, the correction meant that Boutilier experienced his father's death in April, was arrested for sodomy that October, and moved in with O'Rourke in the same year. Boutilier told Sarsfield that he had left the United States approximately four times between 1955 and 1964 (once for a two-week vacation in Trinidad and more recently for a Christmas visit to Nova Scotia in 1961), but Freedman later indicated that Boutilier left three times (including the trip to Trinidad in 1956, a Christmas visit to Nova Scotia in 1958, and a one-day trip to Nova Scotia when his father died). There was also conflicting information, possibly reflecting changes over time, about how many of Boutilier's siblings were living in the United States (three or four) and how many of his brothers were in the U.S. military (one or two). And there were disputes concerning the number of years Boutilier had engaged in homosexual acts in Canada. Boutilier referred to "six or seven" years (after the Halifax incident that occurred when he was 16 and before he entered the United States), but if Boutilier was 21 when he migrated this is impossible. Freedman pointed out in oral arguments that "actually it was only five years," but the Supreme Court referred to "more than six years" of homosexual conduct in Canada, a claim that was tenable if it incorporated the arguably "involuntary" episode that occurred when Boutilier was 14.

As I considered the multiple portraits of Boutilier evoked by these documents, it became clear that they could not easily be grouped into two clusters, one sympathetic and one critical. Nor could the legal portraits be distinguished clearly from the psychiatric ones. Those who favored a ruling against Boutilier highlighted his negative features, but insofar as they wanted to uphold the exclusion and deportation of *all* homosexual aliens (and not just particularly "offensive" ones), they found it useful to mention his positive features as well. In some contexts those who emphasized the Court's deference to Congress underscored this deference by insisting on its necessity *despite* Boutilier's many positive qualities. Meanwhile, Boutilier's supporters presented him, depending on the context, as non-homosexual, homosexual in conduct but not character,

homosexual but not *a* homosexual, a homosexual but not a sexual deviate, and a sexual deviate but not a psychopathic personality. The psychiatric profiles presented by his supporters denied that he was psychopathic, but referred to his "psychosexual problem," "disorder," "neurosis," and "immature" and "dependent" characteristics. One psychiatrist wrote,

> What emerged out of the interview was not a picture of a psychopath but that of a dependent, immature young man with a conscience, an awareness of the feelings of others and a sense of personal honesty.... His homosexual orientation seems secondary to a very constricted, dependent personality pattern.... My own feeling is that his own need to fit in and be accepted is so great that it far surpasses his need for sex in any form.

This portrait was simultaneously sympathetic and critical, and while framed within psychiatric discourse also presented Boutilier as a migrant who wanted to "fit in."

Fascinated by these multiple stories and portraits, I nevertheless set aside my work on Boutilier for about six years as I focused on other projects. But in 1998 my interest revived when I was invited for a job interview with York University's History Department in Toronto. Aware that I would be crossing the border in the same direction taken by Boutilier in 1968, I figured, correctly as it turned out, that a department dominated by Canadian historians and Canadians would be pleased to have a U.S. historian deliver a lecture about an aspect of U.S. history that intersects with Canadian history. When I arrived in Toronto later that year to take up my position, I began looking for Boutilier. A few historians and legal scholars had written about his case, but none presented evidence beyond what was in the official record and none discussed what happened to Boutilier after he was deported. I imagined that if Boutilier was a gay man who had been forced to leave New York City, the largest U.S. city, he might be living in Canada's largest city, Toronto, which had a vibrant gay community. But my search initially turned up nothing.

After about two years of making modest efforts to find Boutilier, I turned to a genealogy website that allows family members and others to find and communicate with one another. But now I confronted ethical and political questions about how to proceed. If alive, perhaps Boutilier was not out as gay to his family or did not

identify as gay. So I carefully worded a posting to the Boutilier family page, explaining that I was a historian researching a court case and looking for information about Clive Michael Boutilier. In March 2001, I received an email from a woman who claimed to be Boutilier's niece. After a careful exchange of several messages, I decided I could be more forthcoming. The niece did not seem to have prior knowledge of Boutilier's case, but indicated that she was going to confer with her family and shortly thereafter wrote that her uncle had been hit by a car while crossing a street in New York around the time of the Supreme Court ruling, had been in a coma for a month, and had been left brain-damaged. The niece and her siblings currently believed this was a suicide attempt caused by the Court's decision. With Boutilier requiring long-term care, his mother and stepfather moved to Niagara Falls, Ontario, where they looked after him for as long as they were able. Since the early 1990s, he had been living in group homes for the disabled. According to the niece, Boutilier looked drunk when walking, but was mobile and able to dress and feed himself. She believed he remembered his "lifestyle" because one of her nephews was gay and Boutilier once said about his grandnephew, "He has the problem, too, doesn't he?" But she also wrote, "I am sure that my grandmother drummed it into his head that what happened was to never be brought into the light of day ever again."

Again, there is no way to know whether this information is accurate, authentic, honest, and truthful. Nor can I know that the person writing to me was Boutilier's niece. Unfortunately, though the niece answered several of my questions, telling me that Boutilier was Anglophone and that the family pronounced the name "Boot–lee-er," my efforts to meet Boutilier did not go anywhere. The niece wrote that under no circumstances would Boutilier's mother or sister allow me to meet him: they did "not want to open old wounds" and his mother "didn't want the subject brought up at all." Putting this together with his comment about homosexuality being a "problem," I wondered whether he had been living for decades as a gay man with significant disabilities, under the control of a homophobic mother and family. At the same time, I was aware that the family had suffered greatly because of Boutilier's "problem." Though I tried to obtain further information, offering to speak with Boutilier's mother, send questions the niece could ask him, or write to Boutilier directly, his niece was not willing or able to help in these ways. And

insofar as she was the only family member who expressed willingness to talk with me at all (and gave me permission to quote from her messages), I did not want to alienate her.

Around this time, Joyce Murdoch and Deb Price published *Courting Justice: Gay Men and Lesbians v. the Supreme Court*, which featured a detailed account of the *Boutilier* case and an intriguing paragraph about Boutilier. According to Murdoch and Price, Boutilier was living in a rest home in "Willand, Ontario" (they were likely referring to Welland):

> Speaking haltingly, he confirmed that he moved back to Canada immediately after losing his legal fight. His seven-year relationship with Eugene O'Rouke [sic] ...was his only long-term relationship. O'Rouke [sic] has "passed away," Boutilier said. Twenty-one years after being deported, Boutilier contended that he'd made a mistake in telling the U.S. military that he was homosexual–though the records indicate his INS troubles were triggered by his citizenship application. How did he feel when he heard the court's decision? "No comment!" (132)

The references to Boutilier's living situation and "halting language" seemed consistent with what Boutilier's niece had told me. The indication that Boutilier knew that O'Rourke had died suggested several possibilities: he died before Boutilier moved back in with his parents in New York, during the time Boutilier lived with his parents there, around the time of Boutilier's "suicide attempt," or after Boutilier's return to Canada (which might mean that they remained in touch). Unfortunately, "Eugene O'Rourke" is such a common name that I was unable to find additional information about him. Boutilier's reference to his "mistake" is open to multiple interpretations, in addition to the one suggested by Murdoch and Price: he could have believed he was mistaken in telling the military that he was homosexual (in other words, that he was not) and he could have believed that had he not told the military he would have been able to withhold related information from the INS. His "no comment" is also open to multiple interpretations.[6]

---

[6] After reading excerpts of this essay in draft, Murdoch wrote, "My memory of my brief phone conversation with Clive Boutilier isn't crystal clear, but I do know that I had no doubt that he still thought of himself as homosexual."

Curious about how Murdoch and Price had found Boutilier and whether they interviewed him in person or by telephone, I sent an email to the authors, one of whom explained that it had taken years to find Boutilier and that his mother had been "quite hostile–even threatening." Boutilier was "clearly in no condition to give a real interview" and "pressing him to say more would have been taking unfair advantage of what apparently is a very severe mental handicap." Not long after I received this response, Boutilier's niece wrote that her grandmother had "left strict orders that no one be allowed to confront him after the last incidence [sic]," but the niece promised me that she would speak with her sister about "the possibility of her and I and possibly you taking him out for a couple of hours." She continued, "I know that my Grandmother will be very upset after the fact because Clive tells her everything but she will get over it." Several weeks later I wrote to the niece again but did not receive a response. Some months later I sent another message and my email bounced back undelivered. I feared the trail had gone cold. Meanwhile, I had additional email exchanges with Murdoch, who wrote that she had interviewed Boutilier by telephone and that "he clearly did not want to talk at all." Because he seemed "more than a bit...addled," she "didn't press him the way [she] would have felt free to press, say, a Harvard-educated Supreme Court clerk." I asked for the telephone number and Murdoch offered to look for it, but further answers were not forthcoming.

Meanwhile, I located at the University of Michigan's Labadie Collection another significant source, Blanch Freedman's case file for "George Boutilier," which had been deposited with the papers of the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born. Was the first name a product of a clerical error or evidence that Clive had been known as George in the 1960s? In this collection I found new materials about Boutilier, including a photocopy of his Canadian passport, lawyers' notes from meetings with Boutilier, letters to and from Boutilier, documents related to legal strategy, homophile fundraising materials, financial receipts, and correspondence with the Supreme Court. The photocopy of the passport indicates that Boutilier was six feet tall and had hazel eyes and brown hair. His lawyers' notes suggest that he tested positive for syphilis in 1961. There is also an ambiguous handwritten note about the Sarsfield interrogation that reads "Gibson–told truth–Gibson came to

apartment." Was this the name of the 17-year-old? Had Boutilier feigned ignorance about Gibson's name, perhaps to protect himself or the teenager? There was also a copy of a 1963 INS affidavit (probably produced in the context of Boutilier's original citizenship application and not included in the case record), in which Boutilier indicated that he was "guilty of said violation" with the 17-year old but subsequently "ceased to continue homosexuality." The financial materials indicate that Boutilier paid his lawyers more than $1100 and struggled financially to do so, having lost his job because of publicity about his case.

In 2003, in the midst of the season when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down state sodomy laws in *Lawrence* and Canada moved closer to recognizing same-sex marriages, I received an email from Boutilier's niece, informing me that two days earlier he had died from complications related to a heart condition:

> I know that he is now at peace because his life as you know was not a very comfortable one. I never did get a chance to talk with him about the past and will never know his side of the story but I am grateful that he no longer has to suffer with any prejudices of society, and I know that he can now live in the hereafter the way he truly wanted to live his life.

The critical historian in me had long worried that the messages from this woman were a hoax, and sure enough when I asked to see a copy of the obituary she wrote that there had not been one ("he wanted to be cremated without any service or fuss"). But I believe that the woman who wrote to me was, indeed, Boutilier's niece, and in 2004 I obtained from the Ontario government a copy of Boutilier's death certificate, which confirmed the date of death. Whether everything the niece told me about Boutilier was entirely accurate I cannot know. Nor can she, since she did not witness any of the events in the 1950s and 1960s that she described.

In January 2005, I came across an intriguing document from the 1960s that contained tantalizing new hints about Boutilier's post-ruling life. In December 1968, the newsletter of the Mattachine Society of New York, a homophile movement organization, announced that "Boutilier is in the news again." After summarizing the Supreme Court's 1967 decision, the newsletter reported, "According to a reliable source, he walked in front of a bus (whether attempted suicide or accident we don't know) and was hospitalized

for three months. He's out now, collected a large settlement from an insurance company and is living back in Canada with his mother in a brand new house" (17). Who the "reliable" source was remains a mystery, though the information published suggests that someone with a direct or indirect connection to the homophile movement (perhaps a health care worker, INS employee, insurance industry representative, legal professional, or homophile activist) also had a direct or indirect connection to Boutilier and maintained this connection after Boutilier moved to Canada.

Memory's Motivations

Historians generally do not openly reveal much about their lives in their scholarly works (except in their acknowledgments), usually assuming objective and empirical poses, avoiding self-critical and reflexive commentary, rejecting use of the first-person voice, and concentrating on the past "as it was" rather than on dynamic relationships between present and past (Bravmann, Novick, and Turner). Many operate under the fiction that the past is knowable and retrievable and denigrate subjective interpretation as biased opinion. While historiographic training encourages practitioners to explore the influences that shaped historical interpretations produced in the past, it does not similarly encourage these scholars to explore the influences on their own interpretations. To a greater or lesser extent, many North American LGBT historians have been exceptions to this rule, exploring various links between personal presents and historical pasts (Abelove; D'Emilio; Duberman; Duggan; Duggan and Hunter; Howard; Nestle; Nestle and Preston; Rupp; Smith-Rosenberg; Stein, *City*; Stryker; and Umphrey). While some reject their approaches as narcissistic (invoking a common trope of anti-LGBT prejudice), they can also be characterized as positively queer, insofar as they call attention to, and simultaneously destabilize, the performance of historical interpretation.

What, then, are the links between my personal present and Boutilier's historical past, how might answers to this question help me understand my interest in and interpretation of Boutilier's life, and how can exploration of my imagined relationship to Boutilier serve usefully queer ends? At the earliest stages of my work, I was drawn to Boutilier's story in part because of the connections I imagined between his "homosexual" identity and my "gay" one,

between his and my histories of sex with men and women, between his life in New York City and mine in the New York suburbs in the 1960s, and between his experiences as an immigrant and mine as the grandchild of immigrants. These identifications have been motivating and productive, but have come with associated dangers. For example, apart from a single declaration that Boutilier made in 1964 in the context of questions about how he had come to be classified as 4F for the military draft ("I'm homosexual"), there is no evidence that he thought of himself as homosexual over the course of his adult life, and his declaration did not use the term "homosexual" as a noun. Boutilier's 1963 claim that he had "ceased homosexuality" and his more recent reference to the "mistake" he made in telling the military that he was homosexual suggest the possibility that at certain points in his life he did not see himself in this way. And it is possible that Boutilier told the military that he was homosexual as a way of avoiding military service for a country that had not granted him citizenship and that had recently fought a war in Korea. If I make the assumption that Boutilier identified as homosexual, my identifications may be leading me further from the evidence than I would like to go. At the same time, entertaining the possibility that he *did* see himself as homosexual keeps open other avenues of interpretation (allowing me, for example, to imagine him as a disabled gay man who maintained autonomy in relation to his caretaker-mother). Similarly, my identifications have encouraged me to imagine that Boutilier referred to homosexuality as a "problem" for strategic reasons (perhaps to convince the INS and the courts that he was remorseful and treatable) or because a homophobic society produced homosexuality as a problem. But it is possible that Boutilier viewed homosexuality as a problem in more traditional senses. My identifications have also encouraged me to be suspicious about Boutilier's claims that he had same-sex sex only three to four times a year and only two or three times a year with O'Rourke while they lived together, but it is possible that all of this is true.

Later, I developed additional forms of identification with Boutilier: he migrated from the United States to Canada in 1968, I did so in 1998. He was 35 years old when he moved to Canada, I was 34. He experienced border troubles when applying for U.S. citizenship because he was taken to be "homosexual," I experienced border troubles (in the form of a special requirement that I have an

HIV test) when applying for Canadian permanent residency, probably because I was taken to be "homosexual."[7] He lived for many years as a legal alien in a country in which he was not a citizen, I do so now. Of course there are also differences in our stories. He was born into a large, Catholic, working-class farm family in Canada in the 1930s; I was born into a small, Jewish, middle-class suburban family in the United States in the 1960s. He did farm, maintenance, and personal care work, I have worked as an activist, editor, journalist, professor, and writer. I migrated semi-voluntarily (making choices constrained by the academic job market); he migrated involuntarily under a deportation order. I am allowed to return to the United States legally, he was not. The Canada to which Boutilier returned in the 1960s (which excluded "homosexual" aliens) was not the Canada that I encountered in the 1990s (which did not) (Girard and Green). Boutilier spent much of his adult life as a disabled person under the care of his family, I have spent my adult life as an able-bodied person living autonomously or with partners of my choosing.

Each of these lines of identification and disidentification have shaped and been shaped by my interpretations of Boutilier's life. For instance, my encounters with the bureaucratic machinery of border control have encouraged me to view Boutilier as a migrating subject as well as a sexual one. In turn, my encounters with Boutilier have encouraged me to be more keenly aware of what it means to live in a country in which I am not a citizen. For another example, migrating to Canada and living part-time in Maine, where a significant percentage of the population is descended from Francophone Canadians, have led me to view Boutilier as part of the Franco-Canadian diaspora, which I might not otherwise have done. My transnational existence has also contributed to my interest in the history of Canadian immigration exclusion, a topic that has helped me develop an argument about the self-defeating aspects of U.S. policy: when Canada, influenced by the United States, passed an explicit restriction on homosexual immigration in the 1950s (Girard and Green), the ironic result was a legal obstacle to the immigration of U.S. "homosexuals" to Canada, which presumably the U.S. government would have favored. When working on *Boutilier* more

[7] For a discussion, see Stein "Crossing."

generally, at times I have found myself thinking, "This could have been me," but at other times I have been conscious of the ways in which my date of birth, class background, educational achievement, and able-bodied status, as well as my family's attitudes about homosexuality, have contributed to differences in our life paths.

A set of professional motivations has also influenced my interpretations. Whether the goal has been a good grade in a seminar, a research grant, a conference paper, an invited lecture, a journal article, a book contract, or a job as a professor, I have been conscious of "using" Boutilier to further my professional success. Arguably all scholars use their sources for similar purposes, but this does not mean that questions cannot be raised about the politics of these dynamics. I have been most aware of this issue when encountering the "worst" aspects of Boutilier's life. Whether it was learning about his positive syphilis test, reading about his financial struggles, finding out about his suicide attempt, or being told about his disabilities, I have been conscious of feeling great empathy, but also the guilty pleasures that come when a scholar discovers horrible details that can contribute to the production of more dramatic and poignant scholarly work. Concerned about these dynamics, I have tried to resist turning drama into melodrama.

These types of motivations have intersected with intellectual goals. For example, because much of the legal proceedings focused on whether homosexuality should be conceptualized as "conduct" or "character," and because the positions on this issue taken by the opposing lawyers are the reverse of what we have come to expect in gay rights litigation today, Boutilier's case has helped me contribute to ongoing debates about biological essentialism and social constructionism as frameworks for understanding same-sex and cross-sex sexualities. I have been able to use *Boutilier* to argue for the importance of the LGBT movement before the Stonewall riots (in contexts that place greater emphasis on post-Stonewall developments); the significance of sexually-radical activists who adopted respectable political strategies (a subject of my first book); the existence of LGBT rights litigation before the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Bowers* (in contexts where scholars write as though this 1986 anti-sodomy ruling was the Court's first significant LGBT rights decision); and the value in studying the subject of my first book, Philadelphia (in contexts that highlight New York, San

Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C., as U.S. LGBT centers). *Boutilier* is also useful as a vehicle for showcasing the conservative underside of the Supreme Court's "liberal" rulings on abortion, birth control, interracial marriage, and obscenity cases—highlighting the conservatism of liberal legal strategies and emphasizing media mystification of the law (through the misreporting of legal rulings). And Boutilier's case helps me argue for the importance of transnational, border-crossing research.

Personal, professional, and intellectual motivations have all intersected with political goals as well. For example, after I learned about Boutilier's death on 12 April 2003, I very much wanted to write an article about him. "The LGBT public, the U.S. public, and the Canadian public should all know," I found myself thinking, without exactly being able to pinpoint why. I knew I did not want to write a conventional obituary, but did not know exactly what I wanted to write. A few months later, I contacted a reporter I know who writes for the *Advocate*, the U.S.-based gay magazine, thinking that Boutilier's death should be mentioned in a column that references the deaths of significant LGBT figures. My friend told me that too much time had passed. In the end, I decided that the kind of article I wanted to write would use Boutilier's death to make a political intervention in the contemporary world. This, I thought, was the best way to offer a useful remembrance. As I thought about what angle to take, I was reading about the mistreatment of immigrants and aliens in the United States. And so, I wrote a remembrance for the electronic *History News Network* that tried to connect Boutilier's case with recent developments.

I began the article, "Forgetting and Remembering A Deported Alien," with a paragraph meant to lead readers to think that I am writing about a straight man, perhaps from the Middle East, who has been caught up in the recent campaign of repression in the United States:

> As far as we know, he came to the United States with his family from an economically troubled region of a U.S. ally, hoping for a better life. But he arrived at a time when the U.S. government was targetting a variety of imagined domestic and foreign enemies and was waging cold and hot wars at home and abroad. He was 21-years-old when he became a permanent resident of the United States and over

> the next decade he worked, lived, bowled, and prayed in New York. There he eventually came to share an apartment with a friend in the same Brooklyn building where his mother and stepfather lived. Two of his brothers served in the U.S. military; several of his siblings settled in the United States, married, and had children. He spoke English. As his lawyers would later make sure to emphasize, in many ways he was a model U.S. immigrant when evaluated according to dominant U.S. values. A few years after coming to the United States he was arrested for a sexual offense with a 17-year-old, but when the complainant refused to cooperate with the authorities the charges were dismissed. The more significant troubles began when he applied for citizenship and mentioned the arrest.

In the next several paragraphs, I let readers know that I was referring to Boutilier, summarized his case, and mentioned his death. With the goal of encouraging readers to make connections across different forms of discrimination against immigrants and aliens, I concluded:

> As the United States experiences another period in which immigrants and aliens are particularly vulnerable to the racial, religious, linguistic, class, gender, and sexual prejudices of U.S. policymakers and government officials, there is much to be learned by studying the alliances and arguments that formed around Boutilier more than 35 years ago.... The alliances that formed between civil libertarians, sexual rights activists, and immigrant advocates in *Boutilier* offered an important challenge to the unjust policing of U.S. borders in the 1960s. Remembering *Boutilier* today should remind various constituencies, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people; women; immigrants; ethnic, linguistic, racial, and religious minorities; and disabled people that their causes and interests are linked. Only a strong coalition of political forces has the potential to stop today's unjust exclusions, detentions, and deportations, which are raising the level of national insecurity in the United States to new heights.

Taking the risk of using Boutilier's "story" for purposes that I believe have value, I cannot know whether Boutilier would have approved.

Queer Conclusions

By the standards established in Abelove's account of his students, this remembrance of Boutilier could be characterized as both queer and gay. I have tried to emphasize the centrality of *Boutilier* in the development of a heteronormative U.S. legal regime, but have also presented stories of a person quite literally expelled to and beyond the country's margins. I have attempted to avoid presenting Boutilier as a "distinct, separate, and individual" person with "deep subjectivity" (Abelove 54), but in some passages have imagined Boutilier in precisely these ways. Though at times I have offered a coherent life narrative, I have also interrupted and disrupted that narrative, keeping in mind Abelove's claim that his queer students would prefer, "insofar as persons were to be represented in history books," that such persons be "figured on the model of characters in late twentieth-century fiction rather than on the model of characters in mid-Victorian fiction" (Abelove 52). Abelove explains that queer students would prefer "characters who have indefinite boundaries, who are always slipping in and out of focus, who are never fully constituted, never reliably whole, never coherent" (52). By focusing on representations of Boutilier rather than on Boutilier himself, by encouraging critical perspectives on these representations, by emphasizing the search for Boutilier rather than my discovery of him, by asking questions that I leave unanswered, and by using various other strategies, I have tried to keep Boutilier out of focus, partial, and incoherent, though I know that sometimes he has come into clearer view. And I have attempted to place Boutilier in transnational, border-crossing frameworks, as well as in frameworks more consistent with my training as a "U.S." historian. Some of this arguably makes me a "critical" historian rather than a "gay" or "queer" one (insofar as historians are encouraged to be critical of all of their sources), but I like to think that there is something specifically gay and queer (as well as critical) about this remembrance.

By the standards of what might be called queer legal history, my work (here and in its other incarnations) could also be called both gay and queer. At times I examine LGBT subjects who are regulated by the law, at others I explore the law's constitution of LGBT and heteronormative subjects. In some contexts I focus on the law's oppression of LGBT people, in others I work on legal

heteronormativity. Sometimes I look at the law's impact on sexed, gendered, and sexualized private and public spheres; sometimes I explore the law's deployment of sex, gender, and sexuality in the history of politics, privacy, publicity, citizenship, and the nation-state. I consider legal contexts when sexual desires, practices, and identities seem to line up, but also foreground ruptures and disjunctures between these sexual dimensions. I present stories of LGBT legal resistance that I admire, but also offer critical perspectives on LGBT political strategies. I highlight the case of a masculine, English-speaking, Christian white gay man, but also think about sex, gender, linguistic, and religious privilege within the law, examine the significance of Boutilier's working class and Francophone family background, and consider the law's constitution of Boutilier as disabled, both before and after his suicide attempt. And while I often privilege U.S. law in my work, I consider transnational legal dynamics as well.

Influenced by the suggestions and scholarship of others (Capazolla, Castiglia and Reed, and Halley) I have also imagined other gay and queer remembrances of Boutilier. If Tony Kushner could place Ethel Rosenberg and Roy Cohn in the same imaginative space in *Angels in America*, I can picture Blanch Freedman sharing her memories with Boutilier's mother, Eugene O'Rourke telling Boutilier's gay grandnephew about his great-uncle, the 40-year-old married man who shared a bed with Boutilier in Nova Scotia having a conversation with Boutilier's niece, and the 17-year-old who had sex with Boutilier talking about the experience with the high school, college, or university student who is reading this essay now. If AIDS activists can produce campy remembrances in the face of extraordinarily devastation, I can imagine working with a catty exchange about the Broadway musical *Annie Get Your Gun* that appeared in the footnotes of the majority and minority 2nd Circuit Court opinions in Boutilier's case. If Janet Halley has produced a remembrance of legal scholar David Charny that wrestles with the "wish not to know" in her discussion of "the possibility that he died of the effects of a virus that he did not know he had," I can consider the silences that echo loudly in my documents about Boutilier.

Abelove concludes that his queer students were "interested in destabilizing identity in the past as well as the present" and "wanted the performance of that destabilization to be always primary."

Pointing out that lesbian/gay works of history "historicize identity," he adds that "from historicizing to destabilizing is arguably just a step" (55). I would add that queering remembrance also involves historicizing and destabilizing history. My queer remembrance of Boutilier not only historicizes and destabilizes my subject's identity but also turns back on the remembrance and its author to historicize and destabilize both.

Works Cited

Abelove, Henry. "The Queering of Lesbian/Gay History." *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 44–57.

American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born. Case Files: Boutilier, George. Labadie Collection, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Boutilier v. the Immigration and Naturalization Service. 387 U.S. 118 (1967).

Bowers v. Hardwick. 478 U.S. 186 (1986).

Bravmann, Scott. *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1997.

Canaday, Margot. "'Who Is A Homosexual?': The Consolidation of Sexual Identities in Mid-Twentieth-Century American Immigration Law." *Law and Social Inquiry* 28 Spring (2003): 351–386.

Capozzola, Christopher. "A Very American Epidemic: Memory Politics and Identity Politics in the AIDS Memorial Quilt, 1985–1993." *Radical History Review* 82 (2002): 91–109.

Crimp, Douglas. *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.

D'Emilio, John. *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

———. *The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture*. Durham: Duke UP, 2002.

Duberman, Martin. *About Time: Exploring the Gay Past*. New York: Gay Presses of New York, 1991.

———. *Cures: A Gay Man's Odyssey*. New York: Dutton, 1991.

———. *Left Out: The Politics of Exclusion*. New York: Basic, 1999.

———. *Midlife Queer: Autobiography of a Decade, 1971–1981*. New York: Scribner, 1996.

Duggan, Lisa. "Making It Perfectly Queer." *Socialist Review* 22.1 (1992): 11–31.

——— and Nan D. Hunter. *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Girard, Philip. "From Subversion to Liberation: Homosexuals and the Immigration Act, 1952–1977." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 2 (1987): 1–27.

Green, Richard. "'Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor, Your Huddled Masses' (of Heterosexuals): An Analysis of American and Canadian Immigration Policy." *Anglo-American Law Review* 16 (1987): 139–159.

Halley, Janet E. "In Memoriam: David Charny." *Harvard Law Review* 114 (2001): 2232–2234.

Harris, Daniel. "Life and Death: Some Meditations." *Antioch Review* 48 (1990): 415–429.

Howard, John. *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999.

Lawrence v. Texas. 538 U.S. 558 (2003).

Luibheid, Eithne. *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2002.

Mattachine Society of New York Newsletter. December 1968.

Mosse, George L. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. New York: Howard Fertig, 1985.

Murdoch, Joyce and Deb Price, *Courting Justice: Gay Men and Lesbians v. the Supreme Court*. New York: Basic, 2001.

Nestle, Joan. *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*. Boston: Alyson, 1992.

———, ed. *A Restricted Country*. Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1987.

——— and John Preston, ed. *Sister and Brother: Lesbians and Gay Men Write About Their Lives Together*. San Francisco: Harper, 1994.

Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Alliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004.

Novick, Peter. *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1988.

Rupp, Leila J. *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-Sex Love in America*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999.

Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America.* New York: Oxford UP, 1985.

Stein, Marc. *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945–1972.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000.

———. "Crossing Boarders: Memories, Dreams, Fantasies and Nightmares of the History Job Market." *Left History* 9.2 (Spring/Summer 2004): 119–139.

———. "Forgetting and Remembering a Deported Alien." *History News Network.* 5 November 2003. http://hnn.us/articles/1769.html.

———. "Preface." *Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History in America.* Ed. Marc Stein. New York: Scribner's Sons, 2003. xiii–xvii.

Stryker, Susan. "Introduction: The Transgender Issue." *GLQ* 4.2 (1998): 146–158.

Turner, William B. *A Genealogy of Queer Theory.* Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000.

Umphrey, Martha M. "The Trouble with Harry Thaw." *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 8–23.

Remembering Tom: The Gay Games' Ego Ideal and Ideal Ego[1]

JUDY DAVIDSON

Judy Davidson is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta. Her interests include feminist and queer theory, cultural studies, and critical sport and leisure studies.

The Gay Games and Cultural Events have become recognized as the premiere international athletic event supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered individuals. The multi-day spectacle emulates the modern day Olympics in size and grandeur. The Gay Games' founding vision was to provide opportunities where "athletes could openly celebrate both their athletic and sexual identities in ways not currently possible in most mainstream sporting events" (Griffin 190). The first of these quadrennial Games was held in 1982 and they have since become major cultural and athletic events.

As might seem appropriate, San Francisco was the site for the first two games (in 1982 and 1986) and Celebration '90 was staged in Vancouver. These Games were the largest sporting event of their

[1] I am grateful to jan jagodzinski for suggesting early in my doctoral research that I work through the idea of Tom Waddell as mediator between ego ideal and ideal ego. I am indebted to Michelle Helstein for helping me understand these concepts, particularly our discussions about Slavoj Zizek's ideas. Doug Aoki deserves special mention for insistently terrorizing me with psychoanalytic theory. This paper is part of my doctoral dissertation (Davidson, 2003) which was funded in part by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowship. This Gay Games project would not have been possible without the Gay Games archive collection at the San Francisco Public Library and I thank the helpful staff there during my data collection in October, 2000 and February 2001. I would also like to acknowledge the helpful suggestions and careful, sustained readings by two anonymous reviewers and the guest editor for this issue, Sharon Rosenberg.

kind held in the world that year. New York City hosted Unity '94, which marked the 25th Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots (often heralded as the "birth" of the gay rights movement). Over ten thousand people participated in 1994. Gay Games V were held in Amsterdam in August, 1998. Fifteen thousand athletes competed in 30 events in the Netherlands with 250,000 spectators involved in cheering them on. Gay Games VI were hosted in Sydney, Australia in November 2002, using the Homebush Olympic Park for many of the events. The Federation of Gay Games (FGG) is the international governing body for this organisation which claims to be the most inclusive major sporting event in the world (Davidson 15-16).

Dr. Tom Waddell, founder of the Gay Games, deeply imbued the event with a certain sense of Olympism. In order to provide an "Olympic" experience for gay and lesbian athletes, this charismatic medical doctor and former US Olympic track athlete, organized the first Gay Olympic Games in 1982. Waddell fervently believed in the "higher" ideals of Olympism (often figured as education, equal opportunity, fair play, excellence, and international goodwill) and wanted his Gay Olympics to embody those virtues (Segrave 150).

Waddell indvidualized the pursuit of excellence through athletics to become the mainstay mantra of the Gay Games, exhorting gay and lesbian athletes to excel "despite" their sexuality. His oft-quoted statement "To do one's best is the ultimate goal of human achievement" has been used liberally in subsequent Gay Games promotions (Waddell in Labrecque i). Waddell hoped that the ideals of Olympism would transcend the petty squabbling of the scandal-ridden "real" Olympics so true athletic competition could thrive. Athletes from around the world paraded behind city team signs in highly regulated uniforms (no corporate advertising, no Olympic logos) at highly choreographed opening and closing ceremonies (Athlete's package 1; Herkenhoff & Lewinstein 1). Athletic events were organised according to set rules and regulations with teams competing and crowds available for cheerleading. Medal ceremonies were ritual affairs. Waddell endeavoured to combine the allure of the Olympics with the beauty of sport in a vibrant gay community (Davidson 61).

Despite these Olympic emulations, the Gay Games suffered many losses in their first five years. In 1982, a court injunction stopped the event from calling itself the Gay Olympics at the

insistence of the powerful United States Olympic Committee (USOC). In the summer of 1987, the US Supreme Court made permanent the ban on the word "Olympic," and, three weeks after this judicial decision, the visionary founder, Waddell, died of AIDS-related causes (Davidson 49-75). Waddell directed not only the guiding philosophy and principles of the Gay Games, but through his death—and how his death has been remembered—imprinted them permanently in and on the organization. His liberal notion of gay pride is one of the strongest pulls for the success of the Gay Games.

In grief, the Gay Games organization and members of the gay community who identified with the Gay Games cause made attempts to vindicate their Olympic loss. In 1987 and 1988 a grassroots protest targeted the Visa credit card company. Supporters of the Gay Games were encouraged to boycott Visa because of a default sponsorship program of the USOC. Waddell's memory was regularly invoked. In 1988, a divisive battle in San Francisco erupted over the Bay Area's bid to host the 1996 Summer Olympics. Certain municipal politicians, including the mayor of San Francisco, insisted that the USOC agree to several anti-homophobia measures before SF would agree to bid for the games. Again the figure of Waddell was repeatedly used to bolster the case (Davidson, 82-97). After these (relatively fruitless) protests, the discourse of resisting the Olympics fell away and Tom Waddell became memorialized in various ways through the Gay Games. A trophy in his honour, commemorative coins, panels on the AIDS quilt, and video tributes have all functioned symbolically to keep his memory alive (Davidson 100-108).

In this paper, I focus on how the Gay Games' community has consciously memorialized Waddell, and, simultaneously, how his figure insistently psychically governs gay pride discourse through the melancholic loss of the word Olympic and Waddell himself. I will argue that the prohibitions and losses suffered by the Gay Games and Tom Waddell have had profound psychic effects in securing the success and viability of subsequent stagings of the events and the establishment of the Gay Games movement. The first half of the paper describes how some of the memorial practices and objects have evolved. The second half asks us to consider whether in fact these kinds of remembrances by the Gay Games community are actually a "successful" kind of mourning. I que(e)ry how the figure of Tom Waddell continues to pyschically keep intact the injurious

homophobic interpellation through which both the ideal ego and ego ideal for the Gay Games emerged. Judith Butler (1990; 1997) suggests that all subjects are necessarily produced through melancholia. In the end, the manifest attempts to mourn Waddell may only be the preconditions for a melancholic incorporation. Remembering the man whose gay pride mission defined the Gay Games enterprise may only continue to solidify the homophobic shame that inaugurates the event. This argument points to questioning the effectiveness, at the productively psychic level, of certain lesbian and gay memorial practices, suggesting that they may in fact simply reiterate and keep intact the original homophobic loss.

Remembering Tom

On July 11, 1987, Dr. Thomas Flubacher Waddell died at home from AIDS-related complications. He had voluntarily removed himself from all pain medication 36 hours prior to his death. Saying, "This should be interesting," he never spoke again, and slipped into his final coma. In his last weeks, family and friends surrounded and supported the dying hero (Waddell & Schaap 4). Waddell had been showcased extensively in the last year of his life, notably since he had "come out" with his AIDS diagnosis. Two major network television pieces were produced on his life, several articles appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and a biography was in process (Fernandez B5; Mandel 1987 B3; Scheer 33). Waddell also received many community awards, most notably the Harvey Milk Community Service Award presented by then San Francisco Mayor Diane Feinstein in March 1987 (Fernandez B5; Marcus 32). Ten days before his death, a banner reading "Gay Olympians Salute Tom Waddell" was carried in the San Francisco Gay Pride March ("A salute" 14). And Springfield College, the ultraconservative athletic school Waddell had attended, awarded him an honorary doctorate, posthumously, after the student body petitioned the administration following a special about Waddell shown on ABC's news documentary television show *20/20* (Moor 41).

In death, and even before his imminent passing, Tom Waddell was immortalised as a hero, represented as a unique and truly amazing human being. His good works as a medical doctor, tireless advocate for "minorities," and pugnacious fighter for human rights and social justice granted him the epitaph of healer—not only of the

body but of the human spirit as well. The public eulogies for him poured in as his death was announced. According to his adherents, Waddell "was able to set the imagination and the hearts of a community on fire with enthusiasm and with purpose" (White 1987a, 23). Tom Waddell

> had everything. He was brilliant, loving, handsome, strong, successful and popular...His message was always hope, optimism, love and struggle towards the light... [Waddell's] greatest gift was his spirit, his tenacity, his love, and his dedication...In his lifetime, [he] created such a beacon of goodness in this world that its light will always illuminate [our] path (Mandel 1987, B3).

One week after his death, the city of San Francisco honoured Waddell with a public tribute organised by its Department of Public Health at which over four hundred people gathered in the rotunda of the majestic San Francisco City Hall. It was the first time since 1978, when the openly gay politician Harvey Milk was assassinated on the front steps of the same City Hall, that a non-elected (and, as it happened, homosexual) individual was so honoured officially by the city (Brazil B1; White 1987a). Waddell's wife,[2] Sara Lewinstein, announced to thunderous applause that the lien on Waddell's home had been lifted by the USOC, and that the Olympic organisation would not seek monetary damages from anyone who had been involved with the Gay Games (Brazil B8; "They Stole a Word" 6). Many individuals in the crowd wore their Team San Francisco uniforms from Gay Games I or II. Gay Olympics t-shirts, which had escaped the hurried censorship just prior to the first Games, were proudly worn. One attendee pronounced, "I wanted to yell 'Olympics' at the top of my voice" (White 1987b, 13).

In spite (or because) of the overdetermination of Waddell with the Gay Games, the print media coverage of his death reinscribed a "normalised" and heteromasculine hero. This held true especially

---

[2] Tom Waddell and Sara Lewinstein met organising Gay Games I. They were good friends and both had a desire to raise a child. In 1983, Jessica Waddell Lewinstein was born. It wasn't until after Waddell was diagnosed with AIDS in 1984 that the self-identified gay man and lesbian decided to get married to legally protect Jessica in the event of Waddell's death. They each were involved in same-sex relationships while sharing the parenting of Jessica (Waddell & Schaap).

for the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s content but included the *BAR*'s[3] reportage as well. This effect was subtly produced through two particular representations of a dying, and finally a dead, Waddell, over and above his contribution to the creation and production of the Gay Games. The first of these invoked him as a decathlete, and reminded readers that the decathlon was considered to be the ultimate athletic test within serious sporting circles. In the second representational strategy, Waddell was heteronormatively produced through the invocations of his wife and child. Let me speak to each briefly.

Waddell was called up as being the sixth greatest athlete in the world in 1968. His strength and skill were invoked repeatedly, even though AIDS had ravaged his once powerful body (Fernandez B1; Schaap 1987 28, 31; Scheer 33). In this first representational strategy, the constitutive spectre of the stereotyped, limp-wristed, effeminate fairy was contained by maintaining and foregrounding the heteromasculine attributes of conventional athletic masculinity. These corporeal athletic reminders kept invisible and silent the trope of the fag, containing the homosexual threat for public media consumption. Toby Miller (1998) has suggested that by the mid-1990s, it was possible to be a successful gay male sporting hero if representational strategies publicly assimilated and kept intact the configurations of dominant, conventional heteromasculinity. Miller's analysis uses Ian Roberts as exemplar. Roberts, a popular Australian rugby player, had, for the most part, successfully managed coming out as gay and maintained his popular appeal in the late-90s through foregrounding a very typically athletically strong, hegemonic masculinity. In the mid-1980s, the Bay Area press predated Miller's claim. "Thomas Flubacher Waddell, M.D., died at his home in San Francisco Saturday morning. In the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, Dr. Waddell placed sixth in the decathlon. By traditional standards, that made him the sixth greatest athlete in the world" (Moor 41). This is one among many media invocations of Waddell's strength and athleticism (Tom Waddell Dead B1, Scheer 33, Mandel B3, Fernandez B1). In death, Waddell, through the same kinds of representational logic, was made palatable to a mainstream San Francisco public in the late-1980s.

---

[3] The *Bay Area Reporter* (*BAR*), no longer in existence, was to date the longest running gay and lesbian newspaper in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In addition to the invocations of sporting prowess, Waddell's wife and child were positioned as the bereaved family. Repeated reliance on the pervasive heteronormative construction of family exceeded the minor inconveniences of the lesbian mom and gay dad who did not cohabitate, giving texture to the second representational strategy of Waddell. Before his death, Waddell actively colluded in the discourses of husband, father, and normative family. He often invoked three-year old Jessica as the guiding light in his life and said his one regret in death would be not to witness her growing up (Fernandez; Scheer; "Tom Waddell dead"). Sara Lewinstein became the bereaved widow, Waddell's best friend and support: simply "We loved each other" (Lewinstein in "Tom Waddell dead" B1). With one exception (White 1987b), Zohn Artman, Waddell's last male lover, sometime housemate, and long time confidante—the queer excess—was made invisible in the public bereavement process. Artman and Waddell were both diagnosed with AIDS within a short time of each other and spent their final months nursing one another through the disease (Waddell & Schaap). Artman died in October of 1987, a few months after Waddell (Newquist).

Attempting to Mourn

In the months and years following the Supreme Court's Gay Olympics decision and Waddell's death, the Gay Games' community symbolized Waddell and his memory, attempting to bring closure, to mourn,[4] that crucial loss. In the immediate wake of his death, the invocation of Waddell was used strategically at various times, often

[4] According to one of Freud's early ideas about grief and loss, when one loses an object (such as a beloved person) or an ideal, the experience of loss is either mourned or not. When one mourns a lost object or ideal, s/he severs their psychic attachment to it, s/he acknowledges the loss, and s/he comes to symbolise the lost object and move their libidinal attachments onto new objects or ideals. They are able to let the person / object / ideal go whilst still "remembering" (Butler 1990; 1997; Gay). In his text "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud made a distinction between mourning and melancholia. Mourning is a grief process in which to properly resolve a loss, there must be a breaking of the attachment to that object (Gay). "Separation is recognized and the libido attached to the original object is successfully displaced onto a new substitute object" (Butler 1990, 84). This process is called introjection, and, if it is to be successful, "the capacity to symbolize experience needs to be developed as a way of coping with separation and loss. For it is only via the representation of the object in its absence that the symbol can come to replace the loss as a memory" (Diamond 177).

to indict the USOC and Olympic movement, especially in the Visa and Bay Area Olympic Bid protests. His memory has been used contradictorily to support projects that some believe would have appalled him. In 1988, Mary Dunlap (the Gay Games' pro-bono attorney) and Sara Lewinstein accused each other of gratuitously misrepresenting Waddell's principles concerning whether or not he would have supported an Olympic bid for San Francisco (Dunlap; Mandel 1988; SFAA Board 1988). Almost every bid proposal prepared to host a Gay Games has gone to great lengths to discuss how they would honour Waddell's memory by fulfilling his philosophies on sport, sexuality and/or participation.[5]

Tom Waddell has been immortalised through the Gay Games movement. Made static, aspects of him hauntingly function to inform the directives of the FGG. Fixing him in a collective memory happened almost immediately upon his death. Male Entertainment Network (MEN video), the official "filmmaker" of the first two Gay Games, made a video of Waddell's public memorial tribute held in the rotunda of the San Francisco City Hall in 1987. It was sold as a "public service" for ten dollars, theoretically the cost of production (White 1987b). *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Bill Mandel lamented eight months after Waddell's death that he was losing the "real 3-D Tom" who was emerging as a martyr less than a year after his death (Mandel 1988, A5). In 1988, Waddell's memory was preserved through seven panels on the AIDS Memorial Quilt, more than any other individual at that time (Waddell & Schaap); and, in 1990, a Celebration '90 newsletter headline proclaimed, "Waddell's dream of international Gay Games fulfilled" (McDell 4).

Further reiterations of the good Tom Waddell continued unabated. In the lead up to the New York Games in 1994, nostalgic remembrances of the founder Waddell were printed in the Gay Games IV newsletter, *Unity '94* (Schaap 1991). Lewinstein spearheaded the development of Tom Waddell commemorative coins (echoing the Olympic collector coins), which would be sold as a fundraising

[5] An example of this comes from the closing sentence of the cover letter that introduced New York's successful 1994 bid. "If Dr. Tom Waddell (who spent so much of his time in New York City) had survived the AIDS epidemic, he would be proud to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Stonewall and Games IV in 1994 with his global sisters and brothers, gay and straight. In 1994 we will have his spirit here in New York City" (Board of Directors 2).

venture for the FGG. The coins featured an image of Tom Waddell's head on one side and the FGG logo on the other. The FGG received 5% of all revenue generated from their sale (Peterson & Kennedy). The Gay Games and Tom Waddell were two sides of the same coin, literally embossed together in enduring memory.

During the 1994 Opening Ceremonies of Gay Games IV in New York City, a Tom Waddell video tribute was played over the huge screen in Wien Stadium at Columbia University to the 25,000 strong Opening Ceremonies crowd. The video was introduced by American Olympic medallist, swimmer Bruce Hayes, and was followed by eleven-year old Jessica Waddell Lewinstein who read a poem she had written about her dead father ("Opening Ceremonies"; Waddell & Schaap). The choreography of the ceremonies was carefully orchestrated to create the imaginary Olympic gay pride moment. As the Gay Games IV *Games Guide* described it, "Truly Olympian in scope, Opening Ceremonies are designed to evoke feelings similar to those experienced by Dr. Tom Waddell as he entered the stadium in Mexico City in 1968, where the idea for the Gay Games was born" ("Opening & Closing" 44). The never-ending quest for origins was solidified through the opening and closing spectacles of the fourth Gay Games: Waddell was invoked in the beginning and at the end (respectively at the Opening and Closing Ceremonies), when his wife and child presented the Waddell Cup for the second time ("Closing Ceremonies").

Indeed, one of the most enduring and public symbolizations of Waddell's memory is the Waddell Cup, awarded at each Gay Games. Given for the first time in 1990, the trophy honour is awarded to recognise the most deserving volunteer participant at each Gay Games. This trophy has become an interesting metaphor for the rationalisation and image-making of the FGG organisation while simultaneously reiterating a certain memory of Waddell. Rob Neyts purchased and donated the trophy after fundraising in the Vancouver leather community. By default, the responsibility for the Cup fell to the newly formed FGG and an Awards Committee was struck to govern the Waddell Cup and its bylaws (FGG Executive 1989; FGG Executive 1991; Neyts). After a hurried call for nominees, the Tom Waddell Memorial Cup was presented for the first time at Gay Games III to long time Gay Games organiser and volunteer Paul Mart. Lewinstein presented the trophy at the Closing Ceremonies with her

and Waddell's then 6-year old daughter (FGG Executive 1990; Forzley & Hughes).

The history of the Tom Waddell Memorial Cup represents the memory of Waddell and his legacy in several interesting and contradictory ways. The trophy's creation through the grassroots initiative of Neyts and the financial support of the Vancouver leather community harkens back to the very first Gay Games where spontaneous gay community support was embraced and encouraged. In Waddell's weekly *BAR* columns in 1981 and 1982, he revelled in and marvelled about the subcultural elements of the gay community that championed the Gay Olympics. Among others, supporters were the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, the very uncloistered group of nuns in drag who performed half time shows at basketball games, and the locally famous and popular gay male sex show, Men Behind Bars (Waddell).

In the mid-1980s, due in part to the AIDS epidemic taking its massive toll on gay men's lives and the resulting clamp down on unbridled homosexual activity, the Gay Games rhetoric, led in large measure by Waddell, shifted to downplay and almost erase sex, particularly any explicit homosexually-inflected sex or representations thereof. The Gay Games were to be about meeting human potential and were not to be defined by (homo)sexuality. This sexless discourse has become, ironically, the unofficial official discourse of the Gay Games (Probyn). Waddell gave interviews to the straight press, in which he insisted that the explicitness of sex in the gay ghetto was not the norm, but was practised by a minority and fetishised by the media (Fernandez; Moor; Scheer). At an SFAA[6] board meeting in March 1986, Waddell was adamant that while "safe-sex" information could be made available during Gay Games II, condoms would absolutely not be distributed, as this would give the "wrong" impression and detract from the spirit and purpose of the event (SFAA Board 1986). The effect was to desexualise and sanitise gays and lesbians so they could more easily assimilate and take their place at the heteronormative athletic table.

---

[6] San Francisco Arts & Athletics, Inc. (SFAA) was the organization responsible for putting on Gay Games I and II in San Francisco. It was disbanded in 1989 to form the Federation of Gay Games (FGG), the international body for the Gay Games movement.

In the official FGG information about the Waddell Cup there was absolutely no mention that its financial condition of possibility was predominantly the gay male leather community of Vancouver. Instead, isolated individuals who had donated significantly for the trophy were thanked in the Celebration '90 Official Program ("Tom Waddell" 1990), and the cup was described as a gift to the Gay Games from Vancouver, headed up by Rob Neyts, who professed to be so moved by Tom Waddell's life story that he wanted to create an award for an exceptional participant ("Personal Trophy"). The official call for nominations read, "the award is intended to honour an outstanding Gay Games individual.... exemplifying the spirit and pride of Gay Games Founder Tom Waddell" (Farrell 1). It was as if there had to be a necessary distancing of the hero Waddell from the taint of a transgressive gay sexual reality. In fact, there was correspondence to the MVAAA[7] from groups inquiring whether a leather presence and/or participation would even be welcome at Gay Games III ("Letter"; MVAAA Board). For some groups, the presumption of inclusivity, no matter how explicit, could not be assumed.

Waddell's philosophy of "inclusion and participation for all" is bizarrely twisted in how he is remembered and immortalised through the Waddell Cup. One of the criteria for the Waddell Cup is "someone who personifies the standards of selflessness, devotion, humility, dignity and love of humanity set by the late Dr. Tom Waddell" (Farrell 2). By foregrounding these idealized attributes, the Gay Games keep intact a version of Tom Waddell that seamlessly integrates athleticism and gay pride with the "true" goodness of humanity, one which does not engage any explicit sexuality. The Waddell Cup winner symbolises for a short time at each Gay Games the lost Tom Waddell—a hopeful but ultimately ineffective replacement, a mournful substitute to be revived every four years.

Another powerfully evocative tactic to keep Tom Waddell "alive" has been how his daughter, Jessica, has been deployed throughout Gay Games discourse. A picture of Waddell holding 3-year-old blonde Jessica at Gay Games II is one of the most enduring pictures of the Games' founder. She has been a presence at every Gay Games since her father died in 1987. A bored seven-year old on the Closing Cer-

[7] MVAAA is Metropolitan Vancouver Arts and Athletics Association. This group was formed to organize Gay Games III "Celebration" in Vancouver, BC in 1990.

emonies stage in 1990 at the Vancouver Gay Games (Forzley & Hughes), her profile at the New York Games was much higher. There, as noted, the eleven-year-old read her own poetry about her father to 25,000 people and presented trophies ("Closing Ceremonies"; "Opening Ceremonies"; Waddell & Schaap). For Gay Games IV, Sara and Jessica hosted the media reception that launched the Rainbow Run for the End of AIDS at Waddell's Albion Street home in the Mission District in San Francisco (American Run). The mother and daughter duo also had a large photographic presence at Gay Games V in Amsterdam ("Photo file"). Daughter Jessica is the closest live emulation of the lost hero. Since his death, Jessica and Sara have been used discursively to subtly keep in place a heteronormative myth, a safe, conventional familial structure. Wittingly or not, the Gay Games have used this conservative symbolism.

The Gay Games have also capitalised on gay Olympic heroes, heroes who were necessarily public Olympians before they were publicly gay. Tom Waddell is remembered as implicitly creating this dynamic: "Tom represented the spirit of the Olympics. He was a true Olympian" (Brazil B8). Olympic swimming gold medallist Bruce Hayes came out to the sporting world in Vancouver in 1990 and was a major poster boy in the promotional campaign for Gay Games IV (New York in '94; Weiss). US gold medal diver Greg Louganis came out at the 1994 Games in New York. His videotaped words, "It's great to be out and proud" drew thunderous applause at the Opening Ceremonies in New York (Louganis in Waddell & Schaap 233).

Three weeks later, Louganis received an award for fairness, commitment to excellence, and dedication to sport and athletics from the USOC. When he accepted the honour, Louganis dedicated it to the late Dr. Tom Waddell, characterising Waddell to the pro-Olympic crowd as founder of the Gay Games, US Olympic athlete, and victim of AIDS. The reception from the American Olympic pundits was less than enthusiastic. Many of the USOC officials in that crowd "had been shocked and offended by Tom Waddell's desire to call *his* festival the Gay Olympics. Some of those officials had been part of the campaign to strip the word 'Olympics' from the title of the Gay Games, part of the campaign to harass and sue Tom Waddell" (Louganis in Waddell & Schaap ix). Waddell not only haunted the Gay Games then, but also continued to be invoked within the circles of American Olympic power. It was at this US Olympic Festival in St.

Louis that Louganis also called on the USOC to remove any Olympic events or activities from Cobb County, Georgia where homophobic, anti-sodomy laws had recently been revived and supported. After reading Waddell's story in *The Gay Olympian*, Louganis suggested that he felt like he knew Waddell, sharing an affinity with being a gay man in elite athletics. He thought Waddell would have approved of his call to boycott Cobb County (Waddell & Schaap xi).

The Gay Games founder has thus been thoroughly symbolised to represent a certain vision for the event. The attempts to symbolically remember Tom Waddell—through the trophy, the coins, his daughter, the unrelenting invocation of his philosophies and ideals—are endeavours to mourn the man and let him go. These efforts to mourn Waddell, however, to let him go through symbolization, have necessarily failed. This complicated grieving cannot just be understood through a mourning process that allows for Waddell's death. It cannot bring closure for the Gay Games, as the mourning can only be operationalised as an effect of a previous melancholic identification.

While the attempts to remember him symbolically may point toward a letting go, they also function to keep Waddell "alive" psychically and the unspoken denial of his loss is represented through the public, social manifestations of homage to the "great man." The Gay Games have been unable to give up both the ideal of the (homophobic) Olympics and the object of Tom Waddell. The strategic and poignant use of Waddell's daughter gives good evidence to the very problematic facing the Gay Games. The next closest thing to the actual lost object of Waddell is his own flesh and blood, the biological, genetic progeny that comes to represent him, but of course is not him. A naturalised, teleological discourse of the human condition is subtly reinscribed through this incorporative process. It is to some of the processes of incorporation and melancholia that I now turn.

A Melancholic Haunting: The ego ideal and ideal ego[8]

As I briefly outlined in my introductory comments, the second part of this paper asks about the effects for the Gay Games of "hanging onto" Tom Waddell through particular memorial practices. As I have

[8] I acknowledge from the outset of this argument that attempting to psychoanalytically understand and analyze culture and organizations is a fraught

argued, the figure of Tom Waddell watches over the Gay Games—a never-ending and contradictory haunting. What dynamics are operating to sustain this memory? How do the Gay Games hold onto Tom Waddell, never letting go of their lost object? One way of reading Waddell's haunting is to consider, in a Lacanian sense, how the figure of Tom Waddell functions to mediate between the ego ideal and ideal ego of the Gay Games organisation. I turn first to outlining this conceptualization of the ego ideal and ideal ego, followed by its consideration in the context of this paper.

Within a Lacanian psychoanalytic framework, the two concepts of ego ideal and ideal ego relate, respectively, to two of the Lacanian orders, the symbolic and the imaginary. The symbolic is primarily a linguistic dimension in which cultural and social realms are produced through the functioning of language. The subject is a symbolic construction. The imaginary order is a specular realm, dominated by the image, typically an ideal image from which all humans are inescapably alienated. "Lacan places a special emphasis on the role of the image, defining identification as the 'transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image.' To 'assume' an image is to recognise oneself in the image, and to appropriate the image as oneself" (Evans 81). This is the basis of the fable of the mirror stage, that dynamic by which the ego is constituted, and which "represents a permanent structure of subjectivity, the paradigm of the imaginary order" (Evans 115; Leader & Groves; Zizek).

The production of the ego and subject happens early. The human infant is radically dependent and not a pre-given totality. To survive, it must attach to a primary caregiver (in the patriarchal culture of

---

enterprise. In the larger dissertation project (Davidson), I make a sustained argument for the Gay Games' organization to be accorded an "ego," in order to make sense of how the Gay Games has melancholically incorporated the loss of the homophobic Olympics to produce a very prideful gay athletic event. I recognize this is not a straightforward move, nor one that will be accepted in all quarters. While Judith Butler (1997) refers to the psychic incorporation of individual subjects, she also suggests that "when certain kinds of losses are compelled by a set of culturally prevalent prohibitions, we might expect a culturally prevalent form of melancholia, one which signals the internalization of the ungrieved and ungrievable homosexual cathexis. And where there is no public recognition or discourse through which such a loss might be named and mourned, then melancholia takes on cultural dimensions of contemporary consequence" (139). Butler continues this conversation in her recent book *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004).

Freud and Lacan, this is predictably the mother figure). As the infant matures and starts to differentiate, psychoanalysis suggests certain dynamics occur in which the ego and, ultimately, the subject are produced. During the mirror stage, the child sees in its reflection a complete wholeness—plenitude. That image may be reflected in an actual mirror or the baby may see itself reflected in the primary caregiver or another child. This *méconnaissance* is not to be read as a literal act necessarily, but understood as a trope for necessary misrecognitions that will occur continuously throughout a subject's life.

The child recognises in this inversion a reflection of the perfect union of caregiver and child, and then realises a fundamental split between the reflection and itself. It misrecognises itself in the mirrored image (understood as wholeness, unity, totality—the perfect fulfilment of desire), cognisant of a disjuncture between its reality and the reflection. The reflected image of bond between child and caregiver is idealised in the imaginary as that ideal, blissful state where the child's every need, want, and desire is fulfilled completely with the caregiver. The domain of the desired image is the imaginary order, the psychic realm where the ego is produced over and over again through identifications with desired objects and ideals (Aoki 1999a; 1999b; Evans; Leader & Groves; Zizek).

It is from a position of otherness that the child recognises itself in the split between its inadequacy and the reflection of perfection. "The child identifies with an image outside him[/her]self" (Leader & Groves 21). The ego is the result of identifying with the image of itself as whole. The dissonance between the two (wholeness and the uncoordinated "baby" body) is alienating, as the child desires to perceive itself as the counterpart. The child realises that the body it has in relation to the idealised image of the Imaginary mirror phase is an incomplete body, which is experienced as a fragmented body. For the infant, the contrast is felt as a threat, which "gives rise to an aggressive tension between the subject and the image" (Evans 115). The subject is split from itself, and the desire to fulfil the unity of the caregiver / child union propels the child into language. In attempting to signify its desire for the fulfilment of plenitude (the mirrored image), the child is subjected to the Law, becoming a subject within the symbolic order (Evans; Leader & Groves; Zizek).

The mirror phase is the primary identification producing the ego in the imaginary order. A secondary identification must occur for

"the passage from the imaginary order to the symbolic order," and this secondary identification concludes the Oedipus complex (Evans 127). In the contentious Oedipal complex, it is suggested that the child realises that s/he cannot fulfil the primary caregiver's (typically the mother's) imagined desire beyond the child itself (represented by the phallus[9]), because the Name of the Father (the symbolic law, language, the nom/non du père) *has* the phallus, and is neither sharing nor exchanging it. This prohibition relieves the child of the responsibility of trying to *be* the phallus to fulfil the mother's desire, and instead, the child identifies (through a forced prohibition in the so-called "castration complex") with the Name of the Father (entry into language, the symbolic order, subjecthood). "The phallus represents what we lose in entering the world of language—the fact that the message will always be slipping away, that what we want will always be out of reach because of the fact that we speak" (Leader & Groves 99). Lack (of unity or wholeness) propels the subject into language to attempt to attain that original desire for the ideal. The subject continues to misrecognise its ideal, and now attempts to fulfil that lack through language in the symbolic order. Language, in its constant deferral of meaning, cannot fulfil the desire. The reflected unity of wholeness is an unattainable ideal, which is paradoxically ordered and stabilised from within the symbolic order (Evans; Leader & Groves). The ideal ego and ego ideal each emerge out of the production of the ego (an imaginary identification) and the subject (a symbolic identification). "The mirror stage constitutes the 'primary identification' and gives birth to the ideal ego" (Evans 81). The ideal

---

[9] Phallus is a difficult and disputatious term. I have resisted agreeing to its use for a long time. Suffice to say that, in a Lacanian sense, the phallus is not the penis. In the imaginary, it is the object that the mother desires beyond the child, and which the child, in the preoedipal phase, attempts to "be," however it is always out of the child's reach. "The child is trying to be the object which it thinks the mother lacks. The phallus is just the name for this object: that which the mother lacks" (Leader & Groves 103). In the symbolic, the phallus becomes the ultimate signifier that has no specular image. It is this phallus that is "castrated" from the child, differentiating him/her from the mother and propelling the child into symbolic subjecthood, beyond the imaginary realm of mother and child. The phallus "is described as the 'signifier of the desire of the Other,' and the signifier of *jouissance*" (Evans 142). Certain feminists have denounced Lacan's use of phallus as reinscribing patriarchal privilege. Derrida has critiqued the notion of a transcendental signifier as simply another form of the metaphysics of presence, repeating a system of thought that is phallogocentric (Evans; Leader & Groves).

ego is the spectacle offered to the gaze. It is the image that is to be seen, the image you want to have of yourself.

Imaginary Identification: Waddell as Ideal Ego

For the Gay Games, the primary identification is with an ineluctable ideal of a Gay Olympics. The Gay Games' ideal ego is a utopic vision of a celebration of out and proud homosexual athleticism that is accorded the same status and grandeur as the International Olympics. In 1982, however, the organisation had an experience of alienation and fragmentation when it had to encounter what it actually was—a tiny, grassroots organisation being mercilessly hounded by the homophobic USOC, with Tom Waddell as a particular target in that harassment.

The figure of Waddell represents in many interesting ways the ideal ego for the Gay Games. Waddell embodied the image of the gay Olympian at the 1968 Mexico City Summer Olympics—a romanticised image the Gay Games needed for its primary identification. Waddell was an extremely charismatic, likeable and articulate man. He was able to transmit his ideal of a Gay Olympics full of other Gay Olympians in Technicolor for others, particularly other lesbian and gay athletes. He loved being an Olympic athlete. In imaginary identification (the ideal ego), identification occurs "with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves, with the image representing 'what we would like to be'" (Zizek 105). The image of "what the Gay Games would like to be" is identified with Waddell's love for the Olympic movement, his success as an Olympic athlete, and after his death, the connection of successful (gay) Olympic athletes to the Gay Games, all of whom constantly paid homage to the path blazed by Tom Waddell. The Gay Games really wanted (and wants) to be (to identify with) a utopic Gay Olympics.

While Waddell has been cast as the symbol of a Gay Olympian, the fact was, at the time of the 1968 Summer Olympics, Waddell was a very closeted fag. In the formation of the ideal ego, "the feature, the trait on the basis of which we identify with someone, is usually hidden—it is by no means necessarily a glamorous feature" (Zizek 105). While the image of a very out and proud Gay Olympics seems to make up the ideal ego, it is the illusion of pride that is necessarily propped up by homophobic, queer shame. Zizek suggests that weakness or guilt can act as identifying traits. I would add shame to

that list of possibilities, as it is the necessity of a shaming athletic and sporting establishment that even makes possible the need for the dream of an ideal Gay Olympics.

"Imaginary identification is always identification *on behalf of a certain gaze in the Other.* The question to ask is: 'For whom is the subject enacting this role? Which gaze is considered when the subject identifies himself with a certain image'?" (Zizek 106, emphasis in the original). In the case of the Gay Games and their ideal ego of a Gay Olympics, the gaze they are trying to attract, the gaze that they are considering, is the gaze of approval from the conventional, international Olympics. The early Gay Games spent much promotional energy representing the events as serious amateur athletic competition. Sanctioning each athletic event, using certified officials, and promoting serious elite athletes who agreed to participate (particularly through endorsements and/or participation by former Olympians), indicated that the Gay Games were able to attract serious competition and were athletic events of note. The downplaying of sexuality throughout the Games (best represented in the discourse of "we are more than just our (homo)sexuality") may in part be motivated through an attempt to consider the gaze of the international Olympic community. The discursive position produced is one of "even though we're gay, we're still worth endorsing because we represent serious amateur athleticism."

Waddell's figure plays an interesting role here as well. In the late 1960s he was on contract with the USOC as a medical advisor—a role that indicated some level of approval by the governing body. Depending on which archival narrative is privileged, one of the stories about the very early organising stages of Gay Games I is that Waddell initiated contact and wrote the USOC to request their approval of his use of the word "Olympic" (Davidson 51). Interestingly, a Gay Olympics primary identification was maintained (maintaining the shame / pride binary construction) even after the USOC request was denied. Those who were able to use the word "Olympic" (local politicians, authors of letters to the editor, etc.) after the court injunction were encouraged to do so (Davidson 57-58). Waddell fervently believed in and wanted "true" Olympism to be part of his event and he wanted that similarity recognised publicly in the Gay Olympics. His identification with the Olympics is poignantly reflected in a statement he made weeks before his death,

just after the Supreme Court made its ruling. "Why are gay people the only people in the world who can't use [the word 'Olympic']?" (Repa 20). This followed tough talk from a year earlier, when Waddell vowed that even if they could use the word, they wouldn't (Coe). In 1993, a little over ten years after the first Games, the Federation of Gay Games was hosted by the USOC at the USOC's invitation, a shift that was hailed as a major breakthrough in the "maturity" of the Gay Games.

Another way to understand "identifying on behalf of a certain gaze in the Other" is to consider what the gaze does in terms of producing the ideal ego. The Gay Games identified with the Olympics through an idealised Gay Olympics, and have fashioned themselves accordingly to try to gain Olympic approval ever since. The gaze of the Other was not, say, the gaze of a grassroots sports organisation. If the Gay Games had identified with an alternative sporting movement, their ideal ego would have been produced very differently. Gay Games' attorney Mary Dunlap's crusade for freeing up the term "Olympic," to be used for a whole variety of amateur sporting and recreation activities and events, illustrated that there was no identification with that cause. The dream of an emancipated Olympics was Dunlap's alone, and she could carry the cause only so far (Davidson 93).

Symbolic Identification - Waddell as Ego Ideal

The image of a Gay Olympics is only an imaginary moment. As soon as that primary identification is brought into the symbolic order through a secondary identification (which is necessary to become a subject), it necessarily fails because language in the symbolic cannot fully express meaning. The "ideal ego is always subordinated to ego ideal: it is the symbolic identification (the point from which we are observed) which dominates and determines the image" (Zizek 108). In symbolic identification, "identification of the subject with some signifying feature [or] trait, in the big Other, in the symbolic order occurs . . . [The ego ideal] assumes concrete, recognizable shape in a name or in a mandate that the subject takes upon himself and/or is bestowed on him" (Zizek 104).

The ego ideal was bestowed upon the Gay Games through the prohibition of a Gay Olympics. Indeed, the Gay Games were *brought into language (and being)* by the prohibition on the word "Olympic."

The law (the literal judicial law of the Supreme Court that represents the Law of the Father—the symbolic law) forced the Gay Games to define themselves according to a network of disciplining symbols outside of an imaginary dyad of Gay (and) Olympics. To become a viable "cultural subject," the Gay Games were forced to subjectivate themselves to the symbolic (Leader & Groves). The law does not forbid the Gay Games, only the Gay Olympics. The ego ideal (symbolic identification) was then produced through identification with what remains and that was gay pride (in a myriad of manifestations) at the Gay Games. The law facilitates the production of the event:

> The constitution of the ego by identification with something which is outside (and even against) the subject is what "structures the subject as a rival with himself" and thus involves aggressivity and alienation . . . Symbolic identification is the identification with the father [being named, brought into language] in the final stage of the Oedipus Complex which gives rise to the formation of the ego-ideal. It is by means of this secondary identification that the subject transcends the aggressivity inherent in the primary identification. (Evans 81)

The primary identification with a Gay Olympics was in contradistinction to the gay pride of the Gay Games. As they tried to emulate the international Olympics, the small, shoestring organisation felt alienated. The newly formed subject of the Gay Games transcended the foreclosed Gay *Olympics* identification. The Gay Games produced an ever more successful event, almost approximating (but never quite completely) Olympic splendour. The secondary (symbolic) identification with gay pride effectively transcends the alienation felt in the original identification by a fledgling queer organisation identifying with an Olympic edifice. The celebration of the Gay Games is predicated upon gay pride, but the event disavows carefully and fastidiously any formal Olympic connection. A Gay Olympics is foreclosed, meaning it cannot return in the symbolic, and thus Gay Games pride is about the Gay Games and not about the Olympics. "Since the symbolic is the realm of the law, and since the Oedipus complex is the conquest of the symbolic order, it has a normative and normalising function" (Evans 129). The prohibition on Olympic clearly illustrates how the Name of the Father

prohibits the subject from having the phallus, which, in this case, is the dream of a Gay Olympics. That symbolic prohibition also cements homophobic shame to a Gay Olympics.

The ego ideal, as symbolic identification, is "identification with the very place *from where* we are being observed, *from where* we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves likeable, worthy of love" (Zizek 105). The Gay Games must observe themselves from a place of gay pride so that the Gay Games can recuperate and celebrate queer athleticism in the symbolic order. The ego ideal is gay pride that matches and even rivals the intensity of Olympic pride, glamour and discipline. The ego ideal is sustained through the specular images of athletic pride that are put on vibrant display at every Gay Games spectacle.

Tom Waddell, as the founder and main organiser of the inaugural Gay Games, celebrated gay pride at every point in the first event. As Heather Zwicker (2002) has noted, pride is, among other things, about not backing down, and Waddell absolutely did not retreat from repeated and serious threats from the USOC. The ego ideal of Gay Games pride was situated in Tom Waddell's vision of gay pride. And, when the living version of Waddell was no longer present, the measure of gay pride has often been accounted for in appeals to Waddell's memory and vision for the Gay Games. Almost every major decision and policy direction the FGG has taken has been justified through invoking Waddell's philosophy as it aligns with his vision of gay pride through organised athleticism.

Waddell functions as a psychic "good bargain" for the Gay Games as he is a "two-fer"—a two-for-one deal. He appears to inhabit both the ideal ego and the ego ideal. To sustain identification, the necessary illusion is that the ideal ego and the ego ideal cohere, but it is an illusion—an identification that is based on misrecognition. While Waddell's figure seems to embody both the ideal ego and ego ideal simultaneously, there is a constant slipping back and forth of a metonymic dance between a Gay Games pride and a Gay Olympics dream propped up by a shaming Olympics. The ego ideal is the position from which you can be misrecognised as your ideal ego. It would only be from a position of Gay Games gay pride (the ego ideal) that the Gay Games would (mis)recognise themselves as the utopic Gay Olympics, and each of the ego ideal and ideal ego could use the figure of Tom Waddell to support either purpose.

In imaginary identification, we "imitate the other at the level of resemblance . . . We identify ourselves with the image of the other inasmuch as we are 'like him'" (Zizek 109). The other the Gay Games desires to imitate—to be "like them"—is the International Olympic Games. Over against imaginary identification, however, is symbolic identification in which we "identify ourselves with the other precisely at a point at which he is inimitable, at the point which eludes resemblance" (Zizek 109). The Gay Games enter the symbolic realm right at the point that the Olympics are prohibited for them. They are too queer, too threatening and must be made abject. The Olympics must become inimitable for the Gay Games. For, at the point that an imaginary identification is fulfilled within the symbolic, psychosis occurs (Leader & Groves). But the ego ideal identification with gay pride supplants the Olympic dream to produce a proud Gay Games identification. "This interplay of imaginary and symbolic identification under the domination of symbolic identification constitutes the mechanism by means of which the subject is integrated into a given socio-symbolic field—the way he/she assumes certain mandates" (Zizek 110). The inescapable symbolic identification with gay pride for the Gay Games plays itself out in the production of the very "prideful" gay and lesbian athletic spectacle.

The formation of the ego ideal is the culmination of the Oedipal identification with the Father (Butler 1990; Evans). The ego ideal is related to the judging superego: "The superego is an unconscious agency whose function is to repress sexual desire for the mother, whereas the ego-ideal exerts a conscious pressure towards sublimation and provides the coordinates which enable the subject to take up a sexual position as a man or a woman" (Evans 52). The figure of the mother in the Oedipal complex functions as shaming Olympism in the production of the Gay Games. The Gay Games' superego represses the shame (of the shaming Olympics) that is an integral part of the constitutive moment for the event. Olympism must also be repressed. The ego ideal, as gay pride at the Gay Games, identifies with the "gay" half of the prohibited Gay Olympics. The father figure for the Gay Games is gay pride. Gay pride (standing in for the father) must be identified with, while the sacred Olympics, representing the phallus the Gay Games cannot have, is let go by the male child. In the production of a male subject, the Law of the Father holds out the promise that someday the male child will get

the phallus back—will have the phallus—but that, implicitly, it must be given up now (Leader & Groves). The Gay Games shall continue to seek the promise of the fulfilment of the Olympic phallus, continue to function as a place of male privilege and patriarchal power, and have, over the years, attempted to court the approval of the USOC (Davidson 138-142).

Waddell's loss therefore works in complicated ways and functions, contradictorily at times, to support and mediate between the ideal ego and ego ideal, subtly guiding the formation and trajectory of Gay Games discourse. The Gay Games subject is the out, proud, gay athlete and Waddell's image insistently governs its representations. He is lurking in the ideal ego of a utopic Gay Olympics that he almost embodied and attempted to create. As ego ideal, Waddell decidedly urges gay athletic pride on, being in his life and his death one of the Gay Games' loudest pride cheerleaders. However, what the memorial practices of the Gay Games do in insistently remembering and paying homage to Tom Waddell is to keep intact the loss of the dream of a Gay Olympics. While ostensibly celebrating the gay athletic pride philosophy that he so fiercely championed, Waddell's figure concomitantly reinscribes the homophobic blow the USOC and US Supreme Court delivered in 1987 when they foreclosed the Gay Olympics. The Gay Games emerged, metonymically linked with Waddell, to be founded and predicated on that injurious loss—a shameful loss that is unwittingly remembered and necessarily reiterated in complicated ways through Gay Games memorial practices.

Works Cited

The following frequently cited abbreviations are used:

BAR – *Bay Area Reporter*, San Francisco.

FGG – Federation of Gay Games

GG – Gay Games

GLC – Gay and Lesbian Center Collection in the SFPL History Centre.

MVAAA – Metropolitan Vancouver Athletic and Arts Association

SFAA – San Francisco Arts and Athletics, Inc.

SFPL – San Francisco Public Library

Aoki, Doug. Lecture notes. *Sociology 537 - Sociology of Knowledge*, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. January–April, 1999a.

Aoki, Doug. Lecture notes. *Sociology 631 - Seminar in Advanced Sociological Theory: Judith Butler and Slavoj Zizek*, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. September–December, 1999b.

The American Run for the End of AIDS. "International Rainbow Memorial Run." Information sheet. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - FGG Business 95–96, 1998.

Board of Directors – New York in '94. [Bid Proposal]. SFPL, GLC 27, Box – Derek GG IV NYC 1994, File – Big Blue Binder. 30 March, 1990.

Brazil, Eric. "Tom Waddell: Tribute to a 'true Olympian'." *San Francisco Chronicle* 19 July 1987: B1, B8.

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

———. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Closing Ceremonies - Gay Games IV. Official Program. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - Derek GG IV NYC 1994. 25 June, 1994.

Coe, Roy M. *A Sense of Pride: The Story of Gay Games II*. San Francisco: Pride Publications, 1986.

Conkin, D. "Longtime community leader Rikki Streicher dies." *BAR* 25 August 1994: 1,6.

Davidson, J. "The wannabe Olympics: The Gay Games, Olympism, and processes of incorporation." Diss. U of Alberta, 2003.

Diamond, Nicola. "Introjection." *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*. Ed. Elizabeth Wright. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 176–178.

Dunlap, Mary. Letter to Sara Lewinstein. SFPL, GLC 27, Box #3 - Games Clippings, File - Minutes from SFAA Board - GG II, #2. 31 March 1988.

Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London:Routledge, 1996.

Farrell, Dee. "FGG seeks nominees for the Waddell Cup." Press release. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - FGG Business 82–94, File: Dereks' Red Binder - FGG 1989 thru 1994. 10 June 1990.

Fernandez, Elizabeth. (1987, March 15). "AIDS: Olympian's most demanding test." *San Francisco Chronicle* 15 March 1987: B1.

FGG Board of Directors. Meeting minutes. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - FGG Business 82-94, File: Federation Board Meeting Information and Minutes October 91–November 92. 2 June 1990.

FGG Executive Committee. Conference Call minutes. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - FGG Business 82–94, File: Federation Executive Minutes 1987–88. 10 October 1989.

———. Conference Call minutes. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - FGG Business 82–94, File: Federation Board Meeting Information and Minutes - October 91–November 92. 9 July 1990.

———. "Committee assignments for 1991." Memo to FGG Board Members. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - FGG Business 82-94, File: Big Red Binder. 15 February 1991.

Forzley, Richard and Hughes, Douglas, eds. (1990). *The Spirit Captured: The Official Photojournal of Celebration '90 - Gay Games III & Cultural Festival.* Vancouver, BC: For Eyes Press, 1990.

Gay, Peter, ed. *The Freud Reader.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989.

Leader, Darien, and Groves, Judy. *Lacan for Beginners.* Cambridge: Icon, 1995.

"Letter from Australia". SFPL, GLC 27, GG III - Unprocessed Box for Series III - Mail Out 1988. December 1988.

Mandel, Bill. "How Olympic foes hurt Tom Waddell's memory." *San Francisco Chronicle* 30 March 1988: A5.

———. "With the death of Tom Waddell, a child loses her dad and S.F. loses one of its best." *San Francisco Chronicle* 12 July 1987: B3.

Marcus, Mr. "Warren Cave, Dr. Tom Waddell Men of the Year." *BAR* 5 March 1987: 32.

McDell, Barry. "Waddell's dream of an international Gay Games is fulfilled." *Celebration '90: Newsletter of Gay Games III and Cultural Festival* June 1989: 4. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - Vancouver - Integrate into Series III, File: Celebration '90 - Fundraising/ Business Backer.

Miller, Toby. "Scouting for boys: Sport looks at men." *Tourism, leisure, sport: Critical perspectives.* Eds. D. Rowe & G. Lawrence. Rydalmere, NSW: Hodder Education, 1998. 194–203.

Moor, Paul. "Gay Olympian in his own words." *San Francisco Chronicle* 13 July 1987: 41.

MVAAA Board of Directors. Meeting minutes. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - Integrate into Series III Material, File: MVAAA Meeting Minutes. 9 April 1989.

New York in '94. "Games can change the world: Unity 94." Corporate fundraising information package. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - Derek GGIV NYC 1994, File - Big Blue Binder. 1993.

Newquist, Jay. "Gay Games promoter Zohn Artman dies." *BAR* 2 October 1987: 18.

Neyts, Rob. "The Tom Waddell Trophy Transfer, Insurance, and Shipping Requirements." Letter to FGG Co-Presidents. SFPL, GLC 27, Box – FGG Business 82–94, File – Federation Board Information and Minutes October 91–November 92. 2 May 1991.

Opening & Closing Ceremonies. *The Games Guide: The Official Guide to all Gay Games IV and Cultural Festival Events.* SFPL, GLC 27, Box - Derek GG IV 1994 NYC. 1994, 44

Opening Ceremonies - Gay Games IV. Official Program. SFPL, GLC 27, Box -Derek GG IV 1994 NYC. 18 June 1994.

"Personal trophy project." *Celebration '90: Newsletter of Gay Games III and Cultural Festival.* Vancouver, BC: MVAAA. SFPL, GLC 27, Series III, Box 3 - Games Clippings, File: Folder #4. November–December, 1988.

Peterson, Rick. & Kennedy, Susan. Letter to FGG Board. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - FGG Business 82–94, Derek's Red Binder - FGG 1989 thru 1994. 4 April, 1994.

"Photo file." SFPL, GLC 27, Box - GGV 98 RoseMary Mitchell Material, FilE Photos. 1998.

Probyn, Elspeth. "Sporting bodies: Dynamics of shame and pride." *Body & Society*, 6 (2000): 13–28.

Repa, Barbara Kate. (1987, June 26). "No Gay Olympics, high court says." *San Francisco Chronicle* 26 June 1987: A1, A20.

Ross, B. "Rikki Streicher" Editorial. *BAR* 25 August 1994: 6.

"A salute to Tom Waddell." Photograph. *BAR* 2 July 1987: 14.

Schaap, Dick. "Death of an athlete." *Sports Illustrated* 27 July 1987: 26–32. SFPL, GLC 27, Series IV, Box 8, Folder 3: Information Pack.

———. "Sports commentator makes his plans for New York in '94." *Unity '94: The official sponsorship newsletter of the 1994 Gay Games*, 1 (Spring 1991): 1,4. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - Derek GG IV NYC 1994.

Scheer, Robert. "Decathlon champion's final hurdle." *San Francisco Chronicle* 24 October 1986: 33.

SFAA Board of Directors. Meeting minutes. SFPL, GLC 27, Box 1, Series I, Folder: 1982 Gay Olympic Games. 3 March 1986.

———. Meeting Minutes. SFPL, GLC 27, Assorted Box Unprocessed - Box #3 - Games Clippings From Rosemary Mitchell. 6 April 1988.

"They stole a word." *BAR* 5 November, 1987: 6.

"Tom Waddell dead at age 49, founder of S.F.'s Gay Games." *San Francisco Chronicle* 12 July 1987: B1.

"Tom Waddell Trophy." *Celebration '90: Gay Games III & Cultural Festival, 7*. Official Program. Vancouver, BC: MVAAA. Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California Archives, Box - Gay Games, File: GG III Ephemera. 1990.

Waddell, Tom. "Update '82 Olympics: The good news is..." *BAR* 11 February 1982: 25.

———, & Schaap, Dick. *Gay Olympian: The Life and Death of Dr. Tom Waddell*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996.

Weiss, P. "Olympian comes out." *Unity '94: The official sponsorship newsletter of the 1994 Gay Games*, 1 (Spring 1991): 1, 4. SFPL, GLC 27, Box - Derek GG IV NYC 1994.

White, Allen. "AIDS claims Olympian Waddell: Gay Games organizer honored by city." *BAR* 16 July 1987a: 1, 23.

———. "Hundreds mourn Tom Waddell in City Hall service." *BAR* 23 July 1987b: 13.

Zizek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso, 1989.

Zwicker, Heather. "Hometown pride." *Vue Weekly: Edmonton's 100% Independent News and Entertainment Weekly - Pride Issue 2002*, 347 (13–19 June 2002): 11, 14.

"What We Do Well": Writing the Pussy Palace into a Queer Collective Memory[1]

JENNIFER BLAIR

Jennifer Blair is completing a PhD in English at McMaster University. Her dissertation focuses on literature and architecture in early North America.

> We're happy, not just for ourselves, but that the women who attended were vindicated—in our behaviour, in what we do and what we do well.
>
> — Jill Hornick

When Toronto Bathhouse Committee members Rachel Aitcheson and Jill Hornick were dismissed of charges of "disorderly conduct" under Ontario's Liquor Act, they declared the ruling a "vindication."[2] In a statement delivered on the footsteps of the old city hall courthouse after the case, Hornick extended the scope of the decision beyond herself and Aitcheson to all "the women who attended." In doing so, she proffered an understanding that Justice Hryn's ruling would affect Pussy Palace patrons and, most likely, their future participation in similar events.

---

[1] Many thanks go to Sylvia Bowerbank and Daniel Coleman for helpful comments on this essay in its early stages. I would also like to thank Sharon Rosenberg and the editors of *Torquere* for their key questions with respect to the Pussy Palace and its losses. Finally, I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for financial support during the writing of this essay.

[2] Hornick and Aitcheson were charged with three counts of disorderly conduct: one count of failing to provide sufficient security, one count of serving liquor outside the prescribed area and one count of serving liquor outside prescribed hours ("Charges").

The judge's likening of the search of the Pussy Palace patrons to a strip search (conducted by five male police officers), and thereby a violation of the privacy rights of the women and transgender people who were there, sets a precedent for the "protection" of bathhouses to come.[3] But it is the curiously worded finale to Hornick's statement that is especially powerful. Hornick concludes that the Pussy Palace patrons should feel vindicated "in our behaviour, in what we do and what we do well" (Gillespie A8).[4] As part of a list of vindications, "behaviour" and "do" are remarkably ambiguous terms and my project in this article is to make the most of their capaciousness—after all, just what did the Pussy Palace patrons "do" so "well" before, during, and after the police investigation?

Mixing erotic suggestion and political strategy, Hornick's statement showcases the patrons' two most significant accomplishments. The first is a curious disregard of the court having anything to do with the outcome, even though it was technically Hryn's decision to disallow the evidence collected in the search that granted Hornick and Aitcheson absolution. In fact, the only active agents Hornick acknowledges in the case are the patrons, and to them she grants almost endless possibilities conjured by the terms "behaviour" and "do." The second accomplishment that Hornick both demonstrates and addresses in her statement, especially by this gesture to a certain active constituency vindicated by this ruling, is the collective community brought about by this occasion—when the Pussy Palace was searched, ruined for the night, and threatened to become lost altogether.

While the Pussy Palace may be understood to have constituted a community prior to the raid, my argument is that this collectivity was founded according to a certain history of loss. Most importantly, it is how the Pussy Palace takes up and responds to its losses that it offers its strongest challenge to anti-queer, anti-sex politics. Taking my cue from Hornick, I argue that the Pussy Palace's most effective politics comes not in the ruling itself—not in the "vindication" by

---

[3] The search took place at the September 15, 2000 Pussy Palace.

[4] In the CBC Online news article, "Lesbian Bathhouse Raid Charges Tossed By Judge," this statement is attributed to Aitcheson. In an article in the *Toronto Star*, Loralee Gillis, another Committee member at the time, is quoted as saying, "We feel quite vindicated in this judgment."

the rule of law—but rather in the articulations of a collective, a collective that refuses to lament the Pussy Palace explicitly and that refuses to celebrate the ruling as the guarantee of a future presence. Moreover, this is a collective whose presence is itself always in question. The discourse surrounding the Pussy Palace case I address here certainly signals a collective, but at the same time this collective is never wholly recognizable and identifiable by the law or even by its own members. Instead, the collective is written into queer collective memory by these writings, remains partial, ambiguously located in time, and shifting in terms of its membership.

Several reports commented upon this collective presence associated with, if not formed by, this case. As Bob Fisher, a Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Police Advisory Committee member said, "If nothing else, what happened at the bath did something that no one else has been able to accomplish. It actually united the community" (qtd. in Darra). While the implication here that the community had not been united before the Pussy Palace search is perhaps extreme, what it lights upon is the fact that there is something unique about this queer community evident in the responses to it. This uniqueness, I suggest, has to do with the way in which the Pussy Palace is articulated and positioned in terms of loss and, in effect, usurps the law and its visual and auditory practices—its search and identification procedures. Hryn's decision, therefore, did not miss the mark when it hit upon the police search as the lynchpin of the case. And Hryn did not mince his words when he condemned the police as follows: "The search was carried out in an unreasonable manner....There was no reason why male rather than female officers were used...I find the breach to be serious. It was flagrant and outrageous. The charter violations would shock the conscience of the public" (qtd. in Prout). But even with all the semantic might of the decision, the discourse surrounding the Pussy Palace case that was generated outside the courtroom does an even better job of troubling the search. This Pussy Palace writing attests to a community that is at once within the sights and earshot of the law, but at the same time very much capable of turning the tables on the conventions of this perceptual field so that it remains both "lost" and "found"—or "never lost"—at one and the same time.

All in all, the Pussy Palace lends itself to a narrative of "lost and found" as much as it does to a narrative of "lost and won," but

it is the authorities who seem to do both the finding and recovering. In other words, the only place for the Pussy Palace to be is lost, even if Hornick and Aitcheson are not exactly the losers (although they did not technically "win" the case, the case was dismissed when the evidence was disallowed). And "lost" is precisely where it wants to be. To keep with Hornick, the discussion that follows looks to what the Pussy Palace "does" with its loss. The answer that I pursue in the following three sections is this: the writing of the Pussy Palace following the occasion of its own susceptibility to being lost is to produce more loss.

That said, the task of this inquiry into the writing surrounding this case, including pre- and post-raid memoirs, news reports from the mainstream and alternative press, and verbatim text from the ruling, is not to seek out any specific lost object of the Pussy Palace. As I show in the first two sections on memory and the loss of time in the "genre" of bathhouse literature, and in the Pussy Palace documents specifically, readers of these texts find themselves quickly diverted from such a project—if not counseled against it. The third section borrows from an essay by Alys Eve Weinbaum on the gendered nature of modernist writings about loss. Building from her argument that the subject responds to the shocking sights of urban decay or feminine "lack" with a "loss of visual acuity," I interpret one of the most remarkable discursive relics of the case whereby, upon seeing the cops enter the bathhouse, one patron reports to have momentarily mistaken them for butch lesbians (Weinbaum 398). The fourth and final section discusses how, in part through this loss of seeing, the writing surrounding the Pussy Palace helped lose the evidence—in other words, how it produced the loss that led to Hornick and Aitcheson's dismissal and, by association, the collective "vindication."

Remembering the History of the Gay Bathhouse

As Dianne Chisholm has pointed out, loss is the catalyst for a number of historiographical texts whose principle focus is the gay bathhouse. Discussing Louis Aragon's *Paris Peasant*, Allan Bérubé's "The History of Gay Bathhouses," George Chauncey's *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World,* Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming Pool Library* and Samuel Delany's *The Motion of Light in Water, Sex and Science Fiction Writing in the*

East Village: 1960-1965, among several other such bathhouse texts, Chisholm suggests that "gay historiography must write against the forgetfulness of mainstream culture. It does so with nostalgia in an attempt to rally collective memory" (244). But for Chisholm this memory of a collective associated with the bathhouse—which includes memories of a collective—is most politically volatile when it violates "readerly perception which looks for homogenous representation of collective space and experience" (259). Working within a paradigm of remembering theorized by Walter Benjamin, in which, contrary to a capitalist dream space of progress and consumer distraction, history is conceived "as a monad, not a spatio-temporal continuum of progress and expansion," Chisholm argues that bathhouse literature is most effective when it troubles this continuum (Chisholm 254). As a whole, her essay celebrates those bathhouse texts which put into play a "technique of seeing history in a dialectical image" where "history—or thinking history—comes to a stop in an image of extreme contradiction" (254). Drawing directly from Benjamin's *Konvolut 'N'* of his *Das Passagen-Werk* ("On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress" in *The Arcades Project*), Chisholm explains that this technique involves a specific focus on images and "entails a radical form of *citation*" (254, original emphasis). If, as Chisholm recalls, for Benjamin, "'To write history means to *quote* history'" then bathhouse literature especially accomplishes this quoting of history, taking place "not as a recitation of what capitalism inventories as success but as a montage of juxtaposed antitheses collected from materials which traditional historicism overlooks as trash and trivia" (Benjamin 476, Chisholm 254).[5]

In general, the arguments that follow situate the Pussy Palace within the history of Chisholm's loosely amalgamated "genre" of gay male bathhouse literature, paying attention to the much overlooked discursive matter ("trashy" matter in some cases) surrounding the case. Broadly, the Pussy Palace writing makes use of so many of the motifs characteristic to gay male bathhouse texts that it easily lends itself to this comparison. But, instead of regarding

[5] The full quotation from Benjamin, also noted by Chisholm, is "To write history thus means to *cite* history. It belongs to the concept of citation, however, that the historical object in each case is torn from its context" (476).

these similarities as natural, coincidental, or passively absorbed from one bathhouse text to the next, irrespective of the gender difference of its planners and patrons, I read them as actively (though not necessarily consciously or intentionally) borrowed from the gay male bathhouse literary tradition and its influences. In other words, by "citing" this tradition, to use Benjamin's term, the Pussy Palace writing appropriates its regard for the loss of the gay bathhouse as the impetus for remembering, a remembering that does not correspond to its instigating loss. Even though the texts in question are prompted by the possibility of the bathhouse being lost, they refuse to allow the Pussy Palace to become the ultimate lost object and therefore neatly periodized and slated into the author's memory. Instead, what the Pussy Palace writing remembers is a certain historical process identifiable in the earlier bathhouse narratives—the process of becoming visible, of becoming known, of identification—a process rendered invisible but made apparent by these predecessor texts' chronicling of occasions when the bathhouse was under threat of being lost.

Delany's *The Motion of Light in Water* is one text that seems to be recalled by the Pussy Palace writing. In a passage addressed by Chisholm, and earlier by Joan Scott in her essay "The Evidence of Experience," Delany remembers the precarious moments associated with the bathhouse only when he can appropriate their disturbing qualities for his own benefit. For example, Delany recalls a police raid years after the fact when he visits the St. Marks Baths. Since I want to situate this passage as a kind of precursor to several Pussy Palace writings, it is worth quoting at length. As Delany describes in his memoir, St. Marks

> was lit only in blue, the distant bulbs appearing to have red centers. In the gym-sized room were sixteen rows of beds, four to a rank, or sixty-four altogether. I couldn't see any of the beds themselves, though, because there were three times that many people (maybe a hundred twenty-five) in the room. Perhaps a dozen of them were standing. The rest were an undulating mass of naked, male bodies, spread wall to wall.
>
> My first response was a kind of heart-thudding astonishment, very close to fear.
>
> I have written of a space at certain libidinal saturation before. That was not what frightened me. It was rather that

> the saturation was not only kinesthetic but visible. You could see what was going on throughout the dorm.
>
> The only time I'd come close to feeling the fear before was once, one night, when I had been approaching the trucks, and a sudden group of policemen, up half a block, had marched across the street, blowing their whistles.
>
> It had been some kind of raid. What frightened was, oddly, not the raid itself, but rather the sheer number of men who suddenly began to appear, most of them running, here and there from between the vans....
>
> What the exodus from the trucks made graphically clear, what the orgy at the baths pictured with frightening range and intensity, was an act that flew in the face of that whole fifties image....
>
> But what *this* experience said was that there was a population—not of individual homosexuals, some of whom now and then encountered, or that those encounters could be human and fulfilling in their way—not of hundreds, not of thousands, but rather of millions of gay men, and that history had, actively and already, created for us whole galleries of institutions, good and bad, to accommodate our sex. (Delany 173-4)

What sparks Delany's memory is not the police or the numbers of gay men present (even though this mass of people impresses upon him enormously). Instead, it is the similar conditions by which his vision of this image of gay men is compromised by a set of limitations affiliated with dominant regimes of looking, seeing, and identification. For Delany the dim blue light at St. Marks corresponds to the vision of men retreating from the police during a raid of the trucks parked at the end of Christopher Street where gay men met for sex.

In a similar fashion, the Pussy Palace writings remember various procedures of identification put into play by the discovery of a loss. That said, there are some significant differences in the conditions of remembering in which Delany engages and those that pertain to the Pussy Palace. One significant difference, of course, is that the Pussy Palace is a bathhouse exclusively for women and transgendered people. So, while Delany's memory of visiting St. Marks leads to what Chisholm refers to as a "wish image of the future" (266), this look to the future is the result of his "awareness of catastrophe" in the

"present 'era of AIDS'" (Chisholm 266 quoting from Delany 175). Further, as Chisholm argues, it is this catastrophe that "compels Delany to remember the past with political foresight" (266); or—in other words, to engage in a kind of strategic remembering akin to Benjamin's thinking of history dialectically—here, where past and future combine to manipulate this catastrophic present. The Pussy Palace patrons' catastrophe is both similar and different than Delany's. As women, the Pussy Palace authors are well-versed in issues of loss, but at the same time, especially in the era of AIDS, there are some losses which affect them differently than they do gay male bathhouse patrons. Furthermore, as a bathhouse targeted by police, it recalls the closures of bathhouses in the 1980s that prompted the writing of Bérubé's history and portions of several other bathhouse texts, texts which came as the result of various governments' homophobic and misdirected responses to AIDS. In this respect, the loss of the bathhouse and the losses of so many millions of people to this epidemic are linked. Part of the charge of "forgetfulness" has to do with the fact that mainstream culture does its best to forget about AIDS and those who have died of it. This is another way in which, when it comes to queer literature of the past two decades, Chisholm's "rally" of "collective memory" inevitably has political implications. But Chisholm also points out that, where retrospect is a key political tool, this forgetting is no longer entirely lamentable as long as the remembering occurs in a particular, politically effective way as it does in the gay male bathhouse literature like Delany's, and, I would add, in the writing on the Pussy Palace.

The "politics of remembering" that was developed largely out of AIDS activism has come to be useful in responding to a variety of queer-associated losses, including losses of place, of social recognition, of millions of people, of the knowledge of self and of sexual possibility. Often scholarship attuned to this remembering has become less concerned with the lost object and more concerned with the way in which subjects and objects are constituted through the unique dynamics of loss. For such remembering projects have found themselves riddled with the paradoxes that come with loss. By remembering people who have died or remembering queer communities that have gone missing from inclusion in mainstream culture, queers—and writers of bathhouse narratives in particular—must engage the loss of their own community, their own culture.

The result, as Judith Butler explains, is that "[l]oss becomes condition and necessity for a certain sense of community." But this community "*cannot* overcome the loss without losing the very sense of itself as a community" (468).[6] Remembering, then, is a complicated practice that requires some strategy if it is to be politically effectual but still reckoned with as somehow only partial. When loss is a condition of permanence in the queer community, attempts to altogether recover forgotten people or reinsert queers into the conventions of history have a detrimental effect. On the flip side, partial remembrances can be taken as the sign of a collective unwilling to become unlost. In fact, as the Butler citation above indicates, this is the only way a collective can be signaled without undoing itself in the process. Accordingly, while the significance of the Pussy Palace's foundation of a community is undeniable, this community is not always immediately present in its writing. What's more, overall the consistently elusive references to loss and memory in the writing about the Pussy Palace may do more for the collective's security than the more direct references like Hornick's and Fisher's.

Loss of Time

Butler's comments about the relationship between loss and community appear in her "Afterword" to David L. Eng's and David Kazanjian's recent collection *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Here, Butler welcomes the "new kind of scholarship" on loss for the way in which it "seeks to bring theory to bear on the analysis of social and political life, in particular, to the temporality of social and political life" (467). When it comes to the loss of place, this new scholarship does not take up the "voice of traditional modernism" that would find in the loss of place a "new place [...] of no belonging, where subjectivity becomes untethered from its collective fabric, where individuation becomes a historical necessity" (468). Instead, it theorizes "a place where belonging now takes place in and through

[6] One descriptor used for the Pussy Palace continued to bother me until I considered it in terms of this melancholia. In an article in *eye Magazine*, Sky Gilbert called the Pussy Palace a "haven" (2). What troubled me about this statement was its association with a "safe haven" and the coinciding image of women hiding out from the world. But "haven" can also be thought as the place where this loss is harbored, where the loss will remain loss in the productive sense that it leads to so much politically useful discussion.

a common sense of loss (which does not mean that all losses are the same)" (468). The parallels with the Pussy Palace are more than clear: the collective identifies with their common experience of grieving the loss of the bathhouse. But this belonging does not play itself out in the Pussy Palace writing so directly. At least, while the principal loss at stake is clearly the loss of the bathhouse, this particular loss is never mentioned. There is not a single comment like "the Pussy Palace might not happen again" or "the Pussy Palace will never be the same again." Instead this writing catalogues a wide variety of losses that do not map easily onto the presence or absence of the Pussy Palace.

One of the most significant losses attached to bathhouse culture is the loss of female sexuality. Janet Rowe, another Pussy Palace committee member at the time, commented that "A lot of women have not had the freedom to explore their sexuality...After all, young girls are not taught that their sexuality is theirs, for their own pleasure" (qtd. in Silversides). What is significant about Rowe's comment is that women's lack of knowledge of their own sexuality is a kind of loss that pre-dates the threat to the Pussy Palace. It is a loss that is addressed at the moment of this threat, but it may still be the condition of the Pussy Palace's significance even when its discontinuation is less and less likely.

There were also several remarks about the loss of any possibility of forming a working relationship with the police. City Councillor Kyle Rae lamented loss of time spent building this relationship since the 1981 Toronto bathhouse raids when more than 300 gay men were arrested on a single night: "This police action takes us back 20 years" (qtd. in Nolen and Freeze). Making matters worse, Lee Zaslofsky suggested that "there may never be a good time" to reestablish this lost relationship (qtd. in Carmichael). Zaslofsky's comment signals the prevailing sentiment of the collective to "never forget" the police raid.[7] In other words, not only was the memory of the search to be kept sacred, but also the threat of the loss of the Pussy Palace was guaranteed to endure into the future. Hornick and Aitcheson's lawyer Frank Addario echoed this gesture to the future by hoping that "this kind of thing won't happen again" (qtd. in Gillespie A8).

---

[7] Michelle Hamilton-Page stated "We're not forgetting, they [the police] can do as much PR as they want" (qtd. in Nolen and Freeze).

The danger in comments that lament an uncertain future, however, is that they tend to attribute too much power to the police. As Chisholm argues, "If we attribute the loss of this space to mainstream homophobia, we merely concede that history belongs to the victors" (269). Indeed, history does seem to belong to the police if they can whisk away twenty years of queer activism in a single night. However, we might say (as Hornick has) that in the case of the Pussy Palace, for once it is the bathhouse patrons who are the victors. In this instance, it is important to acknowledge just how they assumed this role and, especially, what they make of the "history" that now "belongs" to them. If "victory" means to assume and to occupy a certain place in time and a certain place in the city—i.e. the bathhouse—then the writings of the Pussy Palace, instead, identify with but ultimately disavow this privilege by keeping the loss of the bathhouse as something in the recent past and the potential future. When the Pussy Palace loses its place in time, it becomes much more difficult for it to be a lost place. In other words, if the Pussy Palace is a place that used to exist (existed at a certain notch on a timeline) and now does not, then it is easy to recognize as lost. But in these writings it is something different: it travels back in time and is projected into the future. Even though the event of the raid would seem to want to fix the Pussy Palace as something that occurred up to the point of its occurrence and the charges that resulted, in fact it prompted these responsive writings that snatch it out of the linear historicity to which the oppressive authority that likes bathhouse closures depends.

Loss of Sight: "Not Butch Lesbians"

As will be apparent by now, the Pussy Palace case fits with uncanny neatness into an Althusserian scene of subjection. This is the one in which the police officer calls out to an individual who turns to this figure of the law and becomes a subject by virtue of this very turning. This is a turning that signals not just an identification with the name but also, as Butler argues, with its implication of guilt.[8] Drawing

[8] In *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* Judith Butler offers a critique of the conditions of this call. One aspect of her argument relevant to my discussion is the way in which the subject's turn to the law involves also assuming a loss of all of itself that was not identified in the hail (106-131).

attention to the significance of the "call of the law" of the Pussy Palace case, Mariana Valverde, as quoted on CBC Radio news the evening of the ruling, pointed out that "[a]ll of the cases around bars and so on have always been with men, and this is the first case that involved women."[9] Are these women and trans people called by the law the same as the collective noted by Fisher, by Hornick—the same as that queer collective with a certain political agency of Chisholm's analysis?

While one of the most powerful aspects of Althusser's model is its didacticism, it is important to locate possibilities for some discrepancy between the authorities' hail and the subject's response, and also between this theoretical narrative and the events of the Pussy Palace case. On the one hand, there are undeniable privileges to being recognized as subjects with rights protected under the Charter; yet, on the other, to welcome this absolution of guilt when, before the case, guilt was not a possibility, seems terrifically misguided—as does the feeling of relief from future police harassment. After all, how does this become such a relief, when at one time the Pussy Palace patrons did not concern themselves with the possibility of a police visit? Now named by the law, it seems we remain precariously at the mercy of the court that may or may not continue to differ from police procedures. Our official inauguration into the public depends entirely upon the way in which the authorities see us, and this condition will survive beyond the legacy of the police having bungled its initial identification. But how does a collective formed out of the event of a police search identify outside the range of its scope? What or where is this other place and how do its members collect and articulate themselves there?

As noted above, the Pussy Palace writing makes use of some techniques outlined by Samuel Delany in his own memoir of a police raid of the trucks. As Scott argues, one of the most important aspects of this memory (redoubled by the fact that it takes place in a memoir) is its emphasis on the visual. It is significant that Delany

---

[9] Valverde, a criminologist at the University of Toronto, may well have been testing the specific effects of such a naming, rather than confirming its authority. In a column in *Xtra!* a few days later she voiced some concerns over the position of transgender people in this ruling that otherwise resorted to a fairly strict gender dualism (see Valverde, "A Pussy-Positive Judgement").

forgets about the trucks until he visits the St. Marks Baths and is struck with fear at being able to "*see* what was going on throughout the room" (173, my emphasis). What Delany recalls about the trucks that bears some resemblance to the scene at the bathhouse is that "what frightened was, oddly, not the raid itself, but rather the sheer number of men who suddenly began to appear, most of them running, here and there from between the vans" (174). Delany concludes: "What the exodus from the trucks made graphically clear, what the orgy at the baths pictured with frightening range and intensity, was an act that flew in the face of that whole fifties image" of the "isolated" gay man (174). Notice that Delany's memory of the trucks explicitly disregards the police as having anything to do with his realization. Rather than declare that his "fear" is the result of the raid, he attributes it to "the sheer number of men who suddenly began to appear." But even more than this, Delany also claims that "it was the contradiction with what we 'knew' that was fearful" (174). In other words, what Delany sees is different than what he knows about what it means to be gay. By seeing men flee the police, he sees that this image of isolation was produced by the social violences such as this police raid.

To paraphrase Scott, seeing is still the origin of knowing here, but only in a circuitous kind of way. What Delany sees are the historical processes of subjection in addition to the various authorities and subjects involved. Delany is fearful because, having experienced this contradiction with what he "knew," there is so much more uncertainty with respect to his own sense of self and the world at large. This is the uniquely paradoxical situation that comes with the police raid—it accomplishes at least as much collective identification on the part of its so-called queer "victims" as it does monger fear and reproduce the image of queer isolation. The fact that the raid must undertake an optical investment to accomplish what it wants—again, this "image" of gay isolation—guarantees that it will pave the way for an alternative image of an amassed queer collective identity. This is in fact what happens with Delany, who identifies with a collective "we" that has been coerced into identifying under this false "knowledge" of the gay man. As Chisholm explains, "The 'I' of Delany's memoirs becomes the 'we' of history's collective assembly the moment straight urban mythology is revised by politicized memory" (266).

It is important to remember that Delany is only able to see this "we" when he is at the bathhouse, remembering a police raid but not presently subject to one. As Scott and Chisholm both argue, although to quite different ends, it is not so much the masses that trigger Delany's memory. Rather it is a process of seeing in a visual field subject to constraint that, by the time he is at St. Marks, Delany is able to identify and appropriate for the purposes of his own envisioning. In other words, Delany can reproduce optic limitation without the imposition of the police. His substitution for the blue uniforms of the N.Y.P.D. is the uniformity of a blue light. As Scott concludes, it is the blue "wavering light" that "permits a vision beyond the visible, a vision that contains the fantastic projections...that are the basis for political identification" (410). Through this police search of the past, Delany comes to participate in a practice of seeing, one that was called to his attention by the police, but that leads to different visions and consequences. Most notably, it leads not to the elimination of gay men from public knowledge and sight, but rather to their inclusion in it.

Just as it does in Delany's memoir, the "call of the law" comes to an interesting impasse in the following passage in an article by Josey Vogels on the Pussy Palace raid. Like Delany, Vogels appropriates something of the practice of seeing brought by the police in order to turn the raid into a moment of productive queer envisioning. But, while Delany experiences the loss of an image of himself in favour of one of a collective, in Vogels' article this loss is something experienced by the police at least as much as it is by the Pussy Palace patrons. Vogels writes:

> ...after an exploration of the sweaty dance floor, the sauna and the "fun room," ...I suddenly look up and see five guys making their way through the variously clad women.
>
> Just for a second, I imagine they might be really butch lesbians, but, oh, horrors, they're plain-clothes cops. (27)

To appreciate the effect of Vogels' observation, I draw from Alys Eve Weinbaum's "Ways of Not Seeing: (En)gendered Optics in Benjamin, Baudelaire, and Freud." Like Delany, and like Chisholm's analysis of his memoir, Weinbaum focuses on the event of catastrophe or "shock," as she refers to it, as the catalyst for a kind of subjection. Comparing the related shocks theorized by Benjamin and Freud—for the former it is urban decay, for the latter it is the

sight of female genitalia understood as lacking—she points to the way in which both thinkers are "actively involved in the production of modernity as visually destabilizing and, more specifically, in the production of the loss of visual control as a principal index of gender identity" (398). In short, the loss of the ordered city and the loss of a genital organ generate this perceptual loss—a loss of sight. What is most significant, however, is that for both Freud and Benjamin the viewer substitutes a woman for the disagreeable sight before them. The image of the woman becomes the pleasurable "alteration of the visual field" through which the viewer is "able to come to terms with what he sees on 'first sight'" (403).

Without going into detail about the theories of the flaneurism and fetishism in question—Weinbaum does a comprehensive job of this in her article—I provide a brief summary of her findings. Overall, Weinbaum's article responds to the "scholarly consensus that the objectification of woman in the male field of vision has often served as the ground for securing coherent masculinity." It also engages directly with the "now familiar argument" that "when woman is transformed into a fetish object she guarantees the viewer's control over the visual field" (398-399). However, in seeking to "modify this formulation," she suggests "that the male gaze is a construct best characterized not so much by control, mastery, or prowess as by the momentary loss of all three" (399).

If Weinbaum's overall project is to point out that this gendered and gendering loss of seeing is the "product" of modernist theories of subjection, then Vogels puts this product to her own good use. By replacing the cops with butch lesbians, even if only momentarily, she follows the track of the male subject who "must create a momentary loss of visual acuity and a phantasmatic claim that in fact the visual field is occupied by something much less shocking and far more reassuring" (398). There are several ways to read Vogels' "not butch lesbians" comment alongside the modernist tradition of the male gaze—whether we understand this tradition as one of visual mastery or as Weinbaum's "loss of visual acuity." Immediately we might say that Vogels locks the search within a paradox of gendered observation. If this paradigm of the male gaze informs the Pussy Palace search—and, in a sense, Justice Hryn ruled that it did—what were the cops to see there? On the one hand, they pressed charges of "disorderly conduct" as if there was an initial

shocking vision that was never fully transformed into a placating image of a woman, or several women. By citing this paradigm of men seeing or losing their ability to see, Vogels calls to the fore what must be, according to this very paradigm, an impossible situation: they must maintain some control over their field of vision in order to find "disorder," but they cannot do this if they are to complete the program of the male gaze—that is, to accomplish the alteration of vision that confirms their masculinity.

But how does the cops' trouble with seeing come to be something that Vogels experiences herself? One response to this question requires a step back from Weinbaum and a return to Benjamin directly. In his "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (the essay that Weinbaum draws from extensively), Benjamin writes, "the person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return" (188). This notion that a transfer of the act of looking can occur, and precisely the "ability" of the act of looking, speaks directly to Vogels' description of what takes place at the Pussy Palace. However, if Benjamin points to the "ability" of a person and, subsequently, the aura of an object to "look at us in return," then with Weinbaum we might add that it is possible to invest the object of our gaze, or the object of the male gaze, with an *in*ability to look. Is it possible that Vogels' claim to having mistaken the cops for butch lesbians functions to announce that she has acquired their loss of visual acuity, calling attention to their inability to look? If their loss is hidden or silent, Vogels not only makes it pronounced, but appropriates it into a fantasy of her own pleasure. Strangely enough, the search becomes a vehicle for the enunciation of queer desire. In the process it undoes the gendering work of such processes of seeing insofar as the pleasurable afterimage does not secure the difference between men and women.

It is important to clarify that in the passage quoted above, Benjamin specifies that the ability to look occurs when the "*aura* of the object" is perceived. The "aura" is the cluster of associations of the *mémoire involuntaire*. Borrowing the term from Marcel Proust, Benjamin explains that the *mémoire involuntaire* is "only what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an experience" ("On Some" 160-161). Like Weinbaum, Benjamin addresses the possibility of an inability

to look, but in this essay on Baudelaire he focuses on the inability of an object to return the gaze of the subject. Furthermore, while Benjamin makes several observations about the nature of this loss of experience, revisiting the work of Proust, Baudelaire, Freud and others, what his discussion emphasizes overall is the impact of this persistent loss of which the aura is evidence. As the object of the cops' gaze, the fact that Vogels cannot see them properly in her returning gaze confirms that there is indeed a loss that will perpetuate in this scenario. To keep with Weinbaum, as long as the cops see the patrons as a specifically feminized fetish object, they will indicate the presence of an aura constituted by what they refused to experience—that is, the less distinctly gendered male / female environment they witnessed upon entering the Pussy Palace.

Several articles in addition to Vogels' confirm that the police indeed participated in this feminized replacement process, emphasizing the cops' trouble with seeing in their interpretations of the search. Kyle Rae, for example, called the search an "ogle fest" undertaken only so that the police could "cop a peek" at the patrons (qtd. in Brown). One patron accused the cops of "leering" at her and another reported that one police officer tried to "stare" her down (Irwin 13). Nancy Irwin also recounts the experience of T'hayla, who "had to ask an officer who was frozen in a stare at her uncovered breasts if she could 'help him with something.' That broke his concentration, and he said 'no'" (12-13). If Vogels made the cops' trouble with seeing present by actively returning their gaze, then T'hayla identifies this problem by offering them "help." Of course, in the scenario that Weinbaum assesses, the male gaze does require the help of a woman, but undoubtedly the receipt of this offer of help compromises the "mastery" and "prowess" they seek to achieve from looking at women.

One last comment about the cops' trouble with seeing worthy of mention comes from the decision itself. Hryn said that "[t]he male officers knew patrons would be in various states of undress in a highly sexualized environment but didn't search for female officers" (qtd. in Gallant). If the above-cited comments focus on the visual ability of the cops, Hryn's adds that the object of their search was misidentified in the first place: they should have searched for female officers, thereby directing their gaze more or less to their own collective, rather than for illegal activities of the bathhouse patrons.

The eventual outcome of this trouble with searching and seeing—not to mention the lack of searching for female cops—is that the police lose the Pussy Palace, as an object to be secured, in their search.

Loss of Evidence

Having displayed a certain inability to see when conducting the search, it is unlikely that the police had collected any useful evidence should the court have allowed it. Evidence has been a matter of concern for bathhouse narratives to date—even those that do not involve a court case—and so the fact that the Pussy Palace's verdict came down to a question of evidence is fitting. In terms of loss, the Pussy Palace's production of this loss of evidence is perhaps the most significant because it led to the dismissal. Still, to appreciate just how the Pussy Palace "tampered," one might say, not just with the evidence the police gathered but with its status as a representative of "truth," requires returning to earlier bathhouse narratives in which the conventional notion of evidence has come under question. Extending the strategies of these earlier texts, the Pussy Palace writing does not seek to solve the problem of evidence only by directly contesting the evidence collected to substantiate the charges against them. Instead, it recasts the processes of evidence gathering by treating evidence as a manufactured product rather than a relic discovered and poised to serve as the sign of the truth.

As writers from Delany to Chisholm to Scott have made clear, there is little reason to put any faith in the usefulness of evidence when so much of queer experience is lost, or violently extricated, from public memory. These writers are skeptical of solving this dilemma by simply arguing for the inclusion of queer people into the public record—for, as Delany points out, when it comes to remembering lost things, the public record may always be at odds with individual queer memory. In fact, Delany refuses to relinquish his memory of the date of his father's death when the "truth" is presented to him in a paper record of official history. Keeping the two possibilities in play becomes an aesthetic motif for his entire autobiography, a refusal to give the last word to "event and evidential certainty" (xviii). What is remarkable about Delany's memoir is that it does not resort to what Scott identifies as the more conventional "referential notion of evidence which denies that it is anything but a

reflection of the real," even though his project is to give evidence to a relatively silent, pre-Stonewall queer life in New York City (Scott 399). Instead, Delany offers his experiential narrative, and particularly his first trip to St. Marks "not as the discovery of truth (conceived as the reflection of a prediscursive reality), but as the substitution of one interpretation for another" (Scott 410). Scott continues that for Delany there is no single answer to the question "What does it mean to be black, gay, a writer?" Rather "the meanings of the categories of identity change and with them the possibilities for thinking the self" (410). If we map this alternative historical approach onto the Pussy Palace, we might come up with the following: there is no single and historically enduring Pussy Palace patron who becomes visible under a police search or under an experiential memoir of this search. Instead, the search brings with it a certain requirement for evidence, and the patrons become variously constituted according to the responses to these requirements made by all parties involved.

Where Delany's memoir refuses to remain "so comfortably within the disciplinary framework of history" (399), to borrow another phrase from Scott, Alan Bérubé's "History of Gay Bathhouses" falls comfortably into this framework—so much so that it is quickly and easily subsumed by the parallel and politically bereft narrative of consumerism. This is a second problem with evidence featured in bathhouse narratives. As Chisholm explains, Bérubé offers his experience up to his readership as evidence of queers' right to space in the city, arguing that the "gay community has a right to be and be *there*, like any other established community in America, guardian of democracy and home to all enterprising minorities" (Chisholm 245). In other words, Bérubé recounts the history of the bathhouse as a liberalist narrative of emancipation. However, as he describes the development of the bathhouse over time, he gets caught up in the details of its material growth. With increased attention to bathhouses' successive appropriation of gay urban space, including their developments in interior decoration and their investment in "fantasy environments," his history focuses on "property acquisition and 'refurbishing' as much as appropriative, spatial and social practices" (Chisholm 250). The result is that "activist historiography also appeals to entrepreneurial progressivism, thereby undermining its political radicalism" (Chisholm 250).

For Chisholm, several bathhouse narratives go the route of Bérubé's:

> ...historiography of the gay bathhouse compromises its socialist discourse with a narrative of growth and development, whereby production implies reproduction and consumption, appropriation implies commercialization and renovation, and social space is confused with the phantasmagoria of the capitalist marketplace. In a conflation of rhetorics, the gay bathhouse figures now as a commune, then as an arcade. (249)

This "conflation of rhetorics," however, is not a problem in itself. It becomes a problem when "liberal historiography obscures" the "contradictoriness" of capitalism in and through such "narratives of growth and prosperity" (Chisholm 269). The Pussy Palace, however, works the relationship between the social and commercial narratives differently. Instead of conflating the two, the Pussy Palace writing uses the commercial to upset the social. In particular, its treatment of evidence as a manufacturable product, rather than the deliverer of truth and justice, distances the patrons from the narrative of losing and finding, hidden and visible, that is fundamental to the police search as well as to conventional liberalist narratives of social emancipation.

There are a number of examples in which the discourse of the Pussy Palace makes use of commercial rhetoric. Sky Gilbert refers to it as a "supermarket" (1) and Carlyle Jansen ends a post-raid article with an invitation to "stay tuned to the bathhouse channel" (19). What is interesting about Jansen's comment in particular, however, is that it identifies the Pussy Palace's commercial accomplishments as having less to do with the acquisition of things and more to do with the commodification of information. To the extent that they produce visual media, TV channels—and, as we shall soon see, Polaroids—take over from Delany's "blue light." In Delany's opening description of St. Marks Baths, "[i]t was lit only in blue, the distant bulbs appearing to have red centers," the "blue" and "only" light makes a population visible to Delany, but also puts constraints upon that vision so that he will only ever be able to "know" this population in a certain way (173). At the Pussy Palace, there is less focus on an obscuring of vision and more on the manufacture of images.

According to Chisholm, gay bathhouse authors such as Bérubé "must see that his historical object cannot be redeemed until he

detaches it from the capitalist narrative of progress and critically—dialectically—reconstellates the space of its production" (252). Even though the Pussy Palace welcomes rather than detaches itself from commercialism, it does "reconstellate the space" in which evidence is obtained. In fact, the Pussy Palace gives evidence its own production space, instead of treating it as something already there, haphazardly found, and reinserted as an object of history. While Bérubé's history, at least according to Chisholm, falls prey to the imposition of a capitalist narrative that stays hidden under the acknowledged one of liberalist emancipation (losing its political effect as a result), the Pussy Palace foregrounds the commercial by making this space for the making of evidence. But what exactly is this space?

The Pussy Palace made a space for the production of evidence in the form of a "photo room," a place where the patrons could have Polaroid photos taken of themselves to document their night at the bathhouse. In other words, this was a place where evidence-gathering became an event, a place where patrons immediately knew that evidence could be obtained. Of course, the photo room was designed to serve the patrons who wanted to engage in the activity of producing a visual memory of their trip to the bathhouse in the form of take-home souvenir snapshots. As such it had nothing to do with the police. When the police arrived, however, the photo room did come under scrutiny. The result was that its significance as a place to get evidence was intensified, but also confused by a kind of conceptual short-circuiting that occurred when the police, looking for "evidence" in their search, found a place already "in place" to get some. Vogels recalls how "leader of the pack," inspector David Wilson

> ...thinks he's hit the jackpot when he spots a sign on the wall indicating the "porn/photo room."
>
> He points to it as if it's the devil, and repeatedly grills a rather unassuming volunteer. "What is this? Where is this?"
>
> It turns out to be one room where women can watch porn videos and another where women can have "my night at the bathhouse" souvenir Polaroids taken.
>
> Wilson harrumphs and confiscates the sign as "evidence." (27)

The joke here is that Wilson confiscates as evidence a sign for a particular room at the bathhouse where the patrons can get a piece

of evidence of their own. Clearly the room throws the whole police search into some turmoil, since its primary goal to "find" evidence is no longer necessary—presumably, they can take all the snaps they want. In this way, it is almost as if Wilson and his co-officers come to participate in one of the services already provided by the bathhouse. However, being provided with the means to make evidence by the subjects of their search proves to be only a burden to them. The sign is only evidence of a place to get evidence—and, in the end, it only signals the fact that the police are unsuccessful at acquiring any evidence in this place. Moreover, if the only evidence on offer actually in this room is a personal Polaroid, all that the police will be able to prove is the fact of their own presence at the bathhouse. In coming away with the sign for the photo room, they collect evidence of evidence yet-to-be-had. Were they to come away with Polaroids as well, they would only further the argument begun by Delany. For these Polaroids, which could only be of themselves, would remind any judge or jury that any evidence of an experience is limited by the unique perspective of that experiencing individual.

If, for both Scott and Chisholm, the enlightenment narrative of becoming visible and/or acquiring rights to social space is riddled with problems of evidence—its historically conservative processes or its susceptibility to capitalist fantasy—then the Pussy Palace plays the two off against one another. Like the more successfully political bathhouse narratives that Chisholm discusses, the Pussy Palace writing does not allow the narrative of emancipation to "obscure" capitalism's obsession with products. Instead, the product-value of evidence, including the value of the pleasure taken in producing evidence, remains in the foreground.

"Rhetoric" of Loss

Parts of the discussion above may seem to contravene the celebratory atmosphere brought by the outcome of the Pussy Palace case. It's been more than three years since the ruling, and I do not intend to put a damper on the ongoing festivities. On the contrary, I hope to have highlighted the political brilliance of Hornick's statement, Vogels' article, and the several other remembrances like them. After all, there is much more to be celebrated about the Pussy Palace case than has been up to this point.

Some of the Pussy Palace's best successes are to be found in the writing surrounding the case. Certainly these documents seem to accomplish much more, politically speaking, than the discourse pertaining directly to the court proceedings. Perhaps the best indicator of the value of this material comes from then Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino. When Fantino tried to dismiss the discussion surrounding the search just days afterward by stating that "so much of it is rhetoric right now," he called attention to the very arena in which police authority is extraordinarily vulnerable (qtd. in Quinn). The "rhetoric" surrounding the Pussy Palace takes aim at this vulnerability. When much of the media focused on the apparent vulnerability of naked women under the searching eyes of male police, it is important to acknowledge how the Pussy Palace writing demonstrates, in Weinbaum's terms, a "mastery" of the relationship between language, authority, and processes of identification. But this mastery is one that exercises a keen knowledge of loss. By way of manipulating these processes to their advantage, the Pussy Palace writing infuses them with loss or makes known the losses that are already a part of them. As a bathhouse, and in particular a women's bathhouse, the Pussy Palace has a certain amount of experience when it comes to loss. As a result, the police come up empty-handed—well before Justice Hryn disallowed the evidence they gathered in the search.

Works Cited

Benjamin, Walter. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1968. 155–194.

———. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge and London: Harvard UP, 1999. Rpt. 2002.

Bérubé, Alan. "The History of Gay Bathhouses." *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of Aids Activism*. Ed. Dangerous Bedfellows. Boston: South End, 1995. 187–220.

Brown, Eleanor. "Male Cops at Pussy Palace." *Xtra!* 21 Sept. 2000. 11.

Butler, Judith. "After Loss, What Then?" Afterword. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. Berkeley: U of California P, 2003. 469–473.

———. "'Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All': Althusser's Subjection." *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories In Subjection.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997. 106–131.

Carmichael, Amy. "Police, Gays to Form Liaison Committee." *Globe and Mail.* 18 Sept. 2000: A18.

"Charges Laid." *Xtra!* 6 October, 2000. Pussy Palace Website. 7 Feb. 2002 <http://www.pussypalace.com>.

"Lesbian Bathhouse Raid Charges Tossed By Judge." CBC Radio News. 1 Feb. 2002. <http://www.cbc.ca/>.

Chisholm, Dianne. "Love at last sight, or Walter Benjamin's dialectics of seeing in the wake of the gay bathhouse." *Textual Practice* 13.2 (1999): 243–272.

Darra, Irene. "The cop speaks." *Xtra!* 5 Oct. 2000, 14.

Delaney, Samuel. *The Motion of Light In Water: Sex and Science Fiction Writing in the East Village, 1957–1965.* New York: Arbor House, 1988.

Gallant, Paul. "Pussy Palace Charges Dropped." *Xtra!* 31 January 2002, 11.

Gilbert, Sky. "Bathhouse raid a sexist outrage" *Eye Online.* 21 Sept. 2000, 1–3 <http://www.eye.net/eye/issue/issue_09.21.00/columns/pink.html>.

Gillespie, Kerry. "Police raid abused rights of women: Two cleared of charges after lesbian party." *Toronto Star* 1 Feb. 2002: A1+.

Irwin, Nancy. "Police Raid Women's Bathhouse Party." *Siren* (Oct./Nov. 2000): 12–14.

Jansen, Carlyle. "Our Pussy Palace Adventure." *Siren* (Oct./Nov. 1998): 18–19.

Nolen, Stephanie and Colin Freeze. "Bathhouse Raid Angers Lesbian Community." *Globe and Mail.* 16 Sept. 2000: A27.

Prout, Janet. "Charges Dropped in Lesbian Baths Raid." *PlanetOut.* 12 Feb. 2002. <http://www.365gay.com/>.

Quinn, Jennifer. "Fantino Criticizes 'Rhetoric.'" *The Toronto Star.* 19 Sept. 2000: B3.

Scott, Joan. "The Evidence of Experience." Rpt. In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader.* Eds. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barala and David M. Halperin. London: Routledge, 1993.

Silversides, Ann. "The Paw That Scratches: The Pussy Palace Raid has Galvanized the Lesbian Community to Fight Back." *eye*

Magazine 14 June 2001. Pussy Palace Website. 15 Feb. 2002. <http://www.pussypalacetoronto.com/>.

Valverde, Mariana. "A Pussy-Positive Judgement." *Xtra.* 7 Feb. 2002: 18.

Vogels, Josey. "Polite Gal Love." *Now* 20.3 Sept. 21–27, 2000: 27.

Weinbaum, Alys Eve. "Ways of Not Seeing: (En)gendered Optics in Benjamin, Baudelaire, and Freud." *Loss: The Politics of Mourning.* Eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. Berkeley: U of California Press, 2003. 396–426.

The Dahlia Field

HENRY ALLEY

Henry Alley is a Professor of Literature in the Honors College at the University of Oregon. He has three published novels, and his stories have appeared in Seattle Review *and* Virginia Quarterly Review. *"The Dahlia Field" is from his collection,* In Recovery.

Times when I was in high school, looking out on a late afternoon, I would enter that bricklit life of deserted curbs in the city, newspapers blowing under cinderblocks at newsstands with no one seeing, and would wonder what it was like to be lonely. Up until then I had lived in a world full of holidays, of troops of people talking in a festooned dining room, the plates of food and golden candles steaming up the windows, and the piano competing with the din. I was naïve and forward and outgoing, and yet, thirty years later, being single and retired and scared, I had entered what I had observed through that glass—a continually framed picture of inanimate objects. My greatest friends were the birds seen from my kitchen. We communicated. They flew at the feeder, creating a sign language that I immediately understood: a burst of wings that were sometimes red, sometimes copper. On their side, they had grown so used to my movements (very quiet) that even an angry cracking open of the newspaper could send them flying.

The birds had become my flowers, for in allowing my life to shrink down on all sides, I had let my garden go as well—not to wrack and ruin, but just sealed over by the grass, which, one spring, simply spread over the beds and formed a wall-to-wall carpet in my backyard. I was getting up later and later those days, and I thought whimsically one morning at the kitchen window that maybe the grass had taken advantage of me while I was asleep. Yes, let life narrow itself down, let my walks and my bus rides get shorter and shorter, let my grocery list be reduced to the fewest and most essential lines.

I had served my part in this world, and now let it be taken over by those who could better understand a late century whose complexity and speed increased every hour on the hour.

I can't remember how I first heard about Arrowsmith. Dying of AIDS. Confined to a nursing home. How was it possible? I had been disconnected from almost all associations for years. It was the kind of thing you hear about through the grapevine, or at a church, when a call for "general concerns" goes out. Nevertheless I heard. Maybe the birds had sent me a message, in the heliograph of the sun.

I thought about him, Arrowsmith, for a long time. How he belonged to some old days that had caused heavy bitterness for both of us. He would not be glad to see me. Maybe not even glad that I thought about him. We had done some scientific work together, but I had never suited him. Never accurate enough. At first he had been light about my mistakes; later, he had grown severe and caustic, especially after we became lovers. He always seemed to eclipse my life, diminish it. He scored so well in the Male Department. He was middle-aged and good-looking, the winner of awards, and had an irresistible edge which had brought many young men his way. For all his academe, he was built like a brick shithouse, so he could have won any Renaissance man beauty pageant in the fraction of a second. I wasn't jealous. Well—

Well, while I was busy beating a hasty retreat from this life, scurrying, like one of my squirrels, straight into my little 50s house, he seemed to be on just the brink of the New World. All his, for the asking.

But AIDS had him now. And my heart felt like a lead pendulum, and I couldn't say why. The surprise of this wrung my heart, because I had convinced myself, in being alone for so long, that I was no longer bothered by such things. Life for me meant birds, who, when they died, were replaced by indistinguishable replicas. But now the news about Arrowsmith had put everything in twilight. It was as though I had returned to my high school window. Not just among those rose buildings and abandoned theatres, but also back in that very time itself, when I had only wondered what it was like to be lonely. What a luxury only to wonder. Because I had had a home then, and that came back to me, too, because of Arrowsmith. The news sent me back to that house of my high school days when things had been so happy, and there had been the sounds of people going

back and forth in the kitchen (fuck the birds!), throwing turkeys in the oven, and having droves over for potluck in that festooned living room. After hearing about Arrowsmith I was traveling backwards in time, into something larger. I realized the lawn wasn't meant to roll straight over me and my beds and my whole house. I was supposed to grow rather than shrink.

So one morning, the birds, shaking the feeder, which hung from the apple tree, flashed me another message—a star of light hit me square in the face, and I got my coat and took the car out, on tires grown flat from being in the garage too long.

I was pretty breathless, being in that car. God, the scenery comes at you so fast when you're driving. A whole big world, like the clearing, during a hike, that brings the lake and the campsite at last. So much was happening all around me on this Sunday afternoon.

And in Arrowsmith's room, too, when I arrived. I was expecting to find him just lying there, ready to vanish beneath the sheets, but I found him the center of a whole field of activity, once I got beyond the door. His entire family was clustered there, all wearing 3-D glasses, and watching *Robot Monster*. They were laughing with confetti voices, and seemed to be in the middle of a parade. Apparently, soap bubbles were coming out of the screen—although for me, without glasses, it was hard to tell. Talk about odd man out.

The fun stopped the moment they saw me.

"Hello," he said.

His brother, his sister, his mother all drew back.

Robot Monster went straight off the tube.

Only his lover remained near, casting a muscular shadow over the two of us, as Arrowsmith and I shook hands.

His palm was cold, and I saw then, with his 3-D glasses off, how pale he was, how white his hair.

"I can't stay long," I said, ready to jump out of my skin. I seemed to scare his family of origin straight out the door, leaving excuses behind.

"It was good of you to come," he answered. "It's been at least ten years. But to be honest with you, I can't remember what it was we did in the old days. Was it something important?"

"I don't think so."

The tension in the room led me to turn to his lover, who introduced himself. His hand swallowed mine. He still had his 3-D glasses on.

"For heavens sake, Wilbur," Arrowsmith said, "take those things off. You look like an unintentional Martian."

(You must understand that Wilbur was quite young.)

"I am curious, though," Arrowsmith went on, "what it was we did, you and I."

We were lovers once.

We wrote a major scientific article together.

You had my name taken off.

You got all the credit.

It was an AIDS breakthrough.

It might be leading to a cure and a vaccine as we speak.

"I can tell you what we did," I said. "We were in the Dahlia Society together."

"Oh yes, of course," Arrowsmith said, as if he were speaking of my family, "how are your dahlias?"

"I don't have them anymore," I answered, as though speaking of a massive family loss. "But—"

But I had to say something about them. Had to reacquire my niche in this world where families are happy and throw confetti, and watch *Robot Monster*. "But," I said, "I do go out to a dahlia field occasionally. It's so beautiful, especially in late summer. I know the growers, they're like family."

"A dahlia field." He lay his head back on the pillow and rested. "What a wonderful picture. Tell me about this dahlia field.'" He had a hint of a British accent.

"Yes," Wilbur said, interested in me for the first time. "Tell us."

Well, there was no dahlia field. But I had gone this far; I had to follow up on my performance. The backyard birds kept circling in my head, and almost at command, formed indentations of color.

"It's out on the outskirts of town," I said. "A family-owned nursery, and when you get there, there's one row of double A dahlias after another. The woman moonlights as an accountant, so everything is orderly. The Emory Pauls strike you first; their purple blooms are as big as sunflowers and they track the sun. Then the Zorros in all their reds, and the new Papagenos looking like parrots in their yellows and pinks. They move with the wind, and seem to wave at you, and as far as the eye can see, there are crests of orange and white, as though, if you were in an airplane, you might see a kind of sign language being formed on those acres."

"How restful," Arrowsmith said, his eyes shut, "how peaceful. Go on."

"Yes," Wilbur said, "please."

"Oh, I don't know," I answered. "There isn't much more to say. Except that I always remember, Arrowsmith, how much you loved those Emory Pauls."

"Yes," he said, tears coming from beneath his closed lids. "Yes, I remember. I used to put them out on our table before we'd have dinner."

Wilbur looked alarmed.

"Yes."

Silence, with Wilbur turning to me like, "What have you done?"

"Well," I said, taking the hint, "I must be going. I hope what I've said is all right."

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," Wilbur said, surprising me, "you must promise to come back."

"Yes"—Arrowsmith had opened his eyes—"you don't get off that easy."

"I've made up a little sign-up book," Wilbur said, lifting it as though he had done this many times. "People can write their names here and the time, so Arrowsmith will know, in case he sleeps through."

I couldn't tell if I was being humoured. So I said, "Of course. Of course, I'll come again."

But what had I meant when I'd said that?

I meant I had to go find a dahlia field. That would wipe out the lie. Then I could come back. With more stories to tell.

How strange to fight the freeway the next morning, just doing some guesswork based on an old memory. I knew I had seen such a place before. I began to look for magical numbers on the exits. Took one. Passed a sign that said, "You are now entering the next twenty-six miles." I seemed to be driving beneath a rainbow. For heavy rain had fallen and then cleared. But there it was—Davenport Growers. Under the sun. I got out and stood at the fence. Feasting on impressions to take back to Arrowsmith. There were the Emory Pauls, clocking the sun. The flamboyant Zorros riding herd over the rest. And the Papagenos seemed to startle up in the sun, in pinks and yellows and greens, as though they were overgrown peace roses, set to flight and chattering.

I don't know how long I stood there, but I do know this—I came back with bulbs in my car, and with the recollected sight of a lost farmhouse just down the road.

"A lost farmhouse?" Arrowsmith asked, the next time I saw him. "What sort of lost farmhouse?" His mind snagged on anything uneven, out of the ordinary.

"A farmhouse I have seen somewhere before," I answered. "It's one I can't quite place. It was important, I think, at one time. But let me go on: there is such peace as you move from row to row, you can hear the crackle of the old stalks from last fall, and it's as though there are different draperies of different colours as you move from acre to acre."

Such relief now that I was no longer lying! Such a feeling that I had a purpose being there, visiting him.

Through the days and weeks and months that followed, I came to visit again and again, and as AIDS got the best of Arrowsmith and took away his voice, the nursing home acquired a greater silence. Times I came, no one else, not even Wilbur, was around—only a night nurse for whom I developed an affection, and who took my various blooms and put them in startlingly shaped vases. "He's asleep now," Robert would say, "but won't he be delighted to see these in the morning."

It became my routine, my ritual. How I loved signing in on Wilbur's books, complete with the time, hoping to find Arrowsmith awake, which he rarely was, but I was always delighted to see my name below all the other people he had known and loved.

For he had loved me once, that was clear. We had even lived together for a while, tried to make a go of it, until our work at the lab had driven us apart. But there had been a time when he had arranged my Emory Pauls on the dinner table, and I had made his favorite meal for him, and we had held hands and made love and hugged in bed until early morning.

But now, night after night, signing in, speaking to Robert, bringing flowers, at first from the Grower's and then from my yard (for we had gone through a year already, and the bulbs had bloomed from the spaces I had cleared), and then touching Arrowsmith's hand on the coverlet as instructed, I was gaining my days back. I was told he could hear me even if his eyes were closed and he couldn't speak. So I talked. Told him about the Dahlia Field again. Told him about

my house, and, gently, about certain days I hoped he remembered, that were the best I had ever known. Except for these. Because now in his silence, instead of cutting me down, he seemed to love me back.

One night, the white shock that fell over his forehead looked more boyish than usual, and I launched my dahlia field to a greater height. "The birds have come," I said, "and their shadows dart across all the reds and whites and yellows. They seem to weave the colours, as the wind pushes the blooms to and fro. For a moment there is sun, then clouds, and then, a giant glance of light, coming forward, seems to send the flowers up—as though, with the flocks, they are heading into the sky, which is now a dome of cloud-laced blue."

I was about to continue, but someone touched my arm. It was Wilbur, pointing toward Arrowsmith, whose eyes were wide open and full of tears.

My former lover took each of our hands, pressed them, and then sank down into sleep once more.

I was so happy, because I was sure he would rest now—but Wilbur only looked at me solemnly.

I shook my head. It could not be.

But it was true. Soon Robert was there at the bedside, asking us both to leave.

I wandered out, not knowing what to do. At home, where living by myself had become so very comfortable again, I found myself completely desolate.

And in the morning, awakening to the sound of the birds, and the lingering impression of a dream of dahlias, I called to be absolutely sure. Yes, he had died, and all the arrangements had been left to the family.

So there I was again, remembering the time he had taken my hand, just as I had been about to leave, and he had kissed it and said, "Thank you so much for coming." But then there were other times, when his family had been present, he had treated me as if I hadn't been there at all. Arrowsmith liked his coteries, his own soul's societies, and although good-hearted by himself, he could lock me out like a cold jailer if he wanted to.

And so the door was shut with his death. But somehow not on me. Or if it had shut on me, another door had opened up. The birds confirmed that. They had another message. "Go out and try again."

So it was not long before I was venturing out in the car once more, this time driving to the old potluck group that Arrowsmith and I used to belong to; this time it was being held out in the country. Picking up my plate, and walking through a huge farmhouse, I shook hands with people I had once known and loved, but had not seen in years

"Why, it's been at least six months since I've seen you," one of them said, pumping my hand. "Good to see you again."

Six months! I felt elated. Try six years.

The potluck buzzed and rattled and chattered with the news of an AIDS breakthrough. One which Arrowsmith and I had been partly responsible for. With one more step, we would be on the verge of a treatment and a vaccine.

But somehow, as I finished out my dinner, I didn't feel pressed to speak, to take credit. Rather I let the whole place flame with the irony that Arrowsmith had died from the very disease he might help save the world from. Let him have both fame and death.

No, I had nothing more to say. Because, in my mind, it all had to do with dahlias. We were in fact not far from the grower's field, and so it was not long before I was hugging many of the men goodbye—nearest and dearest brought back after many long years—and driving out to the chain-link fence of my dahlia field. Watching the Emory Pauls in their magnificent lavender, I wondered if I stood there long and still enough, would they be the ones to blink first—that is, visibly track the sun.

But there was no time for that. Following out a memory of my talk with Arrowsmith, I got back into the car and searched out that old farmhouse down the road and knocked. And when a strange man answered and I said who I was, all he could reply was, "Well, I'll be ding-donged—well, I'll be ding-donged," over and over like a bell in a steeple, for he was a relative I had not seen in years. A stepbrother. One of the ones who had lived the bricklit life with me outside the window of that high school.

"Well, I'll be ding-donged," he said, "I guess we both got miffed in some terrible way, but I can't remember for the life of me what it was about."

"I have no idea either," I answered, still standing on the porch.

And now it's been several years since Arrowsmith's death, and I no longer have just the birds for my companions, although they still send me messages. There are many, many other beings, including

my stepbrother, who help me stay sighted. But I do remember that it was the robins, the sparrows, and the scarlet tanagers that first gave me the nudge toward that long-term, continuing life called the dahlia field, which led me among so many people I love, and which will keep me in good stead when others and I eventually find ourselves bedded and listening in a room much like Arrowsmith's.

In the Absence of Security: A Memoir

CHRIS BELL

Chris Bell teaches American cultural studies at the University of Bielsko-Biala in Poland. He also conducts research in memory studies at Auschwitz. Soon, he will move to the UK to commence a PhD program examining AIDS through the lens of memory studies.

If I should die tonight/Though it be far before my time/
I won't die blue/'Cause I've known you.
— Marvin Gaye

i

I met Billy Vance in September. We saw each other three more times that fall. He died the following March. Of course I had no way of knowing this would be the sequence of events on the occasion of our meeting. We met at a reception given partially in his honor after he was named as one of the new university fellowship recipients. The reception was attended by representatives from the university administration, faculty members, and current fellows like myself. We convened in the Great Room of the university's Alumni Center. I attended the affair with Gwenyth, another graduate student. After chugging my second glass of Merlot, I felt particularly witty and charming; thus, I left Gwenyth, inserting myself on the fringe of a social circle consisting of the Provost and a few of his minions. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Provost assumed his position at the podium and introduced the new fellows. As the list of names was read aloud, I scanned the room, looking for something (read: someone) of interest.

"And from the Department of English, Billy Vance, Ridgel Fellow," boomed Dr. Provost's stentorian voice.

torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association / Revue de la Société canadienne des études lesbiennes et gaies
Vol. 6 (2004-2005) © CLGSA / SCELG

I was immediately brought back to the occasion at hand. English was my field; and a Ridgel Fellow? Since I was already acquainted with the other English fellows, I wanted to know which individual had received the highly-coveted Ridgel Fellowship, named after the first black student to earn a degree from the university.

To my right, a hand waved, or perhaps it beckoned, I don't know. In any case, my attention was instantly riveted to this individual. My concern had little to do with his elf-like stature, nor the less-than-casual way he was clad in jeans, in direct defiance of the dress code for functions such as this. I gazed at this person, this Billy Vance, Ridgel Fellow, because he was ... well ... white. At least he certainly looked so from my vantage point. Judging from the necks craning throughout the Great Room and the expressions of curiosity coloring everyone's faces, I was not alone in my thinking.

And what did Billy Vance do as the smattering of polite applause welcomed him into the fold of the university and we all stared at him, wondering if he had lied on his fellowship application? Perhaps he had stated he was an ethnic minority, a prerequisite for the fellowship, when he apparently was anything but? What did *he* do, this individual who stood slightly apart from the rest of us, next to the plate-glass window, his face bleached of distress? He smiled. Holding his half-full glass of Chardonnay with enviable ease, Billy Vance smiled, his face utterly aglow.

As Dr. Provost continued reading through the litany of names, I snuck glances at Billy Vance, and each time he positively beamed.

*

"I'm going to meet Billy Vance," I announced to Gwenyth.

Dr. Provost had completed the reading of the names. A great swell of applause thundered through the Great Room. The new fellows looked pleased with themselves. The veteran fellows looked at their watches, thinking of the piles of work waiting from them in their respective residences. The faculty and administrators looked with consternation at the rapidly diminishing collection of wine bottles atop the serving banquette.

"I don't know him. But he's in The Department," said Gwenyth, referring to the English Department not as "our" department, but as "the" department, a practice everyone in The Department adopted.

"I'm not familiar with him either, and it's time to change that."

Without further word, Gwenyth and I walked across the lushly-piled carpet, past the leisurely dripping ice sculptures and the various social groupings, finally settling ourselves in front of the theretofore unheard of Billy Vance.

He looked at us and—I swear—even his eyes were smiling. My attention, however, was not focused on his eyes. Instead, I gawked at his mouth; more specifically, what was inside of it—a set of severely decaying teeth, in need of immediate attention. Evidently undaunted by this dental nightmare, he continued smiling, as if waiting for Da Vinci to rise from his extended slumber, snatch down the aging portrait of that winsome *jeune fille*, and replace it with the more arresting countenance of Billy Vance, Ridgel Fellow.

"Hi."

The word sprang from his lips. I glanced at Gwenyth to gauge which of us should speak.

"Hello," she ventured. "We heard you're in The Department. So are we. My name is Gwenyth and this is Chris."

Effortlessly increasing the wattage in his effervescent smile, Billy Vance extended an assured hand to each of us.

"It's a pleasure meeting you both," he declared.

For the next half hour, until the conclusion of the reception, I remained in Billy Vance's company. Realizing, as he most likely did as well, that I was in the presence of another gay man, I did the inevitable: I sized him up. The hair which hadn't seen a comb for weeks, maybe months; the alert, dancing blue eyes; that smile; the v-necked white T-shirt; the faded through wear, not by design, blue jeans; the Doc Marten boots. I was intrigued by the slow cadence of his voice as he explained that he had applied to The Department's graduate program because someone had told him his poetry was "pretty good."

When Gwenyth returned, stating that it was time to leave, I said to Billy Vance, "I've enjoyed chatting with you. I'm sure I'll see you around The Department."

"Okay. Hey, I'm going out tonight. Maybe I'll contact you," he stated, discreetly alluding to the local gay hotspot, Contacts.

"Hmm. Maybe I'll drop by if I finish grading papers."

As Gwenyth and I left the Great Room, I glanced back at him once more: the hair, the eyes, that smile. At that precise moment, I came to the realization that I was not attracted to Billy Vance.

ii

I didn't see him much in The Department. This was no surprise, as his focus was creative writing and mine was literature, meaning that we shared none of the same classes. He wrote, I was to learn later, poems that pulsated with the power of his reality, while I feigned interest in my course readings.

One night in early October, one month after we first met, I attended a meeting of the Gay and Lesbian Graduate Student Association (GLGSA). The group was planning the dance that would conclude the local community's celebration of National Coming Out Week. We had just dispensed with the lengthy distribution of duties when in walked Billy Vance, smiling. Penny, the chair of the GLGSA, informed him that the meeting was over, but we would appreciate his help at the dance. He said he would be glad to assist and, soon after, we adjourned.

*

I saw him next at the dance. He arrived about forty minutes after we had decorated, set up the DJ and refreshments, let the public in, and collected the money. It annoyed me that he had not been there to help. Moreover, he didn't bother apologizing for his tardiness by explaining that his previous engagement had kept him. No, he merely drifted in; clad in the same faded jeans, flashing the ubiquitous smile, and strolled past the cashier, without paying, to the dance floor.

After the dance, he conveniently disappeared while the GLGSA cleaned up. I quickly followed suit.

*

The last time I saw Billy Vance was on a brisk December morning when our paths crossed in front of the campus library. The conversation was brief, the typical banter of graduate students.

"How're your classes going?"

"Fine, yours?"

"Okay, but I'll be glad when the semester's over."

Shared laughter.

"Me, too!"

"Well," he said, without consulting a watch, "I have to go. I'll see you later, Chris."

"Yeah, I'll see you."

I never did.

iii

Fast forward to the Ides of March, three months after the encounter outside of the library. Gwenyth and I were driving home and chatting. She described a new curricular idea for the class she was teaching. At one point, she abruptly changed the subject, asking if I had "heard about" Billy Vance.

"What about him?"

"He's HIV-positive. I hear he's really sick, really sick. I heard about it from..."

I tuned out as Gwenyth shared the name of the person she had learned the news from. I didn't expect her to understand how much this news impacted me, how overwhelming it was. Gwenyth didn't realize that, like many gay men, I measured my own vulnerability by the number of individuals I knew personally who were infected by The Virus, a number that, as a result of this conversation, had increased, from zero to one.

It wasn't until after Gwenyth had dropped me off at home that I realized she seemed much more affected by her pedagogical breakthrough than she was by Billy Vance's illness.

*

I don't remember where I was when Gwenyth relayed the news. I do know it was the very next week.

"Billy Vance died."

It wasn't as if she told me out of a sense of sorrow or loss. She just sort of mentioned it in passing.

*

Billy Vance's death wasn't the only one that distressed me that March. Two weeks before he died, my favorite hip-hop artist, the Notorious B.I.G., was murdered. I envied Biggie for the hypnotizing cadence of his delivery as well as his talent in turning the events of his reality into powerful, pulsating lyrics of brutality, pain, and wit. But that's another story. Or is it?

iv

Less than a week after Billy Vance's death, I walked into the graduate student teaching "office," an assortment of cubicles in the basement of the building where we stored our textbooks, graded papers, and convened office hours. I had decorated my cubicle with a variety of

items: a pair of bumper stickers—"Feminism is the radical notion that women are people" and "Thelma and Louise Live"—a collection of library books, and a downloaded picture of Montgomery Clift, circa "A Place in the Sun." The office was deserted, save the cubicle directly across from mine that was occupied by Thurman, another graduate student in The Department. When I entered the office, Thurman was at his desk, his normally erect carriage leaning against one of the exposed pipes.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Oh, hi Chris," Thurman mumbled.

"What's wrong?" I repeated.

"I've just found out I have lupus. That's why I've been so fatigued lately."

"Oh, Thurman..."

"But that's not all. I went upstairs to talk to..." Thurman named The Department's Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). "I told him I needed to drop a class because I'm sick. When I said that..."

He paused.

"When I said, 'Dr. [DGS], I'm sick,' he stood up, *backed away from me*, and said 'Ohmygod! You don't have AIDS, do you?!'"

"What?!"

"He asked if I had AIDS. When I told him 'No,'"—indignation flashed in Thurman's eyes—"he said, 'Oh, well, as long as you don't have AIDS,' and sat back down. I had to get the hell away from him, so I came down here."

Before I could respond, indeed, before I could *think* of a response, Thurman stood up.

"Where are you going?"

"I have to go back to the hospital to meet with the doctor."

"Well, do you need anything? Do you want me to bring you dinner tonight?"

"You don't have to do that."

"Well, I'm going to call you later. Let me know what I can do."

"Thanks."

As he left the office, the door clicked shut with a finality I had not heard before.

Alone in the office, I sat at my desk and grew pensive. Moments later, I leapt up and walked out of the office door. Marching upstairs, I headed towards the office of The Department's top gun, the Chair.

*

When I entered the Chair's office, his assistant glanced up and smiled.

"Is he in?" I asked, nodding towards the closed door of the Chair's inner sanctum.

"He is, but he has a meeting with the Dean in ten minutes."

"This won't take long," I assured her. "And it can't wait."

The Chair soon ushered me into his office, making room for me to sit by removing a prodigious heap of books from one of the two chairs in front of his desk. It appeared to be the same pile of books, stacked in the same order, that had been there the last time I was in this office, months earlier. He sat opposite me and, after adopting his unctuous voice, asked what brought me to see him.

I relayed the story Thurman shared with me. When I arrived at Dr. [DGS]'s caustic "You don't have AIDS?!" inquiry, the Chair slumped back in his chair, closed his eyes, and shook his head.

"He didn't. Tell me he didn't."

"He's taking this harder than I expected," I thought to myself. Any feelings that I might have been out of line recounting this story—which had nothing to do with me—had rapidly disappeared.

"It's true."

"Chris, let me tell you something." The Chair leaned towards me, his face assuming an expression of administrative gravitas. "Dr. [DGS] is a wonderful scholar. His publication record is superb and his student evaluations stellar. One trait he admittedly lacks, however, is tact. Sometimes he just opens his mouth and inserts his foot. Why, I remember the first time I met him ..."

While the Chair, chuckling good-naturedly, reminisced about this inaugural meeting, I pondered his already-spoken words. So the illustrious Dr. [DGS]—tenured, prize-winning professor—was a social moron. This individual—who possessed a trio of degrees from the Ivy League—lacked the social graces most of us are indoctrinated with early in life. Not only that, he had convinced others to excuse his venomous ejaculations and other insensitivities because ... well ... just because.

"... and so, I hope you'll forgive him for that lapse, Chris. He really can't help it."

The Chair offered his aw-shucks grin while I sat in stony silence. For the next few seconds, I gazed around the Chair's office at the

disarray of dog-eared texts lining the bookshelves, the rubber plants barely clinging to life, the layer of dust cloaking his computer monitor.

"Nothing changes," I thought to myself. "I could come here for months, years, and nothing, least of all attitudes, would change."

Taking note of the Chair's failure to inquire about Thurman's health, I sensed my *joie de combat* rising. This nascent anger was quickly tempered, however, by a sense of reconciliation through understanding. Looking the Chair directly in the eye, I nodded. Then, rising to my feet, I thanked him and left.

I wandered back downstairs to the graduate student teaching office, which was now abuzz with a swarm of routine activity: copies of class handouts jamming the ancient copier, undergraduates beseeching their smirking graduate instructors for paper extensions, the staccato clanging of the pipes. Yet no one was talking about Billy Vance, and this despite the fact that his now-vacant cubicle was in the midst of the din.

Grabbing my backpack, I left the office and the building and walked, in the gloaming, towards the parking garage. As I slid into my car, I was unperturbed by my imminent absence from that afternoon's "Shakespeare's Women" seminar.

Driving out of the parking garage, I thought about Dr. [DGS]'s gratuitous expression of alarm and the unsatisfying meeting with the Chair. I considered The Department's collective silence about Billy Vance, how effectively he had been removed from the discourse. These thoughts led to my sense of an internal crossing-over, from unconsciousness to awareness. I surprised myself by voicing those feelings aloud. Stopped at a red light on Providence Road, the street separating the campus from the rest of the world, I said to myself, "I do not belong here."

The light changed. I crossed.

v

The semester Billy Vance died coincided with the first time The Department offered a graduate seminar on teaching the Holocaust. I was not enrolled in this class; however, I was regularly apprised of the goings-on in the seminar by Gwenyth, who was. Many times throughout the semester, I wished I had enrolled in the Holocaust

pedagogy class instead of the Victorian literature and Shakespeare seminars I had opted for. Hearing from Gwenyth the legacies passed down through generations, I wondered: What did the Jews, gypsies, and gays think and feel, knowing the "ordinary" individuals—their friends and neighbors—were aware of their plight and responded by denying what was happening, adhering to their daily routines, *doing nothing*? But that too is another story. It must be.

vi

It has now been almost two years since Billy Vance died. The events described here are as evocative to me in this moment as they were then. Because of Billy Vance, I have learned to pay closer attention to the ways that people come into and leave our lives and the ripples they leave behind. Regardless of the amount of time we share with them, these people arguably become a part of us, their lives intertwined with ours. We do not live in isolation. Each of us influences and affects the other whether we acknowledge this or not.

In retrospect, when I met Billy Vance, I told myself I was not attracted to him. Accordingly, I presumed this meant that he held no attraction for me, that there was nothing he could give me. I was wrong. Billy, in his death and its aftermath, transformed me. He brought me out of my stupor as far as realizing how AIDS is/not negotiated in our culture. Indeed, the fact that I have devoted my life to AIDS advocacy is a fact that I owe partially to Billy. It might sound egotistical, but I feel that his positioning in that space at that time was critical for my own development.

*

I think about Billy, I think about him often. Now that I know many others who are HIV-positive and who have died from AIDS; now that I have received a positive HIV diagnosis; now that I have left The Department without finishing my degree, I think of him.

When I think about Billy, I sometimes ask myself: Why didn't he tell me he was positive? Why didn't he tell me he was dying? Was it because he didn't trust me? Or maybe he didn't want people to know? Perhaps he didn't know himself? But surely ...

When I think about Billy, I think of the person I never knew, the person he might have been. I also think about the person that I

was then and how I have changed since he died. (In that way, this memoir is as much mine as it is his.) But more often than not, I think about this:

The night I first met Billy in the Alumni Center's Great Room, we saw each other later at Contacts, the gay bar. Since it was a weeknight, the crowd was sparse, so the handful of us flirted with those we considered worthy, and ignored those we thought less of. A few moments before closing, the then-popular George Michael song "Fastlove" came blaring over the bar's sound system. As I made my way to the dance floor, another figure materialized from the smoky haze on the opposite side of the bar. When we reached our respective places on the deserted-except-for-us dance floor, we ignored one another. Our focus solely on our own gyrations, we studiously disregarded the eyes of the other patrons. Under the pulsating lights and stares, the other dancer grinned and free-flowed to the sounds he heard, while I moved to the infectious beat of "Fastlove," a song about one person's quest for casual sex, wherein the singer croons:

In the absence of security/
I made my way into the night/
Stupid Cupid keeps on calling me/
But I see nothing in his eyes.

When I think about Billy Vance, I remember the way he appeared at that moment, on the brink of summer's end—dancing and smiling, smiling and dancing, secure in his own inviolate world—frankly, the freest spirit I have ever met.

The AIDS Quilt Text(ile)[1] Now: Tensions Between Memorialization and Activism

DIANA M. DAVIDSON

Diana M. Davidson holds a Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Alberta.

Introductions

I sat surrounded by loss. And beauty. The austere and reverent mood in the stone building that had once been a Roman Catholic Church was infectious. Outside, in York's cobblestone snickleways, the sun was shining and maple leaves were turning golden reds and English autumnal oranges. Inside, in the bowels of the old church, the air had a slight chill. It was not surprising to feel cold in this place as mortar and granite memorials formed the foundation of the whole building; testimonials to many centuries' dead made up the church's cobblestone floor. Stained glass windows depicted biblical scenes of judgment and redemption. Melancholy cherub facades and ancient Celtic coats of arms decorated the uneven walls.

York City Council had converted the old church into a cafe and meeting place, now known as the Spurriergate Community Centre. I was in Spurriergate Centre because the local HIV/AIDS service organization I volunteered with (North Yorkshire AIDS Action) was sponsoring a display of panels of the United Kingdom AIDS

[1] I was inspired by and am borrowing this term from Judy Elsley's essay "The Rhetoric of the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt: Reading the Text(ile)." I am also indebted to Heather Davidson, Jonathan Dollimore, Chris Oakenfull, Alan Sinfield, and Hugh Stevens for reading this essay at various stages. A Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship enabled me to revise the essay for publication.

Memorial Quilt in the building.[2] I found myself sitting in this old church—a testimony to ideals and individuals in itself—one Friday morning, handing out pamphlets about the UK NAMES Project and answering visitors' general HIV/AIDS-related questions. It should have been a relaxing and interactive stint of volunteering. However, I had a difficult time keeping my composure. As someone who has been involved in AIDS work for nearly a decade, on both sides of the Atlantic, I should have been more resilient to the emotional power of the AIDS Quilt. Seeing the panels, hanging from five hundred year old rafters, however, I was overcome with grief and sadness for people I had never met or known. I temporarily lost my ability to see the UK AIDS Quilt as a whole or, for that matter, as activist. All I felt that autumn morning was sadness; I was mourning people whose only connection to me was being affected, in some way, by HIV/AIDS.

I am undertaking a reading of the memorial and, more specifically, my complex reaction to it in this essay, because the AIDS Quilt has been the text that has brought me to the tensions of my own activist aesthetic.[3] I found out that autumn morning in

---

[2] The September 2001 exhibition was organized by Chris Oakenfull, a former member of the UK AIDS Quilt organization and, at the time of the Spurriergate display, the Volunteer Coordinator at North Yorkshire AIDS Action.

[3] As I have written elsewhere (see particularly Davidson 2003), my understanding of the term "activist aesthetic" comes partly from Steven Kruger's work on representations of AIDS. In the final chapter of his groundbreaking *AIDS Narratives: Gender and Sexuality, Fiction and Science*, Kruger subtitles his last section "Toward an Activist Aesthetic?" (294). He describes how in Sarah Schulman's 1990 novel *People in Trouble*, a narrative tension arises between the characters' political organizing and "the artist's claim that art in and of itself does political work" (298). Kruger says, "*People in Trouble* also does political work, and not just in helping its readers 'decide to take action.' As Schulman's novel itself repeatedly suggests, language, representation, and narrative do matter" (300). Kruger argues that Schulman's novel is both art imitating life and life imitating art, as it becomes a self-reflexive exploration of art's potential to make a political difference in the HIV/AIDS crisis. He comes to the conclusion that

> Novels like Schulman's intervene in the broader discourses of AIDS, suggest how such discourses often do discredit to the realities of people's lives, and find other language, other narratives that might allow those realities to be differently represented and understood. Such work in rethinking AIDS, while it does not stand in for other, more direct political work, is a necessary way of responding to a health crisis still largely understood in (homophobic, racist, sexist) terms that continue to block an honest and open public discourse on sex

Spurriergate Centre that—as a reader, a scholar, and a human being—I have a need to mourn the people I read, write about, cite, and analyze. This need sometimes seems irreconcilable with my activist impetus to transform loss into empowering motivation. As an HIV organization board member and HIV educator, I try to redirect AIDS-related grief into knowledge, encouraging people to become educated, to take care of our sexual health, and, ideally, to change some of the socio-economic and political inequities that contribute to HIV's increasing global spread. Somehow, in this most recent experience of being near the AIDS Quilt, something in my earlier optimistic thinking about the Quilt's purpose and "work" changed: I felt a sense of sadness and horror about HIV/AIDS that I had not felt in years. While I had spent my time writing, teaching, and interpreting literary and artistic responses to the cultural trauma of AIDS, I had not allowed myself to experience many of my feelings about HIV/AIDS. Even while I could still appreciate and admire the craftsmanship, skill, love, respect, and, indeed, activism that went into each panel, on this autumn morning I could not reconcile the ugliness of death that lay beneath the AIDS Quilt's beauty.

My encounter with the AIDS Quilt, in a Yorkshire church-turned-tearoom, has prompted me to question my own faith in the Quilt as an activist tool and to examine my position within AIDS discourse and AIDS activism in general. This is a realization that is not only painful, but frightening: I worry that if I examine the activist aesthetic of the AIDS Quilt, and my reactions to it, I could discover that I do not completely believe in the power of making, or writing, to repair what AIDS has broken. This essay embodies the hope that perhaps if I can stitch together words, like someone stitching together pieces of fabric for a memorial panel, I can make something that will be a meaningful statement in the "fight against" HIV/AIDS. I am aware that if I challenge the AIDS Quilt as a tool of activism, the whole lexicon and rubric that I have designed for myself through years of careful reading and writing may start to unravel like a worn-out corner of a patchwork. But this is a chance I am going to take, because I think questioning the tools we use to educate and activate

---

and safer sex; a real commitment to the health not just of the uninfected but of those living now with HIV and AIDS; and effective health care and education for all. (301)

is crucial to these methods' relevance within the many shifting social dynamics of the AIDS pandemic.

Hence, this essay seeks to use personal experience to introduce, uncover and explore how the AIDS Quilt exhibits its activist tensions in a new era of cultural understandings and responses to the virus and syndrome. The AIDS Quilt has been read as a unique cultural artifact: both a memorial and an educational tool. Before this particular morning in York, my understanding of the AIDS Quilt came from reading essays and viewing panels on the NAMES Project website. Using the work of critics such as Douglas Crimp, Judy Elsley, Katie Hogan and Nancy Roth, and Luis Varela and Scott Lago, I have read the AIDS Quilt's sometimes unbearable representation of loss as a push in the direction of change and activism. I had viewed the tensions between loss and activism within the AIDS Quilt as not only reconcilable, but also as productive and cathartic. When I first started working in the HIV/AIDS field in 1997, the AIDS Quilt represented (to me) a positive, emotive, and artistic response to the darkness of HIV/AIDS. In just ten years since its 1987 display on Washington's Capitol Hill, the AIDS Quilt, also known as the NAMES Project, had grown from a grass-roots memorial made in an "empty market street storefront in [San Francisco's] Castro [district]" (Ruskin 9) to a worldwide phenomenon, with official chapters organized in thirty-five countries as diverse as Canada, England, Thailand, the United States and Zambia.[4] Readers may be familiar with some of the many unofficial revisions and imitations of the AIDS Quilt that exist as a testimony to its perceived power for change. For example, in York, England, the North Yorkshire AIDS Action Group created a large blue quilt covered in white Yorkshire roses (a symbol of the area), with each rose memorializing an unnamed person. In Northern Alberta, Canada, the Edmonton HIV Network revised the AIDS Quilt into a "Living Quilt": a quilted mountain-scene background onto which buttons are pinned indicating the number of years a person has been living with HIV/AIDS.

The AIDS Quilt began not only as a memorial to the dead, but also as a radical monument trying to expose and repair the cultural damage done by AIDS. On the official NAMES Project AIDS Quilt

[4] Please see the NAMES Project Official website at <www.aidsquilt.org> for information on the AIDS Quilt organization cited in this essay.

website, the organization's stated mission is "to use the AIDS Quilt to help bring an end to AIDS." This is a bold and potentially revolutionary claim, complicated by the reality that in the two-and-a-half decades since HIV/AIDS was first written about in the 6 June 1981 edition of *The San Francisco Chronicle* as simply "a pneumonia that strikes gay males" (4), much has changed in our perceptions and responses to the HIV/AIDS phenomenon. When the AIDS Memorial Quilt was first displayed on Washington's Capitol Hill in October 1987, twelve thousand AIDS cases had been reported in the USA since 1981 (Kinsella 361). The USA was the country most visibly affected by HIV/AIDS. In the present-day, the UN estimates that, at the end of 2001 (when the Spurriergate display was opened to York's public) at least forty million people were living with HIV/AIDS worldwide. The majority of these people are living and dying in Sub-Saharan African countries.[5] Furthermore, according to the UN's figures, there were five million new HIV-infections recorded around the globe in 2001, one-third of them were in people aged fifteen to twenty-four. Although the West is not as affected as other parts of the globe, there were still 75,000 new HIV-infections recorded in 2001 alone (45,000 in North America and 30,000 in Western Europe). To put these new infections in perspective: in 2001 nearly four times as many people became HIV-infected in North America alone, as compared to the total number of American people living with AIDS when the AIDS Quilt was first displayed in October 1987.

Political activism in the West has waned since 1996, as the sense of urgency surrounding AIDS has shifted; in the West AIDS is now widely perceived as something we have "lived through" and as "manageable." In the after-glow of post-protease optimism, the AIDS Quilt starts to look more and more like a memorial not only to individuals lost to AIDS, but to a different era of AIDS, a pre-protease age, when loss meant something different than it does today.[6] While

---

[5] UN statistics can be found in the 2001 HIV/AIDS epidemic report available online at <www.UNAIDS.org>.

[6] In the summer of 1996, at the XIV International AIDS Conference in Vancouver, Canada, the family of retroviral drugs, including protease inhibitor drugs, were reported to have the potential to eradicate HIV, or at least make it undetectable, in the bloodstream of some patients. Since then the public perception of AIDS as a plague, as a death sentence, and even as a public health crisis has changed. While

the change in outlook brought about by medical advancements marked an important shift from the fatalistic to the optimistic for some living with HIV/AIDS, a new kind of silence has been imposed on AIDS discourse in the past eight years. Just as Western culture reached a point in our collective and public understandings of HIV/AIDS where people can increasingly talk about AIDS-related deaths without the terror of shame and ostracization negating our right to mourn, we slowly stopped talking about AIDS-related deaths all together, for fear that such talk would curb the hope and overly optimistic faith in the success of new drugs. While AIDS-related death rates have dropped in places where anti-retroviral drugs are available, HIV-infection rates continue to soar frighteningly in the West and around the world.

If the AIDS Quilt is to remain a viable way of memorializing, and, as the AIDS Quilt organizers post on their website, a potential tool of revolution, we need to ask the challenging and difficult question: how can the AIDS Quilt work as a tool of activism today? Furthermore, we need to ask: has the AIDS Quilt become a memorial not only to AIDS-related death, but also to a sense of political urgency in the West to end the AIDS crisis, in both the West and around the globe? HIV-infection rates are increasing around the world, in countries with very different levels of awareness, activist histories, funding for education and healthcare programs, and resources. In the December 2003 World AIDS Day on-line report from the United Nations, it is estimated that *"the global HIV/AIDS epidemic killed more than 3 million people in 2003, and an estimated 5 million acquired the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)—bringing to 40 million the number of people living with the virus around the world."* Hence, perhaps it has become out-of-date or optimistically naïve to think that an artifact like the Quilt, however important it is as a memorial, could be enough to "end AIDS."

Textile as Text

I take my first critical point of departure, in contemplation of the questions noted above, from one of two UK AIDS Quilt panels that

---

anyone affected by HIV/AIDS knows that anti-retroviral drugs, including protease inhibitors, are not a cure for AIDS, in the words of Andrew Sullivan in his important and controversial essay "When Plagues End," anti-retroviral drugs do signal "something profound in the history of AIDS" (67).

stuck in my memory from the York Spurriergate Centre display. Imagine a panel the size of a grave, three feet by six feet, made of crisp white cotton. It does not have the sensual embellishments, personal details, or quilting artistry that many of the other panels exhibit. Against a plain cotton background read the following words in dark blue thread:

> This panel was made for a Friend by a Friend.
> The Parents do not want this panel shown anywhere.
> The Stigma still exists—Until this changes this panel will remain covered.
> A Red Ribbon is not enough.
> The Quilt is not enough.
> What will it take? Attitudes must change!

This piece of cotton cloth is carefully attached to the UK AIDS Quilt's background with safety pins and, on closer inspection, it becomes apparent that this textual panel is actually a sheet that covers another panel underneath, one we cannot see. The message on the viewable panel expresses what many of us feel, and probably what we are meant to feel, when we see the AIDS Quilt: if cultural attitudes about HIV/AIDS changed, then so too could the individual realities of living with, dying with, and surviving HIV/AIDS. This panel represents a fragility and contingency to the freedom to grieve AIDS-related loss, underscoring that such freedom is not available to us all, equally. This textual panel also draws attention to the fear that the Quilt may not be able to do what it positions itself as doing; that is, the Quilt may not be able to change the attitudes about HIV/AIDS *enough* to change the realities of HIV/AIDS. I am drawn to this self-reflexive panel because it embodies many of my own questions about the NAMES Project and about artistic representations of AIDS in general. This panel prompts us to attend to the tension between personal loss and political hope in the diverse day-to-day realities of the epidemic, and it speaks to the limitations of the AIDS Quilt as a political tool for change. For where does it leave us, as mourners and viewers, when a panel within the very artifact we are meant to invest with revolutionary potential states, "The Quilt is not enough. What will it take?" By covering the "real" panel underneath, this unique text says that, despite the AIDS Quilt's importance as a monument, it is not a symbol that, on its own, is "enough" to "end AIDS," as its organizers may still hope.

Seeing this unique panel-over-a-panel forced me, as spectator, to acknowledge my desperate want to believe the AIDS Quilt's organizers ideal that the artifact can enact "enough" change to bring an "end to AIDS." However, when I found myself sympathizing with and understanding the panel maker's assertion that "the Quilt is not enough," I realized that I no longer believe any one object, memorial, or activist statement can "end AIDS." Perhaps HIV/AIDS is too complex, too intertwined with the make-up of our cultural norms and taboos, and too entangled with age-old cultural questions of desire, fear, and difference to "end." I have come to the conclusion, along with many others, that HIV/AIDS will only "end" once an effective vaccine against HIV is developed, made readily available around the globe, and subsidized to be affordable. This is not to say that medical intervention alone will be "enough" either; it too must be accompanied by cultural and social change. Educators, artists, and activists must continue to do everything we can to continue to challenge the cultural conditions and beliefs that precipitate HIV's spread, we must try to prevent HIV-infection through safer sex education and harm reduction efforts, and we must continue to fight for better services and treatment options for those with HIV and/or AIDS-related illness. The AIDS Quilt may be a tool that can be used to heighten awareness, but we must also ask how it fails to do so, in the hopes that we can better understand the nature of our past, present, and future responses to the changing HIV/AIDS phenomenon.

While the AIDS Quilt is an artifact *of* activism, it risks equating remembering *with* activism. In "*Ars Memoriandi*: The Names Project AIDS Quilt," Louis Varela and Scott Lago discuss journalist Michael Musto's suggestion, in a 1989 edition of *The Village Voice*, that the AIDS Quilt should come with a warning sticker that reads, "Don't Feel That By Crying Over This You've Really Done Something For AIDS" (173). Musto's statement may seem cynically harsh, but it is worth considering the impetus behind it. Part of the difficulty in analyzing the AIDS Quilt, and hence, part of its limitation as a tool of real political change, comes from its role as a memorial to individuals. It may be seen as insensitive to suggest that an AIDS Quilt panel should be something "more" than a personal reconstruction or testimony to a lost life, it may be insensitive to imply that this personal representation is not "enough." After all, in his influential essay "Mourning and Militancy (in the Homosexual Community over

AIDS)," Douglas Crimp asserts that the AIDS Quilt works so well as a tool of activism, precisely because "private identity is held up as monumental" in the memorial (7). People do not necessarily make Quilt panels to join or forge a larger political statement; they may do so as an act of remembrance or as a way of working through loss. The AIDS Quilt is a collection of personal reconstructions. It is perhaps a faulty logic that we expect personal memories of the dead, as represented in an individual Quilt panel, to become political just because the cause of death has been made political.

Tensions between the individual and the collective are difficult to resolve in many representations of AIDS. However, these tensions can encourage us to see AIDS differently, to challenge assumptions about the disease, and to question current modes of activism. The NAMES Project is a text, and a collection of texts, that exhibits this complicated dynamic: the Quilt memorializes individuals, but also joins individual bodies to one another, to make a collective body. As Cleve Jones has written in the epilogue to his 2001 biography, *Stitching a Revolution: The Making of an Activist*, "the Quilt is all about the connection between all these different people united in one particular challenge" (248). Everyone remembered in the Quilt has died of AIDS-related causes and this potentially connects them to one another and to the larger identity of a person with AIDS (PWA). The AIDS Quilt, in both its design and political intent, cannot escape the fact that it is both a monument to private identity and a collective body designed for political means.

As viewers of the AIDS Quilt, we must respect the integrity of the reconstructions of people as represented in the memorial. However, in appreciating individual experiences and memories, we must also interrogate how AIDS-related discrimination and HIV-related ignorance relate to public or collective perceptions of sexual, racial, gender and "Other" identities. We must enquire about the differing experiences of those living with HIV/AIDS, and why silence and stigma still surround prevention efforts, HIV-diagnosis, and AIDS-related illness and death. It is obvious to argue that the inequities of Western culture arise from ingrained power imbalances based on identity and difference. In the initial days of the HIV epidemic (historically referred to as GRID, ARC, AIDS, and in 1985, HIV), the long-standing cultural homophobic representations of men who have sex with men as deviant, ill, and threatening to the norms

of patriarchal culture dominated and shaped discourse on the virus and syndrome. Because of the work of gay / lesbian and AIDS activists / artists, this hate and violence has been exposed and has started to lessen, although it has by no means been eradicated (as the panel discussed above illustrates). Furthermore, although men who have sex with men have been the most visible people stigmatized by AIDS in the consciousness of popular culture, people who use intravenous drugs, people who sell their bodies for sex, people who live on "the streets," and people who are not white have also been targeted as "carriers" of HIV/AIDS. Increasingly, people from sub-Saharan African countries are facing HIV/AIDS-related discrimination in their day-to-day interactions and in the representations of the global AIDS epidemic in the West. Cultural stereotypes of difference both allow "mainstream populations" to believe AIDS is not "their problem" and create "risk groups" categories that allow certain people to remain more vulnerable to HIV exposure and infection and AIDS-related death. Part of the tension between individual and community in the AIDS Quilt reflects the fact that people are disproportionately affected by and discriminated against in the HIV/AIDS phenomenon.

The Memorialized

Part of my grief-stricken reaction to seeing the AIDS Quilt in Spurriergate Centre came from the unbearable specificity of many of the panels and the intimacy I felt privileged to access as a viewer. However, the panel that I have discussed thus far covers up the details of a personal life and replaces those representations with a political message. When I viewed the textual panel, I entertained the idea that perhaps I am part of a culture or public that does not even deserve to see these memorials. Perhaps the privilege of seeing such personal and private representations and memories should only be granted to a culture that will no longer tolerate prejudice and will do "enough" to change medical, political, and cultural responses to HIV/AIDS.

Apart from bearing testimony to individual lives, the AIDS Quilt becomes personal or private in both its subject matter and its medium. Part of the importance of celebrating life in an AIDS memorial comes from the fact that cultural views of AIDS have historically implied that HIV/AIDS affects people who are not worth celebrating or remembering. As Judith Butler has infamously claimed in "Critically Queer":

> there has been an insistent publicization and politicization of grief over those who have died from AIDS; the NAMES Project Quilt is exemplary, ritualizing and repeating the name itself as a way of publically avowing the limitless loss. Insofar as grief remains unspeakable, the rage over the loss can redouble by virtue of remaining unavowed. (236)

The AIDS Quilt can be read as responding to ACT UP's (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) 1987 claim that, in the AIDS epidemic, "SILENCE=DEATH": by naming and memorializing individuals whose lives may have been silenced in particular ways, the AIDS Quilt ensures that their deaths will not be silenced, and, hence, works against their loss being "unavowed." The subject matter of HIV/AIDS also makes the Quilt, at times, unbearably personal: HIV is acquired through the exchange of bodily fluids during sexual encounters, the sharing of syringes, and from mothers-to-babies during the birthing process and/or breastfeeding. These are all private acts that, with the exception of breast-feeding in designated spaces, are constituted as shocking when they occur in public. Centuries of laws and institutions have ensured that these activities or events have been compartmentalized, ostracized, and clinicalized so that their actual occurrence will remain invisible to the public eye. As well, although quilts may seem to be mundane every-day items, they are actually "private" objects. Quilts belong on a bed—a site where intensely personal experiences such as sex, childbirth, illness, and death take place. The AIDS Quilt can be read, then, as a mixed metaphor: it covers, like a blanket, the death of a person, and tries to recover, like a monument, a person lost to AIDS.

Despite its message of loss, the AIDS Quilt does not depict death. As a memorial born from activism, the AIDS Quilt celebrates the life of an individual person. Even though it signifies loss, seeing a panel is not about seeing death. I draw attention to this obvious point in an attempt to understand the anger of people like the Spurriergate panel maker or Musto writing in *The Village Voice* in 1989, and indeed, as a way of pinpointing my own frustration with the AIDS Quilt's positioning as a tool to "end AIDS." Just as cherub facades and ornate gravestones hide the decay and illness of the bodies they memorialize and cover, AIDS Quilt panels rarely present the violence and horror that AIDS does to the individual psyche and body. The NAMES Project is not, as David Wojnarowicz's narrator

envisions in *Close to the Knives*, a pile of corpses dumped on Capitol Hill. He writes:

> I imagine what it would be like if, each time a lover, friend or stranger died of this disease, their friends, lovers or neighbours would take the dead body and drive with it in a car a hundred miles an hour to washington d.c. and blast through the gates of the white house and come to a screeching halt before the entrance and dump their lifeless form on the front steps. It would be comforting to see those friends, neighbours, lovers and strangers mark time and place and history in such a public way. (122)

Wojnarowicz reacts to the disposability of certain people with AIDS by making those bodies literally disposable and disposing of them on the doorsteps of those making them so. This passage may also be read as a reaction to the AIDS Quilt organizers' revolutionary claims. The last sentence in this citation is particularly ironic as the memorial is praised precisely for "marking time, place, and [AIDS-related] history in such a public way." Wojnarowicz's alternative scenario suggests that the AIDS Quilt's covering of death, in order to present life, may occur at the expense of representing the gritty and painful experiences of AIDS. More specifically, Wojnarowicz's passage suggests that political leaders and those at the top of the "pyramids of power" (to borrow his phrase) must come face-to-face, or body-to-body, with the ugliness of AIDS-related death in order for any real change to happen. I may be wrong, but I do not believe Wojnarowicz expects any of his readers to actually undertake his narrator's alternative reality. Nor do I think he wants AIDS Quilt panels to represent lesion-covered, bacteria-laden, tube-punctured, violated, contaminated AIDS bodies. What Wojnarowicz does make us do is think differently about AIDS, culture, and, in the above-passage, how the AIDS Quilt operates as memorial and activist tool. However disturbing, there is a truth to what Wojnarowicz implies in the above citation from *Close To The Knives*: the AIDS Quilt hints at the brutality of HIV/AIDS by presenting loss and then quickly covers it up by celebrating life and memory.

The Viewers

Part of the AIDS Quilt's political importance relies on the fact that it is a spectacle. The NAMES Project website estimates that over

two million people see the AIDS Quilt every year. The AIDS Quilt is a striking, clever, and portable monument that can travel and be seen by many people in various places and contexts. I use the term "spectacle" to invoke Simon Watney's influential essay "The Spectacle of AIDS," published the same year as the first display of the AIDS Quilt on Capitol Hill. Watney identifies the conflict between truth and tabloid in AIDS-related knowledge; he awakens us to the problem that, despite scientific knowledge of HIV transmission and HIV/AIDS in general being widely available, news media and popular consciousness construct HIV transmission as originating from the gay male body.[7] Watney speaks about the highly visible ways the gay male body is presented as a source of fear and contagion, as a body with AIDS. He writes:

> [i]n all its variant forms the spectacle of AIDS is carefully and elaborately stage-managed as a sensational didactic pageant, furnishing "us," the "general public," with further evidence of what "we" already "know" concerning the enormity of the dangers that surround us on all sides and at all times. It provides a purgative ritual in which we see the evildoers punished, while the national family unit—understood as the locus of "the social"—is cleansed and restored. (78)

The AIDS Quilt demonstrates another tension when we define it as "spectacle" as it both embodies and combats Watney's important understanding of "the spectacle of AIDS." The AIDS Quilt can be seen as an artifact that enables the "interpellated spectator [to assume s/he] already knows all he needs to know about . . . AIDS." On the other hand, the NAMES Project resists being a "spectacle," as defined by Watney, because it does not restore the "mainstream," "the locus of 'the social,'" and instead "cleans[es] and restore[s]" those who are seen to exist outside that mainstream. The AIDS Quilt challenges ideas of family and the social by using a domestic artifact (associated with frontier resilience) to memorialize so-called undesirables. The

[7] Watney also writes: "The entire subject continues to be framed by a cultural agenda that is as medically misinformed as it is socially misleading and politically motivated" (72). He further notes: "Epidemiology is thus replaced by a moral etiology of disease that can only conceive homosexual desire within a medicalized metaphor of contagion" (73).

AIDS Quilt names and remembers people who are often seen as existing outside collective bodies of family, and even nation. The NAMES Project tries to change the common perception that representations of AIDS are "sensitive only to the values of the dominant familial truth of AIDS," by privileging individuality and, apart from size, complete autonomy in the content and message of each panel. The AIDS Quilt tries to undo the spectacle of AIDS as it has been conceived in Western media and popular consciousness by presenting "the public" with a different kind of spectacle.

The desperate hope that the AIDS Quilt will "end AIDS" comes not from the Quilt itself, the construction of it, nor even the display of it: it comes from what is expected and what happens after it is viewed. One of the tangible and immediate effects the AIDS Quilt can have is as a tool for fundraising. Cleve Jones told a San Francisco journalist in 1989 that people "come to the Quilt, and they cry, and then they empty their pockets, and then they sign up and get to work. We've seen that over and over" (Elsley 188). While I am sure Jones did not intend to sound cynical, his comments to the West Coast reporter could be read in the same vein as Musto's suggestion for a warning sticker to be slapped on the Quilt: it is not enough to cry, for crying does not mean that one has done anything except react, but crying can be a way to pull on heartstrings and encourage financial donations. Working in the HIV/AIDS field, I am the first to admit that money and fundraising are essential to battling HIV-infection. The money raised by the AIDS Quilt, and other public AIDS Awareness campaigns, is necessary in assisting other HIV organizations and the NAMES Project itself to provide services and education. It costs money and human labour to display the AIDS Quilt. However, when something positions itself as a spectacle, and specifically as a spectacle displayed to generate funds, it also risks becoming a commodity.

Indeed, apart from its important role as a catalyst for fundraising, the AIDS Quilt has also become, in some branches of the NAMES Project organization, such a commodity. During some exhibitions of the AIDS Quilt, viewers are not only asked to donate money to an organization sponsoring the display, but they are also "invited" to purchase AIDS Quilt "memorabilia." When the Online Store Catalogue enables anyone with internet access and a credit card to purchase a piece of the AIDS Quilt "experience," without even

having to view it, we lose what Marx would have identified as the social character of the AIDS Quilt's labour. Commodification takes away some of the power of the AIDS Quilt, its revolutionary potential, that is there when we are intimately engaged and faced with the labour, love, and loss in each panel. Furthermore, when we buy a NAMES Project baseball cap, jacket, keychain, or calendar, we lose the idea that someone laboured over a panel and instead concentrate on the purchased object itself. The sale of these objects not only commodifies the AIDS Quilt, but the objects themselves risk becoming material proof of a consumer's supposed conscientious political sensitivity to the AIDS phenomenon. To be blunt, these objects offer an easy way into AIDS consciousness: why should we look at the causes of poverty-related HIV-infection when we can just buy a t-shirt on-line? I do not want to demonize the individuals who purchase AIDS Quilt memorabilia, as wearing or owning these goods may connect individuals to the memorial in a proactive or cathartic way. However, the fact that these goods are available in the first place must be questioned. When the NAMES Project invites its viewers to become consumers, it compromises its position as a tool of activism. Like the memento identification cards available at The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., or recent sales of bricks and rubble in wake of terrorist attacks in New York City, caps and keychains with images of the AIDS Quilt risk becoming souvenirs of catastrophe. Such items encourage us to tour through calamity instead of engaging with it. The AIDS Quilt, and its accompanying industry of memorabilia, creates a situation where we can purge our guilt about our own AIDS-related apathy by becoming good consumers.

It is always difficult to match up idealist views of an equitable world economy with the sad reality that money is necessary to survival. There is a painful reality that money, and specifically lack of money, is socially constructed and orchestrated to affect people differently. As AIDS continues to devastate economically disadvantaged nations around the globe, the connections between poverty and HIV-infection that have existed since the beginning of the epidemic are becoming undeniable. Stuart Hall's catchphrase "the West and the Rest" has become all too real in a present dominated by appalling "Third World" poverty, increasing HIV-infection rates and AIDS-related deaths among people in developing nations and

among economically disadvantaged people in developed nations, and in a world in the grips of unprecedented tactics of warfare targeting civilians. As cultural critics, we must continue to interrogate how all inequities—particularly economic ones—contribute to the HIV/AIDS phenomenon.

Two decades into the epidemic, AIDS remains a disease identified with "otherness" but the definitions of that otherness are shifting. For example, the African continent was once seen as the "birthplace" of AIDS and is now seen as the epicenter of an AIDS apocalypse. Specifically, "the black African woman" has become the most visible body with AIDS in the new millennium. In a December 29, 2002 article in *The New York Times*, United Nations Director Kofi Annan writes: "[a] United Nations report released last month shows that women now make up 50 percent of those infected with H.I.V. worldwide—and in Africa that figure is now 58 percent. Today, AIDS has a woman's face." While Western women may be perpetually represented in the role of caretaker, African women are presented as bodies ravaged by AIDS. Since the new millennium, Western media presents the image of a skeletal dark female body lying on a mat in a far-away shack to symbolize the current effects and dynamics of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Similar to many early Western representations of the white gay man with AIDS,[8] the black African woman is presented as an exposed (often literally naked), voiceless body, passively waiting to die while the world stands by and watches. It is now unacceptable to construct the white gay male body as equaling AIDS, to borrow Watney's terminology, as "spectacle." Yet, the black African female body is presented in current media in similarly reductive ways to those early Western depictions of the white gay male with AIDS. When women are presented as caretaker or spectacle, the complicated reasons why we are at increased risk for HIV infection are silenced and our daily lives as individuals living and dying with HIV and AIDS are erased; instead of being represented as complex individuals, we become roles and bodies.[9]

---

[8] For an excellent discussion of images of PWAs in the '80s, see Crimp 1992.

[9] How we remember those lost to AIDS and who does the remembering are questions about the AIDS Quilt that are tied to larger cultural questions about the construction and lived realities of gendered identities. I did not have the space in this

While the artifact of the Quilt cleverly domesticates AIDS and makes it a "household" issue, a patchwork quilt is also a Western artifact; hence, how can it do enough to represent the diverse and complicated experiences of AIDS in the new millennium? For example, is Cleve Jones justified in celebrating the NAMES Project's efforts to "encourage Quilt-making and Quilt displays in townships and rural areas across South Africa" (365)? Are there not more culturally meaningful symbols that could be used to foster memorializing and activism among such diverse groups as the Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, and Afrikaners? To be more specific, we must ask if the AIDS Quilt really can acknowledge the range of HIV/AIDS experiences or if it is an object already invested with certain cultural meanings that shape its reading and thereby direct its power, or revolutionary potential, to a certain public. Current representations of AIDS, including the NAMES Project, need to build on the work of the past and use current understandings of the globalized pandemic to see how certain patterns of representation and interpretation both hinder and help activist efforts.

Conclusions, Or Re-reading the AIDS Quilt

There are many complicated problems in how the AIDS Quilt represents the HIV/AIDS phenomenon. Sometimes its presentation of loss overwhelms its political viability or potential for future revolution. However, ultimately, we must read the NAMES Project as a constructive response to tragedy, if we hope to understand both its past and its future. The piecing together, or act of making, displayed in the AIDS Quilt is moving and inspiring. The AIDS Quilt has the unique position of memorializing an event that is past, present, and future. While other memorials carry the message that their dead need not have died and that the event they remember should never happen again, the NAMES Project awakens its viewers to the fact that AIDS-related deaths should not have happened, should

---

essay to engage in the debate concerning quilt makers' identities and gender. See Crimp's (1988) and Hogan and Roth's (1998) essays for two very different arguments about "women's work" and the AIDS Quilt. Also see Michelle Cliff's 1990 short story "Bodies of Water" in which quilts become a narrative site where AIDS, women's political resistance, and American history converge. I write about Cliff's story in my chapter in the 2004 book, *Spectral America: Phantoms and the Literary Imagination.*

not be happening, and can be prevented in the future. The AIDS Quilt, as an object and as a text, recognizes the present moment as a continuing state of crisis. The panel that most affected me at the Spurriergate display, asserting that "The AIDS Quilt is not enough," is a remarkable example of the freedom and diversity of expression in the NAMES Project. Very few monuments, carved in granite or erected as an obelisk, dare to question their own purpose. The AIDS Quilt can be a progressive and exciting tool of activism, not necessarily to "end AIDS," but to better understand it, which, ultimately, can change AIDS. The fact that someone can ask and explore multiple questions about the AIDS Quilt's integrity as a tool for activism is a fine example of the Quilt's revolutionary potential: surely if seeing the memorial has made me think and question and want to know more about AIDS, then it has served its purpose of raising awareness. On one level, the analysis within this short essay answers its own question of whether or not the AIDS Quilt is still a relevant tool of raising awareness simply by asking the question and working through a handful of issues facing current HIV/AIDS activism and prevention work.

In her paper "AIDS and the Responsibility of the Writer," originally presented at the 1990 *Outwrite* conference in San Francisco, Sarah Schulman argued, "[t]here is no book that got any drug released, any drug trial opened, or any service provided. Reading a book may help someone decide to take action, but it is not the same thing as taking action" (rep. *My American History* 196-197). I have always agreed with Schulman's point that writing in itself does not replace the work of political demonstrations or fundraising for AIDS service organizations, or prevention education, but I do think that the creative work of writing, in itself, can be activist. A creative work, whether it is a NAMES Project memorial panel, a journalistic editorial, a song, a novel, or a painting can express the sometimes conflicting realities of AIDS activism in a way that day-to-day community work cannot afford to do, in a world of too few resources and too many overworked activists.

I would like to finish this personal essay by describing the second panel that most captured my imagination that autumn morning at Spurriergate Centre. This panel is not confrontational like the self-reflexive one that claims, "The AIDS Quilt is not enough." Rather, this one is a tribute panel to a writer named Joseph Beam. Beam

grew up in Philadelphia and worked as a writer and African American gay rights activist.[10] The UK AIDS Quilt panel to Beam is elaborate and visually stunning; it has a satin background of oranges and blues that surround a portrait photo of Beam. Underneath the photo, the panel maker has embroidered a letter, "Dear Joe," in gilded stitching. Arthur Law, a man living in Brighton, UK, created the panel to Beam despite never having met him. In his written explanation of the panel, which was displayed with the UK NAMES Project at Spurriergate, Law says that as a reader he felt so connected to Beam that he paid this tribute to him. The letter embroidered on the panel reads:

> *Dear Joe,*
>
> *I stumbled across your words when I felt like I was dying. You dared me to dream as you dared all of us to dream.*
>
> *You gave me back my life. And I risked believing that I really could fly, that I really could be strong enough, that I would never be alone and that the power of our love really is invincible.*
>
> *Your loss is an impenetrable silence.*
>
> *Love, Arthur*
>
> *X*

Remembering the beauty and hope in Arthur Law's panel to Joseph Beam, during my own process of creating this essay, I felt a slightly renewed faith in the AIDS Quilt's revolutionary potential. Arthur Law's panel reconfirmed my belief that creating, in this case, writing and quilting, have the power to change lives.

In seeing the AIDS Quilt, we bear testimony to loss in the hopes that the acts of remembering and naming the dead will allow us to move forward into a better future where HIV/AIDS is concerned. Just as there are many different panels in the AIDS Quilt, there are

---

[10] Beam was the editor of a journal called *Black/Out* and published numerous articles and short stories. He worked at Giovanni's Room in Philadelphia, a major organizing space for gay and AIDS activism in the 1970s and 1980s. Beam is best known for editing a critically acclaimed anthology of black gay men's writings entitled *In the Life* (1986). He was collecting articles for a second anthology when he died of AIDS-related illnesses in 1989. Two of his colleagues, Dorothy Beam and Essex Hemphill, finished editing the anthology and published it as *Brother to Brother* in 1991. Biographical information about Joseph Beam is taken from the "Joseph Beam Papers" available on-line at the New York Public Library's Digital Library Collection. The collection number for the Joseph Beam Papers is Sc MG 455.

many different pieces in any understanding of HIV/AIDS. Individual narratives deserve to be heard even if they do not always "fit" together to make a cohesive statement or answer. Colour and contrast—diversity—are necessary to make a beautiful piece of art, whether it is a textile or a book. Representations of AIDS may have irresolvable tensions, but these tensions can be productive to enacting or even interpreting change. Part of the AIDS Quilt's uniqueness as a memorial is its mutability: it can change and grow as long as people continue to make and add panels and continue to view it and respond. The NAMES Project's inherent character of mutability must be used to address the changing nature of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I will conclude that the AIDS Quilt can remain a relevant and potentially revolutionary tool in AIDS activism—if it is used as a way to generate HIV/AIDS education, and if it continues to uphold the individual life lived and lost as monumental. If the AIDS Quilt is positioned as something it is not—a commodity—or is given an insurmountable task—as a way to "end AIDS"—then its effectiveness as a political artifact will be compromised. The AIDS Quilt is, as the Spurriergate panel maker asserts, not "enough" in the fight against AIDS, but it can remain and continue to be an important artifact and historical document of our responses to HIV/AIDS.

Works Cited

Annan, Kofi. "The Changing Face of AIDS." *The New York Times*. December 29, 2002. The New York Times Website. 15 Sept. 2004. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/29/opinion/29ANNA.html?ex=1095480000&en=5ce9e02870759787&ei=5070>.

Associated Press. "A Pneumonia That Strikes Gay Males," *The San Francisco Chronicle* June 6, 1981: 4.

Beam, Joseph, ed. *In The Life: A Black Gay Anthology*. Boston: Alyson Publishing, 1986.

———. *"The Joseph Beam Papers."* September 2001. New York Public Library Digital Collections. Collection # Sc MG 455. 15 September 2004. <www.digilib.nypl.org/dynaweb/ead/nypl/scmgbeam/@Generic_Bookview>.

Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer." *Bodies That Matter*. New York: Routledge, 1993. 223–243.

Cliff, Michelle. "Bodies of Water." *Bodies of Water*. New York: Dutton, 1990. 121–149.

Crimp, Douglas. "Mourning and Militancy (in the Homosexual Community over AIDS)." *October* 51 (1989): 3–18.

———. "Portraits of People With AIDS." *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS*. Domna C. Stanton. Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 1992. 362–389.

Davidson, Diana. "Difficult Writings: AIDS and the Activist Aesthetic in Reinaldo Arenas' *Before Night Falls*." *Atenea: A Bilingual Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*. 23.2 (2003): 53–72.

———. "Ghosting HIV/AIDS: Haunting Words and Apparitional Bodies in Michelle Cliff's 'Bodies of Water.'" *Spectral America: Phantoms and the Literary Imagination*. Ed. Jeffrey Weinstock. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004. 221–243.

Elsley, Judy. "The Rhetoric of the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt: Reading the Text(ile)." *AIDS: The Literary Response*. Ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992. 187–196.

Jones, Cleve and Jeff Dawson. *Stitching a Revolution: The Making of An Activist*. Toronto: Harper Collins, 2001.

Hemphill, Essex and Dorothy Beam, ed. *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men*. Conceived by Joseph Beam. Boston: Alyson, 1991.

Hogan, Katie and Nancy L. Roth. "Chapter Ten: The Person with AIDS: The Body, the Feminine, and the NAMES Project." *Gendered Epidemic: Representations of Women in the Age of AIDS*. New York and London: Routledge, 1998. 191–204.

Kruger, Steven F. *AIDS Narratives: Gender and Sexuality, Fiction and Science*. New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1996.

Kinsella, James. "Timeline of the Plague: A medical, political, and media history of AIDS," *Covering the Plague: AIDS and the American Media*. London: Rutgers University Press, 1989. 260–270.

Law, Arthur. "Letter: Dear Joe." *UK NAMES Project Display Information*. Manchester: UK NAMES Project Headquarters, 1994.

The NAMES Project AIDS Quilt. December 1998. The Names Project Organization. 15 Sept. 2004. <www.aidsquilt.org>.

Ruskin, Cindy. *The QUILT: Stories From the NAMES Project.* New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1988.

Schulman, Sarah. *People in Trouble.* New York: E.P. Dutton, 1990.

———. *My American History: Lesbian and Gay Life During the Reagan/Bush Years.* London: Routledge, 1994.

Sullivan, Andrew. "When Plagues End." *New York Times Magazine.* 16 November 1995: 58–84.

United Nations AIDS 2001 Report. January 2002. United Nations. 15 Sept. 2004. <http://www.unaids.org/epidemic_update/report_dec01/index.html>.

United Nations AIDS 2003 Report. January 2004. United Nations. 15 Sept. 2004. <http://www.unaids.org/Unaids/EN/Resources/Publications/corporate+publications/aids+epidemic+update+-+december+2003.asp>.

Varela, Luis and Lago, Scott. "*Ars Memoriandi*: The NAMES Project AIDS Quilt," *Facing Death: Where Culture, Religion, and Medicine Meet.* Ed. Howard M. Spiro, Mary G. McCrea Curnen, and Lee Palmer Wandel. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. 166–179.

Watney, Simon. "The Spectacle of AIDS," "AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism," *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism.* Ed. Douglas Crimp. London: October Books, MIT Press, 1988. 71–86.

Wojnarowicz, David. *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration.* New York: Vintage, 1991.

Queer Hermeneutics: Who is that Queer/n in the Picture? Contemporary Philosophical Hermeneutics[1]

RALPH CARL WUSHKE

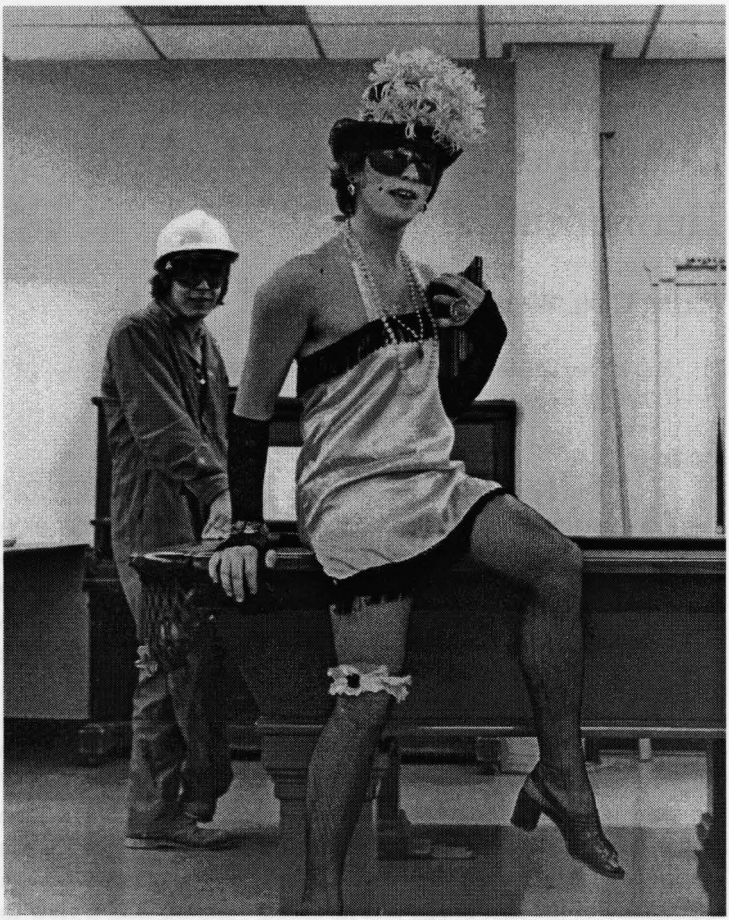
Ralph Carl Wushke is a Th.M. graduate (2004) of Toronto School of Theology, Emmanuel College.

Preface

When I returned to the academy in 2000 one of the goals I stated to myself and others was to reflect on the paths my life has taken. Contemporary philosophical hermeneutics–post-modern philosophy and deconstruction–resting on Schleiermacher's assertion that "the height of understanding is to understand any author better than he understood himself" (72) offers points of access and resources for this journey of (self)understanding. Hermeneutics involves textual exploration and understanding. In this instance the texts for exploration are a black and white photo of two people that is in my possession, and a reproduction of a portion of the same image on a page on the World Wide Web that was online in the fall of 2001.[2] I intend to connect these images with some additional texts I have written in the years, bracketed by the appearance of the first image and its online version, with a view to

[1] This paper was presented at a joint session of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association and the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, June 1, 2004, Winnipeg.

[2] <http://www.quadrat.com/party/>. No longer online.



exploring what was / is (un)said in all these texts. I would like to reflect on this hermeneutical exercise in light of a close reading of the "hermeneutic spiral" proposed by James Olthuis (2000), with reference to selected texts of Jacques Derrida, John Caputo and Paul Ricoeur.

I realize the risk in doing this is that I am (re)counting and perhaps (re)creating memories. Is this truth or fiction? The (im)possibility of perfectly truthful (re)telling brings a quote from Jacques Derrida (2000) to mind:

> Funerary speech and writing would not follow upon death; they work on life in what we call autobiography. And this takes place between fiction and truth, *Dichtung* and *Wahrheit*. . . . An obvious allusion to a distinction between fiction and autobiography that not only remains undecidable but, far more serious, in whose indecidability, as de Man makes clear, it is impossible to stand, to maintain oneself in a stable or stationary way. (Derrida 16)

This short paper also rests uneasily in that indecidability, on the shifting boundary between literature and therapeutic exploration, between autobiography and fiction, since much of it is (re)created and (re)membered–and the testimony of memory can be both deceptive and inventive.

(Re)Reading the First Text

What is actually in the photograph (as seen on page 210)? What is the plain sense of the text? The photograph is an enlargement of an amateur candid shot of a young Caucasian (fe)male. S/he stands in the foreground complete with boa feather headgear, pearl necklace, teardrop earrings, ostentatious ring, fringed shoulderless dress, poor-girl gloves fish-net stockings, sling-back pumps and garter. Is s/he a cancan[3] girl or a flapper?[4] Either way s/he is toying with the risqué or has a rebellious side. S/he appears to be looking off into the distance in mid-sentence. S/he is masked. S/he is supporting herself on the ledge of a billiard table, and is clutching something that looks like a collection of books.

In the background, a more obviously male Caucasian is giving him / her the gaze. He is also masked, and wearing a basic construction worker outfit with hardhat, overalls and work boots. He is a stereotype of masculinity (and heteronormativity?). Does he symbolize the myth of stable gender categories operative in the room? Further in the background, a piano, pool cue stand and pool cue rest. The room is nondescript and does not do the flapper / cancan girl justice.

---

[3] *cancan*: a woman's dance of French origin characterized by high kicking usu. while holding up the front of a full ruffled skirt. *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, 1981.

[4] *flapper* c: a young woman who aggressively manifests freedom from constraint and convention in conduct and dress–used esp. during the period of World War I and the following decade. *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, 1981.

All of this is circumscribed by a cheap plastic frame.

What is outside the frame? What (con)text impinges on the text?

It's Hallowe'en, Friday, Ocober 31, 1975. The venue is the recreation room at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon. The other party-goers are seminarians, their friends, seminary professors and spouses, the "seminary community."

A Second Look

What was being said at the event, the moment in time that is captured by the picture? In Foucauldian terms, performing drag is a discursive activity, a statement in a larger discursive formation.[5] It references other occasions of drag and signals play with gender and sexual orientation. Playing with gender, dressing up in this cancan get-up, was a way of risking disclosure. This event captured in the photograph points to a secret that does (not) want to be told. The image evokes Caputo's exploration of the (non)secret in Derrida: "the secret is constituted by saying and thinking it *as* a secret, so that it is both divulged and negated" (Caputo 33). This image validates Caputo's observation that "[i]f it were utterly secret, if the secret were purely secret, there would be no secret to keep safe. A pure secret, like a pure gift, makes no appearance and has no phenomenality. 'There is no secret *as* such; I deny it'" (33).

Likewise the photograph has the potential to play with the Derridean themes of deconstruction and *différance*. As Caputo says: "Deconstruction is rather the thought of an absolute heterogeneity that unsettles all the assurance of the same within which we comfortably ensconce ourselves. That is the desire by which it is moved, which moves and impassions it, which sets it into motion, toward which it extends itself" (5). He continues, "*[d]ifférance* supplies a condition under which something is constituted or constructible and at the same time through and through deconstructible" (12). The photograph, and the moment it captures, seem to be crying out for deconstruction, and *différance* makes that possible; it opens up the moment and allows multiple viewpoints of the photograph.

---

[5] "Statement" and "discursive formation" are concepts elaborately formulated by Michel Foucault. See *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969).

The photograph was taken a year before I came out, an event that would not take place until October 19, 1976, the first time I voiced "the secret." Nevertheless something was being said that night. As I (de)constructed my own gender, was I hoping that my secret would be less of a secret? Perhaps. Was I (not) saying to my professors (most of whom were in attendance) and my classmates, "I am the homosexual in your midst"? Perhaps.

The photo captures a moment of a secret, which in Derridean terms is not a true secret. The only reason there could be a secret was because it was known to me already, and perhaps suspected by others. I knew the secret and wanted others to know it as well. The dominant preoccupation of the next few years of my life would be that (non)-secret. In deconstruction, neither the (con)text nor the text are stable. The 1975 text in that context did (not) say certain things. The 2001 version of the text says different things. I would like to use (re)created dialogues to explore the (non)secrets in these two texts.

Voices at the Hallowe'en Party

Seminarian: "Can I really do this? No one knows I'm a homosexual. Maybe they do know already. Do I (not) want them to know?"	Flapper: "I'm getting ready for this party. Gee these stockings feel pretty good. I like these heels. I really like the earrings, the lipstick. I feel at home in the feminine."	Construction Worker: "Who is s/he? She's sexy. I'm getting turned on."
Seminarian: "I wonder if they're suspecting I'm homosexual. Maybe I shouldn't have done this. The professors look amused. That's a relief."	Flapper: "What a thrill! Everyone's looking at me! Why do they look so mystified?"	Crowd: "Is that really Ralph???" "He is amazing as a woman!"
	Flapper: "I wish I could tell them what's really going on here tonight."	Some silent voices: "I always thought he was gay."

Voices from Internship

Seminarian (diary entry) Oct. 19, 1976: "This is the greatest day—the fifteen year Advent has ended."	Flapper: "I wonder if this means my work is done now."	Crowd: "What's he so happy about? Why can't he tell us?"
Seminarian: (to professor) "The reason I'm unsure about ordination is because I'm homosexual. Can I be a pastor in this church?"	Flapper: "Oh God, here we go again."	Professor: "I think you will make a fine pastor in our church."
Seminarian: (to seminary president) "I'm homosexual, and I am afraid someone is going to raise the question of sexual orientation during the colloquy."[6]	Flapper: "Wow, that was easier than I thought it was going to be."	Seminary President: "If anyone does, I'll tell them it's none of their business."

Voices in the Parish

Seminarian (now ordained; journal entry), June 12, 1984: "At some moments I think I have to resign this parish and the ministry–there is no way to lead a remotely satisfying life as a gay human being in the parish. The main problem is that it's impossible to be completely open and share oneself in the modeling of the kind of trust that will create community."

Seminarian, October 4, 1984 (in a letter to his friends and family): "In my personal and spiritual odyssey I have returned to the centre and am moving out again... At this point in my life I must leave my present parish and pastoral office... In order to live and act on the gospel I must take the risk to leave

Others: "Is he going to come out?"

[6] At that time the colloquy was the final interview by Lutheran church authorities which seminarians had to pass in order to be certified for ordination.

this work and the security and identity which I derive from it. It might be called 'taking up one's cross…' for, for me at least, it includes a certain element of risk."

Seminarian, February 23, 1989 (letter to immediate and extended family): "[M]uch effort in my life is being expended toward justice for gays and lesbians in church and society… At this point I have reached the delightful stage of self-acceptance and recognize that my sexuality, while perhaps in the numerical minority is a gift of God and therefore something to be thankful for, and not hidden."

Family: "We cried when we read your letter. We are so proud of you." Other family members: Silence.

Voices Toronto/Saskatchewan

Seminarian (in an article for inclusion in the 75th Anniversary book of the Lutheran parish in Redvers, Saskatchewan), December 10, 1997: "In reflecting on what I wrote in the first edition of the Dannevirke history book [in 1983], it is clear that biography omits much: the deep anxiety and longings of which I dared not speak or write for fear. The things which fear would not let me put in public were nevertheless being written in the privacy of my journal, spoken of in safe conversations and prayed about in innumerable moments of soul-searching conversation with the Creator."

Prairie Voices: "Are you sure you want this article published in our history book?"

"When I resigned from the pastorate of Dannevirke Lutheran Church in fall, 1984, I did so because I wanted to take leave of the parish in a way that was not disruptive, so that I could move away from that particular place, both physically and psychologically, to 'come out' in the broader context of church and society."

Prairie Voices: "We don't want that in our history book!"

Reading the Second Text

The second text, a page from the World Wide Web, (re)produces a portion of the first, the image of the flapper, this time surrounded by

marquee lights, overlaid with the caption "Silver Anniversary of a Queer/n" in elegant script. "Queer/n" is highlighted with a radiant pink and gold sunburst. Beneath the caption the announcement for a party follows:

Where: 11 Givins Street, Toronto
When: Friday, October 19, 2001
(25 years to the day since little Ralphie first came out of the closet!)
Time: after 8:00 pm
What to Bring:
- Little something to drink
- Your favourite 70s disco tape or CD

Dress Code: Retro, preferably 70s, but any decade since the 50s will do!
RSVP

A Second Look

An image from a party in 1975 that veiled a (non)secret is (re)used to once more *un*veil the secret that has been told a thousand times and enjoins to celebration. The reference to a "Silver Anniversary" so common for heterosexual wedding anniversaries is (re)claimed to mark 25 years of a gay life lived ever further out of the closet. Combining "Queer" and "Queen" in the postmodern "Queer/n" (re)claims two terms often used pejoratively of male homosexuals and simultaneously references the Silver Jubilee of a reigning monarch.

Voices 2001

Flapper *and* seminarian thinking about the present, past and future:

"Yes, that's me. Queer as a three dollar bill, and proud of it. You didn't recognize me? It's been a roller coaster ride but I wouldn't change a thing!"

Crowd: [Individual voices; no longer a crowd to be feared.]

[Inscription on the back of a framed mixed media painting on mylar of a naked male torso] "To Ralph, in celebration of twenty-five years of being who you are."

"How many times had I practiced those words and sentences to myself: 'I am a homosexual' before actually managing to say them to another human being?"

"Mom and Dad, there's something I'd like to talk to you about ... and when two men love each other the way a man and woman often do, that's homosexuality. I am homosexual."

"My partner and I own our home, walk without shame down our street, and create moments of family around our dinner table."

"My Christmas card list is a great treasure – the men I have loved and still care for deeply."

"I love my homosexual, gay, queer body self and the lives I live in/with it: pastor and student, AIDS activist and theologian, singer and lover, Lutheran and United, cook and gardener, son and uncle, citizen and neighbour."

"Since 1976 your 'closet' is partially empty, for it still miss (sic) you. Happy 25th Anniversary!"

"... I too celebrate your 25th anniversary. You have and still are (sic) a courageous trail blazer on many levels. You embrace perseverance for yourself, which gives hope to many who need it. You are just a wonderful queer guy!"

*RALPH, RALPH, MODEL ELF**

...

For twenty-five years Ralph's been
out.
That closet, too tiny, no doubt,
Just could not contain him,
And no one could chain him.
He had to be out and about.

The church he has made quite uneasy.
In fact, there are some who are queasy.
They close all the doors,
Averting all wars –
A challenge that hasn't been easy.

For us, Ralph has been an example.
His influence surely is ample.
If all were like him,
Hope wouldn't be dim.
His bravery we should all sample.

*elf – a tiny, often mischievous fairy[7]

[7] Brian G. Rude, email correspondence with the author, Jan. 10, 2002.

Hermeneutical / Therapeutic Reflections

In his essay, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text," Paul Ricoeur suggests that human actions and events may leave "marks" on time which may be read for understanding, "*Verstehen*" (529). He says, "[a]n important action, we could say develops meanings which can be actualized or fulfilled in situations other than the one in which this action occurred" (543). He adds, "like a text, human action is an open work, the meaning of which is 'in suspense'" (544). In light of Ricoeur I would suggest that the events referenced by the two texts at hand, a party in 1975 and another one in 2001, are events which can be read through these "marks," a photograph and a page from the World Wide Web. Others could read these texts, but for the purpose of this essay, it is I who will read them with *verstehen* as my purpose.

James H. Olthuis, in "Otherwise than Violence: Toward a Hermeneutics of Connection" (2000), casts an illuminating (spot?)light on this hermeneutic exercise. Olthuis suggests that the hermeneutic task is one of journeying with the "other" and that the other may be "persons, texts, artworks, or even animals or trees as well as God" (137)—categories broad enough to include the two "texts" considered above. The fourfold "hermeneutic spiral of connection" (148) Olthuis describes has many applications, including the meeting of the "other" in a therapeutic relationship. This is significant here because the exercise at hand is both a hermeneutic and a therapeutic one. The person depicted in the texts and I are (not) the same person. I am indulging in the risky exercise of (re)discovery in images of myself as "other," someone I once was, and both am and am not today. Olthuis' hermeneutic model offers some traces within which to explore, without precluding side trips (see his concept of "meandering") (153). For me this is an exercise in therapeutic hermeneutics because I believe I have not taken enough time to "know myself." At the same time it places me in the odd position of carrying out a hermeneutical exercise on something very close to myself.

Encountering the "other" can precipitate threat or invite "mutual recognition, mutual pleasure, and mutual empowerment" (140). The first text under consideration holds both these possibilities for me. The photograph of the flapper / cancan girl long held fear and fascination for me. I stored it in a file cabinet drawer alongside decades-old essays, not wanting it seen, but at the same time not

willing to discard or destroy it. From time to time I would come across it unawares, and be surprised or shocked, intrigued or ashamed. As Olthuis says, "When something very strange shows itself, when differences of time, location and kind multiply, interpretation becomes problematic and calls for special attention" (140-1).

By (re)visiting the first image, and its later iteration I (re)discover "the internal psychic space[s], the interstice[s] between signs and referents, the distances between self and others, ... the birthplace[s] of hermeneutics" (Olthuis 142). In this space between these images and myself I do want to hear Derrida's "pre-originary 'yes'" (in Olthuis 144), which Olthuis, with reference to Julia Kristeva, describes as "[l]ove (as both the energy of connection and the yearning for connection with *self*, others, creation and God)" (144, emphasis added).

Olthuis' four-stage description of this process as a "two-way hermeneutic dance" (145) is a happy choice for this autobiographical exercise. Both flappers and cancan girls were dancers, dancers who pushed the boundaries of sexuality and the decorum of the body in their societies. As expressions of my closeted self, I do believe they have always wanted to dance! At the same time the notion of mutuality implied in the two-way dance that "lets the other be the other, and simultaneously, lets oneself be open to the other" (146) may just be more possible when the person depicted in the texts and the author have identical genetic makeup, and have had over-lapping life spans. I want to respect and know that flapper very deeply, and I want to be known by him/her. In this exercise there is a strong bias toward knowing each other's heart *à la* Levinas (in Olthuis 146).

Postscript

In his later book, *The Beautiful Risk*, Jim Olthuis (2001) describes the healing process as a spiral. "Half the time we move backward in order to find a way forward" (161). This exercise has felt very much like that. My life *à-venir* as pastor / student / lover / friend is (un)assured but hopeful. The wrestling with Little Ralphie and the rebellious Flapper will doubtless be (re)visited, but perhaps a little more skillfully.

In a 1989 interview, published in *Acts of Literature* (1992), Derrida reflects on his own approach to literature and autobiography:

> And deep down this is still my most naïve desire. I don't dream of either a literary work, or a philosophical work, but that everything that occurs, happens to me or fails to, should be as it were *sealed* (placed in reserve, hidden so as to be kept ...) ... This desire for *everything* + *n* – naturally I can analyze it, "deconstruct" it, criticize it, but it is an experience I love, that I know and recognize" (35).

In the same interview Derrida talks about "a singular mark," also "repeatable, iterable, as mark" (43), which "then begins to differ from itself sufficiently to become exemplary and thus involve a certain generality" (43).

As I think about the (re)stor(y)ing—within the hermeneutic / therapeutic spiral—Derrida's notion of the generality of the singular mark comes into play. How many more (con)texts might I (re)read to explore the creative in-between places, Olthuis' "wild spaces of love" (142)? Are there others who on hearing / reading this text might find echoes and applications in their own journey to risk self-acceptance and the rejection or acceptance of those around them? This autobiographical hermeneutic practice might in turn be generalizable in non-autobiographical settings, with the "other" whenever and wherever encountered. Can I venture the same risks with the non-autobiographical "other" as I have with these two texts? With Derrida I want to say, *Oui, oui. Viens!*

Works Cited

Caputo, John D. *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Derrida, Jacques. "An Interview with Jacques Derrida." Ed. Derek Attridge. *Acts of Literature*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

———. *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*. Trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. 1969. London: Routledge, 2002.

Klemm, David E. *Hermeneutical Inquiry, Volume I: The Interpretation of Texts*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1896.

Olthuis, James H. *The Beautiful Risk: A New Psychology of Loving and Being Loved*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

———. "Otherwise Than Violence: Towards a Hermeneutic of Connection." *The Arts, Community and Cultural Democracy*. Eds. Lambert Zuidervaart and Henry Luitzikhuisen. London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000: 137–64.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Interpretation Theory*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. "The Academy Addresses of 1829: On the Concept of Hermeneutics, with reference to F. A. Wolf's Instructions and Ast's Textbook." Rpt. in *Hermeneutical Inquiry, Volume I: The Interpretation of Texts*. Ed. David E. Klemm. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986.

Information

Les Renseignements

torquere

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

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

Aims and Scope

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

Objectifs

torquere se propose de publier des articles scolaires, des nouvelles, des poèmes et des dessins et photos portant sur les dimensions sociales, politiques et textuelles de la culture *queer* au Canada. On publiera également des articles écrits par des chercheur(e)s en études lesbiennes et gaies aux universités canadiennes mais qui travaillent dans des domaines de spécialisation autres que les études canadiennes. On est ouverts à des approches diverses venant de toute une gamme de champs, tels que la sociologie, l'histoire, la science politique, l'anthropologie, la pédagogie, les sciences, le commerce, le droit, les études culturelles, les études autochtones, les études féministes, la philosophie, le théâtre, le cinéma et les média, les sciences religieuses, la musique et les beaux arts. On aimerait recevoir aussi des textes de création et des photos et dessins qui n'ont pas encore été publiés ailleurs et qui présentent un point de vue *queer*, lesbien, gai, bisexuel ou *transgender*. On s'intéresse surtout à des oeuvres innovatrices.

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.

Cover Credits

Vancouver AIDS Memorial, Sunset Beach, Vancouver.
Reprinted with kind permission of Peter Dickinson.
Cover design by Jaroslaw Malanowski, Mo Engel, John L. Plews, & Heather Zwicker.

Printed in Canada / Imprimé au Canada

CN ISSN 1488-5182


UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY
PRESS