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Calling home: queer responses to discourses of nation and citizenship in contemporary Canadian literary and visual culture

Wendy Gay Pearson
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**CALLING HOME:
QUEER RESPONSES TO DISCOURSES OF NATION AND CITIZENSHIP
IN CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN LITERARY AND VISUAL CULTURE**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

WENDY GAY PEARSON, BA, MA

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LITERATURES, PHILOSOPHY & LANGUAGES

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ABBREVIATIONS

519	The Lesbian and Gay Community Centre, 519 Church St., Toronto
ACT-UP	AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power
AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
CDCP	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US)
CEF	Campaign for Equal Families
CHRA	Canadian Human Rights Act
CLGRC	Canadian Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition
CLGRO	Coalition for Lesbian Gay Rights in Ontario
EGALE	Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere
GAT	Gay Asians of Toronto
GALZ	Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
GLBT	Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ILGA	International Lesbian and Gay Association
LEAF	Women's Legal Education and Action Fund
LEGIT	Lesbian and Gay Immigration Task Force
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (a variant of LGBT)
<i>LNPS</i>	<i>Lesbian National Parks and Services</i>
NFB	National Film Board
PLWA	Person living with AIDS
RTPC	Right to Privacy Committee
<i>TBP</i>	<i>The Body Politic</i>
TPFN	Two-Spirited People of the First Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations AIDS Organization
UCR	Uniform Crime Reporting (Program)
WHO	World Health Organization

ABSTRACT

CALLING HOME: QUEER RESPONSES TO DISCOURSES OF NATION AND CITIZENSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN LITERARY AND VISUAL CULTURE

Wendy Gay Pearson

Mobilizing a variety of theoretical approaches from queer, feminist, postcolonial and critical race theory, this dissertation examines the various ways in which contemporary queer cultural production in Canada interrogates and intervenes in discourses of nation, citizenship and the construction of the public sphere. The central questions at the heart of this examination involve, on the one hand, interrogating the construction of home, belonging, and thus nation, as heteronormative, and, on the other hand, adjudicating between the claim made by some queer Canadian scholars that Canada is a queer nation and the assertion, made by other lesbian and gay scholars, that Canada is too heteronormative to allow for the development of a queer public culture. At the same time, postcolonial and anti-racist approaches to issues of Canadian identity and belonging suggest that race and ethnicity remain crucial sites around which competing discourses of the public sphere are mobilized. Particularly when issues of racial, ethnic or indigenous identity are broached in conjunction with sexually dissident identities, questions of queer alterity serve both to problematize and to interrogate the ways in which it is possible to think about what it means to call Canada home.

This thesis approaches these issues in several ways. It attempts to locate the social and cultural faultlines, both in populist texts and in queer cultural works, that reveal the contested and contestatory constitution of queerness both as belonging and as not belonging within the Canadian body politic, in part by looking at two examples that serve as limit tests for both official and popular discourses of tolerance and multiculturalism — the legalization of lesbian and gay marriage and the continued, and perhaps increasing, incidence of queer-bashing, particularly in relation to the 2001 hate-motivated murder of Aaron Webster. However, following Richard Rorty's assertion that it is predominantly narrative cultural texts, such as novels and films, that function "as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress," I concentrate predominantly on narrative examples which both describe and critique the conditions that, often incoherently,

work to effect the exclusion of lesbian and gay Canadians — especially when those Canadians are also, to use Roy Miki’s term, racialized — from the public construction of the nation. Using theoretical approaches predominantly from the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Elspeth Probyn, Paul Morrison, and Ann Cvetkovich, I investigate the ways in which contemporary queer cultural production attempts, in Sedgwick’s words, to disarticulate and disengage impacted social spaces, such as family and nation, and to create “a practice of valuing the ways in which meanings and institutions can be at loose ends with each other,” a practice in which it is possible to understand the ways in which normative discourses produce ways of thinking about home, family and nation in which “*everything means the same thing*.” The critical, cultural practices I examine include a variety of ways by which queer artists respond to the cultural faultlines that regulate questions of visibility, representation, trauma and the creation of archives. I conclude by arguing that it is in the very disjuncture between competing discourses of Canada’s queerness and its heteronormativity that it is possible to assert queerly Canadian ontologies and epistemologies as *public* knowledges and ways of being that are always contingent and uncertain — and always urgently necessary.

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I

INTRODUCTION

I think many adults (and I am among them) are trying, in our work, to keep faith with vividly remembered promises made to ourselves in childhood: promises to make invisible possibilities and desires visible; to make the tacit things explicit; to smuggle queer representation in where it must be smuggled and, with the relative freedom of adulthood, to challenge queer-eradicating impulses frontally where they are to be so challenged.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer and Now"

It is worth asking:

Home, are you coming home? When
are you coming home?

Then let us talk of home:

Does one *come* home

or

Does one *go* home?

Shani Mootoo, "The Predicament of Or"

CALLING CANADA HOME/CALLING CANADA QUEER

... Queer Nation understands the propriety of queerness to be a function of the diverse spaces in which it aims to become explicit... [I]t always refuses closeting strategies of assimilation and goes for the broadest and most explicit assertion of presence. This loudness involves two main kinds of public address: internal, for the production of safe collective queer spaces, and external, in a cultural pedagogy emblemized by the post-Black Power slogan 'We're Here. We're Queer. Get Used to It.' If 'I'm Black and I'm Proud' sutures the first-person performative to racial visibility, transforming the speaker from racial object to ascendant subject, Queer Nation's slogan stages the shift from silent absence into present speech, from nothingness to collectivity, from a politics of embodiment to one of space, whose power erupts from the ambiguity of 'here.' Where?

Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, "Queer Nationality"

The irony of the American Queer Nation becomes turned again in Canada. I do not mean to suggest that gay and lesbian culture in Canada constitutes a 'queer nation.' If anything, we are more disparate than the American homosexual community. But Canada in general is a strange nation, or 'queer' in what at one time was the more common usage, and this in some ways enables the queers of Canada to function in a quite different way from that envisioned by Queer Nation in the United States.

Terry Goldie, "Queer Nation?"

I have entitled this thesis *Calling Home* for the polysemic values of the phrase. 'Calling home' invokes a multitude of potential meanings.¹ In one sense, to 'call home' is to (re)constitute home through hailing (literally 'calling'), that is through interpellation. In Louis Althusser's famous model of interpellation, the subject is constituted by his [sic] recognition of the policeman's hail. In

¹ I want to emphasize from the outset that my working through here of various meanings of 'calling home' is intended to be suggestive, not definitive or enumerative.

responding to the tap on the shoulder, the individual comes into being as a subject. Althusser says that subjecthood occurs at the moment when “he has recognized that the hail was ‘really’ addressed to him, and that ‘it was *really him*’ who was hailed” (48). When a queer person calls Canada home, does — must? — the country respond? Does the nation understand itself as becoming ‘*really*’ what it is in response to the queer hail? Is Canada, in other words, shaped and brought into existence as an entity by the power of that call? What shapes does or might that response take? If, as Althusser insists, “Ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” (45) then what is the role of the ideology that constitutes a place, a population, a landscape as a nation — and whose (queer) ideology is it?² Can we thus say that a nation, and not just a person, is subject to interpellation? If we agree that this may be the case, what does the interpellation of Canada as a ‘queer nation’ mean for how lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people live in and understand their relations to the nation-as-home?

To ‘call (Canada) home’ is also to assert one’s place within the nation, to say ‘I belong’ and ‘this is my home.’ Such a statement can be an overt assertion of nationalism, as it is for Australians with the anthem “I Still Call Australia Home” (even if it is most commonly heard in Qantas ads). It is thus an affirmation, among other things, of one’s right to name one’s nation — Canada — as the proper answer to the often dubious question, “Where are you from?” In this sense, ‘calling home’ responds to the problematization of belonging created by racial, gendered, classed and (hetero)sexualized biases and norms, including the impoverishment inherent in the categorical imperative toward identity-formation. On a theoretical level, such a response, both from within racialized and sexualized communities — and particularly from communities and locales where the two overlap — can also involve attempts to complicate the very desire to insist on one’s right of belonging. Must asserting one’s belonging equate, for example, to assenting to assimilation, to agreeing to act and to present oneself as being as much like the hegemonic — white, male, able-bodied, middle-class heterosexual — as humanly possible? Can the assertion of one’s queerly

² Although nationalism is usually understood as an ideology, Benedict Anderson has pointed out that it could perhaps better be treated “as if it belonged with ‘kinship’ and ‘religion’” (15).

Canadian belonging still allow for the possibility, even the celebration, of differences in ways that go beyond seeing such differences as either totally incommensurable or, at best, as a superficial supplement to 'ordinary' Canadian-ness (such as the 'ethnic' display of dirndls, lederhosen and folk-dancing on carefully specified occasions³)?

To 'call home' is also to get in touch with from 'away,' to report back from elsewhere, to make connections to an absent, but remembered, homeland, a location invested with various types of epistemologies of originariness. Calling home from away is a diasporic act, a response to exile, dislocation, migration. It is what the emigrant does, in the act of reconstituting 'home' as an imaginary locale (a reminder, after all, that Benedict Anderson famously described the nation as an "imagined political community" [6]) to which the migrant knows, as Elspeth Probyn argues, "you can never go home. Or rather, once returned you realize the cliché that home is never what it was" (114). Probyn explains that the term 'nostalgia' was coined by a seventeenth century Swiss doctor, Joannes Hofer, "to signify 'a painful yearning to return home'" (114). Calling home is at once an act of nostalgia — and thus of memory — and an act of imagination, or at least belief. I can only call home if I believe that such a concept, such a place, such an ideal is possible.

Anne-Marie Fortier notes that, in the LGBT community, the "heterosexual family is posited as the originary site of trauma" because many lesbians and gay men experience themselves as "cut off from the heterosexual culture of their childhood, which becomes the site of impossible return, the site of impossible memories" (409).⁴ Because family has come to be so thoroughly metonymized

³ There are some interesting queer problems in the constitution of official multiculturalism as a demand for quaintness and ethnic performance. One of the questions that occurred to me in viewing the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade, which has a large heterosexual spectatorship, was the extent to which it served, not as a political intervention, but as a quaintly 'ethnic' (as in the ethnicity-and-rights model discussed by Alan Sinfield and others) spectacle for the entertainment of the heteronormal.

⁴ I would add "often," because the originary heterosexual family is not traumatic for every queer person, although its situation as traumatic is generally recognized and thus works throughout the community in a disciplinary fashion not unlike queer bashing to contain and constrain both the public and the private production of queerness (a phenomenon which I discuss in some detail in the second chapter). It is thus important both politically and discursively to understand that at least some queer people feel themselves to belong within their heterosexual families and to have done so also as queer children, while not all heterosexual families are in fact heteronormative.

as the nation itself (indeed, Anna Marie Smith refers to such constructions, particularly when mobilized by neo-conservative advocates of so-called ‘family values,’ as the “imaginary familial nation” [70]), to be exiled from the family of origin is also to be erased from the national imaginary. To ‘call home’ then requires the belief that belonging is possible, that a place within the homeland, within the family, can be imagined and may, in fact, have come to be the (unattainable?) ideal to which some (most?) lesbian people, both as individuals and as community(s), aspire.

Indeed, Alan Sinfield argues that the lesbian and gay subculture, a term he considers less problematic than community,⁵ provides a better home for queer people than the heterosexual families into which we are born: “In fact, for lesbians and gay men the diasporic sense of separation and loss, so far from affording a principle of coherence for our subcultures, may actually attach to aspects of the (heterosexual) culture of our childhoods, where we are no longer ‘at home’” (*Gay and After* 30).⁶ One consequence of this, for Sinfield, is that, unlike most diasporic peoples, “[i]nstead of dispersing, we assemble” (30). Whether dispersing or assembling, however, the construction of queerness as a form of diaspora depends on the sense that queerness involves movement, both to and away from, a movement which makes belonging and home both more mobile and less certain. When a queer person ‘calls home,’ is he or she calling back to the family or place of birth and childhood, or to the families and communities that diasporic queerness creates and sustains? Indeed, even in national terms, it is possible to ask whether, when the queer Canadian calls home, it is to Canada or to the Queer Nation — or are there overlaps which suggest that Canada may be queer and, conversely, queerness may be Canadian?

⁵ I use the word ‘community’ throughout the thesis with some reservations, because it implies a homogeneity of interests and ways of life that is not factual; at the same time, however, it does usefully indicate a commonality of experiences of trying to live as an LGBT person in a heteronormative world. In general, I prefer ‘community’ to Sinfield’s evocation of queerness as *subculture* because of the minoritizing status inherent in the prefix.

⁶ Canadian and UK practice is generally to use ‘lesbian and gay’ and ‘LGBT,’ whereas practice in Australia and the USA is normally to prefer ‘gay and lesbian’ and ‘GLBT.’ Some critics prefer ‘queer’ as a portmanteau term to avoid the necessity to spell out increasingly proliferating identities (many Canadian queer organizations now refer to themselves with some variant on ‘Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Transsexual Two-Spirited Intersex and Queer,’ which, while pleasantly inclusive, does tend to be a bit of a mouthful).

Another way to consider these questions is to look at the meanings that have accumulated or, perhaps more accurately, agglutinated around the idea/I of home itself. Lynda Johnston and Gill Valentine note that home “is a word that positively drips with associations. According to various academic literatures it’s a private, secure location, a sanctuary, a locus of identity, and a place where inhabitants can escape the disciplinary practices that regulate our bodies in everyday life”(99). Laura Thrasher argues that, in “dominant discourse, home is most powerfully associated with the nuclear family home, ensconced in domesticity and protected from the evils and ills of the outside world. But clearly ‘home’ signifies in excess of this intended referent” (9). Yaakov Perry, examining queer life-narratives, suggests that

... the trope of home itself normatively signifies the place of origin that prefigures a return, for example, in the denomination of the ‘HOME’ key [on the keyboard]...; in Christian eschatology that speaks of afterlife as home, the dust and heavenly dwelling to which we return; in legal discourse, where ‘domicile,’ for instance, is defined as ‘[t]he permanent residence of a person or the place to which he intends to return’ (195)

Perry links queer conceptions of home with ‘homecoming,’ which is to say, with notions of movement away and return from, and with spaces that prohibit or facilitate ‘coming out.’ Fortier expands on the way in which home can be understood through movement and diaspora, migration and belonging, arguing that there are three significant queer models for understanding ‘home’: ‘migration-as-homecoming,’ where home is a destination rather than a point of departure; homecoming-as-return, in which “home is reimagined through memories that challenge the ideal of home-as-familiarity” (408); and, home-as-mobile, a reconceptualization of home which understands “‘homing desires’ as constituted through *both* movement and attachment” (408).

Fortier’s attempt to articulate the complications raised by queer relationships to home as a concept/ideal follows Elspeth Probyn’s consideration of the problematics of belonging in *Outside Belongings*. Probyn suggests that

... if you have to think about belonging, perhaps you are already outside. Instead of presuming a common locus, I want to consider the ways in which the very longing to belong embarrasses its taken-for-granted nature. More than an implicit play on *outside belonging* as already *beyond* belonging and

identity, I want to raise the ways in which outside belonging operates now not as a substantive claim but as a manner of being. Simply put, I want to figure the desire that individuals have to belong, a tenacious and fragile desire that is, I think, increasingly performed in the knowledge of the impossibility of ever really and truly belong.... (8)

Probyn's attempt to understand, as she puts it, the outside or the surface of belonging consists of three major movements: the first, to conceive of the *so-whatness* or *whateverness* of belonging; the second, to conceptualize belonging in terms of becoming, following the work of Giorgio Agamben, Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault; and the third, to detach belonging from its instantiation in an originary childhood, by rethinking childhood itself as an event, rather than a "private entity" (98). Probyn insists that childhood needs to be conceived as an

... event placed on the *outside*. For if we are to remake childhood as a political tactic to be used to turn identity inside out, we need to deploy the historicity of childhood as event: childhood memories; childhood as a set of possessions we carry with us; childhood as a designated point of departure; childhood as the source of public pathologization (the beginning of the 'problem' of homosexuality); childhood as an epistemology of origins. (99)

For Probyn, the movement of childhood to the outside, away from its instantiation as the exemplary originary, results in a "teleological scrambling" which allows the queer critic or LGBT reader "to displace both the question of psychology ('Why is she a lesbian?') and the question that recurs in gay and lesbian narratives of childhood: 'Why am I am lesbian?'" (116). Probyn's project is thus, in a sense, to disarticulate questions of belonging from questions of origin, as well as to refuse both the pathologization⁷ and the more positive fixing, through various forms of identity politics, of LGBT identities. Probyn's project thus proceeds alongside Judith Butler's, particularly when she argues, in "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?," that "the figure of the child is one eroticized site of the reproduction of culture, one that implicitly raises the question of whether there will be a sure transmission of culture through heterosexual procreation, whether heterosexuality will serve not only the purpose of transmitting culture faithfully, but whether culture will be defined, in part, as the

⁷ As I point out in more detail in chapter two, no-one asks "Why am I straight?" Making that question culturally comprehensible is an important political goal for queer theorists.

prerogative of heterosexuality itself” (35). If culture is taken both to originate in and to be the entitlement of heterosexuality, then Butler’s question could be re-written as “is the nation always already heterosexual?” — and the answer could only possibly be ‘yes.’ Thus, according to Butler, “[t]he postulate of a founding heterosexuality must also be read as part of the operation of power — and I would add fantasy — such that we can begin to ask how the invocation of such a foundation works in the building of a certain fantasy of state and nation” (34-35). Furthermore, if kinship is inexorably heterosexual, then family and marriage can also only be conceived in terms of a heterosexual norm. Contemplating the opposition to lesbian and gay civil unions (which is not, after all, marriage) in France, Butler asks,

Why would various intellectuals, some of them feminist, proclaim that sexual difference is not only fundamental to culture, but to its transmissibility, and that reproduction must remain the prerogative of heterosexual marriage and that limits must be set on viable and recognizable forms of nonheterosexual parenting arrangements? (31)

Not only is Butler’s question obviously applicable to the current debate over the legalization of lesbian and gay marriage in Canada, it also speaks to the conditions of (national/sexual) citizenship.

Linking citizenship, nation, culture, origin stories, and childhood, Lauren Berlant begins her book on sexual citizenship and the state of the (US) nation, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, with a discussion of the ways in which Reaganite national and sexual politics have created what she calls “infantile citizenship”:

Something strange has happened to citizenship. During the rise of the Reaganite right, a familial politics of the national future came to define the urgencies of the present. Now everywhere in the United States intimate things flash in people’s faces: pornography, abortion, sexuality, and reproduction; marriage, personal morality, and family values. These issues do not arise as private concerns: they are key to debates about what ‘America’ stands for, and are deemed vital to defining how citizens should act. In the process of collapsing the political and the personal into a world of public intimacy, a nation made for adult citizens has been replaced by one imagined for fetuses and children. (1)

Berlant’s book is largely an investigation into how and why infantile citizenship has become the norm,

but also into various types of resistances to the hegemony of the presumptively white, presumptively heterosexual infant/fetus — resistances on the level of race, gender, sexuality, and class, as well as resistances that work to dismantle these already limited identity categories. Berlant finishes with a call for ‘diva citizenship,’ a concept not dissimilar to Donna Haraway’s notion of ‘cyborg citizenship,’ a “postmodern marriage of bodies and technology into hybridized identities and counterhegemonic coalitions [that] takes all forms of personhood to be public, and vanquishes the ‘private identity/public world’ distinction to the dustbin of modernist history” (Berlant 223). Diva citizenship resists “...submission to a national sexuality that blurs the line between the disembodied entitlements of liberal citizenship and the places where bodies experience the sensation of being dominated,” but it does this only through what Berlant refers to as a “national pedagogy of failed teaching” (245-6). Diva citizenship, for Berlant, is a challenge to rethink knowledge and the ‘common sense’ that is hegemony’s most valued form of disingenuousness.

Like Foucault, Berlant, Butler and Probyn all call for a radical rethinking of accepted ‘truths’ and unexamined epistemologies; indeed, Foucault insists on the importance of the attempt to “free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently” (*Use of Pleasure* 9). Writing about ways to critique ideology, including the ideologies that specify the relationship of (homo)sexuality to the nation, Jonathan Dollimore similarly calls for strategic uses of dislocation, dis coherence and disarticulation in order to expose the contradictions that normatively fail to render ideologies incoherent and to produce “transgressive or dissident knowledge” (88).⁸ Sedgwick also argues for disarticulation of the impacted social space of the family (and of all the other impacted social spaces where meanings are made to cohere), concluding that it is

Little wonder then that sexuality, the locus of so many showy pleasures and untidy identities and of so much bedrock confrontation, opacity, and loss, should bear so much representational weight Sexuality in this sense, perhaps, can *only* mean queer sexuality: so many of us have the need for spaces of thought where everything doesn’t mean the same thing! (“Queer and Now” 20)

⁸ In the context of Marxist, rather than queer, critique, Frederic Jameson similarly argues for the importance of “that unresolvable, profoundly symptomatic thing which is called a contradiction, and which we may expect, if properly managed and interrogated, to raise some basic issues about the direction of contemporary culture and contemporary social reality” (41).

Home, family, nation — these are the all important social spaces whose meanings have been made, in the late twentieth century, to mean the same thing and always already to mean heterosexuality, which, as Sedgwick also says, is difficult to see because “under its institutional pseudonyms such as Inheritance, Marriage, Dynasty, Family, Domesticity, and Population, [it] has been permitted to masquerade so fully as History itself” (“Queer and Now” 10-11). From a queer perspective, there is a manifest need to disarticulate heterosexuality’s alibis, to dismantle the equation between heterosexual family and thus heteronormative nation, to disengage sexual practices from sexual identities and thus from the limitations of contemporary modes of (hetero)sexual citizenship.⁹ The question remains, how best to begin, if not to accomplish, this goal? In which cultural sites are these articulations, these engagements, these constructions most evident? Or, to put it another way, what are the conditions which may enable LGBT people both to ‘call (Canada) home’ and to understand the social, political and discursive contexts which work to disavow that call. Richard Rorty, looking toward a general project of “coming to see other human beings as ‘one of us’ rather than as ‘them,’” argues that the necessary tools for such a project are “detailed description” and “redescription,” which he identifies with narrative forms like “the novel, the movie, and the TV program [which] have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress” (xvi).¹⁰ That queer theory was founded predominantly as a branch of literary/cultural studies and that its exemplars are predominantly textual, if not always narrative, mostly exemplifies Rorty’s point. Alan Sinfield specifies that the texts which allow us to recognize ideological formations and worldviews are what “I call ‘faultline’ stories. They address the awkward, unresolved issues; they require most assiduous and continuous reworking; they hinge upon a fundamental, unresolved ideological complication that finds its way, willy-nilly, into

⁹ A note on terminology: I use ‘heteronormativity’ in preference to a variety of alternative terms. ‘Heterocentrism’ and ‘heterosexism’ both indicate the degree to which this is a form of pro-heterosexual bigotry, but without referencing the enormous power of discourses of the normal. ‘Homophobia’ always runs the danger of individuating a particular pathology, thus allowing readers to sidestep the ways in which homophobic responses stem from systemic social constructions of normality, health and propriety rather than from the mental imbalance of particular individuals. ‘Homoprejudice,’ while it has a certain directness, also lacks the reference to the systemic which is present in ‘heteronormative.’

¹⁰ I elaborate on Rorty’s statement and its applicability to the queer context in chapter five.

texts” (*Cultural* 4). And, developing an argument about the various uses and interdigitations of paranoid and reparative reading practices, and their relationship to the larger categories of what she names strong and weak theory, Sedgwick notes that “there are important phenomenological and theoretical tasks that can be accomplished only through local theories and nonce taxonomies,” examples of weak theory which include “an unhurried, undefensive, theoretically galvanized practice of close reading ... [which has become a] devalued and nearly obsolescent New Critical skill...” (“Paranoid” 23).

This thesis, researched and written over a four year period as a PhD candidate in Australia, represents, in several senses, my own diasporic, displaced attempt to ‘call home.’ As an immigrant to Canada (my parents emigrated from England when I was twelve and are still living near Ottawa), I am doubly displaced as an international student in Wollongong. At the same time, my experience encompasses certain levels both of belonging and non-belonging: as a white person, so long as I don’t speak — the accent is unplaceable now anywhere, except as not belonging ‘here’ — I can ‘pass’ for Australian or, indeed, for Canadian (despite the possession, as Peter Dickinson notes in *Here is Queer*, of the proper papers and the necessary passport [160]); as a queer woman, however, I almost never (try to) ‘pass’ for straight, nor am I easily able to do so, should I want to — as when attempting those sorts of transnational border-crossings that can now only be authorized by the possession of a passport, the proper papers and the appearance of ‘normality.’¹¹ I have thus found my own experiences to encompass both, as Peter Dickinson argues, the queerness of Canadian culture — I do, after all, ‘call Canada home’ — and, as Gary Kinsman insists, the always excessive heteronormativity of that same national, not to say institutional, culture.

The central aim of this thesis, then, is to examine the very diverse ways in which queerly Canadian cultural texts — primarily, as Rorty suggests, narrative forms such as the novel and the film — adjudicate between the heteronormativity of Canada and its (equally apposite?) nomination as a type of ‘queer nation.’ In accomplishing this goal — or at least in making a start — I hope to

¹¹ I scarcely need to add that this demand for the production of a ‘safe’ (hetero)normality has only been exacerbated in the West’s official responses to the terrorist attacks on the US on September 11, 2001.

identify some of the faultline texts that reveal, to appropriate Probyn's words about childhood, the way in which the nation may be understood as a movement, a becoming, an event that "requires that attention be paid to the modes in which it is articulated: as originary, as nostalgic, as quintessential, as anecdotal, as fiction, as fact" (96). For example, in attempting to understand the possible imbrications of 'queer nation' with 'Canadian nation,' Terry Goldie argues that "the 'nation' of Queer Nation has two rather opposed interpretations. One is a belief in a community that supersedes the traditional view of the nation-state.... The other interpretation is what might be called a life of irony.... This is not so much a greater nation as the old one turned upside down" ("Queer Nation?" 8). The larger irony is, of course, that both of these meanings are always mobilized in the very utterance of the phrase; they are inseparable from each other and linked to the Canadian through the duplicitous ironies that constitute them.

Linda Hutcheon has contemplated at length the ways in which irony functions as one of the major modes of Canadian cultural production, a notion only reinforced by her reference to the winner of the *Canadian Forum* competition to fill in the blanks of "as Canadian as" The winner was "as Canadian as ... possible under the circumstances" (*Splitting Images* 1). In "Queer Nation?" Goldie cites Hutcheon's use of the phrase to differentiate the duplicitously ironic Canadian from our notoriously unironic neighbours to the south. Goldie suggests that, "If any nation is queer enough to accept a queer nation it must be this one. But as implied in Hutcheon's line, we should probably keep the question mark" (25). Irony, however, suggests not just interrogation, but also pleasure, laughter, a raised eyebrow. That such pleasure can stem from theoretical approaches to difficult questions is emphasized by Probyn's insistence that "many readings [of Deleuze and Foucault] fail to appreciate or even comprehend their sense of humor, of joy, and of the deep urgency of remembering that the art of living or becoming is a creative endeavour — the only one that most of us have" (7). In searching for the faultline texts, the cultural products that expose those revelatory moments of cultural contradiction, I hope to retain some of that sense of joy in the art of becoming — particularly in becoming-queer, becoming-Canadian, thus becoming-both/and. This is a project which requires, it seems to me, the deployment of both theoretical — queer, postcolonial, anti-racist

— arguments and approaches, and the “unhurried, undefensive, theoretically galvanized practice of close reading” which Sedgwick, at least, still values.

This thesis is divided into four sections, including this introduction, and five chapters. The next section, “Epistemology of the Bedroom,” contains the two chapters whose primary thrust is contextual. Chapter Two sets the theoretical and methodological stage for the thesis as a whole. It investigates the ways in which queer theory has come to understand contemporary epistemologies and ontologies of (homo)sexuality; it then relates this queer hermeneutic to the epistemological and ontological production of Canada as a culture and a nation. In doing so, it investigates a series of specific sociocultural faultlines, including the difficulties of asserting one’s (homo)sexual citizenship and of being represented as a proper part of the public sphere, the consequent necessity to deconstruct the public/private binarism and the discourses which depend on its valences, particularly the notion that privacy adheres to the bedrooms of the nation, and the problems involved in constituting identity categories, especially sexuality, gender, race/ethnicity and nationality, as stable, essential, natural and/or normal. This chapter also inevitably raises and responds to various uses of Northrop Frye’s identity-formative question, “Where is here?” As my epigraph from Lauren Berlant suggests, the question has more than a Canadian national resonance (and more than a transnational resonance, in the traditional sense of the word); it also speaks to queer national articulations of position, space, being and becoming. As Peter Dickinson argues, in his eponymous book, when one combines Frye’s question with the Queer Nation slogan, the suggestive result is “Here is Queer.” In this chapter, I measure this assertion directly against arguments, mobilized forcefully by Gary Kinsman and more tentatively — and perhaps more suggestively — by Terry Goldie, that Canada is, after all, too heteronormative to sustain a queer culture, let alone to be understood as a type of queer nation

In the second chapter, I set out the cultural and social context for queer cultural production in Canada by looking at two sets of cultural, albeit not narrative, ‘texts’ that expose the extreme faultlines at either end of the culture’s conception of (homo)sexuality and its place within the nation. The texts I begin with are media reports of the legal decision to allow lesbian and gay marriage in

Ontario and its ramifications for the country as a whole, as well as for LGBT people. The second series of texts, which one might call the negative or obverse of the first, involves the conviction of one of the murderers of Aaron Webster, a gay man who was lethally queer-bashed in Stanley Park in 2001. In each case, I juxtapose media texts and populist and LGBT community responses to these events with the ways in which the issues behind them have been taken up by queer artists, thus creating a series of responses which reveal not only the faultlines and contradictions within Canadian culture as a whole, but also within queer culture, insofar as either can be understood — with difficulty — to be singular things. The specific queerly Canadian cultural texts which I examine in this chapter include two novels, Timothy Findley's *Spadework*, which examines the potential dissolution and ultimate resolution of a marriage, and Larissa Lai's *When Fox is a Thousand*, a complex intertwining of three narratives haunted by homophobic, misogynist and racist violences. Thom Fitzgerald's film *The Hanging Garden* and the paintings made for and exhibited as part of the *Queer Project* by artist Spenser Harrison provide visual — and, in Harrison's case, polemical interrogations of marriage and anti-gay violence, respectively.

The third section, "Reading Canada Queerly," contains the next two chapters, which build on the contextualization of the previous chapters in order to examine a series of specific literary, filmic and artistic texts in relation to reading practices, irony and duplicity, postcoloniality (especially as it concerns the ability of the subaltern to speak and the vanishment of the racialized and ethnicized), issues of visibility and utterability, the problem of trauma and its relationship to the archive, and questions of representation, diaspora and hybridity. Chapter Three includes discussions of a number of faultline texts whose ironic and duplicitous interventions into discourses both of queerness and of nation bring those terms into play with other duplicitous concepts, primarily postcoloniality and hybridity. These texts include an episode of the television show *Due South*, several paintings by Attila Richard Lukacs, three novels, specifically Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child*, Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, and Tomson Highway's *The Kiss of the Fur Queen*, as well as several short stories by Beth Brant. I demonstrate that, while all of these cultural texts respond to the conditions that at once allow and inhibit the production of queerly Canadian culture/s (Findley,

for example, was a much-awarded and feted writer of Canadian literature, but the queerness of his work has largely been elided in critical and academic responses to his oeuvre), they also exhibit a range of responses to those conditions. While generally critical of the regulatory inscription of gender, sexuality, race and class in hegemonic Canadian culture, each writer, film-maker or painter interrogates the imbrication of those official categories of ‘difference’ in diverse, albeit frequently ironic, ways.

Chapter Four investigates the ways in which queerness is produced in public culture as at once invisible and hypervisible. Drawing on a variety of theoretical approaches to issues of queer in/visibility, but especially Lee Edelman’s articles in *Homographesis*, I set out to examine how queer artists, and thus queer texts, attempt to inscribe their visibility within the public sphere in order to claim a queer place in public culture — and thus to queer the very public sphere which asserts their invisibility and non-existence. When the in/visibility of the sexualized other is combined with the equally problematic, if differently constituted, in/visibility of the racialized other, both of whom are understood as belonging elsewhere, as not being *at home* in the Canadian nation, questions of diaspora, postcoloniality and the construction of a (racialized) queer archive are brought into play. Butler notes that those who have historically been disenfranchised from the kinship and affiliation structures authorized by the nation-state — which includes the sexualized and the racialized, particularly when either tries to cross normative categorical borders, as, for example, in cases of ‘miscegenation’ — are subjected to a process of ‘derealization.’ “If you’re not real,” Butler adds, “it can be hard to sustain yourself over time” (“Is Kinship” 25). A significant portion of this chapter looks at the ways in which queer writers, artists and film-makers construct alternative, often ephemeral, archives in response to the trauma of derealization and more overt forms of oppression. My exemplary texts in this chapter include the performance piece *Lesbian National Parks and Services* by artists Shawna Dempsey and Lori Millan, Timothy Findley’s play *Can You See Me Yet?*, Richard Fung’s videos, particularly *Dirty Laundry*, Shani Mootoo’s novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*, and John Greyson’s musical *Zero Patience*.

The last section consists of a single concluding chapter, which returns to the question of the

ways in which queerly Canadian culture responds to and constructs ideas of home in light of: questions of sexual citizenship, the public sphere, and the public/private binarism; the construction of reading itself as a heteronormative practice; the banishment of queerness, especially when racialized, from public visibility; and issues of migration, diaspora, postcoloniality, trauma, memory and the archive. In this chapter, I re-engage ideas of reparative and paranoid reading, originally discussed in the second chapter, to examine seven texts, each of which exposes specific aspects of the faultlines that become apparent when juxtaposing 'queer' with 'home' in the context of the nation. These texts include another episode of *Due South*, the quiltwork of artist Joe Lewis, and five novels. I reprise my earlier discussion of Timothy Findley's *Spadework* and undertake close readings of the mobilization of concepts of home and nation in Jane Rule's *Memory Board*, Daphne Marlatt's *Taken*, Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*, and Geoff Ryman's *Was*. I conclude with a brief consideration of the ways in which these texts mobilize concepts of borders and border-crossings in the face of two more social-textual examples: the literal difficulty of im/migration, particularly across the Canada/US border, for LGBT people; and the continued censorship, seizure and, often, destruction — despite important legal victories — by Canada Customs of books, magazines and films destined for lesbian and gay bookstores, even when those same materials are imported with no difficulty by non-LGBT bookstores. These final two examples comprise my last attempt to gather up the threads of the various ways in which queer cultural production exposes the faultlines and contradictions inherent in the construction of Canada as a nation, and particularly in its constitution as a tolerant, pluralistic and multicultural nation, in which difference is celebrated, not censored/censured. I end by arguing that, in the long run, there is no way to adjudicate between competing claims for the heteronormativity or the queerness of the Canadian nation, because both forces are in process together, making the possibility for asserting queerly Canadian ontologies and epistemologies as *public* knowledges and ways of being always contingent and uncertain — and always urgently necessary.

II

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE BEDROOM

- a) 'Where is here?'
- b) 'We're here, we're queer, get used to it.'
- c) 'Here is queer.'

Peter Dickinson, *Here is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities and the Literatures of Canada*

Canada is anything but a queer nation.

Gary Kinsman, "Challenging Canadian and Queer Nationalisms"

... an understanding of any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*

CHAPTER ONE

WHERE? HERE? QUEER?: QUEER THEORY, THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND NATIONAL CULTURE/S

The vector of the nation continues to have profound psychic resonance for Canadians — particularly amongst students of Canadian and postcolonial literatures — filling an intense psychic and cultural need. That it is a necessarily imaginary construct does not negate the fact that it has real, symbolic effects.

Cynthia Sugars, “Can the Canadian Speak?”

The insistence on ‘queer’ — a term initially generated in the context of terror — has the effect of pointing out a wide field of normalization, rather than simple intolerance, as the site of violence. Its brilliance as a naming strategy lies in combining resistance on that broad social terrain with more specific resistance on the terrain of phobia and queer-bashing, on one hand, or of pleasure, on the other. ‘Queer’ therefore also suggests the difficulty in defining the populations whose interests are at stake in queer politics.

Michael Warner, “Introduction”
Fear of a Queer Planet

I. Queerly Canadian?

As the juxtaposition of my two epigraphs suggests, this thesis addresses the intersections of ‘Canadian’ and ‘queer’ and the question of what it might mean either to consider oneself ‘queerly Canadian’ or to desire and actively work to queer Canada as a nation, a landscape, a cityscape, a geography, a bureaucracy and a government, a place of belonging and of unbelonging, a source of citizenship and of alienation, of the familial and the unfamiliar¹ — in

¹ In juxtaposing the ‘familial’ with the ‘unfamiliar,’ I am playing with possible ways to translate into English usage Freud’s conceptualization of the *heimlich* (homely, familiar, and thus, in a sense, familial) and the *unheimlich* (the strangeness that lurks within the *heimlich* itself). See Freud’s “The

short, a home — particularly in the context of the contested spaces of sexual citizenship and the public sphere, a contestation which will be demonstrated at its extreme nodes in the next chapter, which looks at the issues of lesbian and gay marriage and queer-bashing. What, then, does it mean to attempt to discuss the ‘queerly Canadian’ in the context of Canada’s positioning as a ‘postcolonial’ settler nation, while still attempting to foreground the imbrication of queerness with issues of gender, race, ethnicity and class?² In what ways is it possible to conceive of the relationship between epistemologies of (homo)sexuality and epistemologies of nation, particularly when the latter involve not merely our knowledge of what it means for Canada to be a nation, but also our knowledge of the ‘nations within the nation,’ that is, of the First Nations, of Québec, and of the ‘Queer Nation’?

To date, there has been relatively little scholarship that addresses the particular intersections of queer and Canadian in terms of cultural production, although the field is currently experiencing a significant influx of interest, due partially to the positive presence of openly queer artists in Canada, partially to legal and political gains over the last three decades, and partially to the inclination of at least some scholars to focus on and, if necessary, to rehabilitate queer cultural production within the national context. Terry Goldie’s recent anthology *In a Queer Country: Gay and Lesbian Studies in the Canadian Context* (2001), which brings together a selection of papers from the 1997 conference *Queer Nation?*, is a relatively rare example of a collection which combines queer scholarship on literature, film and fashion with ethnographic, political, geographic and historical work. Other critical work by Canadians, such as Thomas Waugh’s *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema* (2000), are concerned more with queer than with Canadian.

Although Waugh does address a number of Canadian films and film-makers, they constitute a very minor part of a field of discussion in which nationality is constituted largely as

Uncanny” for his development of the ways in which each of the terms generates and can be understood to haunt the other.

² While there has been significant and insightful work done on the postcoloniality of settler nations, particularly in the context of literatures written in English throughout the former British Empire (see, for example, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), it is also arguable that it is the colonized peoples within Canada who are its real postcolonial subjects — and it is questionable to what degree the experience of First Nations’ peoples is, in fact, *postcolonial*.

irrelevant. Similarly, Kathleen Martindale's examples in *Un/Popular Culture*, while they speak to the cross-cultural and trans-national aspects of queer culture, are predominantly American, from Diane DiMassa's *Hothead Paisan* comics to Sarah Schulman's novels and critical writing. Both books raise issues that are very relevant to Canadian LGBT people, especially as we are all exposed to, and generally familiar with, many aspects of queer culture produced by non-Canadians. Does this necessarily mean the hegemony, in what one might loosely call Canadian queer consciousness, of an American or a British or even a European style of queer culture?³ This is an issue that subsumes many of the arguments discussed in this thesis, as I examine the work of a variety of critics who have tried to untangle the various strands of queerness, gender identity, class, ethnicity, race and nationality in a wide range of work that might, equally loosely, be understood under the rubric of the queerly Canadian.

The most significant considerations to date of the intersections of 'queer' and 'Canadian' in literature occur in Peter Dickinson's *Here is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities and the Literatures of Canada* (1999) and Terry Goldie's *Pink Snow: Homotextual Possibilities in Canadian Fiction* (2003). No equivalent book-length study exists of non-literary Canadian queer culture, in any medium, whether popular or unpopular, although there are a variety of articles, particularly on media like lesbian performance art and queer film. Both of these recent books thus investigate a number of literary works by lesbian, gay and bisexual Canadians and, in Goldie's case, by heterosexual Canadians, like Leonard Cohen and Robertson Davies, whose works contain significant representations of homosexuality in some form or other. *Pink Snow*

³ For example, do we look to the centrality of Oscar Wilde in the creation of the idea of the queer as artist, or do we assume the hegemony of American tv, with shows like *Queer as Folk* (which is, after all, made in Canada and mostly by Canadians), *Will and Grace*, and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*? Do we contemplate the relevance of film-makers like Federico Fellini and Pedro Almodovar and the high culture associations of opera with a certain style of gayness? My point here is simply that it is difficult to make definitive assertions about the dominance of either a national style in queer Canadian culture or the hegemony of a transnational metropolitan gay culture that can be seen as interpellating gay men, in particular, as gay before they are Canadian. The issue is complicated by a variety of factors, from the traditional argument about how we define who we are, as Canadians to the varying influences of class, race, ethnicity, gender and age on the ways in which queer Canadians respond to the wide range of queer culture available to them. Perhaps the situation can best be understood, in any case, as a matter of both/and, rather than either/or — in other words, for many of us, it is possible to be Canadian (and queer) and to engage with cultural products from elsewhere without losing our sense of ourselves as Canadian (and queer). Even if we do read Walt Whitman or Audre Lorde, we do so not as Americans, but as Canadians, no matter how much we identify with the queer aspects of those writers' works.

focusses on novels by men, primarily gay men, while Dickinson's work ranges more broadly over work by both gay men and lesbians. However, the most significant of many differences between the two studies results from their very different perspectives on the position of LGBT people in both Canadian culture and the Canadian polity. Dickinson's position, even though it may be considered to be in some degree interrogative, is marked by the very title of his book: "Here is queer." Goldie's argument, by contrast, is founded upon what he sees as a largely failed attempt to establish a tradition of gay Canadian literature that is equivalent to the US traditions delineated by David Bergman (1991) and Robert K. Martin (1979), among others. Goldie sums up his work by saying:

I began this project with some hope of finding a homosexual tradition in Canadian literature. These various studies offer glimpses at various times, but no more than that. The recent examples ... suggest even less of a tradition. It is tempting to find political reasons, such as free trade and globalization, but it is also possible that Canadian culture has been too heteronormative to support a local gay culture. This is the argument made by Gary Kinsman in a number of studies, most recently in his article "Challenging Canadian and Queer Nationalisms." Still, there are many reasons why the generic Canadian gay should find even greater temptation in American-centred globalization than the rest of the culture. It seems to me a depressing note on which to end this study, but the future is less likely to be pink snow than South Beach north. (235)

Part of my work in this thesis involves investigating precisely this sort of summation of the place of the homosexual, or, more accurately, in terms of my own project, of the queer, in the Canadian nation. The argument raised by Kinsman and reiterated, albeit in a somewhat more interrogatory vein, by Goldie begs the question, at least, too heteronormative relative to what? Goldie offers two alternatives to the overly heterocentric state of Canadian culture: first, transnational (corporate) and global gay culture, which is equivalent to Sinfield's assertion of a metropolitan⁴ gay culture; second, the US.⁵ Both of these alternatives suggest a context in which

⁴ See, in particular, the first chapter of Alan Sinfield's *Gay and After* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1998), where Sinfield makes the argument that "[i]n North America and North-western Europe, the years since Stonewall have afforded good opportunity to those who have wanted to be what we have come to recognise as gay or lesbian. We have developed significant institutions and the beginnings of a climate where we may express ourselves without too many restraints. This has been a phenomenon of cities in the West; also, business and tourist travel have spread 'gay' and 'lesbian' through the cities of the globe. With all this in view, I will be calling our post-Stonewall lesbian and gay identities *metropolitan* and placing them within the metropolitan sex-gender system. This word referred initially to principal cities, but lately in postcolonial contexts it means the global centres of capital. I intend to

it might be possible both to recognize the traditional heteronormativity of the public face of the nation and the possibility of an underlying queerness that doesn't necessarily find its best expression in the formation of a gay male literary canon, but might be found in a variety of other cultural instances, including those produced by women and by transgendered or transsexual people.

The contextual question raised by Goldie's argument, then, is whether Canada is more or less heteronormative than either some ill-defined global culture (largely Americanized, in any case) or than the US itself.⁶ Of course, this is not an easy question to answer. On the one hand, one can point, as Goldie does, to the presence in the US of a tradition, albeit closeted, of gay male writing, from Walt Whitman to Henry James;⁷ on the other hand, Canada is significantly ahead of the US in terms of LGBT human rights.⁸ However, living as a gay or lesbian person is

exploit this ambiguity: metropolitan lesbian and gay identities have been emerging in the capitalist heartlands of the West, but are found also in large cities around the world, generally alongside older, local kinds of relations" (6-7).

⁵ See David Rayside's *On the Fringe: Gays and Lesbians in Politics* for a useful comparison of the legislative and political issues affecting gays and lesbians in Canada, the UK and the US.

⁶ One of my problems with this assumption of a global gay culture, is that it is hegemonically western, heavily Americanized, and largely predicated on ignoring the huge discrepancies in human rights for LGBT people around the world. Some Muslim countries, such as Indonesia, function as both targets for sex tourism (both gay and straight) while perpetrating massive human rights abuses on their own lesbian and gay populations. Questions of power and privilege cannot simply be omitted from the equation.

⁷ Equally, one could point to an equivalent lesbian tradition, from Emily Dickinson to Willa Cather.

⁸ In terms of a direct comparison of the legal context of LGBT people in Canada and the US, it is certainly possible to argue that there are significant differences. Canada has legal same-sex marriage in some provinces, however uneasily it sits in the political will of the current government, whereas Bush has committed \$1.5 billion to the defense of heterosexual marriage. Canada decriminalized homosexuality in 1969; the US criminalized it in at least nineteen states until a Supreme Court ruling in July, 2003, ruled the sodomy laws unconstitutional. Canada has recognized the equivalence of common law lesbian and gay relationships to common law straight relationships and altered legislation accordingly, requiring an omnibus bill that affected 65 separate pieces of legislation; in the US, tax law, immigration law, inheritance law and a whole variety of other issues continue to be discriminatory at both federal and state levels. And, finally, although it's in no way definitive, it's interesting to note that, despite the financial advantage of a strong American dollar, some 4,000 Americans took part in the 2002 Gay Games in Sydney, while the Canadian contingent numbered 3,000. Given the relative size of our respective populations, that's almost ten times as many LGBT Canadians per capita. (To provide a global perspective, however, it is equally important to note that China, a country of 1.2 billion people, had four representatives at the 2002 Gay Games.)

more than a matter of one's legal standing in society: it's also a matter of public visibility and its corollary, which is public safety; a question of family relations, opportunities for education, employment, housing and health care (the latter particularly important since the tendentious identification of AIDS in North American discourse as predominantly a 'gay disease'); an issue of the availability of social opportunity, including bars, gyms, sports clubs, and simple networks of friendship. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, in terms of my thesis, one's comfort and ease as an LGBT person is also a function of having available to one a visibly queer culture, however one may define it. For Goldie, as is the case with very many gay men and lesbians, one's identity as a homosexual is refracted in fiction, and especially in novels. Thus, the lack of a Walt Whitman (or an Oscar Wilde) is not a minor issue, but one that is central to some parts of Canadian queer culture; it is, however, not the only index of queer culture, which exists in many other venues, including theatre, film, television, music (classical, popular and experimental), the opera, ballet, contemporary dance, performance art, painting, sculpture, comic books, zines, newspapers and even advertising. All of these provide possible contexts within which LGBT people can find or not find, interrogate, reflect upon, resist and refract their relationship to a national culture which, on the one hand, sometimes seems not only not to belong to them, but actively to exclude them, while, on the other hand, providing a variety of pleasurable instances of recognition and subversion.

For Peter Dickinson, by contrast, Canada is both heteronormative *and* queer. Dickinson's argument works to combine "two different imaginative models of identity — one national, the other sexual — within an examination of the cultural production and textual dissemination of contemporary Canadian, Québécois, and First Nations literatures" (3). Dickinson thus begins *Here is Queer*, an important and ground-breaking study of the position of queer literatures in Canada, by directing the reader's attention to the conjunction of two sentences which have identificatory significance within their own communities with a third, conclusory, sentence that forms what he calls an "imperfect syllogism":

- a) 'Where is here?'
- b) 'We're here, we're queer, get used to it.'
- c) 'Here is queer.' (3)

Dickinson suggests that this imperfect syllogism informs his attempt "to uncover, or 'bring

out,' what I see as Canadian literary nationalism's simultaneously othered and coupled discourse, to juxtapose against the predominantly nationalist framework of literary criticism in this country an alternative politics, one propelled by questions of sexuality and, more often than not, of homosexuality" (3). While Dickinson makes the certainly correct point that "what gets *counted* as literature in this country is contingent upon certain supplementary socio-political discourses, such as nationalism and sexuality" (4), his introductory paragraph seems to construct sexuality, specifically homosexuality, *against* nationalism. It is certainly a valid observation that the nationhood of Canada has historically been constructed as heteronormative; however, what makes me slightly uneasy about Dickinson's formulation is the apparent acceptance of this conceptualisation of nationalism, as if it is inevitable that queerness can only be "juxtapose[d] against" (3) Canadian-ness. Thus, although Dickinson's work makes a compelling attempt to explicate a certain relationship between queerness, Canadian-ness and identity, this focus on gay and lesbian identity seems at times relatively unproblematic, despite the overall theoretical sophistication of the argument of each individual chapter and despite Dickinson's recognition of the ways in which sexual identity intersects with racial, ethnic and immigrant identities.

Thus the conjunction of Frye's famous question, "Where is here?", with a Queer Nation slogan suggests both the strengths and the difficulties of attempting to render the problem of relating queerness to Canadian-ness in terms of the synthesis of two "different imaginative models of identity" (3). It is hard not to see Dickinson's formulation as attempting to give equal weight to the identity slogans of two rather different communities. But one might also want to ask whether "Where is here?" is a useful summation of the identity formations current in contemporary Canadian culture?⁹ In the first place, Frye's question was originally formulated thirty years ago, at a time when Canadian culture was largely conceptualized, with the main exception of Québec, in terms of Anglo-European or WASP culture; one could argue, with some force, that that Canada no longer exists.¹⁰ Moreover, as Dickinson's subsequent formulation of his intentions

⁹ I will return later in this chapter to contemporary critical responses to Frye's formulation of Canadian identity as, presumably, a question of landscape and geography with the question, "Where is here?".

¹⁰ See, for example, the demographic arguments made by Michael Adams in *Sex in the Snow: Canadian Social Values at the End of the Millennium* (1997).

suggests, “Where is here?” neither formulates nor solves the problem of relations between different sections of the Canadian population which Dickinson lays out as if they are, in fact, entirely different nations in their own right: “Canadian” refers, we have to presume, to English-speaking (or, more accurately, non-francophone) Canada, while the distinction between “Canadian” and “Québécois” and “First Nations” calls into question the positioning of these latter two groups as belonging within the Canadian nation as a whole. To identify as a Québécois or as a First Nations person thus becomes in this formulation an identity somehow both separate from and outside “Canadian.”¹¹ Finally, the synechdochical construction of “Where is here?” is undoubtedly more apt as an identity formulation for literary scholars than for Canadians in general; the common symbols of nation tend to be more iconic and less interrogatory — the flag, the Mountie (even though Disney now owns the rights to that image), the beaver, the moose, and so on. Molson’s now (in)famous ad, “The Rant” (2000), plays on precisely these iconic images to highly ironic effect (I don’t think it’s possible not to laugh at the line, “The beaver is a proud and noble animal”). Outside of literary scholarship, then, Canadians are more likely to understand themselves as people who play hockey (even though many, perhaps most, of us don’t) than as people who are obsessed with the meaning and location of ‘here.’

A very similar problem attends Dickinson’s initial formulation of queer identity through the activist slogan, “We’re here, we’re queer ...,” where the similarly synechdochical construction obfuscates the problem that ‘queer’ is never an unproblematic identity. ‘Queer’ is most commonly taken in popular discourse as a synonym — and frequently not a positive one — for ‘lesbian and gay.’ Even within the lesbian and gay community, where ‘queer’ has generally been reappropriated and infused with political and activist rhetorical weight, the term is neither universally accepted nor understood in terms of a single unproblematic meaning, as indeed is made clear in my epigraph from Michael Warner. For some people, ‘queer’ is a portmanteau term that rhetorically includes people whose relationship to ‘gay and lesbian’ may be somewhat unclear: bisexuals, people engaged in same-sex sexual relations who do not identify

¹¹ It is difficult and perhaps impossible to speak of what I have called the ‘nations within the nation’ without constituting the subject of nationhood as a dichotomous opposition between national identities. Nevertheless, I argue that the dichotomy is inherently false and resides on the assumption that identity can only be an either/or proposition.

as gay (for example, MSMs or ‘Men who have Sex with Men’¹²) or lesbian, transgendered and transsexual people, two-spirited people, and the so-called ‘straight (or str8) queer,’ that is the heterosexually-identified person who views his or her sexual and affectional practices as existing outside the discursive regime of heteronormativity.¹³ Goldie refers to this as the “alphabet soup of sexual diversity” (“Queer Nation?” 1). And then, of course, ‘queer’ also has a specific academic weight, through its adaptation by ‘queer theorists,’ often explicitly in intellectual, political and practical opposition to or disavowal of the essentializing identitarian positions most commonly espoused by those engaged in ‘gay and lesbian studies.’¹⁴ In this sense, however, it is important to note that ‘queer’ is always contingent. As Warner argues

Queer activists are also lesbians and gays in other contexts — as, for example, where leverage can be gained through bourgeois propriety, or through minority-rights discourse, or through more gender marked language (it probably won’t replace lesbian feminism). Queer politics has not just replaced older modes of lesbian and gay identity; it has come to exist alongside those older modes.... (“Introduction” xxviii)

Queer is thus a term that carries a lot of baggage, from the trepidation of older gays and lesbians, who associate it predominantly with their own victimization at the hands of queer-bashers, to the radical pride of groups like Queer Nation whose slogan Dickinson quotes to create his syllogism — “We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it!” — to what Goldie terms the “abstruse poststructuralist methods of queer theory” (3). However, as Annamarie Jagose argues, it is this very refusal of definition that makes queer so useful as both a critical tool and a form of political confrontation. Responding to the controversy over the choice of “queer” versus “lesbian and gay,” Jagose notes that the very argument about the term is itself useful in foregrounding critical argument and new ways of thinking about sexuality: “Because the word queer indexes — and to some extent constitutes — changed modes of gender and sexuality, semantic struggles over

¹² This term is current amongst AIDS educators, who discovered early on that education aimed specifically at gay men does not work with men who consider themselves straight yet who have sex with other men.

¹³ For a useful discussion of non-normative forms of heterosexuality, see Kath Albury’s *Yes Means Yes: Getting Explicit about Heterosex* (2002).

¹⁴ For a discussion of the difference between queer theory and gay and lesbian studies, see Annamarie Jagose’s *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (1996), Nikki Sullivan’s *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (2003) and William B. Turner’s *A Genealogy of Queer Theory* (2000).

its deployment are far from pointless” (105). Jagose agrees with Sedgwick’s contention that it is queer’s very association with shame and degradation that is the source of its radically transformative potential: “If queer is ever neutralised as a purely descriptive term, the denaturalising cultural work it currently undertakes will become ineffectual. The derogatory underbelly of queer may be one of its most valuable characteristics....” (Jagose 105).

2. “Here is Queer” (Theory)

The label ‘queer,’ then, does not necessarily indicate a particular position relative to the field of sexuality, even theoretically, let alone relative to an individual’s sense of subjectivity or her/his identity formation; as Nikki Sullivan notes, while for some people ‘queer’ is a matter of being, for others it is a matter of doing. Sullivan’s approach, which is to see queer as something one does, not something one is, also informs her theoretical approach to Queer Theory as a field (although ‘field’ inevitably suggests a unity scholars whose work is associated with Queer Theory tend to resist):

One way of avoiding the problems associated with the notion of queer as an identity — albeit a non-essential, provisional, and fragmented one — is, as James R. Jakobsen suggests, to ‘complete the Foucauldian move from human being to human doing’ What Jakobsen means by this is that it may be more productive to think of queer as a verb (a set of actions), rather than as a noun (an identity, or even a nameable positionality formed in and through the practice of particular actions). (50)

While agreeing that queer is “a deconstructive practice that is not undertaken by an already constituted subject” (Sullivan 50), I would argue, nevertheless, that the rather slippery and amorphous area of thought that has come to be known as Queer Theory is largely coalesced by a utopian desire for a world that, rather than reinforcing contemporary sexual identities, transcends what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick refers to as the “chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition” (*Epistemology* 1). My understanding of ‘queer’ is thus shaped by a desire for the death of gender and, beyond that, for the invention of a new hermeneutics of bodies and relationships that is located elsewhere than the semi-coherent epistemological field that we have commonly come to understand as ‘sexuality.’

In this, I follow arguments by a diverse range of theorists and historians, including Michel

Foucault, Mary McIntosh, Robert Padgug, Gayle Rubin, Eve Sedgwick and David Halperin, that 'sexuality' itself is a relatively modern invention, radically distinct from pre-modern conceptions of both the epistemological and the social significance of sexual relations. Foucault says that the "new procedures of power that were devised during the classical age and employed in the nineteenth century were what caused our societies to go from *a symbolics of blood* to an *analytics of sexuality*. Clearly nothing was more on the side of the law, death, transgression, the symbolic and sovereignty than blood; just as sexuality was on the side of the norm, knowledge, life, meaning, the disciplines and regulations" (*History* 148). This means, among other things, that pre-modern conceptions of the meaning of sexual acts did not include the 'knowledge,' utterly transparent to everyone today, that what one does sexually tells the truth about the self. As Foucault notes, with magnificent irony, in his introduction to *Herculine Barbin*,

... we also admit that it is in the area of sex that we must search for the most secret and profound truths about the individual, that it is there that we can best discover what he is and what determines him. And if it was believed for centuries that it was necessary to hide sexual matters because they were shameful, we now know that it is sex itself which hides the most secret parts of the individual: the structure of his fantasies, the roots of his ego, the forms of his relationship to reality. At the bottom of sex, there is truth. (x-xi)¹⁵

Foucault asserts, then, that sexuality is an epistemological and regulatory field which constitutes the modern individual as a sexed and sexualized being and which, furthermore, operates to reveal the deep psychic truth about that individual. Knowing that someone is gay is thus supposed to tell us something, indeed the only important thing, about that person. Arguing in much the same vein as Foucault, Robert Padgug also asserts the historical specificity of the

¹⁵ An interesting illustrating of Foucault's argument made the news in late October, 2003, as participants in Sky TV's reality tv show *There's Something about Miriam* are reported to have successfully prevented the channel from airing the show in November. On the show, seven men compete for the affections of Miriam, unaware that she is a preoperative transsexual. Six of the seven are reportedly suing the company for defamation of character and conspiracy to commit sexual assault, as they claim "they were tricked into kissing, cuddling and holding hands with the 'woman,' Miriam, and say it was only after three weeks of filming that they were told she was male," although the producers argue that "they had made a point of never referring to Miriam as a woman when getting the men to take part" and that referring to a transsexual as male or female is inaccurate ("Contestants"). Discursively, both the show and responses to it, journalistic and legal, hinge on the notion that sex is truth; the unspoken problem is not that the men were deceived, but that, discursively, their ability to be deceived is in itself revealing.

modern reification of sexuality as a thing that can be known and that means in very specific ways. Padgug contends that, in the pre-bourgeois world,

[i]ntercourse, kinship, and the family, and gender, did not form anything like a 'field' of sexuality. Rather each group of sexual acts was connected directly or indirectly — that is, formed part of — institutions and thought patterns which we tend to view as political, economic or social in nature, and the connections cut across our idea of sexuality as a thing, detachable from other things, and as a private sphere of existence. ("Sexual Matters" 16)

Paul Morrison, however, in *The Explanation for Everything* (2001), while agreeing that sexuality has become an apprehensible field of knowledge, argues that Foucault's analysis of the construction of sex as truth is too broad:

Between each of us and his or her sex, the West has placed an asymmetrical demand and capacity for truth. Heterosexuality explains nothing, including the crimes committed in its name. Homosexuality explains everything in need of explanation, including the crimes committed against it in the name of compulsory heterosexuality. (9)

Morrison sees heteronormativity as occupying a position in society so intensely privileged, but also so intensely anxious, that it must be at once everything and nothing — and that its nothingness, its positioning as the sexuality that isn't, is the more visible and potent. If sexuality is a private sphere of existence, it occupies this sphere differently according to the power of the homo/heterosexual definition and with distinctive relations to a public sphere always already conceived as heteronormative.

The place of privacy as both a privileged and a required space for sexuality thus remains tremendously problematic, in large part for its differential impact on the possibility for including particular people as 'sexual citizens' within the public sphere of the nation state. As I will indicate in the next chapter, Trudeau's statement that "the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation" reflected an increasing desire to accord some basic human rights to homosexuals, by granting to them both the privilege and necessity of privacy already enjoined on certain aspects — largely sexual acts themselves — of heterosexuality. At the same time, however, Trudeau's declaration and the legislation that ensued from it also worked to ensure that homosexuality, conceived purely in terms of sexual acts and not in terms of affiliations, friendships, romantic or companionate relations, nor families, remained less than second-class: lesbians and gays, insofar

as they *were* lesbian or gay, were discursively not citizens at all (in other words, their citizenship rested on the relegation to privacy and, indeed, to secrecy, of their sexual identities, not just their sexual acts). The demand for the privatization of homosexuality in return for a limited legal, albeit not always social, tolerance is not unique to Canada, however, but has been played out, with variations, throughout the western world. In the UK context, for example, Diane Richardson notes that

whilst homosexuality may have been defined as a matter for individual conscience, the 1967 changes to the law pertaining to sexual acts between men nevertheless maintained legal limitations that did not apply to heterosexuality on the grounds that 'homosexual' acts in public might cause offence to others. By implication, public decency and public order — indeed the public sphere as it is defined in legal terms — is identified with heterosexuality. (14)¹⁶

If the official surface of the nation is heteronormative, as an emerging body of work on sexual citizenship has demonstrated (see, for example, Giddens, 1992; Evans, 1993; Cooper, 1995; Stychin, 1995; Berlant, 1997; Richardson, 1998; Bell and Binnie, 2000), then queerness is relegated to a compulsory privacy definitionally excluded from the public sphere. What goes on in the bedrooms of the nation thus becomes the national 'open secret.' As D.A. Miller has so trenchantly argued, in *The Novel and the Police* (1989), the secret functions as

the subjective practice in which oppositions of private/public, inside/outside, subject/object are established, and the sanctity of their first term kept inviolate. And the phenomenon of the 'open secret' does not, as one might think, bring about the collapse of those binarisms and their ideological effects, but rather attests to their fantasmatic recovery. (Qtd. in Sedgwick, *Epistemology* 67)

For Sedgwick, the 'open secret' and the political and legal, as well as discursive, injunctions to regimes of secrecy and disclosure, publicity and privacy, centrality and marginality add up to an epistemology of the closet itself. Sedgwick argues that

The closet is the defining structure of gay oppression in this century. The legal couching, by civil liberties lawyers, of *Bowers v. Hardwick*¹⁷ as an issue in the

¹⁶ Since the UK never criminalized female homosexuality, it did not have to decriminalize it.

¹⁷ *Bowers v. Hardwick* was the landmark Supreme Court case in the US in 1986 which ruled that individual states' laws against sodomy did not violate individuals' constitutional rights; in this particular case, the Supreme Court upheld the conviction of Michael Hardwick for sodomy, even though the act itself was both consensual and private. *Bowers v. Hardwick* was finally effectively overturned on June 26, 2003, when the federal Supreme Court judged the sodomy laws to be

first place of a Constitutional right to privacy, and the liberal focus in the aftermath of that decision on the image of the *bedroom invaded by policemen* — ‘Letting the Cops Back into Michael Hardwick’s Bedroom,’ the *Native*¹⁸ headlined — as though political empowerment were a matter of getting the cops back on the street where they belong and sexuality back into the impermeable space where *it* belongs, are among other things extensions of, and testimony to the power of, the image of the closet. (71)

Ironically, heteronormative relationships (those involving heterosexual couples in sanctioned, procreative unions having what Rubin calls “good sex”) enjoy a right to privacy, that is, on the one hand, desired by and yet hard to maintain for many queer people, and, on the other hand, legally, politically and often socially requisite on any demand for tolerance from lesbian and gay individuals. At the same time, however, heteronormativity enjoys a paradoxical right to publicness, or as Eric O. Clarke would have it, to publicity (the state of being public). Apparently, you can have your cake and eat it too — at least when it comes to being heterosexual in a heteronormative world. Richard Dyer points to this same conundrum in the introduction to *The Matter of Images* (1993), when he weighs the varying possibilities of analysis of “images of,” or work on representation, across social groupings and concludes that the “groupings that have tended not to get addressed in ‘images of’ work, however, are those with the most access to power: men, whites, heterosexuals, the able-bodied. The problem with

unconstitutional in *Lawrence et al v. Texas*. In reaching their decision, the Supreme Court justices ruled, in part, that:

The *Bowers* Court’s initial substantive statement — ‘The issue presented is whether the Federal Constitution confers a fundamental right upon homosexuals to engage in sodomy ...’ ... discloses the Court’s failure to appreciate the extent of the liberty at stake. To say that the issue in *Bowers* was simply the right to engage in certain sexual conduct demeans the claim the individual put forward, just as it would demean a married couple were it said that marriage is just about the right to have sexual intercourse. Although the laws involved in *Bowers* and here purport to do not more than prohibit a particular sexual act, their penalties and purposes have more far-reaching consequences, touching upon the most private human conduct, sexual behavior, and in the most private of places, the home.... The liberty protected by the Constitution allows homosexual persons the right to choose to enter upon relationships in the confines of their homes and their own private lives and still retain their dignity as free persons. (*Lawrence et al. v. Texas* 1)

While this is certainly a giant step forward for the basic human rights of LGBT people in the US, it is hard not to wonder about the right of “homosexual persons” to “enter upon relationships” outside of “the confines of their homes.” Effectively, being queer is still legally constituted as a function of privacy.

¹⁸ The *New York Native*, a gay and lesbian newspaper.

not addressing them as such is that they then function as simply the human norm, without specificity and thus without a specifiable relation to power” (4). This insight about the relation of representation to power also drives Dyer’s later work on whiteness, where he lays out the complex interrelationships between visibility, power, and race, as I will discuss later in the thesis.

What is true of whiteness and of heterosexuality is no less true of those other awkward, ambivalent, but endlessly powerful binarisms by which we structure our lives in the world: women are both visible and invisible to men while, at the same time, the masculine remains invisible to itself. Similar binary structures informing issues of representation and visibility reflect not only on what might be called the transnational binarisms of gender, sexuality, race and so on (although it is important to recognize that, even within the relatively homogenous cultures of western modernism, there are still national and regional differences in the way these binarisms are played out), but also, not unironically, resemble the constant reproduction throughout Canadian culture and discussion of Canadian identity of the four founding binarisms: colonial vs indigenous, English vs French, British vs Canadian and, more recently, Canadian vs US.¹⁹ It is impossible not to notice that, when Americans look at Canada, they see either a series of stereotypes or they see themselves, plus snow. On the other hand, Canadians, supposedly inundated with the unstoppable flow of US cultural products, see the US all too well. Thus the supply of clichés about Canadian/US relations along the lines of “Americans are benevolently ignorant of Canada, while Canadians are malevolently knowledgeable about America.” In the seemingly ineluctable hierarchy of binarisms, the US is always discursively the privileged half of the pair.

The top of the binary totem pole occludes its own image: it is not specular, that is, self-regarding, and it uses its invisibility to its own advantage. Both here and not here, it is a register of power that can best be understood in the Foucauldian mode. In “The Confession of the Flesh,” Foucault says that

[i]f one tries to erect a theory of power one will always be obliged to view it as emerging at a given place and time and hence to deduce it, to reconstruct its genesis. But if power is in reality an open, more-or-less coordinated . . . cluster of relations, then the only problem is to provide oneself with a grid of analysis which makes possible an analytic of relations of power. (199)

¹⁹ I will be dealing with all of these at various points throughout the thesis.

Foucault thus delineates a method of understanding the operations of power dynamics that are not dependent on a historical assumption of a prelapsarian moment of equality into which power erupts, like knowledge into Eden. But, as Paul Morrison forcefully (and wittily) argues, there is a price to be paid for this over-privileging of the power of the heteronormative:

Exclusion from representation is conventionally held to be the unhappy fate of the socially marginal or the sexually aberrant. Exemption from representation, Foucault argues, is the singular privilege of the normative. To occupy center stage, to declare one's heterosexual credentials, is already to protest too much. The only compelling proof of sexual 'legitimacy' is the subject's felt knowledge that no proof is necessary. 'Don't ask, don't tell': the policy of compulsory discretion that now governs gays in the U.S. military has long been the informing (if thoroughly internalized) decorum of normativity. Heterosexuality is the love that dare not speak its name. (2)

By contrast, as Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality*, homosexuality along with other 'aberrant' practices has been continuously enjoined to speak its name, even while being endlessly silenced. If, indeed, Morrison and Foucault are right about the normative's privilege of silence, yet Sedgwick is equally correct in her assessment of the crucial place of the closet both in mapping out allowable knowledge and in institutionalizing oppression, then the public/private binarism exists within a set of paradoxical discourses and injunctions: homosexuality must be both silent and outspoken, while heterosexuality must be both private and public, represented everywhere and not represented at all. To be more exact, heterosexuality is everywhere represented precisely because it cannot be represented *as itself*, but only as the 'norm.' Thus the minute heterosexual representation bespeaks itself, it becomes, as both Sedgwick and Morrison argue, suspect, untrustworthy, and perilous. Morrison claims that,

A sexuality that falls too conspicuously below the level of representation is as suspect as one that rises too eagerly to it. Hence, the paradox: if heterosexual credentials are to prove convincing, they must never be offered or demanded, yet the subject's felt knowledge that no proof is necessary must never feel like exclusion from representation. When imposed on gays in the military, the policy of 'Don't ask, don't tell' merely guarantees the normative the triumphalism of their knowingness. (To be entirely pleasurable, sexual knowledge must be extracted from, not freely given by, the perverse subject²⁰). (3)

²⁰ I have been particularly struck by the power of this insight. Among other things, it explains the frequent delight of both the mainstream and tabloid press in outing closeted figures, even as they maintain a prissy, moralizing dismissal of outing by gay and lesbian groups as a political strategy.

If the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation, then, it still has a significant legislative and juridical stake in policing the boundaries not only of homosexuality and heterosexuality, but also of the homo/heteronormative binarism. The bedroom becomes the epistemological, as well as the judicial, locus of sexual practices, most especially those which, as Gayle Rubin has argued, fall farthest from the heteronormative assumption about what can be conceived of as 'good' sex ("Thinking Sex" 13-15). It is thus a closed, even a closeted, space for homosexuality and some forms of heterosexuality (not to mention a host of 'perversions' and 'paraphilias'), whilst remaining an open, if not exactly public, space for an already public heteronormativity. (This leads, as I will discuss in the next chapter, to the curious conclusion that while same-sex marriage has been dismissed as a sadly assimilationist ploy by many LGBT people whose politics are more queer than conciliatory, it may exact a more oddly queer freight simply by its ability to insert LGBT couples into the public sphere, at least juridically). Thus, *pace* Trudeau, the state has, in fact, maintained a place in the bedrooms of the nation, even if it has agreed occasionally to look the other way. At the same time, the bedroom maintains a stake in the constitution of the nation itself, as the nation is gendered and sexualized into a body politic which is definitionally both male and heterosexual. What the nation knows is both what happens and what is supposed to happen in its bedrooms; this knowledge is the very precise means by which the nation understands the truth about itself, that is its own citizens, even if some of those truths can only be brought into intelligibility as open secrets.

3. The Sexual Citizen and the Public Sphere

Trudeau's statement thus set a certain tone for Canada as a nation, an atmosphere in which (homo)sexuality was discursively, and to some extent legally, relegated to the status of the individual's private business. While there is no doubt that decriminalization was a major step towards ending the judicial discrimination against and persecution of gays and lesbians, the move towards the privatisation of sexualities left marital heterosexuality undisturbed in its crowning status as both the presumptive form of citizenship and of the public good, while leaving alternative sexualities in the position of private vices. Trudeau's statement served to decouple the institutions of heterosexuality, particularly where those were also the institutions of the state, from the actual

practices of heterosexuality.²¹ Sexuality as an aspect of citizenship was thus invisible to itself, since it was conceived of only in terms of its institutional aliases, i.e., predominantly as ‘marriage’ and ‘family,’ thus making the nation itself symbolically every bit as heteronormative as its citizens — an effect that I demonstrate in the next chapter in my discussion of the ways in which queer cultural production responds to marriage.

The issue of what has come to be conceived of as ‘sexual citizenship’ is a matter of both public debate and academic investigation throughout the western world and elsewhere. Regardless of nationality, every citizen is now understood as ‘having’ a sexuality, whether conceived of as the business of the state or not. Logic thus tells us that everyone is a sexual citizen. At the same time, however, both experience and history demonstrate that not all sexual citizens are equal. In other words, where heteronormative sexuality is, through its institutional practices, very much the business of the state, other forms of sexuality still condemn their practitioners to greater or lesser degrees of marginalization. Although there are multiple sexual practices that can render the sexual citizen as *de facto* second class — from prostitution to sado-masochism, from polyamory to pedophilia — most of the theoretical as well as activist responses to the relationship of sexuality and citizenship have circled around issues of homosexuality.

At the same time, a growing body of academic work theorizing the body itself, from feminist and queer perspectives and from a variety of disciplines, suggests to me that the sexual citizen can best be theorized in terms of the sexual/sexualized/desexualized body and its relationship to the metonymic ‘body’ of the nation, i.e., the ‘body politic.’ The body politic is maintained through a series of discourses that regulate the visibility, legitimacy, legality and ‘normalcy’ of the body, especially in terms of the place that any given body is able to maintain within both the public and private spheres of the nation. Moira Gatens argues in “Corporeal Representation in/and the Body Politic” that the Hobbesian ‘artificial man’ who is represented as and by the metaphor of the ‘body politic’ is an image of unity that effectively “restrict[s] our political vocabulary to one voice” and that further ensures that “only a body deemed capable of reason and sacrifice can be admitted into the body politic as an active member” (83). As a

²¹ In saying this, I want to emphasize that my critique presumes neither intent nor malice on Trudeau’s part. The effect on discourses of citizenship that I am arguing here is only visible retrospectively and likely could not have been predicted at the time, given the prevailing discursive context.

result, many bodies are effectively disenfranchised from the body politic: according to Gatens, “Slaves, foreigners, women, the conquered, children, the working classes, have all been excluded from political participation ... by their bodily specificity” (83).²²

Questions of (political) representation as inclusion and textual/corporeal representation as visibility, however, while clearly related through the historical construction of the public sphere, are not themselves identical and do not function identically. As a result, some bodies, predominantly queer ones, not only have little viable presence in the public sphere, but are also relegated to the status of ‘private’ by discourses which are supported by the regulatory institutions of the state and the disciplinary powers of normativity. Other bodies, by contrast, while still excluded from representation within the body politic, are almost hypervisible — both a discursive and a ‘real’ visibility that follows from their inscription into the public sphere as a matter of public and national interest; this is particularly true of the pregnant woman and the way in which her body is mapped onto a cartography that delineates dense transfers of public interest, public sexuality, and public futures, all generally envisioned under the larger rubrics of citizenship and nationhood. The pregnant body is a public body precisely because it is the locus not of present but of future citizens and nations. Discussing the intense potency of the fetal sonogram in “a revitalized fantasy of national heterosexuality” in the US, Lauren Berlant argues that,

In this regime of photographic evidence, the mother is not a ‘person’ when she is pregnant; she is ‘public,’ and vulnerable to regulation like a veritable strip mall, or any kind of property. Her technical and political irrelevance to the child’s reproduction in the new sacro-political regime of ‘life’ is a condition of political as well as visual semi-erasure, in which she can gain value only by submitting to the law and forfeiting the intense competition between American fetuses and their mothers. (111)

Berlant, of course, is writing in a context where so-called ‘pro-life’ activists have both more political ascendancy and more discursive effect, thus becoming an important part of the process she sees as instating an ‘infantile citizenship’ as the norm in which both the fetus itself and the innocent, and thus asexual, child become the iconic citizens of the state. The situation in Canada is less extreme, but the pregnant body is still constituted here as a public body whose interests, differentiated from the interests of the woman who now belongs to rather than possessing her

²² In emphasizing the usual feminist litany of oppressions, that is, gender, race and class, Gatens fails to specify sexuality, even though it is clearly a way of marking the binary of inclusion/exclusion.

body, are coterminous with, but never in control of, the interests of the state.²³

Thus when Trudeau made the pronouncement that “the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation,” the statement was already bounded by ‘common sense’ and other forms of public ‘knowledge’ in ways that both reflected and *de facto* enforced the absolute boundary between public bodies and private bodies. There thus seems to me to be two very different ways in which bodies are discursively constructed as ‘private’: the bodies of those whose sexualities are constructed by the state as vices are necessarily private because both the state and the public need to be able to ignore them — and not only to ignore the ‘private’ sexual acts, particularly anal intercourse, that take place in their bedrooms but also to ignore the very bodies — and the people embodied through these private acts — themselves. At the same time, however, the body of the heterosexual (white) bourgeois male is also constructed as ‘private’ in ways that mark its privacy as a privilege of power, rather than as a sign of abjection. Like heterosexuality itself, this body occupies a self-contradictory space of public privacy quite different from the enforced privacy of the queer body and the enforced publicity of the pregnant body — a publicity most marked in the ways in which the woman’s belly goes from untouchable private part to endlessly touchable public property.²⁴ Indeed, Berlant identifies the recent fall into identity on the part of the white, the male, and the heterosexual as the driving force between much right-wing discourse: “formerly iconic citizens who used to feel undefensive and unfettered feel truly exposed and vulnerable” because “[t]hey sense that they now have *identities*, when it used to be just other people who had one” (2). Being marked publically by identity is conceived by the “iconic citizen” as the proper fate of women, racial and ethnic minorities, and homosexuals.

If the pregnant belly is the most touchable of public parts, the anus is equally the most untouchable of private parts. Many theorists have noted the absolute association in public discourse of gay men with anality, an association that, as Leo Bersani notes, is yet one more in a long series of linkages between male homosexuality and the female.²⁵ However, it is important

²³ Berlant’s discussion of the relationship between the pregnant body, the fetus and the nation state is most fully explored in the third chapter of *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*.

²⁴ For a further discussion of this, see Robin Longhurst’s “Pregnant Bodies, Public Scrutiny” in *Embodied Geographies: Spaces, Bodies and Rites of Passage*.

²⁵ Neither the obsession with anality nor the association of gay men with (the despised figure of the) woman are unknown in Canadian cultural production. Nor are they unconnected to the discursive

to note that, in terms of public (not political) representation, there could scarcely be two bodies further apart than the body of the gay man and of the pregnant woman. If both are defined, in essence, by their difference from the normative masculine body of the (heterosexual) 'artificial man' who both is and is represented by the body politic, they are still, however, defined as opposite poles of difference. In a sense, the state claims an absolute interest in the one (the pregnant body) and — at best — an absolute disinterest in the other. It is curious to note that in this case disinterest may be preferable to interest, since the state's historical interest in the body of the gay man, at least since its constitution in the new 'species' of the homosexual in the late nineteenth century, has been almost entirely disciplinary and oppressive. Better to be ignored than persecuted. Thus Trudeau's argument that homosexuality, at least when confined to the bedroom — an argument that itself presumes that it is the sexual acts performed by the queer body that are constitutive of its essence *as* a queer body — are matters of purely private and not of state or public interest was, for its time, both liberal and liberatory. Nevertheless, it worked both to reflect and to reinforce an existing tendency to constitute homosexuality as unrepresentable in the public sphere not only in textual/corporeal terms, ie. as properly invisible,

construction of Canada as a nation, although these associations may have been stronger a few decades ago. Think, for example, of the construction of both Canada and homosexuality in Robertson Davies' *The Deptford Trilogy*. In these three novels, we see Davies' construction of Canada as a bleakly dull and puritanical place, in which everyone hearkens back to a nostalgic view of an England that never was for their sense of values and self-hood. It is also very much a domestic space, populated by domestic figures, particularly female ones, that are not to be found in Davies' descriptions of England or Europe. Interesting things do happen in Canada (indeed, without them, the books would have no plot) but they can only be rendered speakable, and thus 'outed' instead of hidden by a prim, closed-mouth colonial propriety, by placing the speakers elsewhere — Switzerland or England, primarily.

This view of Canada as quintessentially boring and second-rate, deformed by the bourgeois proprieties of those with aspirations to recognition from an England still labelled 'home' and by the inevitable seclivities of such middle-class mediocrity, is perhaps one of the reasons for the series' obsession with homosexuality. Homosexuality permeates the trilogy; it is referred to at least as often, if not more often, than heterosexuality. If Davies' view of homosexuality is generally derogatory, that in itself does not explain his fascination with it, nor the fact that it is consistently rendered, throughout all three novels, only in terms of anal sex (except in brief references to Liesl's affair with Faustina). Indeed, David Staunton not only complains that the young — he is forty — are demanding free love and abortions, but that he now finds himself reading "books advising women that anal intercourse is a jolly lark (provided both partners are 'squeaky clean')" (410). Paul Dempster aka Magnus Eisengrim describes the anal rape he experienced at the age of ten not predominantly in terms of sex (and certainly not in feminist terms as an expression of power) but rather in terms of scatology: "it was something filthy going in where I knew only filthy things should come out, as secretly as could be managed. In our house there was no word for excretion, only one or two prim locutions, and the word used in the schoolyard seemed to me a horrifying indecency" (547). For a more comprehensive discussion of the place of homoeroticism in *The Deptford Trilogy*, see Goldie's chapter on Davies in *Pink Snow*.

but also in political terms, as being definitively excluded from the public body and public acts of the nation.

Eric O. Clarke argues that historically “the public sphere translated ‘private vices’ into ‘public virtues’: acquisitiveness, competition, and rational calculations from private commerce; companionate love, voluntary association, and self-cultivation from the intimate domestic spaces of the conjugal family” (3). These formerly private vices were now firmly associated with a set of moral values that Clarke, following Habermas, sees as entrenched within Enlightenment definitions of humanity and ideals of universality and democracy, but which, unlike Habermas, Clarke understands as definitionally opposed to the inclusion of those private vices which remained private and particularly to all forms of homoeroticism. Clarke argues that

... the principles of translation from private to public retained by the bourgeois public sphere have historically contradicted its own universalist, democratic ideals. While claiming to establish a ‘context-transcending’ sphere through which to adjudicate competing interests equitably, the conversion from private to public has involved quite particular, context-specific determinations of value. For example, the bourgeois public sphere explicitly excluded women from participation, based on their supposedly inferior rational capacities and resolute identification with the domestic Even as marriage and labor were publicly valorized, their value was at the same time inequitably distributed; women were more often than not disenfranchised by the marriage contract and the collective interests of socialized labor were routinely suppressed if not enslaved.... Historically, the intimate connections between *property* and *propriety* have determined in large measure the kinds of subject positions and experiences that could be translated into the legitimate grammar of a ‘general’ public interest. (4)

Gatens similarly understands the body politic, which is the metonymic body of the public sphere, as necessarily unitary, in spite of its own ideals of inclusion: “The most a universal ethic will permit is the *expansion* of the one body. Under pressure from its own insistence on equity, it may be forced to admit women, slaves, and others. It will not, however, tolerate the positing of a second, or a third, or a fourth body” (86-87).

In this sense, then, both Clarke and Gatens, working from a different set of principles of representation, conclude that, despite its idealizing discourses of universality, liberalism and inclusiveness, the bourgeois public sphere as represented in the ‘artificial man’ of the body politic remains incapable of equality except in the form of subjunctivity. Clarke sums this position up nicely when he argues that,

On the one hand, the ideal of publicness certainly contains an irreducibly transformative force that beneficially aims toward a democratization of social life and hence the elaboration of fully enfranchised civic subjects. On the other..., [t]he democratic promise of civic subjectivity is often contradicted by the inclusive processes that would grant it. To achieve integration within forms of public discourse, excluded groups must appear to conform to the standards of the 'normal citizen' by which they were excluded to begin with. (9)

As Clarke points out, the conformities needed to achieve inclusion go beyond the erasure of difference, to a series of transformations that are essentially subjunctive; in other words, sexual citizenship for queer people tends to involve transforming behaviours, attitudes, modes of consumerism and so on (what homophobes tend to sum up in the word 'lifestyle') *as if* heterosexual. To be represented within the body politic, homoeroticism must reposition itself under the sign of heteronormativity, becoming 'just like' that which has been definitionally seen as its opposite. The task for women is virtually the same, as women gain inclusion within the public sphere by becoming subjunctively 'masculine.'

The paradoxical nature of this necessity for transformation is underscored by the impossibility of the pregnant body becoming part of the public sphere while retaining its actual difference. Indeed, the pregnant body is the insurmountable index of the impossibility of true inclusiveness within the body politic, for it is the pregnant body, more than any other (and especially if the pregnant body is also a lesbian one) that cannot achieve equivalence: the pregnant body cannot become subjunctively male, for it is itself the sign of difference from the male. One might also argue that the queer body is in the same case so long as it remains associated with anality and sexual receptivity, because it is the very construction of male homosexuality as difference, not just in sexual behaviours but also in gender, that is opposed to an understanding of the male body of the citizen and of the body politic of the public sphere as inviolable and non-receptive. Hobbes's artificial man, in fact, has no anus; he also has no penis and is curiously detached from the business of reproduction, a point which Gatens might well have used to support her argument that the place of women in the metaphoric body politic is simply to be consumed and incorporated, without corporeal representation or autonomy.

We might thus argue that the place of the state in the bedrooms of the nation is to ensure a distinction between the enforced privacy of queer bodies and the enforced publicity of pregnant ones. The state's concern with the queer body is one of isolation and exclusion; it is not part of

the state except insofar as it is willing to act as if subjunctively heteronormative — and, given the recent legality of sodomy laws in the US which deny LGBT people the right to privacy, such willingness is seen as fundamentally inadequate by many in the USA. Berlant cites the opinion of Justice Harlan in *Griswold v. Connecticut*:

The right of privacy is not an absolute. Thus, I would not suggest, for example, that adultery, homosexuality, fornication and incest are immune from public enquiry, however privately practiced ... [But] the intimacy of husband and wife is necessarily an essential and accepted feature of the institution of marriage, an institution which the State not only must allow, but which always and in every age it has fostered and protected. (Qtd. in Berlant 78)

The state's concern with the pregnant body is thus to ensure the reproduction and replacement of the body politic through state-sanctioned procreative marriages. That this concern has not diminished with the increasing inclusion of women within the public sphere through a process of subjunctive masculinity is made visible through the obsessive and sometimes hysterical discourse around pregnancy caused by falling birth rates throughout the western world. This hysteria is, of course, not simply about numbers, as a world with more than six billion people can scarcely be said to be lacking numbers, but is also, if tacitly, about race and class. For example, when Australian women are warned in the media, virtually on a daily basis, of the dangers of putting off pregnancy for careers, the state is clearly focussing its proprietary interest in the public status of the pregnant body, even where the pregnant body itself exists only *in posse*. There is no question here but that the state conceives itself and is conceived by public discourse as having a place in the bedrooms of the nation.²⁶

Thus, despite coming at the problem from different positions and disciplines entirely, both Gatens and Clarke conclude that the public sphere, represented as/by the body politic, cannot become inclusive of all of its excluded others, since some of those others are incapable of negotiating the subjunctive equivalence which is the *sine qua non* of inclusion. If not all bodies are capable of becoming part of a metonymic body politic, then we need to move beyond a metonymy of body and body politic that is dependent on conceiving the body as male and heterosexual. We need, in other words, to rethink the public sphere and its relationship to

²⁶ Although there is certainly room for dissension within the media, particularly the so-called 'independent media,' it seems to me arguable that, in general, the national and local media function in Althusser's terms as a form of Ideological State Apparatus.

(sexual) citizenship. In the long run, both Gatens' work and Clarke's make inevitable the conclusion that the inclusive strategies possible within the current structure of the public sphere will always automatically exclude those whose bodies are defined by the anus as private part or the pregnant belly as public property. It is difficult then not to conclude, as David Bell and Jon Binnie do in their consideration of the conditions of sexual citizenship, that it is only

... by creating what Michel Foucault ... called 'as yet unforeseen kinds of relationships' — which can begin to rework what we mean by love, what we mean by family, what we mean by friendship — we might be able to rethink from here what we mean by citizenship; or, perhaps, what we mean by *as yet unforeseen kinds of citizenship*.' (140)

Perhaps, however, we also need to add that genuinely inclusive political and public representation might create not only unforeseen kinds of citizenship, but also unforeseen ways of knowing and representing bodies themselves.

4. "Where is Here," Redux?

If Frye's 'Where is here?' was supposed to articulate our identity in terms of place, then what the question mark pointed toward was a Canadasein (to use Avital Ronell's felicitous coinage ...) whose 'being there' was always somewhere else.

Richard Cavell, "Where is Here Now?"

As the discussion above indicates, by invoking Queer Theory in the second epigraph to this chapter I mean to signal both one of the major methodological practices of the thesis (alongside postcolonial theory) and, perhaps even more insistently, the most utopian goal of 'queer,' which aims to bring down contemporary regimes of sexuality, thus invoking the death not of sexual practices, but of the homo/heterosexual binarism which has regulated our lives, our thinking and our politics for over a century. Queer Theory, as I understand it, wishes to deontologize both queerness and heterosexuality, to deconstruct the possibility of either a 'Queersein' or a 'Straightsein' that, in either case, is never really here or there but always already 'somewhere else.' In bringing together at the beginning of this chapter Warner's invocation of the power of 'queer' with Sugars' postcolonial insistence on the resonant and powerful effectiveness of the idea of the nation even when it is recognized as an "imagined political community" (Anderson 6), I aim to begin to interrogate the theoretical, cultural, political and

academic work involved in being either or both queer and Canadian. In addition, the identities, subject-positions and theoretical approaches identified in each of these two epigraphs can only be considered, given the complexity of the problem, within a historically and culturally contextualized investigation of the relationship of sexuality to the nation state and of both to culture. Canada's place in Western culture ensures, on the one hand, the historical and political imperative to heteronormativity, while, on the other hand, allowing for certain fissures in the supposedly smooth plane of national discourse which open up potential spaces not only for queer Canadians but also, and sometimes more importantly, for conceiving the nation itself as queer.

If Trudeau's statement has had, as I argue above, the effect of both instating a rhetorical and, indeed, to some extent a legal and sociocultural practice of tolerance, while at the same time maintaining heterosexuality in its unchallenged location as the public face of Canada, it is important to ask whether it is possible to disarticulate the perhaps immutable and often uninterrogated heteronormativity of Canada as a nation that led Gary Kinsman, even in 2001, to declare that there "is nothing queer about Canada" ("Challenging" 217).²⁷ Nonetheless, if we currently still respond to Northrop Frye's infamous interrogation of the uncertainties of national-identity formation and the national debate in the much-cited question "Where is here?," it is yet possible to suggest, as Peter Dickinson does, that 'here' may indeed be 'queer.' It is obviously possible for heteronormativity and homosexuality to co-exist; indeed, it is impossible for them not to do so. We all live, as Sedgwick argues (although not quite in those terms) at the intersection of those two ontologies. The very centrality of the homo/heterosexual definitional divide to Western epistemology and to the construction of nations as "imagined communities" instates queerness as the at once definitional (for, without homosexuality, heterosexuality cannot exist), incommensurable and frequently invisible standard-bearer of national identity.

At the same time, as I will demonstrate throughout the thesis, queerness cannot, and generally should not, be separated from other identitarian problems that, in Jonathan Kertzer's phrase, "worry the nation." Race, ethnicity, class and, of course, gender are all intricately imbricated with queerness in troubling the nation, both as definitional problems for national

²⁷ As my first chapter's discussion of same-sex marriage argues, it is not yet possible to know what effect including gays and lesbians in marriage as the premier institution of nation-as-family will have on the construction of Canada as a heteronormative state. It does, however, suggest that there is at least beginning to be, if indeed not already, something queer about Canada.

identity and in their relationship to the public sphere. While this thesis is centrally concerned with sexuality as its primary object of investigation, at least in relation to Canadian identity and culture, including the possibility of locating a queer Canadian (sub)culture,²⁸ it is not my intention to suggest that only sexuality matters, nor that it matters *more*, but rather that, as Sedgwick has so vigorously argued, our epistemologies of sexuality have worked for more than a century both to shape and to limit our possible understanding of all other modes of identity and subjectivity. Sexuality thus co-exists with, constitutes, and is constituted by, even as it troubles, all “the tiny number of inconceivably coarse axes of categorization” (*Epistemology* 22) available to us to understand the ways in which people differ from each other. Homosexuality indeed incurs different strategies of discrimination and oppression, different possibilities of resistance and subversion, and different relations to other ways of categorizing difference, yet, at the same time, it is important to remember that institutionalized racism and homophobia arose out of the same foundations in the west and that both are closely linked to sexism and gender differentiation. As Tim McCaskell argues, in his online article, “A History of Race/ism” (1994),

This preoccupation with [racially ‘pure’ and eugenically beneficial] reproduction also resulted in an obsession with sex. Only properly regulated ‘heterosexual’ behaviour could guarantee racial survival. Traditionally, improper sexual activity had been considered a matter of morality and sin.... But now, in a world where *race* was the primary concern, homosexuality or any non-reproductive sexual activity was akin to treason, since it wasted and exhausted the ‘germ plasm’ that carried the strength and abilities of the race. Racial purity went hand in hand with sexual hygiene.

Furthermore, according to Foucault, race, sexuality and gender were all caught up in the same disciplinary regimes of power, although they were, of course, still overlaid with the traces of older and often discordant discourses. Nevertheless, a radical and effective imbrication of race (blood) and sexuality eventuated in the nineteenth century and had, perhaps, its most spectacular moment in the ‘triumph’ of Nazism, although it is surely still omnipresent, if less overt, today. Foucault therefore argues that:

²⁸ I am slightly hesitant to mention the subcultural issue here because I worry that, like Frye’s question, it may be more of a “clever red herring” (Brydon, “It’s Time” 14) than an aid to understanding the relationship between culture produced by LGBT people in Canada and that produced by heterosexually-identified Canadians. It might be more productive, as James Clifford suggests, to conceive of such relations as “intercultural,” rather than as relations between a dominant culture and its minoritized subcultures.

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the thematics of blood was sometimes called on to lend its entire historical weight toward revitalizing the type of political power that was exercised through the devices of sexuality. Racism took shape at this point (racism in its modern, 'biologizing,' statist form): it was then that a whole politics of settlement (*peuplement*), family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health and everyday life, received their colour and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race. (*History* 149)

However, even if one disagrees with or wishes to qualify Sedgwick's assertion that "...an understanding of any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition," (*Epistemology* 1), one must admit the potency of the desire, in western culture, to know sexual orientation as the truth, both for oneself and of others. It may not be entirely clear that this knowledge is more definitional than the knowledge and truth of biological sex (after all, the question of sexual orientation, at least for now, postdates the question asked of every neonate; if there truly is a gene for homosexuality, it is bemusing to wonder what colour balloon might be added to the pink or the blue — clearly, it will not be lavender²⁹). What is clear is that our cultural obsession with these two questions — Are you male or female? Are you straight or gay? — are intensely and hopelessly implicated in each other. The question of gender, even when asked of a newborn, almost invariably carries with it the presumption of heterosexuality; the question of sexual identity, especially when asked of someone assumed to be non-heterosexual, almost invariably carries with it presumptions about the individual's gender, most commonly the assumption that to be gay is to do gender wrong (both to do it wrongly and to do wrong to it). Additionally, as is now a commonplace of postmodernist and deconstructive thinking, it is virtually impossible to separate the halves of each binarism from their embedding in a hierarchical system of value: even today, it is widely considered better to be

²⁹ Though I may joke about this, I am also well aware of the potentially dire consequences of the desire to identify homosexuality as a genetic abnormality. Even if there were a 'gay gene' which could be identified pre-natally, the current climate of both socially and religiously-rationalized homophobia would almost certainly guarantee the prevalence of abortion and/or gene therapy over gay births. As an aside, the gay American writer Keith Hartman has published two sf-detective novels set in a post-gay-gene world in which only Catholics maintain their ban on abortions in preference to the elimination of homosexual babies.

male than female, better to be heterosexual than homosexual. The possibility that these are “merely cultural”³⁰ categories that are neither natural nor normal remains alien to the ‘common sense’ that reigns, discursively, in the public sphere, not only in Canada but throughout the western world (and, indeed, throughout much of the rest of the world). On the one hand, then, we can say that gender is inextricably imbricated in sexuality, and vice versa, but, on the other hand, this does not mean that they are the same, that they carry the same freight of meaning, that they are experienced in identical or even similar ways, that they are textualized using the same tropes, metaphors or metonymies, or even that the hermeneutics of their imbrication is itself lived out in similar ways by individuals for whom sex/gender and sexuality can be experienced and embodied in very diverse ways, even when those ways contradict dominant epistemologies, legal and medical formulations and sociocultural expectations.

This thesis thus involves a theoretical and critical investigation of the effects of various forms of identity politics on queer textual production in Canada; it looks critically both at assumptions of and resistances to specific theoretical positions on the nature of identity, sexuality, gender and the body. I will therefore be examining the confluence of, and sometimes conflict between, what might be labelled ‘queer texts’ and the representational demands inherent in identity politics. In this respect, the thesis reiterates precisely that register of understanding Canadian culture, and especially Canadian literature, which has evolved from Frye’s question about the location of Canadian-ness. As Diana Brydon has trenchantly argued, in a special issue of *Essays on Canadian Writing* inspired by the twenty-fifth anniversary of Frye’s question, the real question is never one of where we are, but of what we’re doing where we are. Brydon quotes Paul Gilroy’s contention that “the real urgency lies in recognizing that ‘It ain’t where you’re from, it’s where you’re at’” and goes on to note that:

Although Frye’s question could be interpreted to ask where Canadians are at, it has seldom been read with this inflection. Far too often it has been seen as an injunction to focus on place and even identity, as if they were fixed. To get beyond this impasse, it is necessary to locate this misleading politics of location

³⁰ I use the term advisedly in reference to the debate in *New Left Review* in 1998 between Judith Butler and Nancy Fraser about whether homophobic, or more accurately heteronormative, oppression has a material or a ‘merely cultural’ basis. Fraser argues that class discrimination has material consequences, while homophobia has only a cultural impact; Butler disagrees both with the argument and with the distinction between the material and the cultural on which it is based. (Butler, “Merely Cultural”; Fraser, “Heterosexism, Misrecognition, and Capitalism”)

and to ask why this form of identity politics has been so persistent in Canadian literary criticism. (“It’s Time” 14)

Queer Canadians and, indeed, any Canadians producing work that seems, to some or all of us, queer, are just as involved in the necessity to ask ‘where we’re at.’ What Brydon calls the “misleading politics of location” (14) shapes lesbian/gay identity politics as much as those of the dominant culture or of any other so-called minority group. Thus, this thesis examines the production of identity that is, in our contemporary hermeneutics of being, co-terminous with the production of culture itself. In specific, I interrogate the ways in which queer Canadian cultural production, predominantly literature and film, has conceived of and responded to national and nationalist discourses of gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity while at the same time investigating the ways in which conceptions of Canada, both textually and politically, have been founded upon notions of heterosexuality and sexual/gender normativity. In attempting to understand the complex imbrication of these different, but related, issues, I start by asking some questions about the relationship of identity to textuality.

5. “Here is Queer,” Redux

We’re here because we’re queer
Because we’re queer because we’re here.

Brendan Behan, *Hostage*, ‘cited’ in *Due South*,
“Ladies’ Man”

It might be possible to begin, for example, by asking how can one address forms of queer cultural production in Canada. To what extent are artistic and creative works by queer Canadians inflected by the artist’s sexuality(s), by the audience’s assumptions about and putative knowledge of what it means for the artist (and her or his work) to be queer, by the recognition or lack of recognition of the artist’s right to speak about or to speak for queers, by the ‘textual’ evidence of ‘queerness’ in the work itself? And to what extent are these works inflected by the artist’s positioning as Canadian, by the audience’s assumptions about and putative knowledge of what it means for the artist (and his or her work) to be Canadian, by the recognition or lack of recognition of the artist’s right to speak about or to speak for Canadians, by the ‘textual’ evidence of ‘Canadian-ness’ in the work itself?

These questions are further complicated by the cultural construction of ‘gay and lesbian writing’ as a ghettoised category, of little or no relevance to those outside of the lesbian and gay communities, with the exception of major figures, like Timothy Findley and Ann-Marie MacDonald, who are regarded as having transcended petty subcultural concerns in order to speak to ‘universal,’ which is to say heteronormative, issues. Similarly ‘gay and lesbian writing’ is widely conceptualized in terms of the primacy of sexual identity, so that writers whose work reflects at least as much about race and ethnicity, such as Sri Lankan-Canadian writer Shyam Selvadurai or Caribbean-Canadian writer Dionne Brand, are more likely to be seen — and perhaps as likely to see themselves — as writing out of and for their ethnic or racial group than out of and for their sexual orientation; the confluence of ethnicity/race and queerness is often regarded both by the larger culture and, on occasion, within the lesbian and gay community as a matter of either/or, not both/and. Such ghettoised cultural production may, as Terry Goldie has suggested, thus seem to be more easily thought of in terms of a transnational, or, as Alan Sinfield would argue, “metropolitan” gay world than in nationalist terms as something that is, in spite of (and it can only even now be ‘in spite of’) its identificatory association with subaltern sexualities, quintessentially Canadian.

Yet not all queer cultural production is ghettoised and the relationship between relatively mainstream forms of queer culture to subcultural lesbian and gay culture is nothing if not problematic. Is the work of Jane Rule, Anne Cameron or Eve Zaremba, whose novels are rarely known outside queer readerships, more ‘lesbian,’ whatever that might mean, than the better known work of Sky Lee, Shani Mootoo and Ann-Marie MacDonald? Is Timothy Findley’s work less ‘gay’ than Sky Gilbert’s, Peter McGehee’s or Dennis Denisoff’s? Clearly, these are not simple questions since they must, on the one hand, take into account both populist and academic discourses about the irrelevance of anything queer to the heteronormative world while, on the other hand, responding to the over-arching recognition of all these works as queer within the LGBT community.

At the same time, questions of literary quality and universal values have traditionally inclined toward both omitting obviously queer-focussed material from the literary mainstream while — in a rather neat assertion of the intention to have one’s cake and eat it too — disregarding anything queer in work that does appeal to the mainstream (leading, for example,

to a large body of critical work that, with some important exceptions, treats Findley's oeuvre as subjunctively heterosexual, as if his own subjectivity and identity had no bearing on his writing).³¹ Peter Dickinson argues that in "the emerging narrative surrounding the canonization of Canadian literature ... the discourse of (homo)sexuality and its role (or non-role) in the formation and organization of literary tradition in this country is virtually non-existent" (4). Dickinson further asserts that "the identificatory *lack* upon which Canadian literary nationalism has historically been constructed — the 'where' of Frye's 'here,' for example — is in large part facilitated by, if not wholly dependent upon, a critical refusal to come to grips with the textual *superabundance* of a destabilizing and counter-normative sexuality" (4). Dickinson's work is largely an attempt to identify that superabundance and to show that it is central, not peripheral, to Canadian literary culture; in other words, *here is queer*.

Not all queer critics agree with Dickinson's assessment. Reading Canadian literature through the lens of lesbian and gay studies more than through Queer Theory, Terry Goldie, as I have noted above, argues that there is really no identifiable gay male tradition in Canadian writing (a project that seems, at least on the surface, markedly different from Dickinson's, which sets out to queer literary tradition more generally). Of course, even when a gay male literary tradition can be identified, as has been the case in the US, many of its authors are also critically desexualized in mainstream criticism and arguments about an author's queer identity or queer elements in his or her work continue to rage. If Goldie attributes what he sees as the lack of an identifiable tradition, in part, to the possibility that Canada is too heteronormative to allow for the production of a viable gay culture, Richard Dellamora, by contrast, argues that the Canadian literary tradition is not so much too heteronormative as too domestic — in other words, too female — to produce the necessary intensities of unacknowledged, but valorized, masculine homoeroticism that is always the obverse of the coin of patriarchy. Writing on queerness in John Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, Dellamora suggests that the "queerness, both disavowed and acknowledged of Glassco's text, however, marks it as a point of departure within Canada's recently formed national canon, which is as strongly characterized by heterosexual tradition as the US tradition has been by queerness" (256-57).

³¹ The issue of critical heteronormativity will be addressed in detail in chapters three and four.

Although both Goldie and Dellamora cite critical works by gay scholars, such as Henry Abelove and Robert K. Martin, which are aimed at establishing the queerness of the American tradition, the first identification of this tendency dates back to Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960). Fiedler argues that American literature, like American life, lacks “real sexuality” (30); admitting, in the 1966 edition, that American puritanism was beginning to diminish, he nevertheless insists that “even if our dreams have become more frankly erotic, the American *eros* has not really changed. We continue to dream the female dead, and ourselves in the arms of our dusky male lovers” (29 fn). So Americans have their male couples — Huck and Jim, Ishmael and Ahab, Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook — whereas we have only (given the hierarchical nature of gender binarisms, it has to be ‘only’) the domesticated heterosexual femininity of Susannah Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill. Advice on soap-making and dealing with childhood ailments seems a far cry from the

archetypal relationship which also haunts the American psyche: two lonely men, one dark-skinned, one white, bend together over a carefully guarded fire in the heart of the American wilderness; they have forsaken all others for the sake of the austere, almost inarticulate, but unquestioned love which binds them to each other and to the world of nature which they have preferred to civilization. (Fiedler 192)³²

If Canadian literature is queer, as Dickinson contends, it seems that it must be queer in a different way than the not entirely covert, not wholly subtextual homoeroticism of the American literary canon.

Alternatively, the queerness of Canadian writing and culture might occupy a different relation to constructions of nationalism and to discourses of race and gender (the overarching discourse Fiedler identifies is deeply misogynist and associated with American primitivism and the myth of the American Adam³³). However, it is important to note that, again, even when dealing with an apparently stronger US tradition, there is still a striking difference in literary histories and critical works in the place accorded to canonical writers, both female and male,

³² That this myth still has force in American popular culture can be demonstrated by the myriad ways in which it is reiterated, up to and including the campfire scene, in the flirtatious, only barely covert, homoeroticism of *Star Trek V*, where the alien Spock plays Chingachgook to Captain Kirk’s Natty Bumppo.

³³ See, for example, Sacvan Berkovitch’s discussion of these tendencies in *The American Jeremiad* (1978).

both straight-identified and queer, and that given to ghettoised writers, particularly of genre fiction — and gay and lesbian fiction can be considered a genre in its own right. Ann Bannon, Gordon Merrick, Steven Saylor and Jewelle Gomez are examples of popular queer American writers who scarcely merit a mention even in most queer literary histories, although Bannon, Merrick and Saylor are briefly mentioned in the compendious *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage* (1995), an encyclopaedic guide subtitled “A Reader’s Companion to Writers and Their Works, from Antiquity to the Present.” Neither Merrick nor Saylor are afforded any mention at all in Gregory Woods’ generally comprehensive *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (1998); there is no equivalent volume for ‘the female tradition.’ Indeed, many critical works on queer writing, such as Richard Dellamora’s *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (1990), Joseph Bristow’s anthology, *Sexual Sameness: Textual Differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing* (1992), Ruth Vanita’s *Sappho and the Virgin Mary: Same-Sex Love and the English Literary Imagination* (1996), and Eric Bruhm’s *Reflecting Narcissus: A Queer Aesthetic* (2001), may make no distinction between a gay male and a lesbian literary canon and/or may find their focus not in the gender of the writer but in a particular period, national culture or thematic of literary studies. As a whole, however, these are also works that are more interested in queer writers who are already part of an established literary canon than in popular or ghettoised queer authors.

This distinction between genre writing and ‘literature,’ between canonical and gay and lesbian writing, however, reiterates the problem of audiences, critics and reading practices. One problem is of ‘gay identification,’ in the Foucauldian sense of arguing that there were no homosexuals in the past, only same-sex practices, which means that while Shakespeare could not have been gay, in our contemporary sense, he could still have had sex with men. Even this is sufficiently threatening to hegemonic academic and populist ideals of literary greatness that a great deal of effort has gone into recuperating an unsullied heterosexuality for the bard — although, clearly, he could not have been heterosexual, either, since the word wasn’t invented until 1890. As Paul Morrison argues, the

... question ‘Was Shakespeare really gay?’ is ‘really’ (and only) the question ‘Was Shakespeare really straight?’ This may seem a distinction without a difference, but to conflate the two is to misconstrue the practical politics of sexual knowingness, if not ‘the nature of sexuality.’ (Claims to normativity are

characteristically met with skepticism. Only parents doubt confessions of deviance.). (5)

Of course, this returns us to the problem of what constitutes ‘confession,’ or identification, in textual terms, as well as to the problem of reading back into history contemporary discursive formations. Shakespeare didn’t have a closet to come out of, so reiterations of his heterosexuality have no disturbing confessional to disavow, while heterocentric reading practices (not unlike parents) impose normativity on all canonical texts. Sedgwick notes sardonically that “not only have there been a gay Socrates, Shakespeare and Proust, but that their names are Socrates, Shakespeare, Proust” (*Epistemology* 52) and goes on to list eight rhetorical and discursive strategies for dismissing queer authorship, all of which add up to “the core grammar of ‘*Don’t ask; you shouldn’t know*’” (53; emphasis in original).

Another problem is ‘gay identification’ in the sense that many critics refuse to acknowledge that an author’s queerness has any effect on her or his work — which is the eighth and last resort of heteronormative reading practices on Sedgwick’s list: “The author or the author’s important attachments may very well have been homosexual — but it would be provincial to let so insignificant a fact make any difference at all to our understanding of any serious project of life, writing, or thought” (*Epistemology* 53). Similarly, Alan Sinfield does an incisive job, in *Cultural Politics — Queer Reading* (1994), of demonstrating how such readings depend on the assertion that literature is ‘by nature’ heterosexual. Discussing his own argument with his colleague, Lawrence Lerner, about reading the poetry of W.H. Auden, Sinfield notes Lerner’s assertion that “gay critics should write as if they were someone else. ‘Suspension of disbelief and scholarly responsibility would make one a kind of provisional ... heterosexual as one reads,’ he notes. That is the historic stance of Englit.... But the problem with that formulation is that it defines poetry as that which is not homosexual” (62). Even when the existence of a gay reading position is acknowledged, Lerner, like so many others in the heteronormative traditions of literary criticism, insists that these are not true readings.

That Auden was a homosexual is well-known, and it is perfectly possible, even likely that some of his friends winked when they read his love poems and gave an extra smirk But in doing this, they were not reading the poems, they were noticing a rag of extraneous meaning that had got stuck onto them — or onto some copies of them, the copies his friends read. (Qtd. in Sinfield 62-63)

Sinfield insists that subcultural readings are valid, a point which I will not dispute. Indeed, it is a valuable contribution to the dismantling of the hegemonic power of English as a discipline which has always been ideological (see Terry Eagleton's work on the position of literary studies in the 'civilizing' and placating of the working classes, for one example). However, I would prefer to suggest that queer readings of texts need not themselves be ghettoised and that the positioning of subculture, literally *under*-culture, is such that a diminution of the importance and power of queer readings, when they are seen as 'merely' subcultural, is virtually inevitable. Indeed, Alexander Doty makes this point forcefully in *Making Things Perfectly Queer* (1993), where he argues against the oppression of the "closet of connotation" and of subtextual reading in order to assert that reading queerness into things is actually responding to what is there in the text, not what is hidden, encoded or abject (xii). In relation to readings of mass culture, Doty points out that queer readings can always be dismissed as connotative or insubstantial

as long as we keep thinking within conventional heterocentrist paradigms, which always already have decided that expressions of queerness are *sub*-textual, *sub*-cultural, *alternative* readings, or pathetic and delusional attempts to see something that isn't there — after all, mass culture texts are made for the 'average' (straight, white, middle-class, usually male) person, aren't they? I've got news for straight culture: your readings of texts are usually 'alternative' ones for me, and they often seem like desperate or pathetic attempts to deny the queerness that is so clearly a part of mass culture. (xii)

Doty thus reinforces Michael Warner's argument, in "From Queer to Eternity," that Queer Theory demonstrates that queer cannot be eliminated or screened out, but is everywhere (Qtd. in Doty xiii). Warner and Doty thus argue, in effect, for the mobilization of Sedgwick's notion of reparative reading, but also attempt to give reparative readings of queer culture primacy over paranoid readings by insisting that the queerness of these texts is not hidden and does not require a revelation which can only reinforce the notion that the queer reader is 'reading into' texts what is either not really there or is subcultural and thus only of interest to LGBT people. The trenchant point that forcing a reading into a subcultural mould has the effect of reinforcing the dominant culture's hegemony on 'culture' itself is not, however, unique to queerness or to Queer Theory as an epistemological approach to sexuality. It is also the point that Mohawk lesbian writer Beth Brant makes, both when she says to a white audience, "I do not write for you who are white," and when she insists to a Native audience that she is also not going to be silenced by

those “who have made it clear that being a lesbian, or *saying* it out loud is not good for our community” (*Writing* 52; 76). Brant specifically positions both lesbian writing and Native writing as central, not marginal or subcultural, and she makes the link between the two forms of marginalization explicit: “homophobia is the eldest son of racism and one does not exist without the other” (77).

Queer reading can be seen then as subcultural, as Sinfield argues, or as an attack on the very binary of centre/margin, as Doty, Warner and Brant all suggest. Sinfield argues that subcultural reading is finely attuned to difference, including differences between people within a specific subculture. “The advantage of subculture as an interpretive tool is that it designates a distinctive framework of understanding that is neither determined by the dominant nor miraculously immune to it” (*Cultural Politics* 68). Allowing that lesbian and gay subcultural readings are inadequate if they do not attend to the sex/gender system (another version of Sedgwick’s contention that all criticism must respond to the centrality of the homo/heterosexual binarism in western culture), Sinfield defines his project as wanting “something both less and more ambitious” than the incorporation of queer reading into Englit: “I want to assert that Auden’s writing belongs to a gay male subculture, and always did, as well as to Englit. And that members of gay subculture will and should do with Auden as they wish...” (73). This is obviously a more cultural form of reading, although not necessarily more subcultural, than those dedicated to the identification of a ‘gay aesthetic’ or a ‘gay style’ (which is often camp); the identification of a gay aesthetic is similar to the location of connotation that Doty so despises, although it is a commonly-played game, and not just by gay men and lesbians.

Queer Theory tends, by and large, to predicate itself not on aesthetics but on the identification of sexual ideologies and their inscription on texts. In “Redeeming the Phallus,” a reading of Wallace Stevens and Frank Lentricchia, Lee Edelman identifies his critical approach to the text as a consideration of

some ways in which a gay reading practice that attends to the social inscription of ideology can make visible certain definitive stresses inhabiting our culture’s texts — stresses that might seem to have little relation to what our critical institutions continue to define as the narrowly specialized (ie. insignificant) concerns of gay men and lesbians. I plan to proceed by focussing on some strategies by which literary criticism in particular attempts to evade, contain, or dismiss what it tendentiously — and defensively — construes as ‘the

homosexual.’ (25)

These dilemmas are not particular to literature, although the positioning of queer writing is specifically more vulnerable to canonical and value-laden critical assumptions, but occur equally as forcefully, if somewhat differently, in film, fine art, music and so on, where they are often reinforced by generic assumptions and market forces. In film and television, for example, the question of audience is invariably the boundary which marks out queer productions from mainstream ones. Films with apparent lesbian or gay content but a strongly heteronormative perspective — for example, the US films *Philadelphia* (1993), *To Wong Foo* (1995), *The Birdcage* (1996) and *In and Out* (1997) — are marketed primarily to a presumptively heterosexual target audience. Films made by queer people or looking at the world through a queer lens — such as, in Canada, *Lilies* (1996), *The Hanging Garden* (1997), *Revoir Julie* (1998),³⁴ and *Better than Chocolate* (1999) or, in the US, films such as *Parting Glances* (1986), *Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love* (1995), *All Over Me* (1997) and *Edge of 17* (1998) — are relegated to film festivals and art cinemas and a quick turnover to the video market, at which point they can be found in the ‘gay’ section, or, as in my local video rental shop in Leichhardt, in the ‘foreign film’ section (a section which includes every gay-themed Australian film except for *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* [1994]).³⁵

A few films, such as *Gods and Monsters* (1996), Bill Condon’s dramatic reinvention of the last weeks of the life of James Whale, director of *Frankenstein* (1931), aim for a mainstream success that they never quite seem to achieve. Teaching *Gods and Monsters* to a first-year university class in Australia, the most common question from straight-identified students was, “Why didn’t we see this when it first came out?” In the answer to that question lie a multiplicity of issues around heteronormative cultural expectations and constraints, audience reception, representation and visibility (are LGBT people representing themselves, or being represented by others, usually stereotypically?), marketing, and even of the relatively limited number of genres authorized by the American film industry. That there are no Canadian films on the mainstream

³⁴ The English title is *Julie and Me*, despite the fact that the film itself is bilingual (and the version I saw subtitled both languages in the other).

³⁵ This despite the fact that Leichhardt is notorious among Sydney’s neighbourhoods for having a large lesbian population.

list also reflects the fact that, in Canada, mainstream almost invariably means American. Linda Hutcheon notes that “it is still the case that Canadians often feel at least culturally colonized by American mass media” (*Splitting* 79), while Aniko Bodroghkozy recapitulates both populist and critical arguments about American hegemony over the Canadian television set:

... according to much of Canadian communications theory, Canada wallows in dependency and dubious sovereignty, always on the verge of being dismantled as a failed experiment in nation-building. And our taste for American popular culture serves as one of the villainous culprits. (570)

Bodroghkozy’s own argument is somewhat more optimistic, focussing on the variety of ways in which Canadians can actively engage with reading American cultural products *as* Canadians, rather than as passive dupes of cultural colonialism. In this, the position of Canadians relative to American cultural production almost perfectly parallels the position of the queer reader relative to the hegemony of heteronormative culture, thus reinforcing the arguments made by Carl Stychin and Caren Irr about the metaphorical ways in which queerness represents Canada’s relation to the US.³⁶ However, it is worth noting that even active reading strategies applied to hegemonic or colonialist texts, such as Michel de Certeau’s emphasis on ‘textual poaching,’ fails to reposition the reader as anything other than marginal or subcultural. ‘Poaching’ a text’s supposedly dominant meanings reinforces the insistence that there are dominant meanings, even when one is reading an already queer poet, such as Auden. Furthermore, as is the case with Kathleen Martindale’s discussion of lesbian reading positions, it forces such readers to identify themselves as ‘plundering’ texts in order to insert themselves, instead of asserting a pre-existing right to read from one’s own perspective:

In an age in which the binary production/consumption has been remade into writing/reading, de Certeau wanted to claim reading as poaching as one of the practices of everyday life in which readers are not necessarily passive but have the opportunity to ‘turn to their ends forces alien to them.’ Reading is a tactic of ‘making do,’ particularly for a reader such as myself, a lesbian critic who is a renter rather than an owner of cultural capital. The lesbian as critic is of necessity a plunderer, especially when she inserts herself into the ‘semeiocracy,’ making herself into what de Certeau, citing Witold Combrowicz, citing Musil, citing Freud, calls an ‘anti-hero’ of knowledge who haunts what de Certeau tellingly calls ‘our research.’ (*Un/Popular Culture* 35-36)

³⁶ See my discussion of this argument in Chapter Two.

I might agree whole-heartedly with this assertion if what was being poached or plundered was wholly un-queer. But what is a purely heterosexual text? Even texts that appear superficially to be entirely heteronormative, such as *Star Trek*, contain sufficient canonical instances to sustain queer readings which are arguably as central as hegemonic ones.³⁷ (I will demonstrate this effect later in the thesis with an examination of a discursively heteronormative Canadian television show, *Due South*.) And why should I need to plunder the work of Auden or, more tellingly for this thesis, of Timothy Findley, when I would rather assert, as Sinfield does, my right to read him as I please? If I please to read him queerly, indeed to read him as being, in important ways, constituted as what I am, that is ‘queerly Canadian,’ then I might also argue that this is not a poaching of textual meaning nor is it a recognition of Lerner’s ‘rag of extraneous meaning,” but rather an insistence, both political and critical, on the centrality of queerness to Findley’s writing — or to Ann-Marie MacDonald’s or to Dionne Brand’s or to Shyam Selvadurai’s.

The question of representation and visibility is also important, however, in any attempt to discuss the relative positioning and reception of mainstream versus ghettoised film and television. There are three more or less queer American television shows on the six free-to-air channels in Australia; students discussing sexuality voluntarily bring up *Will and Grace* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, but invariably omit *Queer as Folk (US)*. I have received two basic answers whenever I’ve asked about this choice: either *Queer as Folk* is not interesting because it doesn’t represent them to themselves (an issue with which LGBT folk are more than familiar) or they are afraid of their parents’ response (“My mum would kill me!”). While the latter, especially from a university student, may be a hyperbolic form of rationalisation, the former rehearses all of the discursive ways in which homosexuality is constructed as irrelevant and unimportant to mainstream contemporary culture. Both the original UK version of *Queer as Folk* and its ‘American’ reworking³⁸ posit a gay, largely male, perspective; straight audiences are often shocked and appalled at being asked to look at the world with a gay gaze, while for

³⁷ I choose the example of *Star Trek* because it is a text that has been widely examined in the context of textual poaching, particularly by the fan writers of the genre known as ‘slash fiction’ (homosexual re-writings of the relationships of presumptively heterosexual television characters, usually male). See, for example, Constance Penley’s *NASA/Trek* and Henry Jenkins’ *Textual Poachers*.

³⁸ Given that ‘US’ *Queer as Folk* is filmed in Canada, using a predominantly Canadian crew and mainly Canadian directors, including John Greyson and Don McKellar, it’s somewhat unclear whether it ought to be considered an American production or a Canadian one.

queers of all stripes, even if they may disagree, sometimes vehemently, with the show's representational politics, the mere fact of seeing from a non-heteronormative perspective has profound effects, some of which may indeed be liberating and empowering precisely because they involve an overt movement from margin to centre. As Beth Brant states, in the context of race, "As a Mohawk, I am very much inside my own world-view, my own Nations, and I am looking at you" (*Writing* 49). Looking at you or looking at ourselves through our own eyes may be constructed as a form of subcultural reading, but it is a powerful one for those who have been denied access to the possibility of finding anything other than hegemonic meanings on the screen, large or small, and who have felt themselves, like Kathleen Martindale, to be mere 'renters' of cultural capital.

6. Queerly Canadian?, Redux

Toronto, the North-East of the West — where I have constructed white men as my objects of desire. In this cruising park, having sex against a tree, I think of the Chinese explorer returning home to the Forbidden City. I am home too — it is not the home I left, and maybe not even the home I wanted — but it is the locus where desire inhabits my body, where I can be simultaneously myself and the Other. Down there, here and now — where I am a subject created by a double inscription, in the playful vertigo of my cross-cultural identities.

Bérénice Reynaud, "[Richard Fung's] Chinese Characters"

Gayle Rubin insists, in "Thinking Sex," that "sexual acts are burdened with an excess of significance" (12), an argument which is supported by the discussions of (homo)sexuality and its place in the Canadian body politic throughout this chapter. Indeed, Eve Sedgwick sees contemporary western culture as being wholly defined by the supposedly unimportant definitional potency of the homo/heterosexual binary and its relation to other discourses circulating around sexuality, gender, identity and culture. In *The Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick argues that "the most potent effects of modern homo/heterosexual definition tend to spring precisely from the inexplicitness or denial of the gaps *between* long-coexisting minoritizing and universalizing, or gender-transitive and gender-intransitive, understandings of same-sex relations" (47). Like Sedgwick, although they may disagree about the specificity of mechanisms, definitions, performances and identities, other critics also position themselves along what might be called the

postmodern axis of suspicion toward fixed categories of sexual identity. Judith Butler, for example, argues that

[t]o claim that this is what I *am* is to suggest a provisional totalization of this 'I.' But if the I can so determine itself, then that which it excludes in order to make that determination remains constitutive of the determination itself.... For it is always finally unclear what is meant by invoking the lesbian-signifier, since its signification is always to some degree out of one's control, but also because its *specificity* can only be demarcated by exclusions that return to disrupt its claim to coherence. What, if anything, can lesbians be said to share? And who will decide this question, and in the name of whom? ("Imitation" 15)

Both Sedgwick and Butler work to identify the degree to which what Sedgwick calls the "chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition" (*Epistemology* 1) have structured and, as Sedgwick say, "fractured" the ways in which it is possible to know and to be within contemporary western cultures. And yet, within those self-same cultures, a stubborn, persistent insistence on the valence, necessity and utility of rigidly unalterable sexual identity categories remains relatively impervious, indeed intransigent to, academic critique. At its most extreme, such an insistence fractures the sense of particular realms of discourse. When evolutionary biologist Geoffrey Miller claims in his 1999 book, *The Mating Mind*, that "not a single ancestor of any living human was exclusively homosexual" (217), it is hard not to read this claim as simply silly: quite apart from the lesbian baby boom (or does congress with a turkey baster and some semen make one heterosexual?), sexual identity is a matter of preference, not ability. Miller makes the remarkable assumptions that homosexuals are both incapable of sexual function with a person of the opposite sex (merely doing it is enough, apparently, to prove one's bisexuality) and that lesbians are never impregnated through rape — but, however foolish, these assumptions are apparently anything but remarkable to the majority of Miller's readers whose ideologies require that sexual identity is reduced to its most absolute, which is to say to sexual performance.

Canadians, on the other hand, if the critics are anything to go by, suffer from a severe lack of identity or, at best, a permanent, apparently irresolvable identity crisis. The only Canadian whose identity is still more or less clear is that nice, white heteronormative male who, according to John Robert Colombo's tongue-in-cheek poem

Thinks he knows how to make love in a canoe
Bets on the Toronto Maple Leafs
Enjoys Air Canada dinners, desserts and all...

Knows what the references in this poem are all about.
(Qtd. in Hutcheon, *Splitting* 13)

This Canadian recently suffered a rebirth as ‘Joe Canadian’ in Molson’s extraordinarily popular beer ad, “The Rant”; even there, however, he seemed a little hesitant, took a while to get warmed up to claiming an identity, and when he did, it was one created in opposition to what Americans think of themselves and of us, which only reiterates the fact that, when it comes to hierarchies of power, we are always already on the ‘wrong’ side of that particular binarism.

So, if queer identities are overdetermined by both discourse and practice, Canadian identities are anything but. For example, anthropologist Eva Mackey argues in *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (1999) that

The desire for and the necessity of a national identity are seen as common sense, it is taken for granted. Yet, if we listen to people, the project of creating identity has also apparently been terribly unsuccessful. Everywhere, Canadian identity is seen as crisis-ridden, as a fragile and weak entity constantly under attack and in need of vigilant defence. Some people say that Canada has no identity at all, or at least not a real one. Even a report from the federal government suggests that Canada is a ‘nation without nationality.’ (7)

Bodrogkhozzy has a similar opinion of how Canada has been constituted as a national entity in relation to the media (although she is also more optimistic about the possibility that a weak national identity might be a good thing): “At the close of the twentieth century, it would be hard to argue that the Canadian project of creating a viable imagined community has been an unqualified success” (565). Linda Hutcheon quotes William Kilbourn’s contention that the “Canadian identity — the phrase is both a chimera and an oxymoron — is full of odd conjunctions, split visions, and unresolved tensions” (Qtd in Hutcheon *Splitting* 15) while adding herself that Canada is “[o]bsessed, still, with articulating its identity” and noting, with some very apt irony of her own, that the equivalent to “as American as apple pie” has come to be “As Canadian as ... possible under the circumstances” (*Splitting* 1).³⁹ Jonathan Kertzer uses Earle Birney’s poem “Can. Lit.” as the epigraph to the second chapter of *Worrying the Nation*:

³⁹ As Hutcheon notes, the phrase eventuated from a contest run by *The Canadian Forum* in 1988 to find an equivalent for “as American as...” It was first published in an article by David Howes entitled “We, the Other People: Two Views on Identity.”

We French, we English, never lost our civil war,
endure it still, a bloodless civil bore;
no wounded lying about, no Whitman wanted,
It's only by our lack of ghosts we're haunted. (Qtd. in Kertzer 37).⁴⁰

Kertzer wants a national literature that reflects our national identity, even if it “casts no heroic shadows because our bland, practical citizens lack the historical traumas and the responsive imagination to expose the dreams of which the nation was built” (37). This is, I suppose, an identity of sorts, and one not all that different from Colombo’s Maple Leaf supporter, but even Kertzer has to admit that if “there is no stable centre to English-Canadian culture, there are no clear borders either. Inclusion and exclusion are equally difficult” (39). A more postmodern critic would likely see this instability as positive. Jason Wiens, for example, in a review of Dickinson’s *Here is Queer* takes issue with what he sees as Dickinson’s attempt to replace a totalizing heteronormative national paradigm with a queerer one, arguing that “... the point of destabilizing such nationalist paradigms is not ... to replace them immediately with more ‘current’ paradigms or ones more suited to contemporary political circumstances; it is, rather, to imagine the nation as a more elusive, wavering, and differentiated space, one continually open to resignifications and articulations of difference” (“Que[e]rying Here” 163).

However one approaches the question of what it means to be Canadian, it is apparent that it remains, at least for academic critics and media pundits, a troubling issue, one that is not capable of straight-forward resolution in the way that, say, defining an American identity is supposed to be for citizens of the US (that it is not that simple there either is, again, another story).⁴¹ What is clear, however, is the near-obsession with the idea of the nation itself — the idea that has come to be understood, academically, predominantly through Benedict Anderson’s proposal that we define the nation as “an imagined political community — and imagined as both

⁴⁰ Of course, some people do want a Whitman, as is the case with Terry Goldie’s search for a gay male tradition in Canadian literature. And others think we’re haunted by some very real ghosts, as I will discuss in the chapters dealing with the spectres of history and their effects on queer First Nations, Asian-, South Asian-, African- and Caribbean-Canadian people.

⁴¹ Indeed, the one critic who currently seems most positive about Canadian identity is Michael Adams and his positivity arises specifically from a comparison of social values and trends in Canada and the US. Adams argues that, with one sixth of the US population living in gated communities, the gap between the rich and the poor continually widening, and a general trend to the right, the US has given up its traditional claim to ‘liberalism,’ while Canadians become more free-thinking and experimental in their approach to life north of the 49th parallel.

inherently limited and sovereign” (6). It is interesting that as Anderson’s definition is quoted and re-quoted the idea of the political drops out and we end up only with the idea of the nation as an imagined community, not specifically as a political one. Of course, that does not necessarily mean that the *idea* of the political drops out of the discussion; indeed, given the importance of the works of Michel Foucault to all discussions of identities and their production, it is inevitable that the idea of politics and of power must reassert itself. In the Canadian context, Cynthia Sugars, for example, takes a postcolonial approach to attempts to define the nation, asserting that

[t]he vector of the nation continues to have profound psychic resonance for Canadians — particularly amongst students of Canadian and postcolonial literatures — filling an intense psychic and cultural need. That it is a necessarily imaginary construct does not negate the fact that it has real, symbolic effects. At such a historical moment, to discard the concept of national identity as an oppressive construct seems counter-productive, as is true of notions of the ‘subject’ more generally. However, this need not imply a robotic adherence to essentializing and dictatorial conceptualizations of the nation, as some of these critiques of nationalism might suggest. One can remain committed to some notion of national community while recognizing its inherent diversity, heterogeneity and flexibility. Indeed, the only meaningful conception of the nation resides in this flexibility and capacity for change — the alternative being an alienating museum piece and not a psychically meaningful ‘imagined community.’ It is only through this imaginative act that, to invoke Stuart Hall, we are able to discover places and positions from which to speak. (“Can the Canadian Speak?” 117)

Sugars’ mobilization of the subaltern and the postcolonial centres the place of speech, of representation, as fundamental to the debate about Canadian identity and the formation of a Canadian literary culture. The following chapters of this thesis are largely concerned with the question of positions from which to speak and positions from which to be seen (the questions of the in/visible and the un/speakable are similar, but not structurally identical problems) in the context of both the Canadian and the queer. In their introduction to the anthology *Who Can Speak?: Authority and Critical Identity* (1995), Judith Roof and Robyn Wiegman write that:

The complexities around issues of visibility, marginality, and authorized speech underlie current reassessments of identity-based politics in as well as out of the academy. These debates have been especially charged because of the simultaneous success and failure of twentieth-century social struggles. Although we have witnessed a number of rather remarkable social transformations ... the

cultural hegemony of white masculinity certainly has not ceased. In fact, it has become far more nuanced in its languages and practices of legitimation, thereby stalling in a variety of ways the discourses of protest that have in the past three decades so decisively threatened it. That a representative visibility of the marginalized is now a precondition to the continued hegemony of those both white and male is itself one of the more pressing political realities of the late twentieth century. (x)

The possibilities for identity and, particularly, for identity politics thus become a function of the legitimation of the right to speak. This insight has become a foundation of postcolonial studies since the initial publication of Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in 1985. Spivak argues that one of the functions of subalternity is the denial of speech and concludes that, despite whatever attempts academics and intellectuals may make to speak *for* them, however they may be defined, the subaltern cannot, in fact, speak. In her discussion of Spivak, Leela Gandhi calls the question itself "[u]tterly unanswerable, half-specious and half-parodic" (2) and argues that Spivak's construction of the gendered subaltern, like that of Trinh T. Minh Ha and Talpade Mohanty, "idealise[s] and essentialise[s] the epistemological opacity of the third-world woman. By making her the bearer of meanings/experiences that are always in excess of Western analytic categories, these critics paradoxically reinvest the 'third-world woman' with the very iconicity they set out to contest" (88). The queer, however, is a very different form of subaltern — and the Canadian is only conceivably subaltern in the terms of our colonial and ex-colonial relationships to Britain, France and the USA. Identities, as they are culturally understood, produce a relationship to speech and visibility that is never unproblematic. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), "the question ... is not whether the status of women, or those on the bottom, is better or worse, but the type of organization from which that status results" (97). In the attempt to elucidate the organizations that create and delimit the status of Canadians, of queers, and of queer Canadians, it is evident that the question of identity is central, as is the question of representation and its relations to both the textual and the visual (and, through some theoretical models, such as Lee Edelman's notion of 'homographesis' to both, as well as to the corporeal). Judith Butler argues, in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) that identifications

belong to the imaginary; they are phantasmatic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous and cross-corporeal cohabitations, they unsettle the I; they are the

sedimentation of the 'we' in the construction of any I, the structuring present of alterity in the very formulation of the I. Identifications are never fully and finally made; they are incessantly reconstituted, and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability. They are that which is constantly marshalled, consolidated, retrenched, contested and, on occasion, compelled to give way. (105)

In the Canadian public sphere, identities are currently sites of significant contestation, as public debate, legal judgment and politics combine to defend, to interrogate and/or to reimagine the ways in which individual Canadians gain or lose access to sexual citizenship and to a place within Canadian public culture. In the next chapters, I examine some of the different ways in which identifications are "marshalled, consolidated, retrenched, contested . . . and compelled to give way" in order to place the minoritized identities of the sexual and sometimes racial or ethnic subaltern at the centre, rather than at the margins, of the national imaginary. Perhaps, even if we have no Whitmans, we may reach the position, at least, of wanting one — and not necessarily one who is white, male and well-connected to hegemonic culture. And perhaps we will find that we need no Whitmans because we have a host of others already making queer culture across Canada today.

CHAPTER TWO

AND IN THE RED CORNER...: SOCIAL, LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS OF QUEER CULTURE IN CANADA

Think of how a culturally central concept like public/private is organized so as to preserve for heterosexuality the unproblematicness, the apparent naturalness, of its *discretionary* choice between display and concealment: “public” names the space where cross-sex couples *may*, when they feel like it, display affection freely, while same-sex couples *must* always conceal it; while “privacy,” to the degree that it is a right codified in U.S. law, has historically been centred on the protection from scrutiny of the married cross-sex couple, a scrutiny to which ... same-sex relations on the other hand are unbendingly subject. Thus heterosexuality is consolidated as the *opposite* of the “sex” whose secret, Foucault says, “the obligation to conceal ... was but another aspect of the duty to admit to.” To the degree that heterosexuality does not function as a sexuality, however, there are stubborn barriers to making it accountable, to making it so much as visible, in the framework of projects of historicizing and hence denaturalizing sexuality. The making historically visible of heterosexuality is difficult because, under its institutional pseudonyms, such as Inheritance, Marriage, Dynasty, Family, Domesticity, and Population, heterosexuality has been permitted to masquerade so fully as History itself — when it has not presented itself as the totality of Romance.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer and Now”

The state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau

1. Prologue: The Red Corner...

I have called this chapter “And in the Red Corner...” for the threefold resonance of the phrase in relation to the central topic — queer culture in Canada and its relationship to the ‘queerness’ of Canadian culture. First, the red corner invokes the image of the boxer standing

ready for his or her bout — the image, say, of Marc Leduc, a gay fighter who won a silver medal for Canada at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992 and came out two years later in a documentary called *For the Love of the Game* (Ford 29-30). The boxer's victory, indeed his very willingness to fight, signifies national pride within the context of the Olympics and a very public adhesion to the nation he represents. It is, however, confounded by the broaching of the public/private delineation of heterosexuality, or more properly heteronormativity, as both the outward and inward face of the nation. In this instance, Leduc's coming out, which could not take place before the Olympics, belatedly puts into play a series of questions around masculinity (his, the nation's, the audience's, that of athletes in general), nationality, sexual identity and the imbrications of all of these with each other under the aegis of nationalist sporting competitions. Leduc's ambivalent position as both the winning athlete (a silver medal adds to Canada's tally and validates the country's investment in elite athletes and their sports) and (if only retrospectively) the gay athlete thus marks his position in the red corner as potentially incommensurable within the sphere of public discourses of nationhood, sports and heterosexuality. This incommensurability and the variety of ways, within contemporary Canadian culture, that it is breached, reformed, and/or brought to potential ruin, forms one of the central axes of investigation in this thesis. How is it that, in marking ourselves as queer, as Leduc did in the act of coming out, not just as a gay man, but as a gay Olympic athlete, we can retain, indeed reinforce, at the same time our places, our identities, our *belonging* as Canadians and, most particularly, as public-and-still-queer Canadians?

In the second place, however, the red corner is also specifically a reference to the Canadian-ness of this thesis, to my desire to understand what is both specifically Canadian about my queer culture and what is specifically queer about my Canadian culture and the ways in which each is implicated not only in the other, but also in all sorts of discourses that have come to be associated with identity, including race, gender and class. These discourses inevitably shape the ways in which it is possible for us to understand what it means to be 'queerly Canadian;' indeed, the very invocation of identity bespeaks not only a particular approach to the politics of sexuality in the contemporary world, but also a series of conflicting epistemologies through which our culture has come to understand sexuality, in general, and homosexuality, in particular, as an identity (with all that that implies) rather than through its earlier formations as a 'preference' or

an ‘orientation’ or, indeed, as a ‘sickness’ or an ‘abnormality.’ In approaching these issues within a specifically Canadian context, I thus cite the ‘red’ corner and not the ‘red, white and blue’ that could symbolize either Canada’s largely historical relationship to the imperial centre of the United Kingdom¹ or our contemporary and always complicated relationship with our equally imperial neighbours to the south. I intend thus to keep to the forefront of the thesis the reminder that these crucial social issues within our own nation, our own national culture, are always being played out under the shadow of the American elephant (to misquote Pierre Trudeau).² Thus, while I wholly agree with Sedgwick’s assertions in my first epigraph, I want to reconsider what and how these contentions mean when they are applied within the Canadian context, rather than in the (invariably better-known) context of US law, public life, and culture. How specifically have such statements as then Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau’s historic comment to the *Globe and Mail* that “the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation,” originally uttered in 1967 and endlessly repeated, both within and outside the LGBT communities, served to differentiate us from either the so-called ‘founding nations’ or the current imperial context of an American culture whose notions of public and private extend quite differently into the (sexual) lives of both its queer and its heterosexual citizens?

And finally, in a reminder that such images can be stark admonishments of trials and failures, as well as representations of celebrations and victories, the ‘red corner’ also conjures

¹ Of course, this assertion can itself be problematized, as it is by Cynthia Sugars’ work in “Can the Canadian Speak?” on the ways in which the Canadian postcolonial understanding of what it means to write ‘Canadian literature’ is still shaped by Britain as an imperial centre; however, I think most Canadians no longer relate to the UK as the hermeneutic centre from which we derive the meaning of who, what and where we are — in its simplest sense, Britain has today ceased being ‘home’ even for the most Anglophile of Canadians.

² I want to draw attention to the fact that both Trudeau’s original comment about the dangers of sleeping with an elephant and Canadian comedian Rick Mercer’s response to it sexualize the relationship between Canada and the US in very similar terms to those Caren Irr discusses in “Queer Borders.” Trudeau’s original comment was made in a speech to an American audience at the National Press Club in 1969: “Living next to you is like sleeping with an elephant; no matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt” (“1968-1984: The Trudeau Years”). Mercer’s ironic gibe at US-Canada relations, which he has made something of a comedic specialty, rewrites the low-level sexual innuendo of the original into something both queerer and more aggressively pro-Canadian: “‘America is not an elephant. For one thing, elephants never forget, whereas Americans don’t really know much to begin with. Ninety per cent of them can’t pick out their hometown on an unmarked map. We’re bigger than they are and we’re on top. If we were in prison, they’d be our bitch” (*This Hour has 22 Minutes*, November 1996).

up the words of the late gay Canadian writer Timothy Findley, the most mainstream representative, in many ways, of queer culture in the Canadian literary scene, that the “red corner,” in his personal symbolic, is a place of panic, dread and the anticipation of violence: “... the tiles in our shower are red [... and I have] this vision of myself in that red corner bleeding.... Every once in a while I get an awful sense that it may happen” (Gibson 125). Of course, Findley uttered these words in 1973, relatively early in a long, productive and largely successful career and only six years after Trudeau declared the state’s disinterest in surveilling and policing the nations’ bedrooms, a statement that led, among other things, to the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada (Warner, *Never Going Back* 44). At that point, Findley was 43 years old and had been, because of the criminalized status of homosexuality, a *de jure* criminal for all but the last four years of his adult life.³ Thus, my invocation of Findley’s phrase, along with some of the other ‘queerly Canadian’ connotations it invokes, is intended to signal the ambivalences, complications and overlaps when it comes to any attempt to understand what it means to be both ‘queer’ and ‘Canadian.’ Similarly, even my use of Marc Leduc’s name in the triumphal context of the crowning moment of his amateur boxing career is not unproblematic, particularly in the context of the issues — lesbian and gay marriage and anti-queer violence — which form the foreground of this introduction. For all his boxing prowess and despite a long history of civil rights successes by the lesbian and gay community, Leduc was gay-bashed by four men on a street in Toronto in 1997.

In the light of this attempt to understand both the inherent Canadian-ness of queer culture, the potentially ineluctable queerness of Canadian culture, and the imbrication of each of these with identity politics and a late twentieth and early twenty-first century epistemology that takes such biologized identities for granted, this thesis seeks to investigate the ways in which it is not only possible to be ‘queerly Canadian’ but to produce queerly Canadian culture. This chapter thus sets out to understand some of the social, legal and political conditions for the production of contemporary queer culture in Canada as a necessary context for later chapters which will examine specific instances of cultural production “in the red corner.” I want to begin here, then, by investigating the context provided for us by two series of texts that might be said to represent

³ While Trudeau made the statement in 1967, the legislation decriminalizing homosexuality was not passed until 1969.

the extreme ends of a spectrum of epistemologies and ontologies of homosexuality in Canada today. Specifically, these are media reports of two events from July 2003, each of which is instrumental in the attempt to understand the central tensions in Canadian culture that this thesis endeavours to analyze and each of which speaks, in its own way, to the public/private disjunction in the relative positioning of the heterosexual and the queer that has, as Sedgwick argues, the capability to render History — and indeed Nation — as mere pseudonyms of heterosexuality. The first of these media reports was occasioned by the introduction by the federal government of draft legislation entitling lesbian and gay couples to civil marriages. The second involves the reporting of the guilty plea and subsequent conviction of one of the men responsible for beating Aaron Webster to death in Stanley Park on November 17, 2001. I will follow each of these discussions with an investigation of cultural texts that speak of and to the particular issues invoked by each topic. In the first case, I look at the ways in which Timothy Findley's novels, particularly *The Last of the Crazy People* and *Spadework*, construct and critique the imbrication of marriage with family, kinship and nation, as well as examining the way in which Thom Fitzgerald's film, *The Hanging Garden*, queers normative ideas of marriage. In the latter case, I investigate the polemical and critical response to anti-queer violence in the works of a number of artists, including Spenser Harrison's paintings for *The Queer Project* and Larissa Lai's novel, *When Fox is a Thousand*, which depicts the haunting of Chinese and Chinese-Canadian women by the spectres of misogynist, racist and homophobic violence.

2. Certain Aspects of Legal Capacity for Marriage

On June 10, 2003, the Ontario Court of Appeal, upholding the ruling of an Ontario Divisional Court in 2002, made lesbian and gay marriage legal in Ontario. As a result, Ontario became the third jurisdiction in the world to offer state-sanctioned civil marriages to same-sex couples (following Belgium and The Netherlands). Two gay men, Michael Stark and Michael Leshner, married within hours of the ruling by the Court of Appeals, which said, in part, that “[t]he existing common law definition of marriage violates the couple's equality rights on the basis of sexual orientation under [the charter]” (“Fight for Gay Rights”). The court decision has had many consequences, some predictable, some not. For the tourism industry in Toronto, same-sex marriage is the only good thing to come out of a year that saw tourists staying away in droves,

thanks to widespread media reporting of SARS and the West Nile Virus, as well as the lingering effects of September 11. Svend Robinson, Canada's first openly gay MP, wrote in July that "We should feel very proud to live in a country whose Constitution and courts, and now governments ... celebrate diversity and inclusiveness of all our citizens, including those who are gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgendered" ("We've Come a Long Way, Baby"). Like Robinson, many other Canadians, both queer and straight, saw the court decision and resultant legalization of same-sex marriage in both Ontario and British Columbia as reasons to be proud to be Canadian. In *Maclean's* year-end poll,

58% of respondents expressed pride in Canada's decision to allow same-sex marriage and decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana, while three quarters applauded Ottawa's decision not to join the invasion of Iraq. This after a year of hand-wringing in which, on all three fronts, we weighed the potential costs of alienating Uncle Sam. ("Proud to be Canadian, eh?")

For the churches, however, the issue has been divisive, with some religious movements declaring queer marriages the end of civilization while others applaud the court decision as a step toward equality and the just recognition of committed and loving relationships. Anti-gay evangelist Ken Campbell's website, for example, includes a statement by Robert Jason that:

We have been tolerant enough, too tolerant in fact about these matters. Who would have thought, for instance, forty or so years ago that we will [sic] be now debating about a man 'marrying' a man, a woman 'marrying' a woman? ... We must make a stand on 'gay Marriage,' particularly. We must not cross that Rubicon. Otherwise, how are we ever going to stop a mother 'marrying' a son or daughter, a father 'marrying' a daughter or son, a person 'marrying' many people (of different genders), someone 'marrying' an animal and on and on ad infinitum ad nauseum [sic]. I mean, it is mind boggling. End of moral order. End of civilization. (Jason)⁴

By contrast, the Moderator of the United Church of Canada, Dr. Marion Purdy, commented in a press release that, "The responsible leadership and courage that the Chretien government has demonstrated in making this announcement, is most encouraging." In the same press release, the Rev. Jackie Harper, noted that, "Expanding the definition of marriage to include gay and lesbian

⁴ When asked by a colleague why she wasted her time reading "reactionary dogma," Lauren Berlant replied, "I read these mainstream documents and discourses of the nation not as white noise but as powerful language, not as 'mere' fiction or fantasy but as violence and desire that have material effects" (*Queen* 13).

couples, doesn't denigrate or diminish the traditional institution of heterosexual marriage, but rather enhances it" ("United Church of Canada Commends").

Similarly, two Muslim-Canadians, Tarek Fatah and Nargis Tapal, published an online article in *MWU (Muslim WakeUp)* urging Muslims to see the human costs of anti-gay discrimination, likening the ban on same-sex marriage to the difficulties they had, as respectively a Sunni and a Shia Muslim, in convincing their families to allow their marriage and arguing that 'end of the world' responses to same-sex marriage represent nothing more than hyperbole. Responding to an editorial in a Muslim monthly magazine which asked its readers if they would rather have the church or the state in their bedrooms and referred to same-sex marriage as "the last nail in the coffin of human morality," Fatah and Tapal write:

Last nail in the coffin of human morality? Not the Holocaust, not the genocide in Rwanda, not the massacres in Bosnia? Just same-sex marriage? Not murder, not hunger, not rape, not war, not honour killing, not illiteracy, not sexual assault by clergy, not its cover-up? To the editorial writer, nothing seems to be as vile as homosexuality.

Speaking directly to their co-religionists, Fatah and Tapal argue that Muslims, who have been on the receiving end of hatred and oppression, but who in Canada enjoy equality under the law, if not always in fact, "should know better than to fall into this trap" by demonizing yet another othered group in society. While Robinson, Purdy, Harper, Tapal and Fatah were among many Canadians who celebrated the legalization of same-sex marriage, *National Post* columnist Diane Francis fretted that it was another chip in the already eroding foundations of goodwill between Canada and the US, arguing that strongly-vested special interests in each country sway attitudes in opposing directions:

Quebec's influence pulls Canada to the left and the Bible Belt's influence pulls the United States to the right. Such differences have enhanced tensions, and intolerance, on both sides of the border. The legalization of marijuana, capital punishment, abortion and gay marriage in Canada are politically incorrect to America's crop of powerful fundamentalists. (Francis)

Francis doesn't say what she expects us to do about it, although the Maclean's poll indicates a general willingness by Canadians to bow to the US on security issues in order to placate them, a tactic unlikely to work with the very fundamentalists Francis is worried about (after all, Pat Buchanan refers to us as "Soviet Canuckistan" because our government has objected to US

plans to photograph and fingerprint any Arab-Canadian venturing south of the 49th parallel).

In fact, same-sex marriage is less an index of our difference, than of the US's, at least within the western world. *New York Times* writer Clifford Krauss, while echoing virtually in the same words Francis' comment about the undue influence of Québec and the American South, argues at the same time that "a more distinctive Canadian identity — one far more in line with European sensibilities — is emerging and generating new frictions with the United States." In addition to "gay marriage" and the legalization of small amounts of marijuana, Krauss also points to our recognition of Cuba, in opposition to the US's hard line, and our support for both the International Criminal Court and the Kyoto Accord. Same-sex marriage, then, is not merely eliciting reactions according to individual, group and national attitudes toward homosexuality, but has also come to be understood as one of the important ways by which Canada is distinguished from the USA. Krauss argues that since

Massachusetts's highest court issued a ruling considered favorable to gay marriage in November [2003], the issue has loomed over American politics. Conservatives here have vowed to change the Constitution to ensure that marriage applies only to a man and a woman, and even the major Democratic presidential candidates have backed away from supporting gay marriage.... Contrast that with Canada, where two provincial courts issued similar rulings last year. With little anguish, Canada became only the third country ... to allow same-sex marriage as a matter of civil rights. ("Canada: Sharing a Border")

George Bush has, in fact, recently pledged US\$1.5 billion to "promot[e] heterosexual marriage" and to support the difficult process of constitutional amendment, stating that the "amendment process is addressed in any serious matter of national concern, and the preservation of marriage rises to this level of national importance" (Alberts; Moore, "Bush Calls for Constitutional Ban").

Indeed, *The Guardian* notes that the US attitude toward same-sex marriage not only distinguishes its governmental and social attitudes from those of Canada, but that it also reflects an increasing difference between American conservatism, heavily influenced by Christian fundamentalism, and that of Britain. Noting that the Conservative Party in the UK has moved away from its traditionally negative position on homosexuality, Tom Happold writes that

the Tories are not only after the pink vote, they are also trying to appeal to those who have come to regard them ... as the 'nasty party.' Party strategists have concluded that being seen as homophobic does not only alienate gay voters it also turns off the sort of floating voters it needs to attract to be electable.

President Bush, and his strategist Karl Rove, have obviously concluded the opposite. America is, after all, a very different society to Britain. (Happold)

It is thus important to note that the judicial and legislative validation of lesbian and gay marriage rights appears to mark an increasing distance between the Canadian social polity and the apparently increasing regimentation of heteronormativity in the United States. Michael Adams argues in his most recent book, *Fire and Ice: The United States, Canada and the Myth of Converging Values* (2003), based on a decade of polling by Environics, that

... it is Canadians who have become the true revolutionaries, at least when it comes to social life. In fact, it has become apparent to me that Canadians are at the forefront of a fascinating and important social experiment; we are coming to define a new sociological 'postmodernity' characterized by multiple, flexible roles and identities while Americans, weaned for generations on ideals of freedom and independence, have in general not found adequate security and stability in their social environment to allow them to assert the personal autonomy needed to enact the kind of individual explorations — spiritual, familial, sexual — that are taking place north of the border. (6)

There has been some suggestion in the US media and elsewhere that the Canadian decision to allow same-sex marriage positively affected the outcome of *Lawrence et al v. Texas*, the US Supreme Court ruling that finally overturned the sodomy laws in the USA on June 26, 2003 — nearly thirty years after Canada and the UK got out of the business of policing what goes on in the bedrooms of their LGBT citizens.⁵ Left-leaning and centrist media outlets, however, have viewed the *Lawrence* ruling with not only with general approval, but also with a degree of apprehension. Echoing the fears of backlash cited by Malone in *21st Century Gay*, Richard Goldstein of *The Village Voice* entitled his article on the issue "Get Back! The Gathering Storm over Gay Rights" and noted that:

In May, 60 percent of Gallup respondents thought gay sex should be legal, but by last week that number had shrunk to 48 percent. For the first time since 1997, a majority think being gay is not an 'acceptable alternative lifestyle.' And when it comes to civil unions, the trend toward acceptance has been reversed.

⁵ *Lawrence et al v. Texas* effectively reversed the judicial ruling in favour of the sodomy laws in *Bowers v. Hardwick*. This reversal was occasioned, in part, by judicial acceptance of arguments about the inconsistent and often incoherent epistemologies of same-sex desire in the past, thus overturning the judicial insistence in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, that western civilization has universally condemned homosexuality throughout history. See, for example, Peter Edidin's "Educating the Court" in the July 20th 2003 edition of the *New York Times*.

Fifty-seven percent think gay couples should *not* have the same rights as married people, the highest number since Gallup first posed the question in 2000.

Goldstein goes on to argue that “Nonstop media chatter about [three tv shows with gay characters] gives the impression that everything on TV is gay. Add the Supreme Court's sodomy decision and the Canadian move toward same-sex marriage, and you've got a picture of radical change. This image may belie the fact that progress on gay rights is incremental at best, but it frightens the masses nonetheless” (“Get Back!”). In this respect Goldstein parallels, within the mass media, the more academic arguments about the incommensurability of gay rights and the fundamentalist Christian agenda made recently by a number of American scholars, notably Thomas C. Caramagno in *Irreconcilable Differences?: Intellectual Stalemate in the Gay Rights Debate* (2002) and Carlos A. Ball in *The Morality of Gay Rights* (2003), both of whom, in turn, draw on previous work on the relationship between gay rights and religious fundamentalism, such as Didi Herman's *The Antigay Agenda: Orthodox Vision and the Christian Right* (1997) and the more journalistic work of Chris Bull and John Gallagher in *Perfect Enemies: The Religious Right, the Gay Movement, and the Politics of the 1990s* (1996).

Goldstein, however, also notes that a decline in acceptance of LGBT human rights in other minoritized communities reflects a fear of one group gaining benefits over and before another, particularly since LGBT people are almost always portrayed on television shows aimed at heterosexual audiences as middle-class, well-off and white, belying the fact that there are many working-class and poor queer people as well as queer members of every racial/ethnic background. Interestingly, the one tv show which looks at gay life from an LGBT perspective, *Queer as Folk (US)*, features a cast of gay men who, while still white, are either working-class in fact or in origin; of the five principal males, only the teenaged Justin is unequivocally middle-class. Goldstein's response thus seems to mirror, from the US perspective, the arguments of Adams, Krauss and Francis about the divergence between Canadian and American social

values.⁶ To some Americans, particularly those of a vitriolically fundamentalist stripe,⁷ Canada is starting to look very queer indeed.

The Canadian government under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien drew kudos from many Canadians for the decision to accede to the judgment of the court in upholding the values of the constitution and to draft legislation ensuring equal access to marriage to all Canadian couples in every province and territory.⁸ The draft of The Act Respecting Certain Aspects of Legal Capacity for Marriage will, if it passes through the legislature, open up civil marriage to lesbian and gay couples across Canada, officially extending to all Canadians rights recognized earlier in the year in Ontario and British Columbia.⁹ The draft of the Act also specifically exempts religious institutions from having to perform gay marriages, although, as I have demonstrated above, that in itself has not been sufficient to end protest from some religious groups. The difference between Canadian and American approaches to divisive and controversial topics is clear in the very different responses to same-sex marriage by the country's leaders. While Bush attempts to inflame an already incendiary level of oratory around the issue, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's speech to the Liberal caucus on August 19 was a specific attempt to "cool the rhetoric." Chrétien said:

⁶ To cite another populist interpreter of national character, Michael Moore argues in *Dude, Where's My Country?*, that the characterization of the US as basically conservative is a mistake. The extent to which Moore's argument functions as a polemical strategy rather than having a basis in fact remains unclear, as few of Moore's statistical claims about American social attitudes are footnoted.

⁷ Fred Phelps and his band of merry fag-haters (their term, not mine — the WBC website can be found at www.godhatesfags.com) from the Westboro Baptist Church, as per their normal routine, threatened to picket and to burn the Canadian flag on Parliament Hill, but were distracted by the graduation of the first Matthew Shepherd Memorial Scholarship student from the University of Wyoming. Hatred, clearly, begins at home.

⁸ Alberta, under the government of Ralph Klein, has threatened to use the notwithstanding clause if the equal marriage legislation passes, thus making it the only jurisdiction in Canada to insist that only heterosexual marriages can be valid.

⁹ This legislation has currently been tabled, while the government seeks guidance from the Supreme Court as to whether offering civil unions, but not marriage per se, to lesbians and gays would be enough to meet the burden of non-discrimination and whether, in fact, the government has the right to alter existing definitions of marriage. According to the CBC, "Critics argue Prime Minister Paul Martin is using the additional question to delay Supreme Court hearings into the matter, scheduled to begin April 16. Martin is expected to call a federal election in the spring" ("Government Asks Supreme Court").

Believe me, for someone of my generation, born and brought up in the Catholic rural Québec of my youth, this is a very difficult issue. But I have learned over 40 years in public life, that society evolves and that the concept of human rights evolves often more quickly than some of us might have predicted and sometimes even in ways that make some people uncomfortable. But at the end of the day, we have to live up to our responsibilities. And none of these are more essential than protecting the Constitution and the fundamental rights it guarantees to all Canadians. (“PM’s Speech to the Liberal Caucus”).

Chrétien’s speech constitutes the question of gay marriage in the very terms that pro-marriage lesbian and gay activists have used, as a matter of equal rights for all Canadians. After refuting the charge that the courts are usurping the role of the legislature, Chrétien affirms that the legislative response, while protecting religious rights and freedoms, is the proper response for Canadians: “It is about giving force and effect to Canadian values. Values of mutual respect, justice and equality” (“PM’s Speech”).

While many people in Canada welcomed the gay marriage initiative, the response from the lesbian and gay ‘community’ itself was also mixed. The idea of marriage rights has always had more of an appeal for certain segments of the community than for others. Even the Supreme Court’s 1999 ruling that same-sex couples must be granted the same rights as common law opposite-sex couples was not universally welcomed by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people across Canada. While benefiting middle class lesbian and gay couples,¹⁰ the resulting act of Parliament, Bill C-23, was seen as disadvantageous by many people on low or fixed incomes or for whom the idea of valorizing coupled relationships of two, presumably monogamous, people has little appeal. Black gay activist Kwame Stephens, for example, argues that pension rights benefit “white, mainstream guys who feel comfortable. But for the black guy whose [sic] dealing with the comfort level [with his sexuality], he’s not going to reach out for that. The closet cases are the black guys” (Qtd. in Warner, *Never Going Back* 221). While Stephens’ argument may (or indeed may not) rest on an over-generalization about the relationship of sexuality to race, his statement to *Xtra!* points to one of many facets of diversity within a community presumed by its opponents, and sometimes by its members, to be homogeneous in

¹⁰ The assumption that lesbians, who are presumed to have a greater inclination to monogamy, would flock to marriage in much greater numbers than gay men is belied by the actual statistics; in 2003, according to the BC Bureau of Vital Statistics, the province granted marriage licences to 398 lesbian couples and 335 gay male couples.

both its demographics and its desires.

Indeed, to activists versed in the less assimilationist tactics of the Gay Liberation movements of the seventies, gaining access to marriage seems merely to reinforce an essentially patriarchal and inherently oppressive institution. Tom Warner, speaking on behalf of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO), asked in 1998 if marriage is “an institution that is particularly appropriate for same-sex relationships” (Qtd. in Warner 222). In *Never Going Back* (2002), a comprehensive history of queer activism in Canada from the perspective of a long-time activist and founding member of the CLGRO, Warner cites his own earlier argument that it “is time to purge ourselves of the belief that our relationships must be legitimized or validated by heterosexuals. We should not care whether they think we are respectable. The belief that we need to be legally married to be equal to heterosexuals is simply another insidious form of internalized homophobia” (222). Similarly, within the UK context, Alan Sinfield argues that the strategy of basing demands for equality on equivalency (Eric Clarke’s useful term for the Habermasian argument that ‘authentic’ representation in the public sphere — seeing lesbians and gay men as we *really* are — itself bestows equal rights, whereas Clarke argues that to gain the rights of a given group, such as men or white people or heterosexuals, one is required to act subjunctively, that is, *as if* one were a member of the privileged group¹¹) is liable to provide more validation for heteronormativity than for queerness: “... fixing our constituency on the ethnicity-and-rights model lets the sex gender system off the hook” (*Gay and After* 20).

Parts of the lesbian and gay community, then, see the demand for same-sex marriage not

¹¹ See Clarke’s argument about equivalency and subjunctivity in *Virtuous Vice*, particularly the first two chapters. Clarke is particularly clear about the ways in which Habermas’ construction of the self-correcting public sphere depends on a belief in the political efficacy of discourses of equivalency and authenticity which leave the necessity to behave subjunctively uninterrogated:

Investigating how the private ‘vice’ of homoeroticism becomes valued as a public virtue thus necessitates conjoining value as a structure of representation with ‘values’ as historically particular moral codes, ethical schemes, and political ideals. Bringing together these two senses of value subsumed under the idealized sign of ‘equivalence’ ... helps to displace the assumption, operative in the public sphere’s self-conception as well as in mainstream lesbian and gay politics, that achieving equivalence in the public sphere will grant a group’s interests authentic representation As the ideal of equivalent representation has developed within Western capitalist social formations, it has come to be seen as an overarching and adequate solution to exclusion and deprivation, rather than also being problematic. (13-14)

as the cornerstone in the march to equal rights, but as a retreat from an agenda of social change and liberation that was foregrounded in the decade and a half between Stonewall and AIDS.¹² In 1982, for example, Dennis Altman began the chapter called “Sexual Freedom and the End of Romance” in *The Homosexualization of America* with what, retrospectively, seems an extraordinarily optimistic premise about the liberatory possibilities of what he calls ‘homosexualization,’ or the influence of gay sexual and affectional mores on straight lifestyles. Altman says

It is in the interconnected areas of sexuality and relationships that gays have the greatest impact on social mores, and where one can speak most accurately of the ‘homosexualization’ of modern society. No longer can gay behavior be seen as unrelated to the sexual norms and anxieties of society as a whole; and as traditional norms of sexual behavior and relationships collapse, it is homosexuals who are prospecting the frontiers of new possibilities. The growing preoccupation of society as a whole with sex, the collapse of old beliefs and standards, means that the very outlaw status of the homosexual makes him or her a model of new possibilities that have meaning for others. (172)

While it might be pleasurable to think that heterosexuals throughout the western world are learning the possibilities of sexual freedom and new models of relationship from, say, the cheerful and indeed committed promiscuity of Stuart (Aidan Gillen) on *Queer as Folk* or of his somewhat more Americanized, and thus sentimentalized, reincarnation, Brian (Gale Harold), on the US remake, it seems more likely that popular culture since the mid-eighties, rather than moving toward a greater relaxation of sexual mores and even more freedom for experimentation with relationships, draws its ‘homosexualizing’ potentials rather from the moment in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) when Charles (Hugh Grant) remarks to Tom (James Fleet) that if they, as heterosexuals, cannot find relationships with women as passionately committed as that of

¹² The Stonewall riots in New York in 1969 have become symbolic of the demand for lesbian and gay rights in the US and form a useful, if over-simplified, *terminus a quo* for histories of queer activism. In fact, John D’Emilio argues that it is the post-Stonewall activism that gives meaning to the event as a symbol: “Whether we realize it or not, the reason we commemorate Stonewall today is because, *after the rioting*, many gay men and lesbians chose to do something — organize” (*World Turned* 150).

The syndrome now known as AIDS was first reported in the US in 1981 and became the catalyst for public hysteria around a putative linkage of homosexuality and disease, as well as for neo-conservative and fundamentalist campaigns against queer human rights, from 1982 onward — a point at which the disease was still known as GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency) and believed to target only particular ‘risks groups,’ largely the ‘Four H’s’: homosexuals, heroin users, hemophiliacs and Haitians.

Gareth (Simon Callow) and Matthew (John Hannah) to each other, then there is really no point in having one at all. Rather than a model for the end of ‘romance’¹³ and the revaluation of promiscuity, non-monogamous relations and a whole host of generally proscribed sexual practices, ‘homosexualization’ post-AIDS has been domesticated — the best *Four Weddings and a Funeral* can do is to throw a few extras into Gareth’s funeral scene whose dress-style suggests that they may have been tricks, rather than asexual friends. If the model relationship is not so monogamous after all, the film can only hint at alternatives, particularly the alternative that Gareth and Michael’s ‘marriage’ may have been model *because* it was not monogamous.¹⁴

Evaluating the movement away from liberationist politics from the distance of the early twenty-first century, Nikki Sullivan sums all of this up when she points out that

liberationists believed that in order to achieve sexual and political freedom, it was necessary to revolutionise society in and through the eradication of traditional notions of gender and sexuality and the kinds of institutions that informed them and were informed by them. Thus in its embracing of a transcendental ‘utopian vision of liberated bodies and unrepressed psychic drives’.... Gay Liberation promised freedom not just for those whose primary desire was for members of the so-called same sex, but for everyone. (31)

Writing in Australia twenty years after Altman’s *The Homosexualization of America*, Sullivan is not sanguine about the continuing prospects of the liberationist drive to radicalize sexual relations and eradicate institutional practices of heteronormativity. She suggests that, “what I am gesturing toward is the increasing emphasis on difference that seemed to pervade sexual, gender, race and/or class politics in the 1980s and the concomitant turning away from grand-scale utopian visions” (35).

By contrast, Tom Warner argues, at least with respect to the Canadian situation, that the

¹³ I put the term in quotation marks to suggest the way in which the concept of romance is mobilized in contemporary western culture to regulate and promote certain modes of relationship in preference to alternatives, including both promiscuity and arranged marriages.

¹⁴ This is not to say that I wish to give a moral *imprimatur* either to monogamy or to promiscuity, beyond suggesting that some people may be more comfortable with one than with the other, but rather to indicate that the state sanction of coupled monogamy through legal matrimony makes it the inevitable target for thinking about alternative forms of relationships. From an anthropological perspective, the monogamous heterosexual couple is merely one among many possibilities, including heterosexual polygyny and polyandry (the former, for example, practiced historically in the USA by Mormons and today, although illegal, by some fundamentalist Mormon sects).

liberationist spirit has never entirely died out or been overtaken. Unlike Altman, Warner's focus is primarily on the effects of gay liberation on LGBT lives; however, his understanding of lesbian and gay liberation has much in common, even today, with the kind of social transformation Altman and others were working toward in the seventies. Quoting Gary Kinsman's 1998 statement that "Queer liberation requires that people achieve control over our bodies and sexualities and an end to institutionalized heterosexuality," Warner elaborates on what he understands such a call for social change to mean:

Lesbian and gay liberation also means that sex does not have to await a monogamous relationship, that it can be engaged in without guilt or shame, solely as a form of recreation. It can be enjoyed anonymously, with several partners or in groups, and in multiple ways involving acts that are not to be judged by others, providing the participants are capable of giving informed consent and do so. Lesbian and gay liberation acknowledges and celebrates the diversity and complexity of human sexuality. It holds that the body in all of its forms, sizes, and shapes is beautiful and erogenous; that fantasy, voluntary role playing, and dressing up can add excitement and fulfilment to sex acts. Liberationists do not see genitalia as gross and unclean. They reject the notion that sex acts are inherently dirty, and only appropriately performed in private, with two people behind closed doors. Lesbian and gay liberationists are thus as much in conflict with the tyrannical views of dominant heterosexual society today as they were in the early 1970s. (9)

In *Gay and After*, Alan Sinfield espouses a similar position when he argues that despite gay liberation's initial aspiration to "open out the scope of sexual expression for everyone," current tendencies in some parts of the gay and lesbian communities to model their political strategies on a minoritizing ethnicity-based model which in turn patterns itself on the race- and ethnicity-based civil rights movements of the 1960s effectively encourage "the inference that an out-group needs concessions, rather than the mainstream needing correction" (20). Obviously, opponents of 'lesbian and gay liberation,' as Warner and Sinfield define it, propound an alternative view, one that is generally referred to as 'assimilationist' and assumed to be essentialist. The aim of assimilationist lesbian and gay politics is literally to assimilate into heteronormative society; the political rhetoric associated with this stream of LGBT politics emphasizes that the only difference between heterosexuals and homosexuals is the sex of the chosen partner.¹⁵ John Malone refers

¹⁵ This is a logical argument given the rhetorical strategies involved in assimilationist politics, just as the minoritizing streams of the black civil rights movement emphasized that the only difference

to this as ‘gay mainstreaming’ and argues that its advocates strive “to downplay differences between gays and straights, using persuasion to work within the largely heterosexual political and legal structure to gain acceptance as productive citizens more like the straight majority than different from it” (21st Century Gay 13-14). Malone calls for recognition that most lesbian and gay people sympathize with parts of the programs espoused both by the assimilationists, or mainstreamers, and by the liberationists, whom he calls separatists (a term which has a different resonance in Canada than it does in the US, where it was historically associated with the more extreme wing of the Black civil rights movement rather than with the separatist aspirations of many Québécois). He refers to this “middle group,” which represents a broad spectrum of political opinion and beliefs about the nature of sexuality and the usefulness of sexual identity, as “third way members of the gay community” (14). With regard to lesbian and gay marriage, Malone specifically argues that, while the “separatists” reject the idea and “mainstreamers” support it, many “third way” gays are unsure that it is “worth the fight” when the very idea “could engender backlash against other important gay civil rights issues” (93).

In a similar vein, but within the Canadian rather than the US context, Tom Warner notes that many lesbians and gays, and particularly those engaged in queer activism, are pragmatically content to seek short-term gains within existing social structures, through the framework of human rights, while working toward ways of changing the institutional character of the nation in the long run. Legalizing civil marriage for lesbians and gays can thus be posited as a necessarily strategic move toward, in some cases, a radical reshaping of the place of sexuality, family and the valorization of the (preferably procreative) heterosexual couple in — or even *as* — the nation.¹⁶ Furthermore, although I do not myself favour marriage as an institution (for anyone versed in Foucault, its regulatory and disciplinary functions are entirely too clear), I do want to recognize that it is still possible that opening up marriage to gays and lesbians may queer that institution in

between black people and white people was skin colour. However, it is allied to a politics which also tends to valorize specific sorts of relationships, particularly those long-term monogamous relationships that are closest (at least rhetorically) to the currently established ideal of heterosexual marriage.

¹⁶ It is also important to recognize that, for many lesbians and gays, full inclusion in existing social institutions *is* the goal.

ways that are not easily anticipated.¹⁷ Despite its historical antecedents, particularly for women whose status as marital property remains loosely veiled behind present-day redactions of the marriage ceremony, and despite its contemporary reincarnation as a quasi-religious, wholly bourgeois ‘grab-fest’ and its over-determined status as a social equivalent to the heteronormative family, the meaning of marriage as an institution is not wholly fixed. That we know that marriage is comprised of a series of past and present interpenetrations of gender, sexuality, citizenship, race, class and nation, both discursively and as material practices, still does not in and of itself tell us that marriage *must* mean in specific ways, thus making it difficult to pre-determine either the meaning of same-sex marriage or its hermeneutic effects on marriage itself.¹⁸

Indeed, Eve Sedgwick calls for a rethinking of the possibilities of interpretation that seem always to be closed down by the monolithic hermeneutics of a heteronormative state in which marriage must always mean family and family must always mean nation and so on. Sedgwick asks, “What if instead there were a practice of valuing the ways in which meanings and institutions were at loose ends with each other? What if the richest junctures weren’t the ones where *everything means the same thing*?” (“Queer and Now” 6; italics in original). What if, indeed? What if gay marriage, unlikely as it may seem, reinvents that institution so that it ceases to be, like the family, what Sedgwick refers to as “an impacted social space” (6)? If this seems implausible, it is no doubt because it appears entirely too possible, as Eric O. Clarke argues in *Virtuous Vice*, that

... focusing queer politics and public discourse on marriage rights tends to enforce heteronormativity as the moral measure by which eroticism in general can become publicly relevant. Again, the question is not whether queers should have access to marriage; of course they should. Nor is it a question of rendering

¹⁷ Given the current prevalence, particularly in American right-wing media, of so-called ‘slippery slope’ arguments — that allowing same-sex marriage opens the institution up to supposedly equivalent demands by paedophiles, people committing incest, polygamists, and people involved in bestiality — I want to emphasize here that this is *not* what I mean by unanticipated. Rather, I’m referring to the potential for queer marriage to interrogate and potentially reinvent contemporary understandings of the public sphere, of the public/private binarism, of gender relations, and of sexual citizenship.

¹⁸ An inverse form of investigation is practiced by John Boswell and others who have investigated what might be called the ‘heterosexualization’ of marriage. Boswell, in particular, elucidates with great precision, in *Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (1994), the historical practices of various forms of same-sex marriage throughout Christian and pre-Christian Europe.

monogamous arrangements and indeterminate erotic expression¹⁹ mutually exclusive for everyone at all times.... Rather, when enfranchisement is moralized — in this instance according to a dominant heteronormative standard — marriage becomes one of the only rights deemed worth having, and conversely *only those who desire to marry are deemed worthy of rights.*” (46; italics in original)

Thus, although one might hope that opening up civil marriage to gay and lesbian couples may result in unanticipated queerings of that institution and in the relaxation of the impacted social space of the heteronormative family, it seems far more probable that Clarke will prove right and that gay marriage will predominantly serve to create a distinction between ‘good’ lesbian and gay couples and ‘bad’ queers of every other stripe.

The role of marriage in Canadian queer culture suggests two immediate observations: on the one hand, one might argue that there is surprisingly little in the way of cultural production around the issue of same-sex marriage, given its high profile in the media and its central place in current judicial and legislative debates; on the other hand, one might also argue that marriage *per se* occupies a surprisingly pivotal position in many queer works, if only because these works reflect the still dominant role of the marital ideal in the larger Canadian culture. I want to look at two examples of the latter: the role of marriage in Timothy Findley’s novels and in Thom Fitzgerald’s 1997 film, *The Hanging Garden*.

Marriage is a central theme in Findley’s work, one that he returns to again and again, although few of the marriages he depicts could be called ideal. His first novel, *The Last of the Crazy People* (1967), tells the story of a proto-queer child, Hooker, whose inability to understand the adult world of marriage, sexuality and illness leads him to kill the very people he seeks to protect, while his last novel, *Spadework*, returns to and reworks the themes of marriage, family, sexuality, madness, violence and patriarchy that habitually preoccupy his writing. As Heather Sanderson notes in “Love, War and Fascism,”

The Last of the Crazy People becomes an early indication of the themes which recur in every one of his novels that followed: the damaging rigidity of discourses of gender and sexuality that are reproduced in Anglo-Saxon Canadian families, particularly of the upper middle class in Ontario; the violence that is present in

¹⁹ “Indeterminate erotic expression” represents Clarke’s attempt to find a way of talking about non-monogamous relations that is not already stigmatized. “Promiscuity” invariably carries that stigma.

the gender and sexual roles in our culture; the links between an ideal of masculinity and death; the opposition between civilization in its violence and destructiveness and the natural world from which we have closed ourselves off, spiritually and physically; and the brutal process by which children are 'educated' from innocence into deadly adult knowledge. (81)

All of these aspects are, as Sanderson argues, foregrounded in *The Last of the Crazy People*, where violence becomes Hooker's only answer to those violences done to him by the heteronormative expectations of family and society. In the case of *Spadework*, however (which I look at again in Chapter Five), physical violence is confined to a subplot involving the gardener's brother, who appears to be committing rape and murder. In the lives of the main characters, Jane and her husband Griff, madness takes the form of obsession — in Jane's case with the incredibly beautiful telephone repairman, Milos, whom she both describes and draws as an angel; in Griff's case, it leads to him agreeing to enter into a sexual relationship with his director, Jonathan, in order to secure important roles at the Stratford Festival Theatre.

The novel's portrayals of marriage, sexuality and family are complex. On the one hand, a conservative reading of the novel could see queer sexuality, depicted overtly for one of the few times in Findley's career, as predatory and destructive to the traditional family, while reading Griff's return to Jane and his young son, Will, as redemptive; on the other hand, because both Jonathan and Griff pose their relationship in pedagogical terms (at the outset, Jonathan says that, more than sex, he desires to teach Griff "to accept the fact of being desired" (134) in order to make him both a better actor and a better man, while Griff, at the end, declares that he has learned much about himself, including that he can continue to love Jonathan) it is equally possible, particularly in the light of Jane's obsession and single, but equally pedagogical, sexual encounter with the angel-man, to read their sexual experiences as a necessary part of their growing into a better relationship with each other. Their renewed relationship can be understood as better precisely because it has broken through the rigid boundaries of the heteronormative construction of marriage and altered, in particular, Griff's concept of masculinity — the "harshly drawn" and fearful edges that Jonathan critiques in Griff's portrayal of Brick have been softened and reworked (133).²⁰ The novel ends with the family, including Mercy (the family housekeeper and

²⁰ Findley's choice of the sexually ambivalent character from Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* to indicate Griff's failings, as an actor and as a man, also works as yet another link back to his

Will's closest confidant) and Luke, who have over the course of the story begun living together, going out for pizza to celebrate the springtime release of the swans to the Avon River. "Going home," Jane says, and it marks one of the few times in a Findley novel when a marriage is redeemed and a family reunited (407). The swans, the marriage saved, the child happy, the 'maid' become the mistress of a bed and breakfast: in *Spadework* Findley, for perhaps the only time in his career, ends the novel with "open water, open skies and the promise of life everywhere" (408).

In both of these works, and indeed, in his entire *oeuvre* Findley depicts the heterosexual marriage and family as precisely what Sedgwick refers to as an "impacted social space in which all of the following are meant to line up perfectly with each other" — she lists, among others, "a surname," "a sexual dyad," a "legal unit based on state-regulated marriage," a "proscenium between public and private," a "mechanism to produce, care for, and acculturate children," a "mechanism for accumulating material goods over several generations" and "a site of patriotic formation" ("Queer and Now" 6). Marriage and family have thus come to mean the same thing — and each to mean all of these other things as well. Caught within that impacted space, it is no wonder that, in *The Last of the Crazy People*, Hooker is unable to "disarticulate them one from another, to disengage them — the bonds of blood, of law, of habitation, of privacy, of companionship and succor — from the lockstep of their unanimity in the system called 'family,'" which, I repeat, must also mean, within the heteronormative, putatively Christian standards of the contemporary public sphere, marriage ("Queer and Now" 6). Thus, as Catherine Hunter suggests, the children in Findley's works are almost invariably entrapped within "a preadolescent realm from which they perceive the world of adults through soundproof glass. Nothing is explained to them" (18). And because nothing is explained to them, the possibility of sorting things out, of, as both Sedgwick and Dollimore suggest, 'disarticulating' them, remains unthinkable. When everything means the same thing, yet the meaning of that one thing remains unavailable, then everything effectively means nothing, everything is suffused with incomprehensibility and consequently with danger. Lorraine York, speaking both of Hooker and of Harper in the short story "About Effie," notes that "Both children, in the midst of a domestic

generic appropriation of the conventions of the Southern Gothic, as I will discuss shortly.

war zone, are innocents who misinterpret information they receive” (*Front Lines* 3). As Rosetta, the boys’ aunt, puts it, the word ‘family’ is “the worst word I know, now” (*Last of the Crazy People* 153).

In “Staging Monstrosity: Genre, Life-Writing and Timothy Findley’s *The Last of the Crazy People*,” Barbara Gabriel argues that

The pressures on Findley’s texts are particularly complex, and only partly because these fictions were, in the beginning, the products of a writer who saw the monster in the mirror. They are also more than usually resistant to exclusively literary or local reading because of the density of the codes that operate to produce their meanings. (169)

This density renders the texts opaque, in a sense, because they require both close reading and subcultural reading. Alan Sinfield has argued at length on behalf of the possibilities of subcultural reading and against the insistence that a text must be read as provisionally heterosexual.²¹ Gabriel reads *The Last of the Crazy People* through Findley’s own comments about important moments in his life, but she does so “not as a return to the transcendent author, but as a reminder of the ways in which *texts are traced over a field of language and culture that is always mediated by lived experience*” (170; emphasis mine). She refers to the doubling in his texts as producing “a submerged and often ‘signalizing’ ... gay text [that] both informs and operates in tension with the dominant narrative” (170). As Richard Dellamora has pointed out in the context of *Famous Last Words*, such double-coding is necessary both to produce a queer and a Canadian reading, arguing that “For Findley, the affirmation of sexual difference has provided a means of raising to the level of conscious analysis the sexual and ethnic biases of Canadian post-colonial identity” (“Becoming-Homosexual/Becoming-Canadian” 198-99). In *The Last of the Crazy People*, the ethnic or racial and the sexual are condensed, in a sense, through the relationship between Hooker and the family’s black maid, Iris. Importantly, however, that relationship, as Barbara Gabriel indicates, repeats both Findley’s own life experience, as a boy in Rosedale, and his reaction to Carson McCullers’ *The Member of the Wedding*. Findley says that McCullers and Tennessee Williams

... were playwrights who happened in at the absolute moment, the crux of my

²¹ See chapter four of *Cultural Politics — Queer Reading* and my discussion of Sinfield’s argument both in Chapter Three of this thesis and in “An Odd National Entity.”

life. I'd always known that I was a homosexual, but at the point where I started to live like I was one, that's when they arrived. And in a way, Carson McCuller[s]'s imagery delivered me. That was me, that little girl in the kitchen with the maid — that was me — that was my childhood. (Qtd. in Gabriel 168)

Barbara Gabriel links this revelatory moment in Findley's life-writing to the problems he had getting the novel published and to its somewhat hostile critical reception; it was labelled un-Canadian both because of its subject matter ("people don't do things like this in Canada" [Qtd. in Gabriel 173]) and because of its generic resemblance to the intense family narratives associated with the Southern Gothic.

Spadework ironically returns to Findley's appropriation of this genre, rewriting, as Findley so often did, what might be called "Southern Ontario Gothic" by situating the Old South, with its dramas of familial madness and historical loss, in the person of Jane, an American exile who literally re-inscribes herself over the persona of Aura Lee Terry, changing her first name herself and her last name through marriage. It is significant in *Spadework* that its most singular trauma comes as a revenant of the deep South, an old boyfriend of Jane's named Troy, who makes an unanticipated visit to Jane at her home in Stratford and, quite without warning, assaults her sexually, spilling semen all over her dress (the story riffs continually on the stained blue dress that was iconic of the Clinton-Lewinsky affair, using it to foreground the question, 'What is sex?'). The generic conventions Findley references in *The Last of the Crazy People* allow him to foreground the historical construction of a certain kind of family in Canada after WWI in a drama of "lost patrimony — the family text echoing the fall into adolescent sexuality and the compulsory gender scripts of the dominant culture" in a "double narrative of loss and exclusion" (Gabriel 179).

Hooker is caught within this bind of loss (the loss of family through his mother's literal withdrawal; his father's silence; the suicide of his brother, Gabriel; and the loss of innocence through adolescence) and exclusion (his brother calls him a "stinking little queer" [205], adding a sexual aspect to his sense of difference, even though sexuality is still obscure to him). But it is a bind created by Hooker's cultural context — by the regimes of heteronormativity located in a specific time and place (which is both this particular family and this particular geographic location) and it is one whose meanings are opaque to him, which, in fact, he continually

misinterprets. This, too, links him to the subaltern through Gabriel's mockery of Iris's insistence of interpreting the "Frankie and Johnny" song as a "triumphant reclaiming of a lost black history" rather than, as Gabriel insists, a "song about 'two spades in St. Louis, Missouri'" (Gabriel 177).²² For Hooker, as for Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding*, weddings and marriages create families which are places of confusion, alienation and danger; misunderstanding his family's misery and his own estrangement from it, Hooker tries to save them in the most final of ways, by killing them.²³

Families in Findley's work are thus not, contrary to the right-wing argument cited by both George Bush and the Pope, places of automatic comfort and safety for children, but places where meaning is unknowable and stories are untellable. Hooker asks "Are we crazy people? Mother is upstairs and won't come down. You live in the library. Rosetta won't look at me. Iris has secrets. And Papa sits with his back to everything. What does it mean?" (204). While Hooker's questions may be interpreted, as both Hunter and Gabriel do, as being linked to the pre-adolescent mystery of sexuality, they are also, as Sedgwick tells us they must be, linked — just as sexuality itself is — to the impaction of marriage, family, nation, public/private, respectability, and propriety, all of which are expected in and of themselves to provide proper meaning, but all of which fail to do so for Hooker and, indeed, for Gilbert, whose response is not to kill his family, but to kill himself, an act of speaking silence that repudiates both silence and speech. Hunter acutely notes that Nicholas's obsession with maintaining an aura of respectability and propriety around his marriage and family inevitably denies him the ability to speak of anything of import. In consequence, "Sexuality and birth are consistently associated with suffering and shame, whereas silence, like death, is associated with relief" (Hunter 25). For Hooker, the only way to disarm the silence that maintains the impaction of everything with everything else is to kill

²² Gabriel's language, while consistent with its period, also forms a link to *Spadework*, whose very title recreates that loose linkage between subaltern identities. If the 'spade' in the title of the novel is also its author, then Findley is forging overt linkages between oppressions that are at once powerful, as suggesting lines of alliance against the dominant culture, and problematic, as appropriations of life experiences and identities that are not necessarily aligned with his own.

²³ It is, of course, also possible to argue that the marriage of Bragg and Minna in the four short stories that deal with them is a portrait of a queer marriage, particularly when Bragg's lover Col becomes part of the relationship. I have chosen, however, to look at Findley's first and last novels as reworking his more typical approach to the issues at hand.

it, thus illuminating the ways in which, when everything is forced to mean the same thing, then everything can only mean nothing and suicide and murder are not merely relief from the tyranny of silence and un-meaning, but also a way of attempting to speak meaning into being, however hopelessly. The portrait of marriage in *The Last of the Crazy People*, as indeed in all of Findley's work, is a polysemic critique of the phallocratic impaction of meaning into a single nexus of terms, each of which inevitably contains and constrains the others so as to make them discursively inescapable, impenetrable, and ultimately deadly to the spirit, especially for proto-queer kids like Hooker, like Frankie in McCullers' play, and like Findley himself.

The Last of the Crazy People was written in the early sixties and finally published in 1967, two years before homosexuality was decriminalized in Canada. As Barbara Gabriel discusses in "Staging Monstrosity," its conception coincided with an era of homosexual witch-hunting in both Canada and the USA. While the US had the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) under Senator Joseph McCarthy, Canada, as Gary Kinsman has meticulously detailed in *The Regulation of Desire* (1996), utilized the services of the RCMP to investigate, identify and ultimately fire hundreds of gay men, who were identified as security risks, not merely because of the threat of blackmail, but also because homosexuality was seen, at the time, as a psychiatric disorder which rendered gay men unfit for the police, the military and the civil service, if not, indeed, all professions save hairdressing, fashion-design, the stage and the ballet (and we should remember here, as Gabriel points out, that Findley began his career as a dancer and actor). The RCMP compiled files on 8,200 men whom they identified as homosexual, files which were stored in the Character Weakness Section, while their most bizarre attempt to identify who was homosexual and who was not was an invention called the 'Fruit Machine' (Kinsman, *Regulation* 177-78).

The question of recognition and identification was, at the time and to a lesser extent today, always a fraught question, since the homosexual male was, as Lee Edelman points out in "Tearooms and Sympathy," simultaneously identified as homographically marked by his difference, thus always visible, and as the monster within the family, thus always invisible through being able to 'pass' (151-158). The difficulty of identification stages a crisis in masculinity which informs much of Findley's work and which continues to be a troubled issue today, as varying epistemologies of gender and sexuality come into conflict. One epistemology naturalizes male

homosexuality as masculine behaviour, the other reads it as a form of inversion (the preferred late nineteenth century term for queerness) and, by the 1950s, as literally gender treachery which linked sexual with political and ethnic ‘aberration,’ — a moment repeatedly reproduced through the construction of Jews, communists and queers as one and the same.²⁴

In the decades between the early sixties and the beginning of the twenty-first century, gay rights in Canada have come a long way. Lesbians and gays are protected under the anti-discrimination legislation of the Charter, are granted *de facto* equivalence to common law marriage through Bill C-23, and are now legally able to marry in a civil ceremony in both Ontario and British Columbia. If Findley, responding both to discourses of gender and sexuality that named him as a deviant and an aberration (sick, mentally ill, and legally criminal) and to the still painfully fresh memory of those photographs of Dachau and Bergen-Belsen that led him to pronounce that we “are all a collective hiding place for monsters” (*Inside Memory* 311), continually reworks the monster as a Gothic device for revealing monstrosity where we discursively do not expect to find it, specifically in phallic masculinity, patriarchy, and the impacted heteronormative family, then how does the more liberal, but relentlessly contested context, of queer life today respond to these same issues? In attempting to answer this question, I want to look at the film *The Hanging Garden* as one more example of how marriage may be depicted within queerly Canadian culture.

The Hanging Garden, writer/director Thom Fitzgerald’s first feature film, garnered major critical acclaim, including four Genies out of eleven Genie nominations, was named best film of the year by *The Globe and Mail*, and won the 1997 Claude Jutra Award for Fitzgerald as best debut filmmaker. This is all the more remarkable, as the film was refused funding by the Canada Council for the Arts (ironically, Fitzgerald told an interviewer that it was turned down because the Council thought he was homophobic [Kaufman]). A magic realist text with Gothic overtones, the film breaks with realist conventions of narrative film-making, particularly through its simultaneous use of three versions of the main character, Sweet William (played as a boy by

²⁴ This racial/sexual conflation is still repeated today, as will be seen in the next section, where reports of gay-bashing often involve anti-Jewish name-calling.

Ian Parsons, as a teenager by Troy Veinotta, and as an adult by Chris Leavings).²⁵ Like *The Member of the Wedding*, the occasion for *The Hanging Garden* is a wedding: William's sister, Rosemary (played by Sarah Polley as a teenager and Kerry Fox as an adult) is marrying William's best friend and would-be teenage lover, Fletcher (Joel Keller). But the film introduces us first to William as a boy, whose impatient, alcoholic father corrects his knowledge of flowers and beats him for watering the plants improperly. The scene ends with apologies and offers of ice cream, leading directly to the second scene where an obese teenage William is seen alone in the garden, reciting the knowledge of flowers his father has beaten into him, and looking over his shoulder to the noisy activity of the house from which he seems to be exiled. The film then segues to the wedding scene, establishing the family as both dysfunctional and eccentric before introducing the adult William who, as Gary Morris puts it, looks "every inch the slender, self-possessed modern homosexual" (Morris). Another child William's age wanders through the scene; the viewer knows that Violet (Christine Dunsworth) is a girl, but William takes her for a boy, as she intends. Violet, in turn, thinks that William is her brother, but she turns out to be his daughter, conceived as a result of his mother's attempt to 'straighten him out' by arranging for him to have sex with a single mother who agrees to introduce him to the wonders of heterosexual sex for a fee.

Early in the film, it's also made clear that there is some history between William and the bridegroom, Fletcher. In his first conversation with Rosemary, she tells him that he must feel like he is "in the goddamn twilight zone" and he responds with, "No kidding; your husband's coming on to me." This is clearly not news to Rosemary, whose threat to "divorce the fucker" reveals neither surprise nor intent. At night, after the wedding, William, Violet, Rosemary and Fletcher all gather in the garden, where Rosemary teases Fletcher about wanting to kiss William, before taking Violet off to bed. The two young men end up on the dock, where Fletcher asks William what he thinks his life would have been like if he hadn't run away to Toronto and William sardonically replies that, "You and I would be married, we'd have a nice little bungalow by the ocean with our daughter," invoking the seemingly perverse image of a queer marriage on the night of Fletcher's heterosexual wedding. Undeterred, Fletcher attempts to seduce William, who asks,

²⁵ One of the film's minor conceits is in naming all of the characters after flowers and other decorative plants.

“Fletcher, you just got married. How can you want to have sex with me?” Fletcher responds, “To let you know that I really care about you.” Ignoring William’s rejoinder that that sentiment could as easily be expressed verbally, Fletcher begins kissing William and trying to take his clothes off, but is interrupted when William starts having an asthma attack. Flinging Fletcher off, he runs up the hill to where his teenaged self has hanged himself from a tree in the garden and starts trying to cut the corpse down. These scenes are intertwined with a flashback that shows the two teenaged boys naked in the garden as Fletcher introduces William to the pleasures of mutual masturbation, the scene which is referenced by the adult William’s remark that, “We might get caught again,” as their adolescent explorations are interrupted by the screams of William’s excessively religious grandmother.

The Hanging Garden is a complex film which uses the techniques of magic realism to tell a double story: in one, the adolescent William runs away from home, loses weight, and makes a life for himself with a man named Dick; in the other, the adolescent William responds to his sexual humiliation (caught with Fletcher and then forced to have heterosexual sex while his mother babysits the other woman’s toddler in the next room), his abusive father, and his dogmatic grandmother by hanging himself. William has a history of trying to escape in a variety of ways; ironically, he makes himself disappear by becoming very fat. He tells his mother, “There was nothing you could do about it. Nobody could make me be skinny. It was the one thing you could not make me be. It felt good.” When Iris challenges him about how it could feel good to be that fat, William replies that it was a form of freedom: “Being fat meant I didn’t have to play any sports, didn’t have to have any fights, didn’t have to have a girlfriend.” But when even fatness proves not enough to allow him to escape familial and societal pressures entirely, William hangs himself/runs off to the big city. Both stories are omnipresent in the story line, although the film suggests that suicide is the alternative story that William manages to escape by leaving for the city (an escape echoed in the first twenty minutes of the film by Iris, who abandons house, family and drunken husband and is last seen walking out the garden gate, leaving William literally holding the baby).

However, rather than displace queerness to the big city, which is often the case in dominant discourse, where homosexuality tends to be seen as an urban phenomenon (and is often the case in life, where cities present a relatively queer-friendly haven for those alienated by the

heteronormative pressures of small town and rural life²⁶), the film establishes that there is plenty of queerness in small town Nova Scotia. Fletcher tells William that, “You were the first and the best, but not the last,” clearly indicating that he has had other sexual contacts with men. Moreover, the teasing that goes on between Rosemary and William about incest opens up the possibility not only for a relationship between them, but also, because she knows and seems willingly to accept Fletcher’s sexual interest in her brother, of something even more complex and taboo. Marriage in *The Hanging Garden*, even though it takes place between a man and a woman, is not a purely heteronormative institution; in the triadic structure of erotic tension operating between the three principal characters lie multiple possibilities, some strong, as in the likelihood that Fletcher and William will have sex, and some weak, as in the possibility of actually enacting, rather than merely joking about, sex between the siblings or between all three. At the end of the film, when adolescent William has been buried by his adult self, adult William leaves for Toronto with Violet, whose momentary transformation into a flower girl did not even last the length of the wedding. Queer child, queer father, going home to Dick to become a queer family.

Within queer culture in Canada, then, marriage occupies a complex and problematic space; cultural responses to marriage tend to be both descriptive and critical of the realities writers and artists see around them, rather than prescriptive or polemical. On the one hand, cultural production thus responds to the centrality of marriage as a form of heteronormative regulation, critiquing the ways in which dominant discourses of marriage and family form an “impacted social space” which, as Sedgwick suggests, reduce them to a singularity in which they become pseudonyms for nation, history and so on. On the other hand, because it is possible to understand marriage as polysemic, rather than having a singular meaning, and because it is possible to at least begin to disarticulate marriage from its equivalence with proprietary ideas of romance, family, gender, sexuality, nation and history, it also becomes possible to contemplate alternative possibilities for marriage and family that exceed those discourses. Same-sex marriage

²⁶ Michael Riordan’s *Out Our Way: Gay and Lesbian Life in Rural Canada* (1996) does an excellent job of examining the lives of lesbians and gays who have either stayed in the country or moved out there from the city. While some of the stories Riordan relates involve encounters with bigotry and the necessity for closetedness, there are also others which demonstrate the possibilities for acceptance and community, contrary to dominant discourses about the narrow-mindedness and bigotry of rural life.

may well be an assimilationist political tactic, aimed at merging ‘good’ homosexuals seamlessly within the heteronormative nation state. However, I am arguing here that, even within Canada, the same-sex marriage issue is not only difficult to interpret or predict, but that it is also only part of the picture of how LGBT people are understood and positioned within contemporary Canadian society; a quite different section of the canvas is reflected in the second series of media reports from July, 2003 that I want to discuss next.

3. Would You Beat This Man?

The second item in the news in July reflected an entirely different view of the way in which gay and lesbian people are treated by some other Canadians. This second report was of the guilty plea entered by an unidentified nineteen-year-old charged in the murder of Aaron Webster in Stanley Park in Vancouver on November 17, 2001. As the man was seventeen at the time of the murder, he could not be identified in the media; he received a three year sentence for his part in a killing in which he and three friends allegedly used baseball bats and golf clubs to beat a complete stranger to death. Reports in the gay news and elsewhere indicate that the police had received a complaint ten days before Webster’s murder of repeated attempts to assault a heterosexual man named Edward Smith, a construction contractor who liked to walk in the park at night.

The men in question were cruising the park in a vehicle, were armed with baseball bats, and, in the case of the assault which Smith reported to the police, repeatedly called him a ‘pervert.’ Even before making the link to Smith’s report, however, police were convinced by the fact that witnesses all reported seeing three or four men, by the brevity of the attack (which police estimate took less than two minutes) and by its frenzied nature, that they were dealing with a hate crime. The conviction of one attacker and the arrests in October, 2003, of three others, including two 21 year old men, Ryan Kran and Danny Rao, and another anonymous nineteen year old, fly in the face of insistence by right wing media and regressive religious and political groups that Webster was most likely murdered by another gay man, either a jealous lover, or someone with whom he was having sex.²⁷

²⁷ Knight also anticipates the ‘homosexual panic’ defense — that Webster was murdered for making an unwanted advance on a panic-stricken heterosexual (who, ironically, must often defend himself, at

Indeed, Leo Knight of the *North Shore News*, managed in an article on November 28, 2001, not only to cast doubt on the likelihood that Webster's murder was a queer-bashing, all evidence to the contrary, but also succeeded in working into his diatribe the government's refugee policy (he apparently wants Australian-style detention camps), some entirely unsubstantiated statistics about the rates of 'promiscuity' in the heterosexual and homosexual communities, the usual accusation that LGBT demands for basic human rights (like access to housing, employment and health care) involve some sort of mysterious 'special rights,' and the insistence that gays are not and never should be equal to straights: "... catering in the manner we do to the homosexual lobby is also stupid. For the gay community to suggest their lifestyle is, in any manner, equivalent to a typical heterosexual relationship is utter nonsense" ("The 'Fruit Loop' Can Be a Dangerous Place"). The conjunction of homophobic rhetoric with anti-immigrant rhetoric in Knight's article is not entirely a coincidence. Speaking of similar rhetorical strategies conjoining presumptively non-white immigration to sexual normativity in the heteronormative public sphere in the US, Lauren Berlant concludes that "sectors of the mainstream public sphere link whatever positive value immigration has to the current obsessive desire for a revitalized national heterosexuality and a white, normal national culture" (*Queen* 177). Similarly, non-white immigration is linked to the presumptive threat of homosexuality in disrupting a national culture that racializes, genders and sexualizes others in the process of constituting itself as the norm.

What constitutes Webster's murder as a matter of urgent public concern is thus the systemic basis of the hatred which motivated the crime. Such lethal violence is the extreme end of a spectrum that begins with anti-gay jokes and casual, often unconsidered, homophobic remarks. We are frequently unconscious of the extent to which these sentiments pervade public consciousness — the degree, for example, to which negative responses to homosexuality, in general, and particularly to anal sex inform civic (and supposedly civil) discourse, especially in

least in the eyes of the law, by reconstituting himself as a 'latent' homosexual). Judicial willingness to accept this defense varies according to jurisdiction; it was disallowed, for example, in the trial of the two men who murdered Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, in 1998. Like Knight, most right-wing media and politicians also consistently disavow the notion that queer-bashing is a hate crime, although, again, recognition of bias crime has an increasing basis in law. The murderer of Sakia Gunn, a 15 year old African-American lesbian, has recently been charged under bias crime legislation on the basis of his utterances to police about his motivation in stabbing the girl, who was unknown to him, as she stood at a bus stop in Newark.

political, military and commercial life. Jokes about bending over (or not), rolling over (or not), going down on (or not), getting in bed with (or not), all constituted within a same-sex/homosocial context, are the staple diet of political cartoonists, to take a single, but noticeable example, even though the cartoonists and newspaper editors responsible would undoubtedly disavow charges of homophobia and may, in some cases, even identify themselves as LGBT people. A similar spectrum of homophobic discourse underwrites Knight's relatively mild opinions in his newspaper column; those of us who are academics are often sufficiently insulated from the reality of 'life on the front lines' that the extent of opinions like Knight's — and many that are far more inflammatory and, on occasion, open about their bigotry — can come as a shock.

However, the hate crime statistics released by the Toronto police for 2002 indicate that assaults on gays and lesbians place them amongst the three groups most likely to be targeted. Police statistics for Toronto indicate that Jewish and black Canadians still bear the brunt of hate-related crimes in Canada, suffering fifty and forty-four incidents of reported hate crimes respectively.²⁸ LGBT people were next (eleven reports), closely followed by Muslims (ten reports). Nevertheless, the police statistics can only count reported incidents and many LGBT people are reluctant to call in the police, either afraid that they will not be taken seriously, that in some instances they will risk 'outing' themselves, and even that they will be further harassed by the police. *Xtra!*, the Canadian gay and lesbian weekly newspaper, quotes one victim of a gay-bashing in Cawthra Park who refused to report the incident to police at 52 Division in Toronto because the same officers had recently been involved in raids on several gay bars — raids

²⁸ These statistics tally with those recorded nationally for the USA by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program: in 2002, the UCR recorded 7,462 incidents of hate-related crime. Of these, Jewish (931 incidents), black (2,486 incidents) and queer people (1,234 incidents) made up 62% of the victims of reported hate crimes — and this is not counting those who were victims because of multiple motivations, including crimes against queer Jewish and African-American people. By way of contrast, in 2002 and despite 9/11, the UCR reported 155 incidents of hate-related crimes against Muslims and 10 incidents of heterosexuals attacked because of their sexual orientation. Given that heterosexuals make up somewhere between 90% and 99% of the population (if you believe the regressive right's insistence that less than 1% of the population is gay or lesbian), this makes the incidence of straight-bashing less than 0.000,000,004%. Comparatively, the incidence of queer-bashing is 0.4%, taking 10% of the population as LGBT (using the regressive right's figures, the incidence would be more than 4%). Either way, a queer person is more than 10,000,000 times more likely to be targeted for attack on the basis of sexual orientation than is a heterosexual. One third of the reported hate crimes involved physical assaults against the victims, including 11 murders (including 4 murders of gay men) and 1,481 incidences of rape and sexual assault. 4,517 of 7,314 known offenders were white.

perceived as homophobic not only by those members of the gay community who are the bars' habitués, but also by many LGBT people for whom bar culture, queer or straight, is profoundly uncongenial.²⁹ Karen Baldwin of the Anti-Violence Program at the 519 Community Centre in Toronto says that the 519 receives about one hundred reports of violent assaults on gay men and lesbians every year, but that only ten to fifteen percent of those assaults are reported to police. The Toronto police liaison officer, PC Judy Nosworthy, is also quoted by *Xtra!* as agreeing that many assaults against LGBT people go unreported ("Bashing Copycats").

The most comprehensive study of anti-LGBT crime in Canada at present is Douglas Janoff's MA thesis, *Pink Blood: Queer-Bashing in Canada* (2000). Janoff evaluates reports of anti-queer violence from a variety of sources, including police reports, court records, the media, and interviews with victims, activists and people working in criminal justice. Janoff set out to answer two questions, the first about the prevalence of queer-bashing in Canada and the second about methods which might effectively mitigate or prevent anti-LGBT violence. In the course of his research, which covered the decade of the 1990s, Janoff found over 300 incidences of queer-bashing across the country. Perhaps because he was based in Vancouver and thus had better access to local records, BC has a disproportionate incidence of anti-queer violence. Even more disturbingly, however, Janoff reports thirty-three known incidences of hate-motivated homicide in the decade, with a strong possibility that another fifty-five homicides were also the result of queer-bashing. One of Janoff's strongest critiques is the way in which the Crown in BC, despite clear guidelines to the contrary, has plea bargained many of the sentences in cases of hate-motivated homicide, in addition to allowing defendants to use the so-called "Homosexual Advance Defence," which, unlike the "Homosexual Panic Defence," requires that the heterosexual merely be repulsed by a sexual advance from a gay man, rather than forcing him to plead psychological panic due to his own latent homosexuality. Twenty-one homicides in

²⁹ A parallel situation can be found in the response to the notorious bathhouse raids of the early 80s. Many of the protesters, regardless of sexual or gender identity, had never been inside the bathhouse; the raids were perceived by the gay community and by anti-homophobic citizens across Canada as symptomatic not only of homophobia amongst police ranks but throughout governmental and bureaucratic institutions across Canada. It is thus ironic, as Susan Knabe has argued, that the community mobilization in response to the raids presented a ready-made infrastructure which enabled the gay community in Canada to respond to AIDS-related homophobia in a more coherent and organized fashion than was initially the case in the US.

Canada in the 1990s involved the use of HAD, while only three mentioned HPD. HAD allows the defendant to cite provocation, which, in turn, reduces the crime from murder to manslaughter, with a concomitantly lesser sentence. Janoff notes further that although “many police departments record a name-calling incident against a gay man in their statistics as a ‘hate crime,’ the killing of a gay man who is stabbed sixty times is not considered a hate crime” (53). In 42.5% of the homicides Janoff studies, the perpetrator was convicted of manslaughter; in only 6%, or 2 cases, was the murderer convicted of first-degree murder.

The details of the homicides, however, coincide with the results of studies in the US. Caramagno notes that, “A recent study of 151 anti-gay slayings revealed that 60% of the murders were marked by ‘extraordinary and horrific violence’ of the sort ‘fueled by rage and hate’” (185). Caramagno also cites an emergency room physician from San Francisco, Dr. Stewart Flemming, as saying that attacks on gay men and lesbians “... are vicious in scope and the intent is to kill and maim. Weapons include knives, guns, brass knuckles, tire irons, baseball bats, broken bottles, metal chains and metal pipes” (Qtd. in Caramagno 185). Gregory Herek sums up the logic of anti-gay violence in the US by insisting that, “Anti-gay violence is a logical, albeit extreme, extension of the heterosexism that pervades American society” and defines ‘heterosexism’ as “an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, of community” (89). While Canadians might like to think that our society is more accepting and less biased than the US, Janoff’s research reveals a disturbing level of violence directed at LGBT people across the whole country.

Thus, despite the growing acceptance in popular discourse that some people simply happen to be gay or lesbian and that their sexual orientation should have no bearing on their accession to basic human rights, the fact is that some people in Canada still see themselves as authorized to enact socially countenanced forms of violence on the bodies of those they apprehend as different.³⁰ The distance between discourses of celebration, of tolerance, of

³⁰ Following Foucault, who responded to a question about the origin of homosexuality with “On this question I have only an opinion; since it is only an opinion, it is without interest” (“Sexual Choice” 142), I take no position here on whether lesbians and gays are born or made, as I also feel the question is both unanswerable and, to a large extent, irrelevant to the question of human rights. Christians become Christian not through birth, but through baptism, yet the fundamental right of freedom of religion is not challenged because of this, nor is religion denied its special status (including, for example, tax exemption) on this basis.

intolerance, and of violence thus works to delineate the range of social repertoires from which responses to homosexuality can be drawn within the rubric of national identity and iconicity, while also pointing to the material urgency of much queer theorizing. As Sedgwick argues, it is necessary still and perhaps even especially now “to challenge queer-eradicating impulses frontally where they are to be so challenged” (“Queer and Now” 6). This is the urgent impetus that informs, for example, such work as Spencer J. Harrison’s *The Queer Project* (previously known as *The Fag Project* and also as “Would You Beat This Man?”) and, particularly when structural homophobia (or heteronormativity) and homophobic violence are imbricated with racialization and racism, novels like Larissa Lai’s *When Fox is a Thousand*, which I will also discuss in this chapter.

In the case of *The Queer Project*, Harrison has spent much of the last eight years recording the stories of victims of queer bashing and — occasionally — of their bashers. The paintings in the *Queer Project*, which was renamed when lesbians started coming forward with their stories, are visual interpretations of what the victim saw and heard at the moment of the attack. For example, the words recorded on the panel that accompanies “Yeah I was Scared”



Figure : Spencer J. Harrison, “Yeah, I was Scared.” Oil on linen bandages. 1995. Courtesy of the artist.

viscerally remind the viewer that the violence anticipated and apprehended in the painting was enacted on a very personal, very material basis on an individual because of that person's interpellation, by their attackers, as "fag" and "queer": "AND THEN THEY PUSHED ME '...QUEER' AND THE BIGGER GUY GAVE ME A PUSH AND PUNCHED ME. I FELL ON THE GROUND AND THEN HE GAVE ME QUITE A KICK IN THE SIDE...." The polemical nature of Harrison's project is immediate in the effect of the visual image of anticipated violence; the paintings are dark, life-size, and often arranged so as to surround the viewer with minatory images. The fact that Harrison has made every effort to make his work accessible to the public — arranging showings primarily in public locales, such as hospital foyers, police stations and churches, rather than in the rarefied and relatively inaccessible 'high culture' space of the art gallery — merely reinforces the extent to which the *Queer Project* is intended as an intervention into public discourse and thus as a form of revelation, of making visible the apparently hidden nature and extent of anti-queer violence.

The visual nature of Harrison's project, as well as some of the responses to it, foreground the issues of visibility, representation and spectacle in relation to the constitution of homophobic utterances and acts as normative — and thus as invisible. The logic of homophobic rhetoric with regard to the very violence it enacts is: gay-bashing doesn't exist, but if it does, it's gays' fault. In an editorial entitled "Look Sharp, Spencer, Another News Media Sucker Just Walked In," *Alberta Report* writer Link Byfield reproduces precisely this rhetorical feat of erasure and blame.

Byfield attacks a reporter from *The Edmonton Journal*, David Staples, for a sympathetic response to the display of one of Harrison's paintings (Byfield further derogates Harrison's work by referring to his painting as "a poster") in the "downtown cop shop" at the behest of the Gay Liaison Committee to the Edmonton police. According to Byfield, Edmonton has never had a gay-bashing reported to the police and Harrison's work is part of some sinister attempt to foist 'the homosexual agenda' on an unsuspecting heterosexual public.³¹ Calling Harrison's work "hysterical" and "self-pitying," Byfield makes some all too familiar claims (familiar enough to make one wish the far right might actually invent an *original* lie about LGBT people, instead of perpetuating the same tired old whoppers). Admitting that homosexuals may actually be

³¹ Byfield does not actually use the phrase "homosexual agenda" in this particular article, but it lurks behind his good ol' boy prose in the same way the phrase "lone gunman" equates with "conspiracy."

assaulted in Edmonton from time to time, Byfield adds:

As 1% of the adult population, they no doubt suffer 1% of the common assaults, and presumably inflict 1% of them too. If there really is any gay-bashing, either the victims don't want the police to interfere, or they inflict it on each other and don't want to admit it, or they are too ashamed to report it, even to the highly sensitized, rather crestfallen members of the Gay Liaison Committee. Who knows? All we can conclude from the absence of evidence is that when Edmonton's rowdies pound some poor fellow's face into a parking meter, they adopt a broad-minded indifference to his sexual orientation.

There aren't many gay people, but even if there are, they no doubt assault themselves; if the few gay people in Edmonton really do get assaulted, they're too ashamed to admit that they no doubt brought it on themselves; and anyway, violence is simply not a serious issue — just a handful of “rowdies” having a fine old time. The implication that real men don't whinge about a spot of rough-housing on their way back to their real jobs in the oil patch serves to trivialize even further the violence experienced by gay men and lesbians, and by women more generally. Of course, not all LGBT people are victims of homophobic violence, just as not all women are victims of misogynist violence. However, the likelihood of being targeted increases in proportion to one's visibility as ‘different,’ a visibility that may be, as I will discuss in a later chapter, marked



Figure : Spencer J. Harrison. “Would You Beat this Man? (detail).” Courtesy of the artist.

homographically on the body itself or that may be a result of temporal or spatial location. Like Edward Smith, walking in a particular park at a particular time of night, may be all that is needed to mark an individual as gay regardless of how that person regards his or her own sexual identity.

When Harrison paints the faces or the fists of queer bashers — or of a masculine hand looming out of the dark, holding a baseball bat — his work resonates at a visceral level, particularly for those who have been the targets of homophobic (or other bias-related) violence. While the incidents Harrison records did not lead to the deaths of their victims, there is no escaping the brutal fact that what Harrison has painted here is one of the last things Aaron Webster saw before he was killed. Harrison's project is both explicitly political and urgent, not as a reminder to the queer community of the practical dangers one may encounter (a rhetorical strategy which could only repeat the minatory tactics used by some AIDS 'educators' to frighten people away from sex), but rather a reminder to the wider community of presumptively heterosexual people of the violence they harbour and may, in fact, foster.

Such reminders are sadly necessary, but often do not have a long-term impact. In the US context, for example, the horrified media reportage of Matthew Shepard's murder led some fundamentalist leaders to take a momentary step backward and to disavow the very violence they had been preaching. The effect was not complete, however, as other fundamentalist groups continued to use violent rhetoric toward gay men and lesbians and even exacerbated it (a particularly nasty example was the addition to some fundamentalist websites of a picture of Matthew Shepard engulfed in flames on a button which, when clicked, allowed the websurfer to "hear Matthew scream in hell"). Nor was the lesson long-lasting, as less than three years later, both Pat Robertson's and Jerry Falwell's immediate response to the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, was to label it "God's punishment" on the USA for allowing homosexuals to exist.³² As Paul Morrison so scathingly argues in *The Explanation for Everything*, homosexuality has frequently been made to function within western and colonized societies as the

³² To be fair, homosexuals were only part of the list of evils which, according to Falwell and Buchanan, had caused "God to lift his veil of protection" from the United States: others topping the list were the ACLU, feminists and pro-choice advocates.

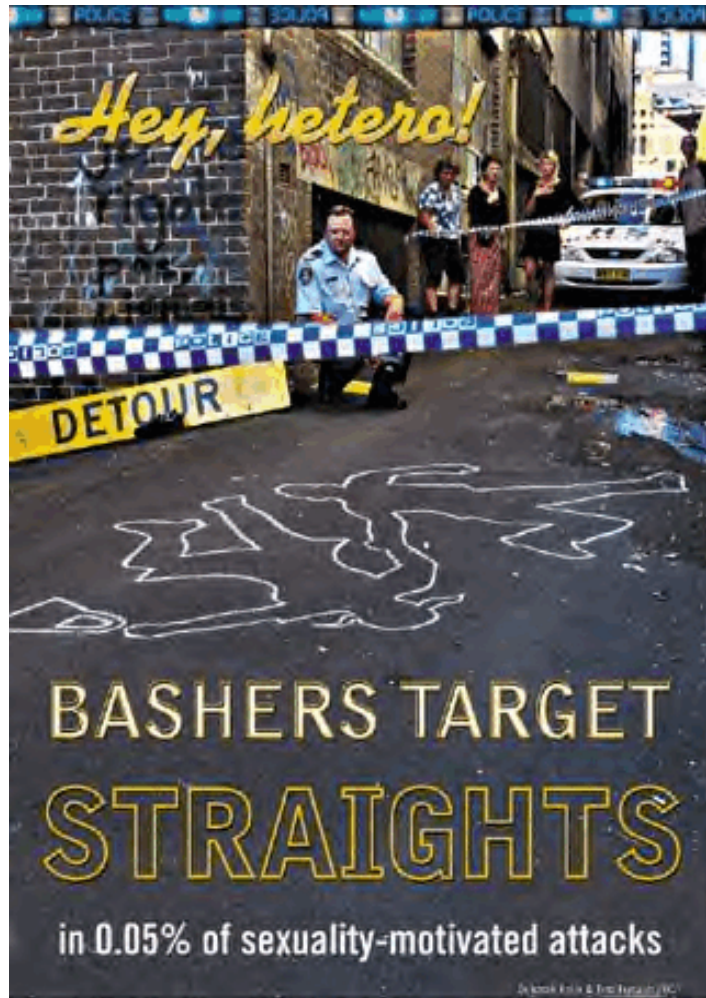


Figure : Deborah Kelly & Tina Fiveash, “Bashers Target Straights,” photograph (2000)

“explanation for everything (bad)”
(1).³³

I have already cited the statistics on relative rates of victimization, both in Canada and the USA. The simple fact is that heterosexuals are extremely unlikely to become targets of violence because of their sexual orientation, while gays and lesbians much more commonly experience violence, both physical and verbal, because of the ways in which they are interpellated into certain forms of public discourse. Indeed, in an ironic reversal of Byfield’s strategy of dismissing violence against gays and lesbians as non-existent, even

in a conservative political environment where reporting to potentially homophobic police officers has little incentive, Australian artists Deborah Kelly and Tina Fiveash admit that they had to exaggerate the 0.05% ‘statistic’ that appears on their “Bashers Target Straights” poster, as their research turned up no evidence of hate-motivated attacks on straight people in Australia, even though gay fears of involvement with the police (dealing with a traditionally homophobic and unsympathetic profession, the possibility of ‘outing’ for those victims of violence who are closeted, reporting to the very people who have in the past targeted your own institutions and people for harassment) do not apply to heterosexuals *per se* (it might apply for other reasons, such as recreational drug use or involvement in prostitution, but not purely on the basis of sexual

³³ “The Explanation for Everything (Bad)” is actually the title of Morrison’s very insightful and sardonic first chapter, which explores how homosexuality becomes discursively explanatory for everything bad — including acts against homosexuals.

orientation).³⁴

Semantically, also, it is difficult to target heterosexuals in the same ways that it is possible to calumniate gay men and lesbians; perhaps the worst term for a straight person is ‘breeder,’ which is a minor slight (indeed, it turns on a practice that heteronormativity tends to celebrate as the greatest virtue of heterosexual behaviour) compared to the wealth of defamatory words revolving around homosexuality. The speech in which Stuart outs himself to his family in the original British version of *Queer as Folk* takes almost a full minute (a long time in the world of 15 second commercials) to go through a highly incomplete listing of the derogatory terms applied to gay men:

I'm queer, I'm gay, I'm homosexual, I'm a poof, poofter, ponce. I'm a bumboy, baddy boy, backside artist, bugger. I'm bent. I am that arse bandit, I lift those shirts, I'm a faggot arse, fudge packing, shit stabbing uphill gardener. I dine at the downstairs restaurant, I dance at the other end of the ballroom, I'm Moses in the parting of the red cheeks. I fuck and I'm fucked, I suck and I'm sucked; I rim them and wank them and every single man's had the fucking time of his life and I'm NOT a pervert.

Even where these terms have been reappropriated by their subjects, as is the case with “queer,” the language itself remains capable of enacting a form of violence. Wayson Choy points out in an interview in *CelebrAsian* that Humber College in Toronto, where he teaches, has been very successful at minimizing the incidence of racist and sexist language, but that “you often hear the word faggot in the hallways” (19). Homophobic language remains acceptable in ways that other forms of linguistic bigotry are not. Choy adds that this ironically increases the pressure to use more homophobic slurs in places where racist or misogynist terms might previously have been used: “...homophobia to me sometimes is an unconscious language in which you can’t say Chink, Nigger or whatever. But you can still say faggot” (19). The slippage from speech to act is not necessarily huge, especially as the language, as Harrison’s paintings indicate, invariably accompanies the act.³⁵ The reverse, however, is not necessarily the case, although it has been

³⁴ In conversation with the artists, September 12, 2003. The posters were designed to be displayed as public art on bus shelters, etc., as one of the art exhibits featured during the 2000 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

³⁵ Queer-bashers always want their targets to know that they’re not the victims of random violence or robbery with violence, thus necessitating the use of verbal as well as physical assault.

argued — and has, indeed, become the basis of law in Canada, as elsewhere — that hate speech is performative: it not only incites to harm, but causes harm in itself. In her discussion of hate speech in *Excitable Speech* (1997), Judith Butler explicitly links the existence of hate speech in the social domain to the constitution of the state itself:

... that the category [of hate speech] cannot exist without the state's ratification, and the power of the state's judicial language to establish and maintain the domain of what will be publicly speakable suggests that the state plays much more than a limiting function in such decisions; in fact, the state actively produces the domain of publically acceptable speech, demarcating the line between the domains of the speakable and the unspeakable, and retaining the power to make and sustain that consequential line of demarcation. The inflated and efficacious utterance attributed to hate speech ... is itself modeled on the speech of a sovereign state, understood as a sovereign speech act, a speech act with the power to do what it says. (77)

The legal aspects of hate speech that Butler discusses are specific to the US context, where the protection of freedom of speech under the first Amendment has produced some peculiar distinctions (as Butler points out, while denying homosexual speech, courts have utilized the first Amendment “to produce the burning cross [of the Ku Klux Klan] as an emblem of intelligible and protected speech” [98]). In Canada, hate propaganda has both less state sanction and less public toleration. Nevertheless, Butler's discussion of the performative aspects of hate speech and its reiteration of an already existing trauma has important ramifications for understanding the ways in which hate speech is mobilized against minoritized others throughout the western world.

What Harrison's paintings make clear — almost obscenely clear, in fact — is the commensurate, highly impacted relationship between hate speech and the visual spectacle of violence. As Sedgwick argues in “Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading,” there is an assumption of revelation and the importance of making visible that underwrites certain forms of critical and cultural work. Sedgwick refers to this as “paranoid reading,” a term I will discuss at greater length below. At the moment, however, I want to point to the ways in which it is possible to understand the visible threat of homophobic violence that is spectacularized in Harrison's paintings as working through a certain (often justifiable) paranoia and, specifically, as working through the assumption of the efficacy of revelation, of unveiling. However, as Sedgwick notes,

... while there is plenty of hidden violence that requires exposure, there is also, and increasingly, an ethos where forms of violence that are hyper-visible from the start may be offered as an exemplary spectacle, rather than remaining to be unveiled as a scandalous secret. Human rights controversy around, for example, torture and disappearances in Argentina, or the use of mass rape as part of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, marks — not an unveiling of practices that had been hidden or naturalized — but a wrestle of different frameworks of visibility. That is, violence that was *from the beginning* exemplary and spectacular, pointedly addressed, meant to serve as a public warning or terror to members of a particular community, is combatted by efforts to *displace and redirect* (as well as simply expand) its aperture of visibility. (18)

Do Harrison's paintings, then, merely reveal what we already know, which is that gay lives are valued less than straight ones, or do they effect a redirection of what Sedgwick calls the "aperture of visibility" when it comes to queer-bashing? Furthermore, it is important to ask whether queer-bashing, like torture and mass rape, forms an exemplary spectacle dependent on its very visibility. However, a third question can be disentangled from the discussion of spectacular violence and its relation to queer-bashing and other homophobic acts: that is the question of whether anti-queer violence is equally visible to both the straight and the queer communities and, if differentially visible to queers, but not to heterosexuals, what is invoked by that very discrete aperture of visibility? For whom, we might ask, borrowing yet another phrase from Sedgwick, does such targeted and disciplinary violence (using 'disciplinary' in its Foucauldian sense) conceal itself within the "privilege of unknowing" ("Privilege of Unknowing" 23-25)? And, finally, is it possible to contemplate the disciplinary effects of queer-bashing on targeted peoples and communities without having recourse to mainstream discourses of victimization, discourses in which complexity is attenuated and dubious hierarchies of suffering are forced into competition with each other? Victim discourse has, in any case, largely been appropriated by the dominant culture — although this may be less true in Canada than it is in the USA, where Lauren Berlant makes the trenchant point that during the Reagan years US citizenship became infantilized:

During this period, a cartoon version of a crisis in U.S. citizenship has become established as a standard truth. In the cartoon version of the shaken nation, a citizen is defined as a person traumatized by some aspect of life in the United States.... This coupling of suffering and citizenship is so startling and so moving because it reveals about national power both its impersonality and its intimacy. The experience of social hierarchy is intensely individuating, yet it also makes people public and generic: it turns them into *kinds* of people who are both

attached to and underdescribed by the identities that organize them [T]he public rhetoric of citizen trauma has become so pervasive and competitive in the United States that it obscures basic differences among modes of identity, hierarchy, and violence. Mass national pain threatens to turn into banality, a crumbling archive of dead signs and tired plots. (1-2)

Perhaps the best illustration of this appropriation and attenuation of trauma can be illustrated in American pop culture — as well as in other American cultural appropriations, such as the entire debate about the Americanization of the Holocaust³⁶ — in the *South Park* sketch, “A Brief History of America,” which portrays every aspect of white American history as a product of trauma and fear: the Pilgrims leave Britain out of fear of religious persecution, they massacre indigenous people out of fear, they establish the KKK out of fear and on and on....; each attempt to relieve trauma, attempts which frequently mobilize violence against the feared object, simply leads to more fear and more trauma.³⁷ The difficulties circulating around victim discourse and its relation to histories of trauma make it difficult to assess the utility or even the truth-value of claims to victimization, but they also make it difficult to engage in legitimate political activism aimed at ending brutality toward targeted groups. However, Ann Cvetkovich argues, in *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003), that trauma “can be a foundation for creating counterpublic spheres rather than evacuating them ... but [she] also want[s] to hold out for the presence and promise of cultural formations that bring traumatic histories into the public sphere and use affective experience to transform our sense of what constitutes a public sphere” (15-16). Susan Knabe argues that Cvetkovich’s examination of trauma within lesbian public cultures functions reparatively, rather than remaining merely a paranoid reiteration of victim discourse:

Cvetkovich identifies trauma as a potential discursive site for rethinking both the concept of the archive and the constitution of public cultures and cultural production which are located in response to trauma but not necessarily defined by it. [Reparative reading] also resonates with Cvetkovich’s formulation of the way in which traumatic cultural production functions therapeutically within queer

³⁶ See the work on the Americanization of the Holocaust by scholars such as Peter Novick and Hilene Flanzbaum.

³⁷ Thanks to Michael Moore’s inclusion of the three minute sketch in *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), it is now probably the most widely known clip from *South Park*, having been seen by millions of people who don’t watch the show.

culture” (“Picturing Reparation” 13-14).

It is thus possible to see Harrison’s *The Queer Project* as utilizing both a paranoid critical function, in revealing to those who don’t know, if only because they have resisted or refused such knowledge, the existence of anti-queer violence, while at the same time offering to queer audiences therapeutic possibilities which they may or may not recognize and may or may not choose to engage with.

Harrison’s own MA thesis, *The Queer Project: The Distance Between History and Truth* (2002), also attempts to answer some of these questions by examining both the context of and the responses to his polemical project. Because much of the useful theoretical work on trauma has been undertaken in response to the Holocaust — which tends to form the limit case for understandings of trauma, just as returning Vietnam veterans do for its medicalization as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) — Harrison looks at the ways in which queer bashing can be understood as an expression of genocidal desires (as Sedgwick says, in regard to the psychiatrization of proto-queer kids, these events are invariably expressions of “the overarching, relatively unchallenged aegis of a culture’s desire that gay people *not be*” [“How To” 164]). However, Harrison identifies many differences between the two events, differences located in the degree of organization, of active participation, and of the desire to eliminate witnesses. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub have argued that what makes the Holocaust unique was that it produced “... *no witnesses*. Not only, in effect, did the Nazis try to exterminate the physical witnesses of their crime, but the inherently incomprehensible and deceptive psychological structure of the event precluded its own witnessing, even by its very victims” (Qtd. in Harrison, 42). The Holocaust is thus presented to us precisely as that which is both unrepresentable and incomprehensible, with each term automatically reproducing the other in the attempt to render the Holocaust only as that which can neither be seen nor spoken of. By contrast, Harrison argues that

Gay-bashers wish... to produce witnesses so as to accomplish similar physical and psychological goals. The perpetrator of the hate crime, which in most cases does not end in death, wishes to *create* a witness who can carry a message back to his or her community. This message is not the same ongoing psychological torment, unimaginable physical torture and certain death which the Nazis’ victims might have expected, but a message of imminent danger equated with the victim’s identity and a very real and imaginable future violence. While the perpetrators realize they can not eliminate the lesbian and gay population,

one of their underlying goals is to effect a form of genocide, a genocide which homogenizes the greater population by erasing lesbian or gay male visibility as well as discouraging others from joining the community. (42)

Harrison thus explicitly rejects a hierarchical understanding of genocidal desires and resultant traumas, arguing that the Holocaust is markedly different from the violence of queer-bashing or the more organized and socially acceptable, and often covert, violences that uses AIDS as an excuse to dream, as Sedgwick says, “the overarching, hygienic Western fantasy of a world without any more homosexuals in it” (“How To” 163).³⁸ This difference has, in part, to do with the spectacularization of anti-queer violence, a spectacularization partially dependent on the idea that homosexuality is a chose lifestyle; the Nazis did not believe that threats of extermination could transform Jews into Aryans, whereas the queer-basher believes that his victim has made a choice that is both perverse and reversible.³⁹ Evaluating his own attempts to make such violence visible to the heterosexual community, from which it is normally hidden, Harrison argues that his initial vision of using art as a form of political intervention was naïve; he also questions whether effective witnessing is possible while the acts of violence continue (again, differentiating his project from the act of witnessing to the Holocaust, acts which are by definition historical, focussed on revealing the past and intervening in the future, more than in the present).⁴⁰ And finally, Harrison worries that his project, rather than proving therapeutic for the victims of violence who took part in it, has been, at least in some cases, itself traumatic rather than enabling. I want to argue, rather, that *The Queer Project* allows its viewers the possibility of both paranoid readings, through witnessing to the fact that, contrary to the Byfields of the world, such attacks do take place with regrettable frequency, but also through offering reparative possibilities,

³⁸ Given the situation of most African states with regard to AIDS and the difficulty of access to affordable medications or even to condoms (the official Catholic line in Africa is that it has been ‘scientifically proven’ that condoms do not stop the HIV virus, thus vastly reducing possibilities for the prevention of HIV transmission), one can argue that this genocidal vision is now forcefully turned toward the dream of a world without any more black Africans in it.

³⁹ Indeed, it was partially the belief that homosexuals were making a behavioural choice which betrayed, at the most fundamental level, the ideal of perpetuating an Aryan race which led the Nazis to incarcerate and exterminate German homosexuals in concentration camps. Whereas Jews were viewed as intolerable because of their racial identity, homosexuals were punished as traitors to the race. The distinction, however, did not keep the Nazis from reviling Jews as homosexuals.

⁴⁰ Thus the rhetorical force of “Never again!”

of which the most singular and most important involves the possibility of inverting the effects of secrecy and shame that queer-bashing often enacts on its targets. Harrison argues that

The repositioning of the stories revealed in the interviews outside of those interior, secretive, private spaces of the marked body of the queer person opens up the trauma and shifts the power of the violent acts. Now in public view through the vehicles of these varying sites or locations, the earlier enforced secrecy and shame is shifted away from the lesbian and gay person and repositioned on the actions of the aggressor By no longer remaining invisible or silent, the victim demonstratively demands the violence be recognized *in its truth*, that is with the attacker as the criminal and the lesbian or gay body as the victim. (122)

Of course, a more direct form of reparative reading involves the direct fantasy of bashing back, as is the case with Diane DiMassa's *Hothead Paisan* comics in the US, or in Canada with the title of another art exhibit aimed at anti-gay violence, this time called "Free To Bash Back," which was put on in 1999 by Wil Munro at the Toronto anarchist book and music store Who's Emma? and featured artworks by Alex McClelland and Alon Freeman. Both men were cycling in Toronto when they were assaulted: "A taxi cab was beside us and was full of these guys and they started yelling, kind of like, 'Jew, kike, fag' at us."⁴¹ The two men were separated, one group of youths continuing to assault McClelland while the taxi, with the remaining youths, pursued and caught Freeman. He escaped and found McClelland being beaten and strangled, while pedestrians and security guards from a nearby building "stood by and watched" (Prendergast). The two men actively pursued the case themselves, despite apparent police indifference, finally laying charges themselves against the cabbie who enabled the attacks, not with the police and the judicial system, who failed to act against the driver, but under the Municipal Standards and Licensing Act. McClelland and Freeman also took to art to express their message, using polaroid photos of their own bruised and battered bodies and faces, the torn and bloodied t-shirt McClelland was wearing, and rhinestone-studded pepper spray canisters, as well as chalking outlines of bodies and details of assaults on sidewalks around Toronto. All these are acts of visibility and legitimation, aimed at expressing outrage at police and community

⁴¹ As I noted earlier in the thesis, the conflation of subaltern ethnic/racial identities with sexual identities is common in this type of assault, thus indicating the extent to which what is being targeted is difference itself.

indifference to acts of violence targeting gay men and lesbians as a group. In this sense, like *The Queer Project*, “Free to Bash Back” utilizes both paranoid, that is revelatory, approaches and reparative ones. The message repudiates the target’s reduction to victim status, as intended by the bashers, and instead reiterates in the public sphere both individual and community frustration and anger at bashing and its apparent validation through judicial indifference, particularly the disinclination of police to lay charges and the imposition of unacceptably light sentences (the youth convicted in the Aaron Webster murder received only three years). The title of the show itself indicates the possibility that queer-bashing may not always be light entertainment for young suburban men, as LGBT people work out strategies to “bash back.”

Doug Wilson’s novel *Labour of Love* (1993), which forms the sequel to Peter McGehee’s unfinished trilogy,⁴² begins with precisely this scenario: rather than being the easy target the bashers expect, the “fat faggot” Searcy fights back against the five “young hosers” who attack him:

Searcy is sprawled on the sidewalk. You can hear the dull thud of boots connecting with flesh and their ugly cursing as they crowd around him And then, incredibly, he’s on his feet. He’s bloody and his clothes are torn but he moves like a dancer. And he is angry. ‘You little scum-sucking sonafabitches!’ he bellows. He picks up the nearest one by the scruff of the neck and the crotch and pitches him howling right over the hatchback into the center of the street. The kid lies still. (8)

At this point, a crowd of queer people has gathered and “the kids are ringed by angry folk from the neighborhood. The punk in the road is just beginning to stir and his buddies are a frightened lot” (8). The police eventually arrive, but decline — politely, of course — to lay charges until Searcy, aided and abetted by the chanting crowd, forces them to change their minds. Wilson portrays this as a victory not only for Searcy, who eventually parlays his local hero status into an NDP nomination for the Toronto city council, but also for the community as a whole and an opportunity for further activism: “A young man with green hair jumps up on the top of the basher’s car. He’s wearing a Queer Nation button. ‘Join us here next Saturday at three P.M. for a rally protesting bashing and to celebrate this successful defense of our neighborhood,’ he

⁴² The first two novels, *Boys Like Us* and *Sweetheart* were completed by McGehee before his death; the novel’s title refers in part to the labour undertaken by Wilson, McGehee’s longtime lover.

enjoins the crowd” (9). Nevertheless, Searcy’s initial reaction is one of frustration and anger: “So goddamned angry. Here we are in one of the largest lesbian and gay communities in the world. We provide so much of the heart of this town, yet the cops and the city let us be beaten and even killed in our own neighbourhood. Something’s got to be done” (10). When the narrator, David, asks what can be done, Searcy says that protests and demonstrations aren’t enough: “We need to let them know that we won’t take it anymore” (10). Of course, in ‘real life,’ various efforts of this nature have been attempted, including the institution of self-defense classes and of volunteer patrols around vulnerable neighbourhoods. For the situation to stop, however, Canadian society as a whole has to demonstrate that it won’t countenance such attacks on individuals or on the LGBT community as a whole.

As Harrison points out, the knowledge and fear of queer-bashing operates to discipline lesbians and gay men, attempting to require of them a similar vigilance and bodily awareness that society already expects of women. As Foucault would tell us, of course, power is not purely hierarchical but operates in often unanticipated ways throughout all human relations. Pragmatically, this means that the regulatory power of queer-bashing engenders its own resistance, both as political action and as a refusal of the incapacitation associated with fear and even of the fear itself. Nevertheless, while individuals and communities may choose to confront their fears of queer-bashing, rather than bowing to them, the knowledge of vulnerability remains a nearly unavoidable part of anyone’s identification as an LGBT person today. It is a knowledge which attempts to interpellate the queer under the sign of the deviant, the perverse, the aberrant, and the abnormal, and the queer community’s single most powerful strategy against it has been to mobilize discourses which resist such efforts at interpellation through reparative readings which emphasize the normalcy of individuals within the targeted community(s) and the criminal deviance of the attackers.

These issues become further problematized when those targeted for violence are part of not one, but two or more minoritized communities. In the case of Larissa Lai’s *When Fox is a Thousand*, two brutal and violent deaths haunt the novel. The novel is complex, intertwining the Chinese myth of the Fox and a historical narrative about a poetess from the ninth century with a contemporary story, set in Vancouver, about five young women, Diane, Artemis, Mercy/Ming, Claude and Rachel, and their relationships with each other. Diane is haunted from the beginning

of the novel by the death of her brother, Andie (the spelling of the name, an anagram of Diane, suggests an identity between brother and sister that goes beyond their sibling relationship). Andie's first relationship is with a young librarian named Stephen, who turns out to be more interested in Andie's Chineseness than in Andie; Andie breaks up with him and moves to Toronto, from which his sister receives a series of increasingly cryptic, but worried postcards. When no more postcards or letters arrive, Diane begins to "dream up worst-case scenarios" (48):

The sky is dark now, and the first stars are poking through velvet.... He meets progressively fewer people coming the other way as he walks. No more couples, families, or rollerbladers. He passes the last fishing family, casting a hopeful net for the last try. Men's eyes come out of the darkness and vanish again. He passes the rock shaped like a woman waiting for her lost lover, and it is there that a thick arm encircles his throat. 'Faggot!' His groin screams. 'Chink!' His eyes, please, not his eyes. He falls down, and there are steel-toed boots slamming into his mouth, his spine, the crack of his bum. Blood pours hot and sticky over his face. There are pinpricks of light in the darkness, and then there is nothing. (49; italics in original)

Artemis asks Diane if she ever found out what happened to Andie; Diane replies, "It was the way I imagined it. He was killed. Except in High Park in Toronto, not Vancouver" (49). High Park, of course, references one of the most infamous anti-gay murders, the beating death of librarian Ken Zeller by five high school students in 1985.⁴³ As they discuss Diane's feelings about Andie's death, erotic awareness begins to flare between the two women, but it takes them some time to become lovers. The two women's names, of course, are Greek and Roman versions of the same goddess, Diana the virgin huntress, the goddess of the moon. Readers of Wayson Choy's first novel *The Jade Peony* may also remember that the moon is the female principle, but is also used, by the middle son, Jung's, grandmother as the explanation for his queerness, evident at a tender age only to the older woman.

One of the differences between Diane and Artemis is that Diane, although born in Canada, is raised in a Chinese family, while Artemis is adopted and raised by a white family earnestly intent that she not forget her ethnic heritage. In the meantime, Mercy Lee is beginning

⁴³ One of the consequences of Zeller's death and the resulting evidence of widespread homophobia in the public school system was the founding of the Human Sexuality Program by the Toronto School Board in 1988.

the process of her transformation into Ming, after discovering that her father is part owner of a factory in China which burned down, killing the workers unable to get out through the single door. The fourth woman of the group, Claude, was raped by her brother and his friends after she was caught making out with another girl in the school cloakroom. Rachel is Claude's most recent lover, after Artemis, and is a relatively minor character. All five women are lesbian, or possibly bisexual, and the relationships between them twist and turn, overlaid with their individual issues and problems as well as with the shared issue of hybrid identity, which each woman experiences differently. Lai says specifically that, "My strategy in recent years has been to make a project of constructing a consciously artificial history for myself and others like me — a history with women identified women of Chinese descent living in the West at its centre"; she adds that her "readings of history are bleached not only by the ideological interests of gender and class but also of race and culture" ("Political Animals" 149). Because of this, the Fox, an important figure of sexuality and death in Chinese mythology, forms a bridge in the novel between the contemporary story and the historical tale of Yu Hsuan-chi, the ninth-century courtesan and poet on whom the character of the Poetess in *When Fox is a Thousand* is based. But the Fox, who has the possibility of immortality and whose story is told in the first person, also functions, Lai says, "as a new trope for lesbian representation, or, if that term and its history reeks too much of its western origins, then as a trope of Asian women's community and power" (151).

When Fox is a Thousand is a novel stalked by death and violence: there are the deaths, violences and betrayals that are part of the everyday life of the Poetess; there are the deaths that feed the Fox, who needs to reanimate the bodies of the recently dead in order to take human form for her mischief (the Fox is also a trickster figure, although perhaps somewhat more malevolent than the Coyote in First Nations' mythology); and finally, the contemporary characters are haunted by the death of Ming in Stanley Park, which is foreshadowed by Diane's dream of the death of her sibling, Andie. Lai links all of these in her discussion of her own novel in "Political Animals and the Body of History" when she says that:

Insofar as *When Fox is a Thousand* concerns anti-racism ... I think issues of the body are primary. There are the obvious metaphors — the Fox breathing life into the bodies of the dead is like an Asian woman trying to breathe life into the assimilated almost-white self required by the social pressures of liberalism. She can never do it perfectly. There are always moments where the synapses

don't connect, where there are understandings missing. But for the Fox, these moments of breathing life into the dead are also moments of passion. This is something she is compelled to do. It is her nature. (152-53)

And Lai adds, continuing to consider metaphors of breath, that, "To engage the breath is to disrupt the binary opposition of Houdini's two boxes, to break from what Judith Butler refers to as 'the discursive site of injury'" (153). The quotation comes from the chapter "Subjection, Resistance and Resignification" in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), which considers the mechanisms by which "injurious interpellations will constitute identity through injury" (104-5). Thus, being called a "fat faggot" or a "Jew, kike, queer" or a "Chink" confers identity as it injures:

Called by an injurious name, I come into social being, and because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence, because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially. The self-colonizing trajectory of certain forms of identity politics are symptomatic of this paradoxical embrace of the injurious term. As a further paradox, then, only by occupying — being occupied by — that injurious term can I resist and oppose it, recasting the power that constitutes me as the power I oppose. (104)

Butler's description of the mechanism by which the subject is interpellated into social formation by the injurious term, as Louis Althusser would have it, also accounts for the resistance created by that very interpellation. Butler argues resignification occurs not as "an unconscious outside of power, but rather something like the unconscious of power itself, in its traumatic and productive iterability" (104). It is, it seems to me, this very "traumatic and productive iterability" that all of the artists attempting to resignify sexual/ethnic/racial violence are mobilizing to create, within their works, both the necessary moments of paranoid and/or revelatory reading and the resistant possibilities of resignifying injurious interpellation through reparative reading.

In *When Fox is a Thousand*, both paranoid and reparative readings are possible. One reading must, of necessity, focus on the making visible of what is invisible. Contemporary Asian-Canadian lesbians suffer from a three-fold invisibility, as queer, as Asian, and as women. That visibility becomes even more extreme when it comes to disinterring queer historical sources. Lai says that

... it is extremely difficult to find historical materials on Chinese lesbians. I suspect this not because they did not exist, but because for a long time sexual practice was not considered a focal point for identity.... Later, the absence of

such texts could be ascribed to the fact that women's lives were not deemed important enough to write about, or if worthy of writing, not deemed worthy of translation. (152)

When Fox is a Thousand writes both historical and contemporary queer women into existence, through the threefold narratives of the Poetess, the Fox (although Lynne van Luven reads the Fox as male, a possibility which had not occurred to me and still seems to me unlikely), and the contemporary women characters, whose queer sexuality cannot necessarily be encompassed by assuming a lesbian identity premised on western sexual epistemologies. Furthermore, the novel asserts a queer, a female and an Asian presence in the face of both historical and contemporary violences that interpellate these women as worthless.

Ming's death in Stanley Park, foreshadowed as it is by Andie's similar death in Toronto, is told and retold in the novel, each retelling trying out a different instance of the violences offered to people like Ming — the tattooed, short-haired, boyish dyke of the group. The Fox tells Artemis the story of five women brought before the judge of the underworld: all are Chinese-Canadian and all have been brutally murdered and/or buried in Stanley Park, the first by skinheads for racist reasons, the second ("the one with hair like a boy" [216]) by two crewcut men who (mis)identify her as a "faggot" and "bum-fucker" (217), the third by men who kidnap her and make her drive them to Stanley Park before killing her, the fourth because she was walking regularly at night in the park "wishing for violence because [her] heart was broken" (218), and the fifth, killed by her brother because her family discover she has a passionate attachment to another woman. In this litany of brutality and violence, which, as Artemis complains, provides no clear link to Mercy's killers, how is it possible to find anything reparative?

My argument here is that Lai, rehearsing all of this violence against her female characters, refuses to let it dominate, rather than haunt, the story. Furthermore, as Robyn Morris argues, Lai's brief invocations of scenes from *Bladerunner* (1984) use the film's notorious concern with defining the human (are the replicants, the artificial beings, not more human than the humans?) as a way of indicating that contemporary judgments about who really is a person (women in Canada were not, until 1929), who really is human, who really is a citizen (after all, Chinese-Canadians were not allowed to become citizens until 1947 and this thesis deals, in part, with the question of whether LGBT people are, even today, inscribed as full citizens within the Canadian polity).

In positing her women as not merely human, but as having a history and a mythology which links them to potent, if not necessarily 'real,' creatures like the Fox, Lai works reparatively to undo some of the history of injurious interpellation that the killers mobilize with words like 'bitch,' 'faggot' and 'Chink,' as well as with the very real violences enacted against the bodies of racialized, gendered and sexualized subaltern populations.

4. Everyday Theory, Everyone's Citizenship

When one juxtaposes the media reports and queer responses to these two very different issues involving LGBT people in Canada today, one question immediately springs to mind: what effect will gay marriage have on the incidence of queer-bashing? Does the right to marry also involve the right to hold hands in public? The right to kiss one's lover hello or good-bye at the airport or train station? The right to be openly romantic with another queer person? Does it mean that Hallmark or other mainstream card companies will now start issuing queer (or at least gender-neutral) wedding and anniversary cards? Does it mean that advertisers will recognize that queer people buy their products, too, even at Christmas?⁴⁴ Does it mean that proto-gay kids, to use Eve Sedgwick's term, will no longer be harassed for being 'sissies' or 'tomboys'? Does it mean that people will generally stop assuming that everyone they meet must naturally be heterosexual, so that one doesn't have continually to come out to every new acquaintance, every government official, every salesperson, every co-worker? Does it mean that all queer families will now be recognized as families, or that all families will recognize and accept their queer children, of whatever age (as Sedgwick has also remarked, queer childhood is always a matter of the past tense)? Finally, and importantly from the point of view of maintaining a viable queer culture in Canada (which may also be a viable Canadian culture), does it mean that Canada Customs will cease its longstanding harassment of Canada's lesbian and gay bookstores,

⁴⁴ This particular question was inspired by noticing that the full-page ad for the Broadway (Shopping) Centre in the current issue of the *Sydney Star Observer* (a GLBT newspaper) still features a heterosexual family, with blonde mother, blond father, and two blond kids, one girl and one boy. I suppose it could be said that it is a good thing that the local shopping centre (ie., the one closest to the largest concentration of LGBT people in Sydney), is supporting the queer newspaper through advertising revenue, but one would have thought that they could have come up with a more appropriate ad, especially as Christmas is often a very traumatic time for queer people who are estranged from their families of origin.

harassment that continues despite court victories on the part of Little Sister's bookstore in Vancouver? Legal rights are one thing; social practices may well be another thing entirely, particularly when, as the case of Little Sister's illustrates, judicial rulings fail to overturn discriminatory usages in practice.⁴⁵

What is also revealed, however, when one juxtaposes these two issues, is the tension between differing epistemologies, differing ideologies, differing conceptions of the person, the family, and the nation. On the one hand, we have the progressive liberal discourse invoked by Chrétien: however difficult, however estranging, however challenging, human rights must go forward; on the other hand, we have the material consequences of living in a society already well-versed in practices of discrimination and hatred. But are the discourse of liberal tolerance and the practice of material intolerance really so far apart? Sedgwick argues that the "hermeneutics of suspicion," borrowing Paul Ricoeur's phrase, by which we understand what underwrites a cultural event, experience or mode of being, results in a form of "paranoid reading," which, in turn, can never tell us more than we already know. She worries that the "very productive ... wide-spread critical habits indeed, perhaps by now nearly synonymous with criticism itself — may have had an unintentionally stultifying side-effect: that they may have made it less rather than more possible to unpack the local, contingent relations between any given piece of knowledge and its narrative/epistemological entailments for the seeker, knower, or teller" ("Paranoid Reading" 4). Sedgwick specifies very precisely that when she speaks about paranoid reading, she is not recirculating a "pathologizing diagnosis" of paranoia, but rather emphasizing that, "as Ricoeur notes, 'For Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the fundamental category of consciousness is the relation hidden-shown or, if you prefer, simulated-manifested...'" (5). Sedgwick adds that

⁴⁵ A press release from Little Sister's Bookstore on March 5, 2002, dealing with Canada Customs' seizure of two issues of the *Meatmen* adult comic book, says, in part:

Despite the fact that the Supreme Court of Canada condemned Canada Customs' record of prohibiting perfectly legal material which Little Sister's attempted to import, it would appear to be 'business as usual' at the border. Little Sister's expects that this important obscenity trial will not only demonstrate that the banned books are not obscene but also that nothing of substance has changed in the day-to-day operations of Canada Customs. As a result the bookstore intends to ask the court to shut down Customs' ability to ban books at the border — at least until such time as Customs can demonstrate that it is capable of administering its governing legislation in compliance with the Charter.

“... in the hands of thinkers after Freud, paranoia has by now candidly become less a diagnosis than a prescription. In a world where one need not be delusional to find evidence of systemic oppression, to theorize out of anything *but* a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naive, pious, or complaisant” (5). Despite her insistence that paranoid reading is unavoidable, Sedgwick’s move toward theorizing a mode of non-paranoid, or reparative, reading, works to remind us that paranoid reading, like queer theory, is not knowledge itself, but simply a way or series of ways of reading and understanding crucial social practices and epistemologies that has proven itself particularly potent in the current circumstances.

Despite this, however, Jonathan Dollimore refers to Sedgwick’s argument as proof that queer theory is “often supercilious, ... anxious, defended and sometimes paranoid” and suggests that this paranoia has less to do with deconstructive reading practices than it has “to do with the professional in-fighting in the American academy” (*Sex* 11-12). Despite Dollimore’s dismissal of Sedgwick’s argument about the importance and necessity of paranoid reading, Sedgwick’s thesis is important for any discussion of the ways in which discourses of sexuality underwrite material conditions and possibilities. Sedgwick consistently emphasizes the sociocultural factors and everyday experiences which inform the urgency of her anti-homophobic project: the extent of queer youth suicide, the scapegoating of gay men and, to a lesser degree, lesbians for HIV/AIDS, the prevalence of oppressive and discriminatory laws and practices, the targeting of proto-queer children for psychiatric intervention, the historical and contemporary violences enacted on the bodies and minds of LGBT people, “... the overarching, relatively unchallenged aegis of a culture’s desire that gay people *not be*” (“How To” 164).

Even if paranoid reading merely reveals what is in plain sight, rather than what is hidden, we still sometimes do need to know what we know, or rather what knowledge *means*, as well as what it does. Most importantly, we need critical tools, including both paranoid and reparative reading, that allow us to comprehend the imbrication of apparently discrete categories of knowledge, most obviously the supposedly differential categories of, on the one hand, sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, indigeneity and class and, on the other hand, the ostensibly distinct institutions of family, marriage, education, employment, housing, medicine, psychiatry, the judiciary, religion, immigration, citizenship and the nation itself. In unpacking, or attempting to unpack, the contingent, local relations between *knowing*, for example, that gay marriage is a

necessary, if difficult, legislative enactment on behalf of the advancement of universalized human rights and *knowing* that ‘queers should be killed,’ we need first to be able to ask if and how these two broadly disciplinary practices are related and what that relationship means.⁴⁶

When we bring in other practices and knowledges that have borne historically and continue to bear in the present a series of fraught and not necessarily clear relationships to sexuality and sexual practice, we may indeed find ourselves asking, within the Canadian context, questions very similar to those the American critic Lauren Berlant asks in *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (1997):

What would it mean to write a genealogy of sex in America in which unjust sexual power was attributed not to an individual, not to patriarchy, but to the nation itself? Such an account would expose the circuits of erotic and political dominance that have permeated collective life in the United States: it would register how intensively *sexual* white Americans’ relations have been to African American people, as well as to other people of color, and it would demonstrate the perverse play of attraction and aversion in the political life of the polis; it would show how vital the existence of official sexual underclasses has been to national symbolic and political coherence, linking experiences of violated sexual privacy to the doctrine of abstract national personhood; it would radically transform what is considered *national* about the history of the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ in the United States; finally, it would establish an archive for a different history, one that claimed the most intimate stories of subordinated people as information about *everyone’s* citizenship. (221; italics in original)

These are important questions, although their specific valence cannot be identical in the Canadian context: differing histories of colonization, settlement, relations to indigenous peoples, immigration and racialization, as well as variances in governance, political machinery and collective life, all mitigate for the necessity of reformulating and rebalancing the questions Berlant asks, both in themselves and in their relations to each other. While Canada, for example, was certainly not blameless in the matter of slavery, it does make a difference that slavery was never institutionalized in Canada to the extent and in the ways that it was in the United States. Black/white relations dominate racial politics in the USA in a way that they don’t, quite, in

⁴⁶ Lest I be accused of exaggeration, I would like to remind readers that both Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson had messages on their websites on September 12, 2001, claiming that the attack on the World Trade Centre was America’s punishment for allowing homosexuals, feminists, abortionists and the ACLU to exist. Bull and Gallagher also quote R.J. Rushdoony, Pat Robertson’s mentor, as calling for the death penalty for “practicing homosexuals” (*Perfect Enemies* 277).

Canada. The quintessential moment of nation-building racial trauma for Canadians is not the slave trade, as it is in the US, but rather the fraught relationship of the nation, however much it may be officially re-written as benign (the Mounties, after all, were officially founded to stop renegade Americans from massacring ‘our’ Indians), with the indigenous people that white colonialists attempted to displace.⁴⁷ And this particular racial trauma has itself often been subsumed into the background of more official and sometimes more acrimonious debates about the relations between Canada’s “two founding peoples,” that is the English and the French.

This relationship, too, has inevitably been recast in both racial and gendered terms: if the Québécois are, on the one hand, “les négres blanc d’amerique,” Québec itself is frequently the feminine in a union conceived in terms of heterosexual marriage (and, with the separatist debates, heterosexual divorce).⁴⁸ More importantly, for my purposes here, Carl Stychin, in *A Nation by Rights*, and Caren Irr, in “Queer Borders,” have argued that the relations between Québec and the rest of Canada are not only gendered, but queered, in part by a series of metaphoric comparisons between English and French cultures but also, in part, pragmatically by the very early recognition of gay rights in Québec (protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was enshrined in Québec’s charter in 1977, more than twenty years before national legislation was altered, largely on judicial insistence, to provide the same protections under the law across the whole of Canada). Irr, however, also notes that the same extended series of metaphors, both gendered and sexualized, have also applied to Canada’s relation to the US: if Canada is masculine in its ‘marriage’ to Québec, it is simultaneously feminine in its relationship to the larger, more dominant culture of the US; if Québec is ‘queer’ relative to the rest of Canada, then Canada is (perhaps increasingly) ‘queer’ in its relation to the US.

⁴⁷ On the nation-building character of the mythologies arising from the foundation of the RCMP, see primarily Keith Walden, *Visions of Order*, as well as the first chapters of Eva Mackey’s *The House of Difference*.

⁴⁸ The term, of course, comes from the title of Pierre Vallière’s book, which was published in its English translation as *White Niggers of America*.

III

READING CANADA QUEERLY

Most writers are defensive about any label that has a potential for limiting their audience, whether it is 'woman,' 'black,' 'academic,' 'regional,' 'popular,' or 'lesbian.' Unlike some writers, I like the label 'Canadian.' I chose it, feel at home with it, and know it travels very well in the world.

Jane Rule, *A Hot-Eyed Moderate*

For what I have tried to experiment with here is the wager that in writing we become-other, becoming that of which we write and think. While there are no assurances that this will play out in immediate ways, that the social will be miraculously rearranged, listening more carefully, looking more acutely — in short, being deeply interested in life — may help to renew the energy we need now and in the future if we are to encourage relations of belonging that peacefully and joyously coexist.

Elsbeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings*

CHAPTER THREE

‘AN ODD NATIONAL ENTITY’: DUPLICITY, POSTCOLONIALISM AND THE QUEERNESS OF BEING CANADIAN

That Canada is an odd national entity is likely clear to the rest of the world, if not to Canadians, if only because what other nation has — as its combined national hero and colourful symbol — a policeman in a funny costume?

Linda Hutcheon, *Splitting Images*

Queer cultural practice necessarily engages the colonial contexts of Canadian identity in redefining what it means to be a citizen today

Richard Dellamora, “John Greyson’s
Zero Patience in the Canadian Firmament”

1. Introduction: Queerly Colonial?

My epigraph is taken from the beginning of Linda Hutcheon’s *Splitting Images: Contemporary Canadian Ironies* (1991). I find myself citing Hutcheon here for two reasons: first, because her work on the relationship between irony and Canadian culture provides a pivotal, albeit perhaps equivocal, theoretical basis for parts of my argument here; and, second, because *Splitting Images* grounds itself within a particular view of a Canada caught between (at least) two disparate and uneven colonial histories¹ — a history of British/French colonialism that is rapidly vanishing from popular memory, although its legacy is all around us, and the contemporary history of Canada’s fraught relationship with US, and especially with the vision of contemporary Canadian culture as already irredeemably colonized by the world of guns, big-budget movies, and — to quote Billy Joel — “rock and roll and cola wars.”

¹ This is not intended to suggest that colonialism is not still very much a fact of life for First Nations peoples, as will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In 1997, my partner and I attended a seminar on performativity at Penn State, where the wrap-up discussion led one of the American participants solemnly to pronounce — in the context of seminars that were, after all, being led primarily by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Sue-Ellen Case — that “all Canadians are queer.”² While the literal meaning of this statement is clearly absurd (though I am, of course, tempted to add, ‘would that it were so’), this phrase has stuck in my mind because it does, in fact, as Stychin and Irr have argued, incorporate something of the genuine relationship between Canada and the United States, while at the same time pointing up the necessity for Canadians of viewing the US in a somewhat ironic light. From the American point of view, Canadians no doubt do seem a little queer ... but ‘queer’ is not even now, as I argued in the first chapter, a word that can be pronounced without carrying some echo of the duplicity, even the multiplicity, of its meanings. The queerness of Canadians must, at the very least, incorporate the oddness symbolized in our national icon — or perhaps more precisely these days by Canadian actor Paul Gross’ most famous character, Constable Benton Fraser³ — and, at the same time, the very particular queernesses of its lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and two-spirited citizens.

As indicated briefly in the previous chapter, this suggestion that Canada can be understood as at least metonymically queer in relation to the US is not mine alone, but also informs work on Canadian-US relationships by Carl Stychin and Caren Irr, as well as by Thomas Haig. Haig discusses the reception of CBC’s gender-bending comedy show *Kids in the Hall* in the US, where it was distributed first on HBO and later on CBS, and the ways in which the comedy troupe’s “fearless appetite to satirize sexual and gender conventions” could be read, perhaps ironically, as reflecting the difference between Canadian and American national masculinities (227). Haig quotes Toronto film critic Jay Scott’s 1989 *Village Voice* article, in which Scott argues that “Americans routinely condition their males to swagger with a strut that is rare in Canada ... Canadian male children grow up softer around the edges — less assertive,

² Both Sedgwick and Case have done foundational work in Queer Theory, a field in which notions of performativity have become increasingly central.

³ Gross is best known, both inside and outside Canada, for his portrayal of the morally-upright, rather quirky Constable Fraser on *Due South*, a Canadian television show which, according to its press releases, has been shown in some two hundred countries around the world.

less demanding, less butch” (Qtd. in Haig 227). Haig reads Scott’s assertion of differential gender performance sardonically to indicate that “Canada is an effeminate country, and its male citizens, lacking an ingrained ‘swagger’ and ‘strut,’ have a natural calling to don skirt, wigs and make-up” and suggests that “despite his progressive gay politics, Scott understands effeminacy in stereotypical terms as some kind of lack or absence” (227). By contrast, Haig argues that “the signs of gendered, sexual, national, racial, and ethnic identities ... circulate on ‘Kids in the Hall’ [sic] as a kind of excess overflowing characters, screens, and borders” (228).

Haig notes particularly the way in which the character of Buddy Cole, played by Scott Thompson, the troupe’s only gay member, flouts Hollywood’s stereotypical construction of effeminacy as “sexless, unappealing, and pathetic,” instead affirming Buddy’s effeminacy as “a source of pleasure and power both for himself and his audience” (228).⁴ In attempting to answer the question of whether Buddy is also “distinctively Canadian,” Haig notes that Thompson’s performance of the Buddy Cole character unintentionally suggests an alternative approach to the apparently endless debate over national identity in Canada, by allowing the viewer to see Cole as quintessentially Canadian and thus the country itself as quintessentially ‘queer.’ Haig argues that the

... parallels between being Canadian and being queer are numerous.... Just as gays and lesbians are surrounded by, and barely represented within the larger heterosexual culture, Canadians are awash in a sea of normalizing, hegemonic American culture that rarely depicts them. English Canadians often ‘pass’ as Americans based on hasty assumptions about what is marked as different, just as queers can (and often must) pass as straight. Moreover, both queers and Canadians have tended to wrest a space for resistance and self-representation by ironically re-reading and re-working dominant culture texts: camp culture and Canadian traditions of satire and irony can be understood as remarkably similar responses to the experiences of marginalization and lack of voice. Even the rhetoric of ‘coming out’ and being ‘outed’ bears comparisons. In other

⁴ The Hollywood prototype of the effeminate gay man (a tautology in the terms of the time) was Harold (Leonard Frey), the 32-year-old “ugly pockmarked Jew fairy” in Matt Crowley’s *The Boys in the Band* (1970). Although widely criticized for its stereotypical performances — not only were the characters effeminate, but the film proclaimed “show me a happy homosexual and I’ll show you a gay corpse,” a campy line which actually only reinforced the heterosexual belief in the unhappiness of gay men — the film broke ground as the first (and apparently still the only) Hollywood movie exclusively about gay men. It is worth noting, however, that one of those stereotypes was the conflation of queerness, effeminacy and Jewishness in the figure of Harold, a conflation that would have been perfectly understood both by HUAC and by the Nazis.

countries, English Canadians often adopt a strategy of self-affirmation by 'coming out' as Canadian, and famous Canadians living and working in the United States are frequently 'outed.' (229)

Haig concludes that, in refiguring effeminacy not as a lack, but as a kind of transcendent excess, Thompson's portrayal of Buddy Cole allows the viewer to "imagine the particular 'queerness' of Canada as a place in which we thoroughly enjoy and craftily deploy our fabulous ambiguous and excessive identities" (229).

Haig understands Canadian culture as working through irony and satire to wrest a space for self-representation, often by reshaping hegemonic cultural projects, as Thompson does with the Americanized stereotype of the effeminate and sexless queen. Irony, in particular, is often understood as a form of duplicity — or double-talking — and has also been identified by many Canadian critics, most notably Linda Hutcheon, as one of the quintessential tactics of Canadian cultural production. While Hutcheon, unlike Haig, does not address specifically the doubling that implicates the queer with the Canadian or with the postcolonial in Canadian culture, her work on irony and double-talking opens up spaces to interrogate the intersections of different identity formations within divergent forms of cultural production. It then becomes possible to do queer, postcolonial readings, not unlike Haig's reading of *Kids in the Hall*, of everything from the quirkiness of the Canadian television show *Due South* to the duplicitousness of John Greyson's film *Lilies* (1995) (itself already a translation and revision of Michel Marc Bouchard's stage play *Les Feluettes ou la repetition d'un drame romantique*) to the reworking of foundational prairie fictions alongside Japanese mythology in Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child* (2001) to the particular re-appropriation of Conrad in Timothy Findley's *Headhunter* (1983) or of Genesis in his equally queer, ironic, and postcolonial novel, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984) to the duplicities and doublenesses involved in being both Cree and queer in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) or both Mohawk and lesbian in Beth Brant's short stories.

Canada occupies an ambivalent place within discourses of nationalism and postcolonialism. Canadians are at once colonizer and colonized, existing within both a postcolonial and a colonial present that is only made more complex by the divisions between First Nations people and European settlers, between French and English, between colonist descendant

and more recent immigrant⁵ — and, of course, between straight and gay.⁶ Perhaps because Canadians have feared to recognize and to come to terms with this multiplicity of experience, our cultural discourses have historically served to inculcate in newcomers a sense of connection to an imperial British past, while attempting to elide both the real ethnic and racial differences of the immigrants themselves and the historical and cultural narratives of the First Nations peoples. At the same time, our culture ‘industry’ and our government operate within an uneasy alliance designed to protect us, however ineffectually, from the colonizer to the south. And, of course, we do this while continuing to maintain the so-called ‘two solitudes’ of Québécois and ‘Anglo’-Canadian culture.

This chapter will examine selected works of culture — primarily Goto’s novel, *The Kappa Child*, Findley’s novel, *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, Greyson’s *Lilies*, the paintings of Attila Richard Lukacs, several of Beth Brant’s short stories and Tomson Highway’s novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* — in the hope of both discerning and interrogating the ways in which these works mobilize the potential intersections between queerness and postcoloniality. While both queer and postcolonial readings of these works are possible, indeed fruitful, part of my aim in this

⁵ Jonathan Hart and Terry Goldie note that Canada is

... a settler culture overlaid by an English tradition. The Canadian experience must also take into account the fact that the French were the first major colonizers ... Canada is ... a political and economic construction of two of the most potent European powers, France and Britain. The increasingly multicultural nature of the country also complicates the relation between indigenous and settler countries. (156)

These various complications suggest that Canada’s relationship to both colonialism and postcolonialism is complex, experienced very differently by First Nations peoples, settler descendants, both French and English, and more recent immigrants (who may themselves also bring post/colonial experiences from elsewhere to their perceptions of Canada). These different relationships to the post/colonial cannot be taken as equivalent or as containing the same or similar meanings. In discussing Canada’s relationship to the US, it needs to be noted that this relationship is also experienced differently by different people.

⁶ I should point out in this context that it is not uncommon for people in the lesbian and gay community to view themselves as colonized by the larger heterosexual — and heteronormative — world that surrounds them. This reaction is particularly marked when gay people see their lives being regulated by outside powers which can arbitrarily refuse to recognize the existence of a forty-year relationship, remove children from their mothers, or enforce sexual mores that gay men, in particular, often see as hopelessly inappropriate; it is further reinforced by the ethnic model of sexual identity that underlays much contemporary lesbian/gay politics. The question here remains whether or not being forced, as a subaltern community not constituted by race or ethnicity, to live by another group’s rules constitutes *per se* an experience of a form of colonialism. The corollary perhaps explains why issues of sexuality and especially dissident sexuality have largely been ignored by the majority of postcolonial scholars.

examination is to ask which aspects of these works are brought into focus and which, by contrast, disappear from view when seen through the overlapping lenses of these two theoretical positions. In doing so, I will return to Hutcheon's notion of the importance of doubling, of duplicity, both to the creation of Canadian culture and to the articulation of a postmodern Canadian identity.

2. Seeing Double: Irony, Identity and the Clearly/Queerly Canadian

The image of the Mountie — the “policeman in a funny costume” — has been one of Canada's most successful cultural exports, even if the image has little to do with the historical reality that traverses such less than inspired events as the Winnipeg riots, the burning of barns, and, more recently, Peppergate.⁷ *Due South* (1994-98) features one quirky Canadian Mountie patrolling the mean streets of Chicago armed only with a deaf wolf, an aptitude for jumping off tall buildings, a seemingly endless supply of Inuit stories, and a degree of moral rectitude that is in sharp contrast to the shadiness of even the other ‘good guys.’ Teamed up with a street-wise and somewhat sleazy Chicago cop, our hero appears at once larger-than-life and hopelessly naive about urban — and American — ways of life. The Mountie as icon of the clearly/queerly Canadian thus stands at the heart of *Due South*'s sometimes scathing commentary on US/Canadian relations. The satirical objective is often two-fold, taking aim at Canadians' perceptions of how they are perceived by Americans as well as at American culture and social mores.

Due South is popular throughout most of the English-speaking world, though perhaps more so in Commonwealth countries than in the United States. I want to begin my comments on Canadian and American cultural relations in the context of both queerness and postcolonialism with reference to the episode *Perfect Strangers* (1997), in which the Mountie and the cop have two murders, one in Chicago and one in Toronto, and two suspects with perfect alibis.

⁷ Acting on misinformation from private security firms hired to infiltrate the labour movement, the Mounties killed two protesters and wounded twenty others during the Winnipeg General Strike in June, 1919. In November of 1997, the RCMP pepper-sprayed and arrested peaceful demonstrators protesting the presence of Indonesian President Suharto at the APEC meeting in Vancouver. Attempts by the Prime Minister's office to deny responsibility for the actions of the RCMP led the media to dub the incident ‘Peppergate.’

Unsurprisingly perhaps, especially given the show's notable tendency to quotation and intertextuality, it turns out that the villains have swapped victims.⁸ However, the scene I wish to cite occurs early in the episode, when Constable Fraser and his American partner watch a tape that recreates the second murder, which took place in Canada. Shot in black and white with obviously 'artistic' camera effects and a soundtrack of Gregorian chant by the Benedictine monks of St-Benoit-du-Lac, the crime scene recreation looks more like an attempt at *film noir* than anything else. When the Americans express their incredulity, Fraser carefully explains that "government funding of the arts in Canada produced a glut of film-makers at the same time as American domination of Canadian cinemas left these enthusiastic young artists with very few arenas in which to ply their craft." These innovative would-be film-makers are forced to turn their hands to crime scene reconstructions for the RCMP, resulting in an oddly hybrid product. One of the ironies of this scene is that, while the overall situation is accurate enough, the real RCMP's crime scene reconstructions are as mundane as anything produced in the US. There are further duplicities in the episode, one of which is that the Americans on the show are largely portrayed by Canadian actors; at the same time, the episode produced a specific moment of intertextuality in which art coincided with life, since it aired three days after a visit to Parliament by a number of Canadian television personalities, including Gross, urging the government to reverse its decision to discontinue the Canadian Television and Cable Production Fund.

While *Due South* has neither an obviously postcolonial nor an obviously queer context,⁹ despite the Mountie uniform having been taken up since the show first went to air, in a notably ironic context, as gay bar costume and icon of sorts (a 'Mountie' in Stetson, red tunic and fishnet

⁸ This is the basic scenario of Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* (1951), which was based on Patricia Highsmith's first novel, published the previous year.

⁹ Bodroghkhozzy, however, argues that *Due South* exploits a specifically postcolonial strategy for survival: "If Canada has traditionally been 'hard to see,' what better way to change that than by making a kind of 'Canada' visible in the very place where Canada has been most invisible — American television?" (581). As Bodroghkhozzy notes, this is a strategy which is not without its hazards — she argues specifically that the show's view of Canada is patriarchal, symbolized by a 'macho man' in the same way that Crocodile Dundee functions as an icon of patriarchal Australia. I disagree with the latter argument, in part because I view the show as being overtly queer (when I used the word 'obviously' above, I was referring primarily to the heteronormative assumption that the 'obviously queer' must be the obviously homosexual, ie. explicitly genital) and, in part, because the last two seasons of *Due South*, which aired after Bodroghkhozzy's article was written, were produced without US funding, a fact which substantially minimized the show's need to play to Americans, as well as to Canadians, without diminishing its generally ironic commentary on Canadian-US relations.

stockings carried a maple leaf banner with the slogan “we always get our man” in the 1999 gay and lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney), it does provide a useful example within popular culture of the propensity for what Linda Hutcheon has identified as an inclination to irony that is particularly prevalent within both Canadian artistic and literary endeavours and within the theoretical milieu of postmodernism. Furthermore the notable homoerotic subtext of the show, which has itself been vastly, not to mention explicitly, elaborated in the subsection of the fan fiction world known as ‘slash,’ provides precisely the sort of duplicitous queerness that Hutcheon’s theoretical exposition of Canadian irony suggests.¹⁰ Insofar as the show appears to cater deliberately to several different audiences, making note, for example, of the fact that it can tell jokes to both Canadians and Americans that are largely only accessible to one or the other audience, it is a particularly useful exemplar of the postmodern within popular culture.

In fact, the language of postmodernism generally has become sufficiently commonplace that it informs such non-academic works as pollster Michael Adams’ non-fiction bestseller *Sex in the Snow: Canadian Social Values at the End of the Millennium*. While the tongue-in-cheek title may be the initial attention-grabber, Adams’ attempt both to resist and to redefine traditional demographic studies that work along such axes as age, race, ethnicity, and geographic location is specifically situated within an understanding of the Canadian social and cultural milieu not simply as multicultural by governmental policy, with its attendant baggage of enforced tolerance and exaggerated resistance, but as a kind of psychological multiculturalism as popular postmodernism. The makers of *Due South* would likely not disagree with Adams’ suggestion that

[t]oday our postmodern Canadian nationalism is one part moral superiority (over you know whom) and an equal part irony. We know, deep down, that we are superior to Americans (the UN tells us so every year in its development report), but, like ancient Greeks, we fear that if we admit it, we would be committing an unforgivable act of hubris and the gods would take it all away. (xxi)

¹⁰ ‘Slash’ fiction is so named because of the habit of fan fiction writers, in the mid to late seventies, of indicating that *Star Trek* stories portrayed a homoerotic relationship between Captain Kirk and Mister Spock with the shorthand ‘K/S.’ In an article in *The Globe and Mail* on August 8 1998, journalist Cynthia Brouse quotes Paul Gross as acknowledging an awareness of the existence of slash fiction, while also claiming that the notorious kissing, aka ‘buddy breathing,’ scene in *Mountie on the Bounty*, which Gross wrote the script for, was not aimed at that audience because it constitutes too small a demographic.

At the same time, as both Hutcheon and my example from *Due South* point out, Canadians tend to have a sense of their culture as deeply embattled by the overwhelming economic power of the cultural industries in the US — which include not only Hollywood and the US television moguls, but also US bookstore chains, magazine empires, etc. With reference to the apparent hegemony of US media in Canada, Aniko Bodroghkozy notes that

... in dominant discourse, Canada has been served up as a paradigm case of media imperialism. An industrial powerhouse by global standards, a charter member of the Group of Seven economic powers, regularly ranked by the United Nations as one of the world's most livable societies, and yet, according to much communications theory, Canada wallows in dependency and dubious sovereignty, always on the verge of being dismantled as a failed experiment in nation-building. And our taste for American popular culture serves as one of the villainous culprits. (570)

Bodroghkozy counters the pessimism of this gloomy vision of Canadian cultural dependence in three ways: it is clear that Canada is still a viable nation, quite different from the US in many ways; the consumption of American cultural products need not be passive, but can involve reading strategies which reconstruct and recontextualize texts; it is arguable whether a “common symbolic culture” is, in fact, a prerequisite for viability as a nation-state (Collins, qtd. in Bodroghkozy 570). Nevertheless, while their necessity as importantly constitutive of Canadian identity may be in doubt, certain forms of independent Canadian culture continue to teeter on the edge of economic viability; for example, small publishing enterprises feel themselves increasingly threatened by the forces of transnational corporatism, which for Canadians tends to equate to American corporatism. These worries attend not only the possible publishing opportunities for Canadian writers generally, as being a relatively small market, but for all groups who are ‘outside’ the centre, including both ethnic and racial minorities and gays and lesbians, let alone for those who, like Tomson Highway, Beth Brant, Dionne Brand, Shyam Selvadurai or Hiromi Goto, happen to fit all three categories: queer; aboriginal, Trinidadian, Sri Lankan or Japanese; and Canadian.

Irony, then, is one of the modes by which those of us who are outside the mainstream of artistic and cultural production attempt to make our voices heard and our presences seen. It says something about the Canadian view of ourselves as both colonizer and colonized that we apply this logic not merely to the work of those who have traditionally been on the margins of

Canadian cultural production, but also to those who are firmly rooted within its mainstream — Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, and Robertson Davies, for example. Hutcheon suggests that irony, and specifically double-talking, opens up spaces for Canadian cultural production despite the looming Walt Disneyfication of the world (and it may be worth noting that, only five or six years after the publication of *Splitting Images*, the RCMP sold the right to market their image to Disney). Hutcheon notes that Canadian writers and artists both attempt to escape the dominant cultural ideology of our neighbour to the south and to interrogate our own dominant cultural ideologies through finding

the liminal spaces in between, the double meanings that double-talking ironies are making room for. The tactics used to bring these spaces into being ... are common enough: those familiar rhetorical devices of understatement, hyperbole, anticlimax, and repetition, as well as those modes of strategic positioning that provide counter-expectation—incongruity, recontextualizing, defamiliarizing clichés, or parody. Whatever the medium and whatever the function, irony seems to be at least one of the ways so-called English-Canadians have chosen to articulate their problematic identities. (*Splitting Images* 39)

But what of those whose identities are even more problematic, those who do not fit even untidily into the port-manteau category of English-Canadian, which often enough means only those who don't happen to be francophone or First Nations? And what of those who 'really' are queer, whether English-Canadian or otherwise? It becomes apparent, I think, once one encounters the cultural productions of those who are outside this central definition of what it means to be Canadian (leaving aside the equally problematic question of what it means to be Québécois), that what Hutcheon calls the "double-meaning of double-talking," whether one identifies it as irony, parody, satire or intertextuality, is a prevalent technique for bringing one's own story into visibility and, often, for undercutting, subverting, or rewriting the dominant narratives by which one has been represented. Double-talking is one means of regaining agency, of representing one's own subjectivity in a culture that has either (or both) misrepresented one or has rendered one invisible. Recognizing such duplicities has been and remains one of the major modes of queer reading, whether that reading is recognized as cultural or subcultural, reparative or paranoid.

3. Wrestling with Kappa, Swimming with Whalesbians

I found the writing intense, atmospheric, heavy with something that was not said, which I nonetheless recognized. I couldn't tell what it was, aslant the calm surface of narration, that I heard. But whatever it was spoke to me precisely along the wavelengths of a silence that I found irresistible. As if somehow, the novels were written in a language which I could not articulate and yet in which I found myself articulated.... My reading was rapt. I can still recall a kind of fevered sense that overcame me ... [; I] read the story as if it were some kind of science fiction. The place was unimaginable, I could not imagine it as being real. It was the place of reading. It was where I was.

Jonathan Goldberg, "Strange Brothers"

Goldberg is speaking here about his adolescent experience of first encountering the works of Willa Cather, particularly "Tom Outland's Story" and the novel *The Professor's House*, both of which circulate around the discovery of the Mesa Verde cliff-dwellings of the Anasazi, a First Nations tribe that vanished even before the arrival of Europeans. Goldberg points out that the eponymous professor not only lives a double life, his story is told in a kind of double language, "one in which 'common words' are given 'a second meaning that would be readily recognized only by other gay men'" (Goldberg 475) — and, of course, by lesbians like Cather herself. I take this detour via the literary figure of Cather, a writer central specifically to that form of literary criticism that gave birth to queer theory, precisely because it suggests ways of queer reading that are informative even when applied to texts that are, as Cather's were not, openly queer, as well as to texts that are openly 'deviate' along other lines, particularly racial and ethnic ones. Goldberg's adolescent experience of recognition, however ill articulated and indeed, at the time, unspeakable, is central, I suspect, not only to queer readers, but to others who have found themselves marginalized from the supposedly central reading position of the bourgeois white male heterosexual.

Thus it is not necessarily the obvious texts that speak to us or that call out for creative re-readings, for interpretive strategies that allow the reader to "reconstitute and recontextualize" texts in precisely the same ways that Frank Manning insists is necessary for Canadian consumers of American culture (8). Alternatively, when we unquestioningly accept the dominant reading of a text, we can trap ourselves in utterly untenable positions, as does the nameless narrator of Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child* (2001), who needs desperately to transcend the sanitized

fiction of pioneer life for young girls that is Laura Ingalls in *Little House on the Prairie*. Such readings/re-readings/re-writings are examples of precisely that ironic duplicity that Hutcheon identifies in *Splitting Images* as a quintessentially Canadian deconstructive device:

What irony allows writers ... to do is to break the link between the unrepresented and the unrepresentable. Beyond even deconstruction, in the liminal interstices of ironic doubleness, the other finds a way to represent itself — as black, South Asian, ethnic, female, or gay. (30)

What Hutcheon finds so numinous about irony's deconstructive potential is also true, I will suggest, about the genre-bending potential of much contemporary Canadian speculative fiction. Indeed, the use of genre in these works might itself be said to be consciously ironic, a deliberate deviation from generic norms, a willingness to turn the connections between genre and gender on their heads, a desire to double back on one's own generic tracks precisely in order to represent "the unrepresented and the unrepresentable." Thus, for example, Geoff Ryman's *Was: A Novel* (1992) merges children's stories with AIDS narratives with biography with magic realism with a postcolonial perspective on the settlement of Kansas, all of them intimately connected through *The Wizard of Oz* — the novel, the film, and the life of Judy Garland.¹¹ Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* combines Cree mythology and story-telling with western narrative conventions and magic realism to structure a novel which is already shaped by the liminal ways in which its protagonists, two Cree brothers, learn eventually to reshape the western arts of dance and music through First Nations traditions. Goto's two novels, *A Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994) and *The Kappa Child*, present the reader with a pastiche of western and non-western genres, from the re-telling of Japanese folktales to the re-writing of the pioneer story as a new immigrant narrative. That all of these texts, and indeed many others by queer and non-queer Canadian artists, employ magic realist techniques speaks, in part, to Canada's queerly postcolonial position in the world. As Stephen Slemon notes, magic realism originated in Latin America and the Caribbean before spreading to "India, Nigeria and English Canada, this last being perhaps the most startling development for magic realism in recent years, since Canada, unlike these other regions, is not part of the third world, a condition long thought necessary to the

¹¹ I discuss *Was* later in the thesis, in the context of the ways it mobilizes discourses of home.

currency of the term in regard to literature” (9). Reading Canadian culture through a queer lens, however, it seems to me that the near wholesale adoption of magic realist techniques throughout the Canadian literary world clearly reiterates the peculiar queerness and (post)coloniality of the Canadian position in North America, as well as giving voice to the concerns of the minoritized within Canada. And Terry Goldie adds, in a discussion of magic realism in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, that “[m]agic realism can be an agent which does not divorce the modern from the past, but rather offers the past a viable way of continuing in the present” (*Pink Snow* 215).¹² *The Kappa Child*, which won the 2001 Tiptree Award for a work “that explores and expands gender roles in science fiction and fantasy”¹³ and was also short-listed for the Spectrum Award, which celebrates “works in science fiction, fantasy and horror which include positive explorations of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered characters, themes, or issues,” is an intriguing mix of generic fantasy, humour (in its mobilization of excess, especially corporeal excess, it has a certain camp quality, although the term is rarely applied to writing by women), Japanese mythology, magic realism, alien abduction stories, and what Samuel Delany would call a ‘literary’ interest in the psychological.¹⁴ Goto asks ‘what if the kappa, a trickster character from Japanese folklore, were transplanted to the dusty landscape of the Canadian prairies?’ And, ‘what if the protagonist, who is still struggling to come to terms with her abusive childhood, meets a kappa and becomes pregnant?’ Thematically, *The Kappa Child* is about

¹² This seems to me as true of queer pasts, with a history of systemic oppression and violence (anyone doubting that this is the case in Canada need only read Gary Kinsman’s *The Regulation of Desire*), as with the pasts of ethnic and racial minorities, including the systematic destruction of First Nations’ cultures and languages, the internment and forced relocation of Japanese-Canadians, the destruction of community and individual hopes brought about by the Chinese Immigration Act, and the contemporary mistreatment of Caribbean-Canadians of all kinds.

¹³ The Tiptree Award is named after James Tiptree Jr., who shocked the science fiction world when it was revealed that s/he was ‘really’ Alice Sheldon, particularly as Tiptree’s prose was celebrated for its supposedly masculine, Hemingwayesque characteristics, thus raising the question of whether there really are such things as ‘men’s writing’ and ‘women’s writing.’

¹⁴ Delany, an American critic and science fiction writer, claims that it is the obsession with psychology that distinguishes ‘Literature’ from genre fiction, which he calls “paraliterature”: “For the last hundred years, the interpretative conventions of all the literary reading codes have been organized, tyrannized even, by what, in philosophical jargon, you could call ‘the priority of the subject.’ Everything is taken to be about mind, about psychology. And, in literature, the odder or more fantastical or surreal it is, the more it’s assumed to be about mind or psychology” (“Semiology” 32).

families, both the ones you're born into and the ones you make for yourself, thus making obvious connections with contemporary queer concerns about the political, social and legal construction of family; it is also about the difficulties and joys of human relationships, of friendship, of sisterhood, and of love. And, finally, it is about the way in which the past transforms the present. In fact, Goto's play of past and present, fantasy and reality, which switches back and forth between the protagonist's adult present and her childhood past, between the apparently mimetic and the apparently fantastical, reminds me very strongly of Geoff Ryman's argument, in the afterword to *Was*, that we need to distinguish between fantasy and history, if we are not to be deluded by the one and controlled by the other, and then to "play them off against each other" (369), a tactic which gives primacy to neither while insisting on the necessity of both.

Told in the first person, the protagonist-narrator's story unravels bit by bit to reveal surprises that are only made possible by the novel's defiance of generic convention — this is particularly true of the protagonist's encounter with the kappa, the mythological Japanese creature that gives the novel its name. The unnamed protagonist is one of four Japanese-Canadian sisters who are transplanted from the lush wetness of the British Columbia coast to the dry, flat and mostly inhospitable prairies. Of course, it is not only the landscape that is inhospitable, although it could hardly be more unsuited to the father's dreams of rich, wet fields covered with the luxuriant verdure of Japanese rice: the family struggles through years of hardship and failure, exacerbated by their position as a visible ethnic minority in an unwelcoming, largely WASP culture. But even the family home is not a refuge for the four sisters, as the father takes out his bitterness and rage on the helpless girls and their frightened, subservient mother.

This is, however, not a realist novel about the hardships of immigrant life on the Canadian prairies, although that story is certainly counterpointed within the novel, primarily by the protagonist's childhood obsession with Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* (1935). The narrative itself is complex, moving as it does between the protagonist's present as a pregnant cart collector whose one asset is an ancient milk delivery van, her recent past, and her difficult childhood. It is a story peopled predominantly by women, including the three sisters, the protagonist's friends and her eventual romantic interest, and the mother and her friend and neighbour, Janice Nakamura. The three sisters have 'English' names given to them by the

protagonist as a child: the eldest is Slither, the two younger sisters are Mice and PG, short for Pig Girl. The mother is referred to by the protagonist as Okasan, although, like the sisters, she reclaims her own name before the close of the novel. The protagonist's friends are Genevieve, whom she meets at the opening/closing sale of a pajama store as she purchases the first of what is to become "the most extensive collection of pajamas in the western hemisphere" (51) and Midori, whom she first encounters in a tussle over a discarded couch. The remaining friend and potential lover is Bernie, the woman who owns the Korean grocery store where the protagonist buys her Japanese cucumbers. And finally, there's the kappa for whom the novel is named. Like Goto's children's novel, *The Water of Possibility* (2002), the kappa is the figure at the centre of *The Kappa Child*. The kappa, according to the note at the end of the novel, is an "aquatic, frog-like creature with webbed hands and feet, a small turtle-like shell, a beaked mouth, and a bowl-shaped head" (277). The bowl holds the water which endows the kappa with its supernatural properties. A little shorter than humans, kappa have a fondness for playing tricks on people and engaging them in sumo-wrestling matches.

In this case, the narrator meets a stranger in a red silk wedding dress when she inadvertently crashes a wedding banquet at a Chinese restaurant and accompanies her (him? — kappa, as the reader eventually learns, have no gender) to Calgary airport to watch "the last totally visible lunar eclipse of the twentieth century" (12). Somewhere between the runways, much to the narrator's anxiety, she and the stranger — is it really a kappa? — engage in something that may be sex and may be sumo-wrestling and that leaves the narrator pregnant, albeit with a pregnancy no-one else, including doctors, can detect. It also leaves her with an incurable urge to eat pound after pound of Japanese cucumbers, which she buys from the local Korean grocery store. This insatiable urge for the green, watery vegetable seems to be as kappa-induced as the pregnancy; in one of the novel's many moments of slyly understated, ironic humour, the protagonist first encounters the joys of Japanese cucumbers when she's breakfasting at a truck stop after her encounter with the Stranger. She's picked up the Stranger's leather jacket and now she starts to explore its pockets, finding in the left one something

[l]ong, thin, and strangely bumpy. I bravely gripped the object in my palm. Pulled it out, realizing too late that it was a dildo and all the other customers would see the ugly Asian in the pajamas and leather jacket, one shoe only, holding a dildo in the fluorescent brightness of a twenty-four-hour truck stop.

“Well,” the Beaver Lumber-hat guy boomed and I cringed. Maybe I should run to the washroom?

“Isn’t that just the freshest-looking Japanese cucumber I’ve seen around these parts in a long time....”

“Thanks,” I mumbled, blushing because it *wasn’t* a dildo. Go figure. (146)

The craving for cucumbers also results in the protagonist’s meeting with Bernie, whose interest in her is apparent enough to the reader but not to the protagonist herself. She’s so caught up both in the problematic “abnormal” pregnancy and in thinking of herself as undesirable, that it takes her a long time to realize that Bernie desires her. The ambivalence of the pregnancy is part of the potentially duplicitous trickster quality of the novel. Written as it is in the first person, the reader has to choose between accepting the narrator’s own conviction about being pregnant or deciding that it is some sort of illusion — or both. An imaginary pregnancy might indeed be part of the narrator’s way of coping with the reality of her disorderly family life — I suppose the pop-psychology term ‘dysfunctional’ would apply here, but it is not really adequate to describe the particular eccentricities of the four sisters and their parents. Ultimately, though, the novel asks for and gets that particular suspension of disbelief that allows the reader to understand the protagonist’s pregnancy as both a psychological and physical reality, even if it is one which cannot be detected or explained by medical science.

Moreover, the whole novel is itself a reworking of several western genres, including, importantly, the pioneer children’s story represented by *Little House on the Prairie* (the novel predominantly, but also the tv series). When the narrator is a child, her father takes it into his head to move from water-rich British Columbia to the dry and inhospitable Prairies in order to grow Japanese rice; his project is doomed from the start, and yet it also succeeds — on one single, marvellously wet year. The narrator carries with her on her journey a much-loved and much-read copy of the story of Laura Ingalls — only to discover that, even in the twentieth century, prairie life is not like that. She partially rejects that particular set of lies as a child, when she tears up and burns the totemic book “until every page was blackened and the print unreadable” (217). It is not until she is an adult, however, that she is able to reconcile her own experience with the full recognition of the book’s falsity, when she returns to her basement home to find her television mysteriously on and Melissa Gilbert, playing Laura Ingalls, filling the screen:

The camera angle is wide and Melissa runs closer and closer. Until her face fills the screen. The music is gone. Only the sound of wind in the grass. And as I watch, her face hardens, the skin slowly browns, tightens, pressing against bones, her eyes glitter bright in her starving face, lips cracked with malnutrition. Her braids are messy, the hair dull and brittle. The child grins and her teeth are yellow and crooked.

‘They changed the book, you know,’ she croaks.

I shake my head.

‘They did! They got it all wrong.’ Laura Ingalls’ lips are bitter. ‘Why did they do that? Oh, I know what they said. “The book is for children! Children need happy stories!” Damn them all to hell!’ (252)

The scene ends with Laura fiercely insisting that she cannot do anything about the sanitization and obliteration of her story, but that the narrator can. Indeed, the novel’s re-writings extend to a reclamation of the poor prairie child’s story. For certain readers, moreover, a certain intertextuality — albeit a silent one in the narrative — with that other famous novel of Japanese-Canadian life on the Prairies is inevitable. However, whereas the family in Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan* (1983) is exiled to the Prairies as a result of the internment and displacement of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War, ‘Dad’ in Goto’s novel moves voluntarily, dragging his wife and four daughters behind, tethered by his crazy vision and his unpredictable temper. And both re-writings — that of white Laura Ingalls and of the Nakane family — are contained within the novel’s additional doublings and ambiguities, particularly those which work around issues of gender and sexuality. When the narrator meets the boy next door, Gerald Nakamura Coming Singer, he asks, “You a boy or a girl” and the narrator retorts, “You Blood or Japanese?” (168). While Gerald’s acquiescence to this parallel is perhaps a child’s logic, the narrator’s frequent references to the blurred boundaries between the child and the adult self reinforces the importance of this exchange: if Gerald can have be half Blood, half Japanese, can the narrator not also be seen as half boy, half girl? This question is revived with the narrator’s kappa pregnancy: if kappa have no gender, what will a half-human-half-kappa, half-genderless-half-tomboy/dyke baby be? *The Kappa Child* provides the reader with no direct answer, refusing even to confirm or deny the reality of the pregnancy itself.

Indeed, the novel proceeds to some extent by *not* naming what is important to it: not only is the first person narrator nameless, although she provides us with many self-deprecating descriptions of herself as an “ugly Asian” with “pumpkin teeth” (20),

but the father is never named, other than as “Dad,” and Okasan, her mother, only regains her name, Emiko, when she runs off with Gerald’s mother to form a support group for immigrant survivors of alien abduction. In the Canadian speculative fiction canon, alien abduction may itself have become synonymous with lesbianism, thanks to Nancy Johnston’s very funny sf short story, “The Rendezvous” (1999); certainly, knowingly or otherwise, this particular intertextuality can only be strikingly appropriate in the context.¹⁵ The nameless narrator’s sexuality is itself not named, although her eventual awkward romance with Bernie, the woman who runs the Korean grocery store, appears — but does it do more than appear? — to clarify the situation. And finally, the narrator as a child renames all three of her sisters: the youngest sister becomes Mice, the middle sister PG, short for Pig Girl, and the oldest sister becomes Slither, although she also takes back her own name towards the end of the story. This particular doubling is ironically revealing in its own right, both a concession to and a criticism of a culture’s refusal to cope with what is seen as either difficult or different, and thus to render even the names of Japanese-Canadians unrepresentable in their own right. The narrator says,

Okasan gave us all Japanese names, too, but folks couldn’t remember for nothing, as the saying goes. Hard to know what was worse. Having names no-one could say or being called names not our own. What’s in a name? some people say. A great deal, was my conclusion. So when it was apparent no one could utter us intelligibly, I made up new names, based on the animal of our birth year. Names that would disguise and protect us. (15)

All of these re-namings in Goto’s work involve what Mark Beauregard has named an “on-going negotiation” between the author and her culture/s: this applies as much to the demand that the Japanese-Canadian author perform ‘Japaneseness’ for the presumptively European-descended audience as it does to the writer’s negotiations with more apparently western genres. Guy Beauregard notes the ways in which Goto’s re-telling of Japanese folktales in *A Chorus of Mushrooms* effect a negotiation between a supposedly ‘pure’ ethnicity and the demands of a

¹⁵ “The Rendezvous” is told as a series of reports which, read literally, indicate that the woman who has abandoned her husband has done so as a result of alien abduction, but the knowing reader immediately understands this to be the result of the heterocentric investigator’s inability to see her lesbian relationship with her lover. Much of the humour in the story derives from the reader’s recognition that it is the investigators’ dominant reading practice, that insists on seeing only heterosexuality, that causes them to miss the obvious and to invent a bizarre and tortuous tale of alien abduction in place of the manifest lesbian love story.

contemporary world in which gender and sexual orientation are as factitious — and as fictitious — as ethnicity or race. In Goto's version of the story of Izanami and Izanagi, for example,

... the female Izanami is clearly the leader: she initiates the journey down the rainbow and ends up doing all the creating. Her brother's single contribution — 'Let there be light!' — ironically echoes Christian creation, and is quickly criticized and dismissed by his sister as a violation of 'good taste and understated beauty.' Equally playfully, Goto replaces Izanagi's phallic spear ... with Izanami's *fingers*: she 'dipped her fingers in the cool blue water and flung the droplets back into the water' in order to create islands. Goto's revisions problematize the 'source' of creation by displacing the privileged role of the phallus with the marvellous ambiguity of fingers, with their potential for crossing auto/alloerotic, homo/heterosexual, and male/female borders. ("Hiromi Goto's" 50)

This "marvellous ambiguity" is precisely the duplicitous re-telling that allows the author to represent the unrepresentability of the other: Izanami's fingers name the lesbian without having to name her, they represent what has not only been unrepresented but unrepresentable. Similarly, in *The Kappa Child*, it is the trickster figure of the kappa, a mythical Japanese creature that is inadequately described as a 'water sprite' (277) who provides the most obvious example of "the marvellous ambiguity" of Goto's re-workings of Japanese folktales to represent the sexualized as well as the racialized other.

Roy Miki argues vigorously in *Broken Entries: Race, Subjectivity, Writing* (1998) that racialization "applies to the imposition of race constructs and hierarchies on marked and demarked 'groups' whose members come to signify divergence from the normative body inscribed by whiteness. The subject racialized is identified by systemic categorizes [sic] that winnow the body, according privilege to those glossed with dominance and privation to those digressed to subordination" (127). Replacing the words "race" and "whiteness" with "sexuality" and "heterosexuality," Miki's definition could be altered to describe not what hegemonic white culture does to its racial others, but what hegemonic heterosexual culture does to its sexual others, thus providing a useful and suggestive link between 'groups' forced into minority status within the dominant culture. This is not to say that the rationale and micropolitical processes of discrimination and the ways in which that discrimination warps the embodiment of those defined as other is the same, nor that it is experienced in identical ways. It clearly is not, in part because members of both racialized and sexualized minority communities can, in some cases, experience

moments of congruity with the hegemonic body of the white (male) heterosexual; heterosexual members of racialized ‘groups’ *may* well experience their sexuality as fully congruent with the norm, may, in fact, because of their marked status as racially ‘different,’ experience more pressure to position themselves as ‘normal’ with regard to sexuality and may thus express their disapproval of sexual difference in ways that are overtly homophobic. Similarly, white members of sexualized ‘groups’ *may* experience their racial identities as ‘normal’ and adopt racist attitudes to the racialized in order to reposition themselves closer to what they perceive as the hegemonic norm. Neither position, however, is a necessary result of racialization or sexualization and productive alliances can and have been forged on the basis of being marked as different, even if that marking occurs on a variety of axes of difference. Moreover, those who are both racialized and sexualized may find themselves doubly or, in the case of women, triply distanced from the hegemonic norm — and may, furthermore, find themselves displaced from both the racialized and the sexualized ‘groups’ to which they are discursively supposed to belong.

Racial ‘groups’ have, in any case, often experienced forms of sexualization that mark their (hetero)sexualities as different and ‘exotic.’ There is a long colonial history of european travellers seeking sexual adventure and, in some cases, places of sexual solace and sustenance in ‘other’ lands, as has been documented by, for example, Robert C. Young in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (1995), Anne McClintock in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (1995) and, most recently, Robert Aldrich in *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (2003). As Aldrich demonstrates, while some of the europeans formed lasting, sympathetic and politically anti-colonial relationships with people in colonized lands, few questioned the logic of orientalism which marked the bodies of the ‘other’ as both culturally inferior and sexually exotic. The use of ‘orientalism’ as a term for the west’s investment in normalizing itself by instating the ‘Orient’ as its debased other dates back to Edward Said’s 1978 book of that title. As Aldrich notes, “Edward Said had little to say about homosexuality, and he and others have been taken to task for, in the words of Joseph Boone, the ‘conspicuously heterosexual interpretive framework’” installed around orientalism as an object of critique (7).

Goto’s work, however, critiques both orientalist and heteronormative impulses, explicitly mocking the notion that Asians are supposed to know exotic sex secrets that are unavailable to

the mundane sex lives of ordinary white people. For example, in *Chorus of Mushrooms*, the protagonist, Muriel, has a teenage encounter with the white boy she's dating in which he asks for "Oriental sex" in return for the t-shirt he's given her for their "three-week anniversary." Faced with Muriel's obtuseness about her "unlearned innate sexuality," Hank grouches, "You should know. You're Oriental, aren'tcha?" Muriel replies;

"Not really ... I think I'm Canadian."
 "Ahhh, you don't have to be embarrassed. I won't tell anybody if we do stuff."
 "What stuff?" I was going to lose it. And Hank was really nice, at heart, too.
 "You know. The Oriental kinky stuff. Like on 'Shōgun'."
 (Goto 122)

Not very surprisingly, Hank finds himself looking for a new girlfriend with whom to experiment with "Oriental sex." As an adult, Muriel reinvents 'Oriental sex' as a game between herself and her Japanese lover, answering his bemused question, "What's oriental sex?," with "I don't know ... I thought I would make it up as I go along." His reply is to suggest that they "make it up together" (123). Similarly, in her long poem, "The Body Politic," Goto describes the orientalizing demands of those who racialize her:

People want to dress me up
 in kee-mo-nees and garter belts.
 They want to hear about Zen and Buddhism and ritual
 Hairy Carrie.
 They want to squeal over tiny slices of raw fish.
 And finish off with exotic Oriental sex,
 whatever that is. (219)

Commenting on these same passages and noting that *Chorus of Mushrooms* is addressed to Muriel's lover, initially identified only as "you," an identification which invites the reader to imagine herself or himself in the place of Muriel's beloved, Mark Libin argues that

Just as I struggle [as a white male] to define my position as a reader, Goto's narrators struggle to represent themselves as corporeal without being reduced to racial stereotypes, without being forced into the pose of geisha girls, but their uncertainty regarding their ability to overcome the discourse of racism is evident in both texts. ("Some of my Best Friends" 102)

In *The Kappa Child*, Goto again confronts "exotic Oriental sex," but this time indirectly,

working through what Darko Suvin has identified as science fiction's quintessential technique of "cognitive estrangement,"¹⁶ to create an ironic commentary about orientalist assumptions. In this case, the sexual encounter between the unnamed Japanese-Canadian narrator and the kappa both estranges and literalizes "exotic Oriental sex," for what could be more "exotic" or more "Oriental" than to have a sexual encounter with a genderless creature from Japanese mythology, wearing a red silk wedding dress and a heavy leather jacket, a sexual encounter so strange that the narrator is never sure whether it is sex or sumo wrestling. The description of their encounter is sensuous, intense, lush with the green wetness of the kappa overriding the dusty dryness of the prairies:

Stranger hit the ground before I did, the beret knocked off a strangely shaped head, something cool-wet spilled, covered me in liquid sweetness. I thought that she came. Came in waves of pleasure. Hearts pounding. The celestial bodies slowly moving across the fabric-space of time. Arms clasped around each other, still.

‘You win,’ Stranger winked. Eyes so close. Intensely dark with a color I couldn’t name. I could only gasp for air. Stranger nimbly clambered over my exhausted body and nudged between my legs. Blissfully, I let them part. Mouth. Wetness. Cool as a dappled pond in a grove of trees. The Stranger blew. (124)

On the surface, there is little in these two paragraphs to mark them as other than a description of sex between two women, save for the narrator's reluctance to use the pronoun 'she.'¹⁷ In context, however, as Stranger grows more and more kappa-like before the narrator's eyes, it is clear that this is something literally stranger, something literally more exotic. Goto employs a kind of ironic duplicity to defamiliarize the orientalist notion of "exotic Oriental sex," a duplicity which both ridicules the notion itself and fills the (magic) reality of the human-kappa encounter

¹⁶ Suvin argues for differentiating between "naturalistic fiction," which is mimetic, and "estranged fiction," which uses the device of cognitive estrangement to place the reader outside of mimesis:

Fiction, then, can be divided according to the manner in which men's relationships to other men [sic] and their surroundings are illuminated. If this is accomplished by endeavoring faithfully to reproduce empirical surfaces and textures vouched for by human senses and common sense, I propose to call it *naturalistic fiction*. If, on the contrary, an endeavor is made to illuminate such relations by creating a radically or significantly different formal framework...I propose to call it *estranged fiction*. (18)

¹⁷ Because kappa are literally without gender, Goto uses the pronoun 'she' only once in the six pages that describe this encounter, and then only in relation to the narrator's inner thoughts.

with poetic sensuality.

At the same time, the narrator's impregnation by the breath of the kappa and its invisible, but tangible results, explicitly mocks the straitened utilitarianism of the belief that the purpose of sex is procreation and the production of human (preferably white, male) children.

Similarly, in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* (1994), a humorous duplicity is one of the major tools which exposes the ideological construction of the First Nations peoples as deviant.¹⁸ Told from the perspective of indigenous people, the narrative involves the re-telling of a series of western narratives, both mythological and historical. In general, these re-tellings are constituted as a series of jokes and puns — for example, the three recurring cars in the story, all of which float away, are a Nissan, a Pinto and a Karmann Ghia. One of the native characters runs a restaurant called The Dead Dog Café, where white people can have the apparent experience of eating dog, in a clever turn-around of white beliefs about Native culture. Of course, the joke depends on the natives keeping their white clientele in a constant state of anxiety about whether or not the hush puppies are actually made out of puppy.

Furthermore, the novel itself contains four variants on the First Nations' creation story/s. All are 'contaminated' to some extent by Genesis, which forces the storytellers from time to time to start over and attempt to retell it. Still, other stories keep inserting themselves; Coyote has a tendency to confuse DOG and GOD; Adam, spelt Ahdamn in the novel, insists on making an appearance, and A.A. Gabriel, Heavenly Host, materializes looking very much like a door-to-door salesman. However, each of the stories, in its own way, recapitulates the point Walter L. Williams makes about the importance within Native cultures, especially those that are accepting of third and fourth genders, of creation stories that do not favour men over women. Each of King's versions of the creation story begins with a woman — respectively First Woman, Thought Woman, Changing Woman, and Old Woman — falling to Earth.

At one point, King tells the story of Changing Woman, who floats down the River to the Ocean, where she runs (literally) into the Pequod. Taken aboard by Ahab, she is renamed Robinson Crusoe, though she says she would prefer to be Ishmael. Ahab tells her that they are

¹⁸ While King himself is, as far as I know, heterosexual, this novel contains some strikingly queer moments, which are interesting both in their own right and in comparison with the other works discussed in this chapter.

searching for the Great White Whale, Moby Dick. The sailors sing out “Blackwhaleblackwhaleblackewhalesbians...” Ahab insists that the black whale is really white, that the female whale is really male. “You’re mistaken, says Changing Woman, I believe that is Moby-Jane, the Great Black Whale” (164). Of course, Ahab will not be convinced, so Changing Woman and Moby-Jane swim off together.

I know just the place to go, says Moby-Jane.

Where is that? says Changing Woman.

Florida, says Moby-Jane.

Is it warm?

Oh yes, says Moby-Jane. That place is very warm and it is very wet. Just relax on my back, says that whale, and I’ll take you there.

So, Changing Woman stretches out on Moby-Jane’s back. Pretty smooth back, that one. Changing Woman presses herself against that whale’s soft skin and she can feel those waves rock back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth.

This is very nice, says Changing Woman.

Yes, it is, says Moby-Jane. Wrap your arms and legs around me and hold on tight and we’ll really have some fun.

It is marvellous fun, all right, that swimming and rolling and diving and sliding and spraying, and Changing Woman is beginning to enjoy being wet all the time. (187)

Of course, this is in some ways precisely the sort of duplicity, just like that mobilized in *The Kappa Child*, that Hutcheon speaks of as being quintessentially Canadian and that Goldberg speaks of as central to his recognition of the queerness of Cather’s work. As with Goldberg’s reading of Cather, what is needed here is the “translation [of the text] into sexual knowledge” — a sexual knowledge that is, at the same time, perfectly obvious, but obscure to those who have not yet acquired it extra-textually, usually children and adolescents (465-66). The reader who doesn’t notice the slippage — if you’ll forgive the pun — between whales and lesbians and who reads the passage at its most literal misses much of the double-dealing that is going on here in terms of gender and sexuality. Indeed, the very name of Changing Woman refers to traditional First Nations’ beliefs about the Changing Ones, the Two-Spirit people who are neither male nor female. European anthropologists named these people “berdache,” a word rather insultingly taken from an Arabic term for a catamite; in general, these days, the Changing Ones oscillate between attempting to reclaim the term “Two Spirit” and adopting the western logic of “gay and

lesbian.”¹⁹ King’s novel is, in general, much more about Native identities and issues than it is about issues of sexuality. These racial/ethnic issues are invariably also caught up with class issues, but both are explored using ironic and duplicitous humour. The pun, being duplicitous in its very nature, is particularly ripe for this.

I have demonstrated in the preceding discussion the extent to which various forms of duplicity — what Hutcheon calls “the double-meaning [of] double-talking” (*Splitting* 39) — work within these two postcolonial novels to reveal the ideological and discursive construction of otherness as deviance and the ways in which each of these writers responds to the unrepresentability of her or his identity/s within the dominant culture. As Hutcheon argues:

Works of and about marginalization ... tend to use irony as a deconstructive device because it allows them to address a dominant culture from within its own structures of understanding, while still contesting and resisting those structures. (31)

Duplicity takes more forms than irony, although irony is certainly one of its major aliases. It also takes the form of genre-bending and of the re-working and re-telling of dominant readings of stories, particularly those that have achieved some sort of iconic status in western culture — it scarcely matters whether these icons are as traditional as the Bible or as twentieth-century as *The Wizard of Oz*. Indeed, Goto’s narrator even recognizes the force of this duplicity within her understanding of her own story when she comments, bitterly, that

I just want to have a normal life! I just want to have a normal family! But I’m always tossed into this tornado, this Wizard of Oz meets Godzilla at Little House on the Prairie. Jesus, god.... (244)

¹⁹ As Peter Dickinson notes, there “is no ‘true’ or ‘essential category of Indigenous two-spritedness, just as there is no singular or authentic definition of Western homosexuality; after more than five hundred years of inter- and cross-cultural contact, both terms are thoroughly imbricated with each other’s meanings” (*Here* 179). Nevertheless, this does not mean that individuals do not experience their identities as ‘true’ and ‘essential.’ As Richard Dyer has pointed out,

Many would agree that the categories of ‘lesbians’ and ‘gay men’ are not given by reality. Most societies recognize sexual relations between members of the same sex, whether or not they proscribe, institutionalize or elevate them, but only a minority have an idea of persons who habitually, exclusively and ‘by nature’ have such relations.... But *we* live in this society at this time, where some people do feel that they ‘are’ lesbian or gay, and often enough wish to make common cause with others who feel the same. It is true that such identities are never as comprehensive as they claim ... but it is also the case that one cannot live outside the society, the network of representations, in which one finds oneself. (*Matter* 3)

Kappa become human when they despair, Goto tells us. They dry up, “rip their water bowl from atop their noble heads. They tear off their turtle shells and expose their flesh to the sun. They turn their eyes away from all things kappa,” (176) but most especially from the water that defines kappa life. What the reader can learn from this novel, however, is that humans can also become kappa, by accepting what is green and growing within them and turning away from dead stereotypes and racist/heteronormative assumptions. The duplicitous nature of the kappa, like all Tricksters, works both ways; the duplicitous nature of Canadian speculative fiction “from the margins” also works both ways — it deconstructs, “in Northrop Frye’s terms, ‘the lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitious terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions’” (Hutcheon, *Splitting* 142) in order to find a new place of its own, which is, at least in part, a place where it is possible both to read queerly and to read as queerly Canadian, readings which, in both of these novels, are also clearly reparative.

4. The Uncanny Campness of Queer Desire

Just as writers from racially othered backgrounds have, of recent years, thus written in a kind of engagement with postcolonial theory, writers from sexually-othered backgrounds, especially those who are identified as gay or lesbian, have also written in engagement with Queer Theory. This is therefore an engagement with Queer Theory’s various attempts to interrogate and bring into visibility an epistemology that takes as its basis the assumption that queer subjects can be represented in culture and, further, that it is possible to recuperate a history of representation of sexual dissidence in culture that has been rendered invisible both by societal insistence on the primacy of heteronormativity and by academic insistence on the critical duty to read “as a kind of provisional ... heterosexual” (Sinfield, *Cultural* 62). That is, just as the queer theorist refutes the assertion that anything gay about a work by a gay artist is extraneous, the corollary, I would argue, is that a postcolonial approach suggests that the visibility of the racialized and/or colonized other in cultural production has some importance in itself. Furthermore, combining the postcolonial and the queer provides a viable, albeit duplicitous, reading position: for example, both what is Native about Highway’s writing and what is queer about it can then be seen as central, rather than as “a rag of extraneous meaning” (Lerner, qtd. in Sinfield, *Cultural* 63). In other words, just as the postcolonialist is enabled to read *not* as

provisionally white,²⁰ the position of the queer theorist allows him or her to read *not* as provisionally — or presumptively — heterosexual.

The works of Canadian artist Attila Richard Lukacs exemplify both some of the benefits and some of the problems inherent in the reliance on the ironic production of double-meanings. While it is clear from interviews that Lukacs himself sees his work as ironic, parodic, disruptive of what one might call their surface meaning, this is not always what the critic or audience has seen. Lukacs' work throughout much of the last decade has consisted primarily of very large, more or less classically realist paintings of naked or nearly naked skinheads against backgrounds which are often suggestive of violence. As a gay artist, Lukacs is painting images whose relationships to the gay and lesbian community, as well as to Canadians in general, are significantly contradictory. On the one hand they summon up images of cultural and sexual violence within both queer and postcolonial contexts: not only are skinheads seen as gay-bashers as well as racists, but the iconographic references to Nazi Germany cannot avoid the image of the concentration camps, with their ethos of racial purity and the resultant horrific destruction of both the racially and sexually other.²¹ The fact that Lukacs has lived and worked in Berlin merely reinforces these resonances in his paintings. Furthermore, his representation of the male nude has been accused of recalling what is supposed to be the curious complicity of a certain kind of gay aesthetic with the Nazi ideals of physical and racial perfectability, of male comradeship, and of violence as a ritual of masculine purification.²² The series of

²⁰ The provisional whiteness of the colonial reader is precisely that which Richard Dyer notes, in *White*, is always the unmarked category; the white postcolonial reader thus has to negotiate a way of reading that marks whiteness as a racial category and attempts, however awkwardly, not to foreground it at the expense of other subject positions. A similar balancing act is required of the straight critic coming to queer theory.

²¹ While it doesn't appear to be well-known to the "general public," several recent cultural and political events within the gay world have brought attention to the experiences of homosexuals during and after World War II. Unlike other concentration camp victims, homosexuals were not released when the camps were liberated, but were transferred by Allied forces to civilian prisons. This historical fact makes Lukacs' work particularly fraught for contemporary gays and lesbians, particularly those few still living who survived both the Nazis and the Allies.

²² Both Richard Dellamora and Barbara Gabriel have dealt specifically with the relationship in Findley's works between Nazism and a gay aesthetic that simultaneously recognizes and abhors it. Anne Geddes Bailey has also recently published a book, *Timothy Findley and the Aesthetics of Fascism* (1998), dealing with fascism in Findley's work; however, she does not focus on the potentially problematic relationship between Findley's own sexuality and the ways in which his works

paintings that include “In My Father’s House” (1989) and “Glamour Crew” (1993) — in which the mise-en-scène appears to be a slaughterhouse with the warning “Achte” writ large in the upper third of the painting — provide particularly clear examples of the conflation, in some of Lukacs’ work, of these two aesthetics. As David Bourdon has pointed out, Lukacs offers the viewer “tantalizing images that insinuate kinky possibilities but remain resolutely ambiguous” (90); Lukacs’ paintings cannot be taken as having only one meaning, only one set of referents.

These are works that are disturbing, no matter how primed the viewer is to anticipate an ironic, duplicitous intent on the part of the artist. Are they, perhaps, too easily read ‘straight,’ that is, as reinforcing rather than disrupting the very linkages the artist claims to be questioning? Lukacs has on his side, as it were, a tradition of irony — or camp — as a form of gay cultural production, a tradition which would suggest the possibility of a queer viewing of the painting (one in which, for example, the threat of the skinheads is diminished as they are rendered into the fetishized object of the gay male gaze and thus of gay male desire). However, as Hutcheon notes in *Irony’s Edge*, “the juxtaposition of the formal echoing of previous art (some of it, like that of Caravaggio, with clear homosexual connotations) with the neo-Nazi associations of the subject matter” (13) has proven intractable for some critics. The very ambiguity of the paintings’ various associations risks readings that recuperate them for a ‘master ideology’ that links the racially subaltern with the sexually subaltern and seeks to control, diminish, or eliminate both. To appropriate Kobena Mercer’s conclusions about Mapplethorpe’s photographs, Lukacs’ paintings are

... open to a range of antagonistic political readings The risky business of

at once attack fascism while allowing a certain camp attraction to its particular aesthetics. More recently, however, Paul Morrison has scathingly demonstrated the discursive ways in which the Nazis are homosexualized and homosexuals Nazified through the discursive power of heteronormativity:

No matter that gay men and women knew something of the ‘true meaning of genocide embodied under Hitler.’ There is no deeper truth than the psychosexual, and the psychosexual guarantees the political innocence of the heteronormative.... A blithely counterfactual understanding of the sexual politics of fascism protests the regime of compulsory heterosexuality from the knowledge of its own genocidal past; in turn, the restriction of the ‘true meaning’ of genocide to its ‘authentic’ embodiment under Hitler shields heterosexuality from the knowledge of its own genocidal present.... [T]he imagery of kinky sex is placed under the sign of Nazism the better to mystify the banality — I mean the heteronormativity — of our century’s defining instance of evil. (142-43)

ambivalence by which his images can elicit a homophobic reading as easily as a homoerotic one, can confirm a racist reading as much as produce an antiracist one, suggests that indeterminacy doesn't happen 'inside' the text, but in the social relations of difference that different readers bring to bear on the text, in the worldly relations 'between.' (359)

Mercer's insistence, in his reading of Mapplethorpe, that ambivalence "happens" between text and reader recapitulates Hutcheon's argument, in *Irony's Edge* (1994), that irony happens in the conjunctions between author, text and reader. What Hutcheon would call "the edge" between the artist's and viewer's perception of irony in Lukacs' paintings shifts according to the way in which different works can elicit very different responses from the same viewer.

I would argue, however, that Lukacs' paintings play off the uncanniness of their interpretative uncertainty and that this is itself a function of their camp appropriations of venerated art-historical sources, such as Caravaggio — sources whose own homoeroticism has been consistently under-represented in canonical histories of art. Moe Meyer notes in *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (1994) that camp works through "the queer subject's *uncanny* experience of the impossibility of representing his/her desire within the parameters [of dominant culture]" (Qtd. in Savoy 8). Eric Savoy refers to Lukacs' deployment of camp tactics as "sophisticated and often tortuous" and notes that, "as subjects of visibility, we are more skilled at recognizing it in film ... than in what we are inclined to understand as the static opacity of painting" (8). For Savoy, Lukacs' ironic quotation of high culture art history alongside his appropriation of the more brutal icons of low culture are "discursive performances, nearly all of which contest the real through the incongruities of camp" in order to displace high culture fictions of authenticity. Speaking of Lukacs' monumental 1988 painting *The Young Spartans Challenge the Boys to Fight*, which juxtaposes a citation of Degas's *Young Spartans Exercising* with one of Caravaggio's *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, Savoy argues that

Lukacs's ironic representation ... dislocates the meaning of Degas and Caravaggio by the camp appropriation into allegory, the incongruity between the somatic or spiritual calls to purity in the historical sources and the erotic economy of the present. It also allegorizes allegorical painting itself in the look that is exchanged between the right and left ... [so that] the fearful fascination that shapes the look between the groups on the canvas is framed by Lukacs's ironic look at the history of figure painting: and the point of that look, and the point of the allegory, is the demonstration of the homoerotic that invests, and

may be understood to constitute, the great icons of the homosocial. (17-18)

Another example of Lukacs' attempts to make overt the homoeroticism that constitutes "the great icons of the homosocial," or, in other words, to produce a queer reading of an obvious homoeroticism that has been silenced by hegemonic readings, can be found in his *Czech Boy* (1995). With its profile of a young nude male against a checked black and white background (an obvious pun on the title), *Czech Boy* pictures the model in thrall to some unknown force: his body is tapped by thin pipes attached to spigots, which suggest both the forcible insertion and simultaneous draining of fluids; at the same time, the pipes are themselves so fine, so apparently fragile, that the young man's retention in their embrace hints at some form of complicity. He is at once captive, experimental subject, and, in his nudity and exposure to the viewer, erotic object; the multiple valences of meaning suggested by the pipes and spigots are reinforced by their locations: one set binds the boy's hands behind his head, others encircle his head and neck and pierce his sides, while still others pierce his anus and ring his penis. Yet the boy's expression is placid and there are no indications of blood or pain or harm to suggest that these multiple

invasions are violent or even unwanted.

This sacrificial victim, if such he be, belongs to the machine age, an image reinforced by the stark mechanical nature of the black and white squares in the background; and yet, duplicitously, this same background also recalls both the tiled floors and domestic interiors of seventeenth century Dutch paintings and the surface of a game board, a place where

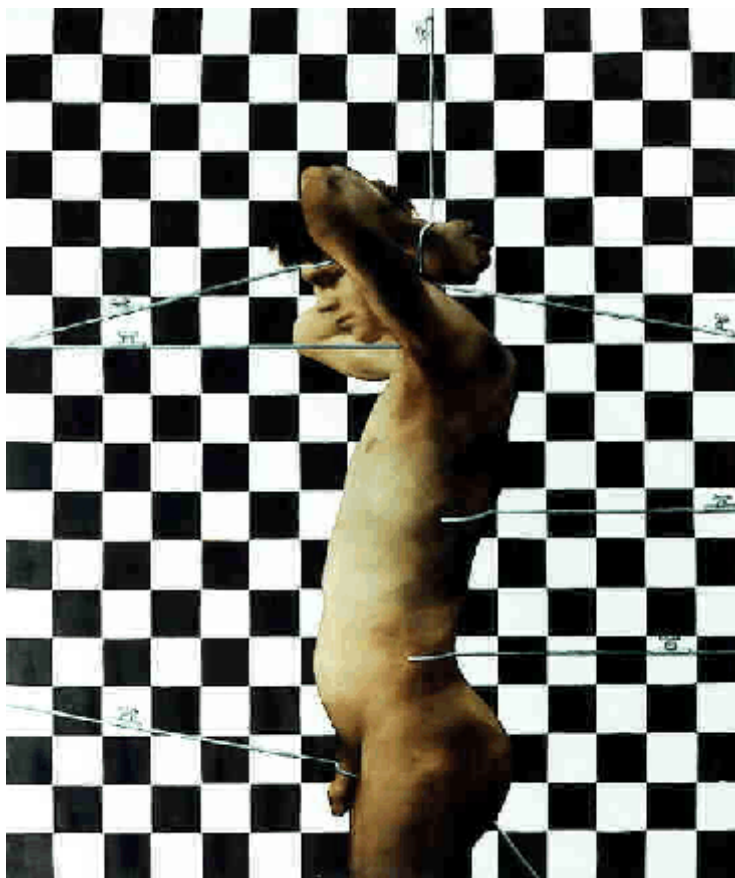


Figure : Attila Richard Lukacs. *Czech Boy*. (1995) Tar, enamel, oil on canvas. 180 x 150 cms. Galerie Schedler.

people play. Thus, on the one hand, we have the starkness of pipes and background and the boy's vulnerably nude and bound state to call to mind — in the context of Lukacs' fascination with Germany — the medical experimentation of the Nazis; yet, on the other hand, we have the nude male, bound in ways that are as much sexual as threatening, and offered up for the erotic pleasure of the viewer. Savoy notes that "Lukacs is always reluctant to separate the desructiveness of violence from its erotic power" (23). It is therefore no accident that the sensual homoeroticism of the boy's pose reminds the viewer of Renaissance and baroque paintings of St. Sebastian or that the pipes are as slender as the arrows that pierce the martyred saint; indeed, one of the young lovers in Greyson's *Lilies*, acting out the martyrdom of St. Sebastian, assumes almost the identical pose. Here, I think, the possible associations with and allusions to fascism are contained in such a way that the nude boy, as object of the erotic gaze of the gay male, remains always the focal point of that gaze and yet never quite transcends the slippage between foreground and background or between the idealized and the real viewer.

5. Blue Boys and Red Men: Postcolonial Fairy Tales

In 1991, Lukacs assembled an installation that consisted of four large paintings of British skinheads posed as Thomas Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" (1770), along with a steel work-table strewn with the Doc Martens and the clothing worn by the models. There is an obvious, indeed almost heavy-handed irony, in depicting young toughs as citations/reworkings of what is perhaps the most infamously effeminate, even paedophilic, of classical paintings. At the same time, there is an equal, if less laboured irony, in Lukacs' appropriation of the skinhead as the "blue boy" of the eponymous magazine, one of the longest running pornographic magazines for gay men in the US. And, of course, there are the associations of "blue" itself with the sexual and the forbidden: blue movies, for example. Lukacs' queer reworking of "Blue Boy" clearly plays off all of these associations, yet its title — "True North" — invokes an entirely different set of images and traditions. For as all Canadians know, it is Canada that is, in the words of our national anthem, "the true north, strong and free." Here we have an obvious meeting of the queer and the postcolonial and yet, like much of Lukacs' work, it is framed in ways that are so ambiguous as to remain potentially opaque: what, after all, is the relationship between the British painter and the British models, the Canadian artist and the Canadian title? How is the viewer to bring these

disparate associations together? And to what extent, finally, is the (queerly Canadian) viewer's response preconditioned by the conflation of sexual and national identity?

Similar questions may well also be directed at the figure of a very different "blue boy," the character of Japeth in Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*.²³ Yet in this case the different critical responses to the character seem at first to indicate the divergent potential for either postcolonial or queer readings of the text. Lorraine York, noting correctly that few critics have had anything of substance to say about Japeth's change of colour, suggests that "this bizarre episode ... burlesques colour-associated racial labelling. Japeth, the self-styled warrior who wishes to be the wielder of the oppressive sword, cannot bear to be coloured as the other ..." (210). Peter Dickinson, however, argues that the very circumstances of Japeth's becoming blue (he sets out for the Cities of the Plain²⁴ "to find his manhood once and for all — and, returning, to slay the dragon of [his wife's] virginity and kill the giant of his shame" (Findley 23), but is captured and marinated by the Ruffian King and his cannibal band) imply both a homosexual and a sado-masochistic "awakening and denial" (*Here is Queer* 64). In arguing that "Japeth's resulting discolouring works counter-discursively to turn this scene into a specific instance of 'camp-recognition,'" Dickinson cites precisely those two iconographic gay images (Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" and the magazine *Blue Boy*) that I have already invoked myself in discussing Lukacs' "True North." And while, as Dickinson adds, in the version of his chapter reprinted in *Paying Attention*, his and York's interpretations are not contradictory, since Japeth, in the novel, represents both the sexually and racially other, it is important to note that he *wants* to be neither: his denial of and silence about his experience allow him to pretend to be, like his father and his God, both white and heterosexual, thus performing what Clarke identifies as subjunctive heteronormativity.

²³ The link between Lukacs and Findley may be more overt than their respective blue boys. Mark Cohen argues that Findley bases the paintings of Julian Slade, in *Headhunter*, specifically on Lukacs' work; Cohen goes on to argue, incorrectly I think, that Slade/Lukacs are thus implicated in and perhaps inspire the sexual predations of the Club of Men. Whether wrong or right, however, Cohen's argument serves to foreground the very difficulty Hutcheon examines at length in *Irony's Edge* when she notes that "nothing is ever guaranteed at the politicized scene of irony" (15).

²⁴ These are, biblically, Sodom and Gomorrah, although Findley renames them Baal and Mammon, thus neatly reinscribing his own view of evil as linked to the false gods of greed and patriarchy, rather than to homosexuality.

If Japeth is the homosexual who doesn't want to be, his brother Ham and Ham's 'wife' Lucy/Lucifer provide, according to Dickinson, "perhaps [Findley's] most positive representation of 'harmonious' gay sexuality" (*Here is Queer* 57) to be found in all of Findley's works. A man of conscience — the only decent one of Noah's sons — married to a seven-foot drag queen who also happens to be both fallen angel and light-bearer, Ham is implicated not only in a queer narratology — the telling of *fairy* tales — but also in a postcolonial one. For it is Ham's children (and Lucy's) who are mythologically deemed to be the ancestors of the African peoples, an association which provided white slave-owners during colonial times with a 'Biblical' rationale for the enslavement of black people.²⁵ Furthermore, it is Ham and Lucy, along with Mrs. Noyes and her blind cat Mottyl who fight to save the world from destruction by the patriarchal and life-hating tyranny of Noah (Dr. Noyes in the novel) and God (Yaweh). Diana Brydon has pointed out that *Not Wanted on the Voyage* reworks Biblical myth as a power struggle not only about who has literal control over the world but also about whose version of the story can be told; Findley's version gives voices to all the outsiders, all those who are literally not wanted on the voyage—women, children, animals, fairies (both mythological and queer) and so on. As Brydon notes,

[t]hese characters contest the way the Noah myth establishes its patriarchal authority by condensing God and Noah into a single term and by refusing to 'see' their difference (as with the fairies) or to acknowledge their equal right to self-determination (as with the women and the animals). The novel may be read as a parable challenging the imperialist version of colonization as well as a warning against fascist eugenics and the impossibly fascist quest for purity of any kind. ("Timothy Findley" 587)

The world the others (whether othered by race, sex, sexuality, age, class, species or some combination) struggle to save is both ante/diluvian and pre/colonial, a world where the borders have not yet been rigidly drawn, where mythological creatures still live and animals speak, and yet where all its wonders are (always already) under threat from the imperial/patriarchal self-justifications of the tyrants. The faeries drown and the unicorn is murdered by Japeth when he cuts off its horn after Noah uses it to rape Japeth's child-bride, Emma. Findley's retelling of the

²⁵ According to this somewhat dubious theory, black people were doomed to slavery by the curse laid by God on all of the descendants of Ham's son Canaan in Genesis 9:25-27.

Flood is not a quaint zoological fable for children or a pleasant excursion on the waters — “everyone knows it wasn’t like that (3)” — but a truly fascistic holocaust aimed at reinscribing the rule of an utterly authoritarian, viciously heteronormative and masculinist hierarchy. Having revealed, with an irony as brutal as a *Wayne’s World’s* NOT!, the manifold immoralities underlying this patriarchal morality tale, Findley’s ironic revaluing of those not wanted on the voyage suggests to the reader that the world can only be saved by choosing Ham over Japeth, the bent over the straight, the unruly over the obedient, the fantastical over the normal.

If irony is one of the modes by which Canadian postcolonial narratives can be told, then camp, again, is clearly one of the modes by which queer narratives can and have been told. Both Dickinson and Cecelia Martell pay attention to Findley’s use of camp in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, particularly in the figure of Lucy.²⁶ One might then ask — raising fruitful possibilities for further research — whether camp is, in fact, a form of irony and whether the strategies the two modes of representation (postcolonial and queer) call into play are at heart similar or different. The similarity of strategy in some works is, of course, foregrounded most when the author is writing out of experiences and identities that are both queer and postcolonial, as is, for example, the case with Tomson Highway, who is both Cree and self-identified as gay.²⁷ Just as Findley’s camp version of Lucifer, the archangel-as-drag-queen as the literalized excess of the feminine, brings into visibility both the queer (the gender-bending sex-positive non-human [fe]male who marries Ham) and the postcolonial (or perhaps more precisely the poco-queer, since, as Barbara Gabriel points out, Lucy is “explicitly drawn as the *Onna gata* of the Japanese Kabuki theatre, that ideal stylization of the feminine which is always performed by a man” [“Performing” 233]), so Highway’s Fur Queen, the white beauty pageant winner whose etherealized photograph becomes the protective *manitou* of the two Cree brothers, also conflates the queer and the postcolonial. The Fur Queen is, as Brydon has also noted, “indigenized and transformed into a trickster deity”; however, the vampirically white Fur Queen also both represents “the threat of

²⁶ Indeed, the campness of Lucy also forms part of the argument I make for queer readings of *Not Wanted on the Voyage* in “Vanishing Acts, II.”

²⁷ During a talk at Trent University in 1995, Highway, who was trained as a classical pianist, referred to himself as “the Cree Liberace,” a joke which takes on more poignancy when he refers to the dancer brother in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* as a “Cree Nureyev.”

a white culture maintaining its vitality through sucking the blood of the colonized” and, as Weesageechak, the trickster, embodies “the force conjured by the native death rituals” performed in Gabriel Okimasis’ hospital room, as he dies of AIDS (“Compromising” 21). Like Lucy, it would seem that the equally hybrid figure of the Fur Queen also represents the excess that is always conjured by the recognition of desire. Just as Quentin Crisp longs, in *The Naked Civil Servant* (1975), for a ‘real man’ to desire him, knowing the futility of that desire, since a man who desired him would not, by Crisp’s definition, be real, both Highway and Findley invoke in writing, as Lukacs does in paint, the seemingly inevitable complicity of male same-sex desire with the masculine of a heteronormative, patriarchal — and thus inevitably misogynist and homophobic — world. Here both camp and irony come into play in what Jonathan Dollimore has labelled “transgressive reinscription”:

The cultural dynamics of transgressive reinscription suggest [that] ... identification with, and desire *for*, may coexist with parodic subversion *of*, since a culture is not reducible to the specific desires of the individuals comprising it ... and even less to the ‘truth’ of desire itself. Gay culture is in part constituted by a self-reflexive, ironic representation of desire itself, both gay and straight, and of the objects of desire, again both gay and straight. This is especially so of its involvement with masculinity. In one and the same gay milieu one is likely to encounter identification with, desire for, and parodies of masculinity. (*Sexual Dissidence* 321-322; emphasis in original)

Even as Findley’s novels, like Lukacs’ paintings, both repudiate and parody the hegemony, ideological and political, of a certain kind of masculinity, they remain conscious of a certain “identification with, desire for” that which is parodied; desire and identification awake sympathy, as well as loathing. *Not Wanted on the Voyage* never quite allows the reader to forget that Japeth, while he wishes to be as monstrous as his father, also still longs for an alternative world in which ‘his skin would not be blue and the world would be as it was — the world of pristine wonders and the kindness of strangers: the world he had loved as a boy and had thought would be his forever’ (79).

Japeth’s experiences of being marinated and almost being eaten by the Ruffian King and his band is self-shattering in ways explicitly similar to Robert Ross’s experience of being raped by his fellow soldiers in Findley’s *The Wars*; unlike Ross, however, Japeth seeks safety by siding with the dominant masculine, rather than repudiating it. He tells Michael Archangelis, the angel

who is Lucy's binary opposite, "I want to be a warrior. Like you" (84). As Terry Goldie notes, in "The Canadian Homosexual," the central distinction in Findley's work is not between homosexual and heterosexual, but between dominators and dominated, the phallic versus the non-phallic.²⁸ Goldie argues that "[i]n an almost mathematical equation, the woman adds to man, as her desire presents femaleness as support of maleness, but the bottom subtracts from man as his internal negation compensates for his worship of the phallus" (128). Reading this sentence in the light both of these texts — Lukacs' paintings, Findley's, Goto's and Highway's novels, and Greyson's film — and of the theoretical argument made by Dollimore, I find myself less sanguine about the mathematical exactitude of this equation. All four of the male artists I discuss in this chapter recognize, I would argue, that their desire for the phallic male contradicts their desire for a non-phallic world; in wanting to have their cake and eat it too, as it were, they recognize the ironic duplicity of gay male utopian desire. The parody of masculinity thus becomes, for these artists, an essential counterpoint to the ever present danger of desire for and identification with the (phallic) male. This tension is particularly marked in the figure of Japeth, who refuses his possible identification(s) both as a homosexual bottom and, being literally blue, as a person of colour. Japeth's blueness and the fact that his experience is literally of cannibalism rather than of homosexual rape allow him sufficient ambiguity to make his identifications partially a matter of choice, though they are also not entirely successful: he will never quite be like his father.

If Lucy is the trickster figure who reveals, patchily and often in the darkness of the lower decks of the ark, that there are alternatives, that sons do not have to become their fathers, s/he finds her counterpart not only in the ambiguous hybridity of the Fur Queen in *Kiss*, but also in the figures of both the Countess and the exotic Parisienne, Lydie-Anne, in Greyson's *Lilies*. In this film, however, all of the characters on screen are transvestites of a sort. The film has two settings, one inside the other: the chapel of the St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary in 1952, inside

²⁸ As Goldie points out, the "phallic male" can include some homosexuals, like the oppressive and pederastic Robert Ireland in *Headhunter*; the non-phallic includes, first, animals and children, but also women and non-oppressive gay men (whom Goldie labels "bottoms"). Like homosexual men, heterosexual women can also be implicated in phallic oppression; Shem's wife Hannah, in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, is in many ways both more complicit with and more oppressed by Noah's evil than is Shem, the Ox who lives up to his nickname; although both Hannah and Shem participate in Noah's rape of Japeth's "wife," the twelve-year-old Emma, Hannah's role is the more active of the two.

of which the inmates act out the story that took place in the village of Roberval in 1912. Thus, all of the actors are male and all are playing two characters: the prisoner and the character the prisoner is pretending to be. The layerings of transvestitism are profound and disturbing, as is the layering of the two historical moments, the one the romantic story of the love of two young gay men, Simon and Valliers, and the religious righteousness and jealousy of the third boy, Bilodeau, who murders Valliers, and the second, the revelation of the murderer enabled through the mechanism of the convicts' play. Greyson says that, in making the film, he found

... a great advantage in sticking to the central tenet of the play, which was that men play the women's roles, because that insists on the artifice of this very theatrical thing. There's a whole thing about truth that runs through the film, through the script, from when Lydie-Anne tells the Countess that 'all men are liars, and I've been lying to myself,' the ironies are piled upon ironies because we are watching men playing women talking about how all men lie. (Brophy)

The doubled narrative, with its all-male cast, thus reveals both Greyson's and Bouchard's understandings of not only the performative nature of both gender and sexuality but also the various ways in which "truth" is constructed, particularly the truth of pre-Stonewall gay narratives, with their inevitable tragic endings. What is revealed here when, for example, actor Brent Carver's tough prisoner becomes the fey Countess is that all of these performances are just that: performances. The prisoners perform the role of prisoner, the bishop that of bishop; these performances are neither more nor less true than the roles the prisoners play out in the chapel. Both performances create versions of Canadian history, yet in one the sexual and romantic attachment of the two boys is central, while in the other, the official version, their romance becomes merely the backdrop to the machinery of criminal prosecution and 'justice.' At the same time, *Lilies* breaks down conventions of cinematic realism, as the film moves between prison chapel and village, revealing both to be equally true and equally false; likewise, the play within the film disrupts our expectations of historical reality: when Simon, who is playing St. Sebastian, questions whether the village will accept Father St. Michel's "boys caressing each other," the Father replies, in the language of postmodernism, "I want to show that a man's yearnings have no limit, I want them to see that a man can reject established force and assert his right to subjectivity." Rejecting both the verdict of the judicial system and the regulatory masculinity and heteronormativity of Canadian culture, *Lilies* asserts the right of the others, in this

case the gay boys and the prisoners, to subjectivity. The film thus undermines accepted notions of heterosexual masculinity while also calling into question a hegemonic Canadian culture: *Lilies*' various doublings undercut our understanding not only of the binarisms of male/female and straight/gay, but also of English/French, truth/fiction, past/present. Indeed, André Loiselle argues that Greyson's "betrayals" of Bouchard's original "actually function ironically to increase the adaptation's fidelity" by accentuating the theme of lying (125), thus increasing the paradoxical and deconstructive play with binaries in the film.

The multiple transvestitisms of *Lilies* fracture hegemonic truths so as to reveal those written out of a heteronormative colonial history. In allowing boundary crossings between apparently absolute binarisms, the transvestite thus functions, for western culture, much as does the trickster in Native culture. According to Sheila Rabillard, the combination of Highway's acknowledged homosexuality with the gender fluidity of Nanabush, the trickster, means that "the presiding spirit of Highway's plays is inimical to boundaries, polarities, and binary oppositions" (16). Rabillard goes on to add that "the drama seems to invite the audience to see the opposition between the genders as a hurtful condition analogous to — if not the product of — the sufferings brought about by White colonization" (17). The imbrication of a postcolonial with a queer subjectivity, particularly when, as in the works of these artists, it is combined with a problematizing of traditional masculinities (and femininities), decentres not only the (masculine) self of the white queer but also the relationship between subject and nation. These deconstructions suggest a hybridity of nation, sex and self that denies the possibility that there is an authentic masculinity, an authentic (hetero)sexuality, or an authentic Canadian.²⁹ This is nowhere more clear than in the particular duplicities at play in the work of First Nations writers. I look next at the work of Beth Brant and Tomson Highway, both of whom situate their characters within a double narrative that invokes both First Nations and European cultural traditions. This is particularly the case when it comes to making visible the necessarily doubled

²⁹ The de-authenticizing of hegemonic culture appears to inform even such mainstream cultural products as *Due South*, where the over-the-top hypermasculinity of the hero is even further fractured by his obvious inability to understand normative gender codes, just as his heterosexuality is undermined both by his lack of heterosexual relationships and by the homoerotic subtext of the show. That *Due South* also questions racial notions of what it means to be Canadian is made apparent by, for example, the appearance of a turbaned Sikh Mountie in the episode cited earlier.

narrative of the survivors, those who know and must tell both stories, the stories of those who make it and those who don't. In Brant's short stories and in Highway's novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, both Native and queer people occupy this position.

6. Trading in Discourse

I've always been proud of being Mohawk, of being from here. I *am* proud of being gay, even though everywhere I turned someone was always telling me not to be either. In the city they didn't want me to be native. In this place, they don't want me to be gay. It can drive you crazy!

Beth Brant, "This Place,"
Food and Spirits

The protagonist of Mohawk lesbian writer Beth Brant's short story, "This Place," is a young gay native with AIDS who returns to his mother's house to die. While the apparent point of the story is the way in which Native spirituality and acceptance of his sexuality help David to face his death, other aspects of this complex and moving story recall, from a Mohawk perspective, the historical and very real effects of European colonialism on the people, the culture and the land. When David's sister brings his nieces and nephews to visit, David is afraid for them:

Afraid the virus would reach out of his body and grab these babies and eat at them until they, too, disappeared in its grip. The virus put a fear in him—a fear that he could wipe out his people by breathing, by talking, by living. David saw, in his dreams, the virus eating away at this place until it was gone (*Food* 50)

David's fear is a very contemporary fear, the extraordinary fear of *contamination* invoked both by AIDS itself and by the meanings which proliferated around it, particularly in a North American context, after the syndrome was first recognized in and associated with gay men in the US. At the same time, David's nightmare of the "virus eating away at this place" is a historical reminder of the consequences of colonialism for native people, of a history in which viruses did indeed "wipe out his people by breathing, by talking, by living" and in which "this place," the place of native belonging, was incurably infected by European colonization.

In "The History That Will Be," Jonathan Goldberg argues that the story of colonialism is always imbricated with the history of sexuality. History, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points

out, is always already heterosexual—more precisely, heterosexuality is History (“Queer and Now” 10-11). The colonization of the Americas by the Old World is thus also the triumph of discourse, particularly of the discursive constructions that make history heterosexual and, by implication, white. Goldberg’s argument suggests that the invisible heterosexuality of european history creates a “plague of discourse” (Edelman, “Plague” 79-92) that infects the colonized, just as european viruses created historical plagues that destroyed native peoples and cultures. The most salient of Goldberg’s arguments is, I think, his critique of historical explanations of the epidemics inflicted upon the native population that reduce the decimation of a people to the state of an accident. Goldberg points out that identifying the viruses, rather than the europeans who introduced them to the Americas, as “chiefly responsible”³⁰ for the nearly genocidal effects of the epidemics “removes moral explanation entirely, replacing it with a supposedly neutral, natural—indeed, biological—explanation” (“History” 394). The discourse of european colonialism, in which history is always read after the fact for maximum potential for self-justification, thus, in fact, renders the history of epidemic as the natural, just as european discourses of gender and sexuality render as natural the inferiority of women and as unnatural the desire of anyone for their own sex. Furthermore this plague of discourse unleashed on the native population, along with the physical invasion of the land, resonates with the “epidemic of signification” that has, equally, infected the victims of that more recent epidemic, AIDS (Treichler, “AIDS”; Edelman, “Plague”). In part this plague of discourse has similarly made it possible for western culture to read the history of AIDS backwards onto the bodies of those infected, thus marking those bodies as always already diseased through the specific practices (primarily anal sex) that supposedly equate homosexuality with vulnerability to the virus.³¹

David’s story, in “This Place,” thus brings together both the physical and the discursive effects of two epidemics whose histories may appear to some to have little in common. David’s body, David’s spirit, made whole (but not ‘cured’) within the story, suggests the possibility of reconciliation of both parts of David’s identity, of the recognition by his family and by the

³⁰ Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism* (1986) qtd. in Goldberg, “History” 394.

³¹ For a further explication of this phenomenon, see Susan Knabe, “Coincidences and Likely Stories: Perverse Desire and Viral Exchange in the ‘Origin’ of AIDS.”

medicine man, Joseph (himself a two-spirit³²), that it is indeed possible to “be gay [and] be an Indian” (*Food* 55). Furthermore, the healing that occurs between David and Joseph and “this place” itself invokes the existence of not one but two histories that mainstream western society would like to consign “not merely to a past but to a past that is past and absolutely irrecoverable, cut off from the present” (Goldberg, “History” 396). This effect is secured, as Goldberg points out, through a discourse of authenticity by which white historical accounts accept as ‘Indian’ only those who are demonstrably “pure-bred” (395-396), just as settler culture seeks to establish its own purity by differentiating itself from the colonized other. As Sheila Rabillard argues in her article on the role of the Trickster in Tomson Highway’s plays, the essentialist underpinning of ethnographic studies of Native culture

... manifests a desire for cultural and racial purity: the Indian culture is, ideally, the culture before contact with Whites, for the *real* Indian and the *real* White are defined by their difference from one another ... This search for purity of definition, through its nostalgic narrative structure, works to sustain the twinned stereotypes of noble savage and degraded Indian. Both stereotypes, of course, along with the location of essential ‘Indianness’ in the past, contribute to the politically convenient and sentimentally soothing notion of the vanishing Indian who is, by definition, on the way to extinction (5-6).

In defining what is Indian both as what is past and as what is not ‘us,’ this type of discourse attempts to render native cultural expression not merely as marginal, but as impossible other than as universalized offerings to the centrality of whiteness: not only can a dead people not speak, in this schema, but attempts by Natives to express their own culture as presence, as *present*, can then only be read within the discourses of white liberalism, whose universalist stratagems still fix whiteness at the centre of meaning, or of white supremacy. This strategy, which is at once essentializing and silencing, is not entirely dissimilar from the discursive strategies by which cultural expressions of queerness are rendered invisible to the heterocentric gaze and thus undecipherable within mainstream culture. The desire not to have to know about anything queer has had extraordinarily powerful repercussions in the dominant culture for our understanding of

³² Native people have generally rejected the European term *berdache*, with its particularly inappropriate and pejorative origins; many Native people use ‘two-spirit’ more or less interchangeably with lesbian and gay.

sexuality, of ourselves (that is, those of us who are of european descent), and of other peoples.³³ Walter L. Williams, whose *Spirit in the Flesh* is the first significant academic exploration of homosexuality in Native culture, notes that as late as 1975 “the American Anthropological Association even voted ‘not to endorse anthropological research on homosexuality across national borders’” (13).

Both Mohawk and gay, David’s identities are thus implacably linked through genocidal histories that imbricate the european’s desire that natives should indeed belong to a historical past, as extinct as the dodo, with what Sedgwick has termed the “overarching, relatively unchallenged aegis of a culture’s desire that gay people not be” (“How to”164). Underwriting the cross-identification of western culture’s desire to eliminate the other, and demonstrated by both Brant and Highway, is the methodological attack on children: just as “gay and proto-gay kids” are placed at the mercy of psychiatrists who claim to be able to render them acceptably heterosexual,³⁴ Native children have historically been made as white as possible, either through adoption or through education.³⁵ The similarity of these attacks on children whose identities-to-be are either racially or sexually subaltern underlies Brant’s “A Long Story,” in which she alternates the story of an Indian woman in the 1890s whose children are taken away to be educated as almost-white and ultimately to become domestic servants and agricultural labourers with the contemporary story of a native lesbian who loses custody of her child because of her relationship with another woman. As with “This Place,” in “A Long Story” Brant brings together genocidal narratives whose very existence western culture denies, in large part through the

³³ This point is also made by David Stannard, who argues in “Uniqueness as Denial,” in the context of european failure to understand Native peoples, that “a culture that is mistaken about another must also be mistaken about itself” (195)

³⁴ While queer people have, by and large, seen the removal of homosexuality from the American Psychiatric Association’s list of mental disorders as a victory, one of its unfortunate effects has been the move to concentrate on the heterosexualization of children, through treatment of the mental ‘disease’ called “Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood.” In other words, now that ‘curing’ adult homosexuals is no longer an acceptable pursuit within the psychiatric profession, the battle against homosexuality has been displaced onto children whose gender identifications suggest that they may be ‘at risk’ of becoming queer. Psychiatric discourse thus once again reifies sexuality *as* gender, since it identifies only effeminate boys and tomboyish girls as gay men and lesbians *in posse*. For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Sedgwick’s “How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay.”

³⁵ I would also suggest that it is no accident that the two groups most at risk of suicide are Native youth and queer youth.

discursive production of 'History' as that which is always already whiteness, always already heterosexuality.

Both Brant and Cree playwright/novelist Tomson Highway tell stories — write — in ways that reverse the normative European perspectives of both history and narrative.³⁶ At the same time, as queer natives, both tell stories that are complicated by the historical destruction of native sex/gender systems and by the importation into native culture of western homophobia and heteronormativity. If Brant's stories are told from a Mohawk perspective, they are told equally from a lesbian perspective, just as Highway's plays and novel are both Cree and gay. It is hardly surprising then that, in "This Place," David's story calls into view a reverse discourse of infection that serves to remind the reader that native bodies, native spirituality, native understandings of gender and sexuality have all been contaminated by the trade goods of European colonialism, by the genocidally destructive effects not only of European guns, but also of less obviously noxious imports. Whisky and other types of alcohol introduced problems that remain difficult to address within native communities; viral diseases, such as smallpox, influenza and measles, decimated native populations; and European/Christian ideologies affected the treatment of both women and two-spirits within surviving native communities.

As Beth Brant herself puts it, in her essay "Physical Prayers,"

Church and state have long worked as consorts in the colonization of aboriginal peoples. With the guns came the Bible. With the Bible came the whiskey. With the whiskey came addiction and government over our affairs. With government came reserves, and loathing of all that was natural. With loathing came the unnatural; the internalization of all they told us about ourselves. And the beliefs hold fast in some. There are Christian Indians and there are homophobic Indians... The love that was natural in our world, has become unnatural as we become more consumed by the white world and the values therein. Our sexuality has been colonized, sterilized, whitewashed (*Writing* 59-60).

7. The Dead Who are Not Powerless

Tomson Highway's first novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, tells the story of two Cree boys, Champion (Jeremiah) Okimasis and his younger brother Dancer (Gabriel), who are born on a

³⁶ Richard Lane notes the importance of orality to First Nations writing, linking it to the idea of the text itself as having a "scriptural function" and explicitly rejecting the notion that orality is a degradation of the literary (198).

trapline in northern Manitoba in the 1950s and sent away to residential school as young children, where they suffer sexual abuse at the hands of the priests. They are later sent to high school in Winnipeg, where Jeremiah studies classical piano while Gabriel covertly takes up ballet. As young adults, the brothers are bitterly divided by Gabriel's homosexuality and their divergent attitudes to their Indianness. The last part of the novel shows the brothers coming together as adults to attempt to reconcile both their native identity and their sexuality through their art, which itself melds native culture, mythology, and story-telling with the western arts of playwriting, music, and dance. The story ends with Gabriel's death from AIDS and the final wink of the Fur Queen, the compromised Trickster³⁷ whose kiss begins the novel and who "is still here among us — albeit a little the worse for wear and tear — having assumed other guises" (iv).

In 1951, the boys' father, Abraham, the aptly named patriarch of the Okimasis clan, becomes the first native to win the world championship Sled Dog Derby in Oospaskooyak, Manitoba. As champion, Abraham is presented with a silver trophy by the Fur Queen, that year's winner of the town's annual beauty pageant. The photograph of Abraham, trophy in hand, being kissed by the Fur Queen becomes the brothers' icon. However, the novel hybridizes the Fur Queen from a white teenager tricked out with a tiara and a cape of arctic fox into a Cree Trickster, a compromised and compromising mixture of the colonial and the pre-colonial, of the serious and the camp — in other words, a Trickster who, like the Weesageechak story the brothers tell, always gets a little shit on her/his coat.³⁸ The image of the Fur Queen presides over the brothers' lives; Champion is conceived in the aftermath of the Fur Queen's kiss, as Abraham sees her becoming "one with the northern sky ... a shifting, nebulous pulsation, the seven stars

³⁷ In "A Note on the Trickster," that prefaces the novel, Highway says that "... in Indian (eg. Cree, Ojibway), there is no gender ... So that by this system of thought, the central hero figure from our mythology—theology, if you will—is theoretically neither exclusively male nor exclusively female, or is both simultaneously." He then adds that "[s]ome say that Weesageechak left this continent when the white man came. We believe she/he is still here among us—albeit a little the worse for wear and tear—having assumed other guises." (iv). Highway uses the Trickster's Cree name (Weesageechak) in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and her/his Ojibway name (Nanabush) in the two Rez plays.

³⁸ In "the entrails" of a Winnipeg mall, the brothers remember that "'Weesageechak comes down to earth disguised as a weasel' ... 'And the weasel crawls up the Weetigo's bumhole' ... 'In order to kill the horrible monster.' 'And comes back out with his white fur coat covered with shit?'" (Highway, *Kiss* 118). For a discussion of the coprophilic nature of Trickster stories (Trickster is Weesageechak in Cree, Nanabush in Ojibway) and their relevance to questions of anality in Highway's plays, see the chapter on Highway's plays in Dickinson.

of the Great Bear ornamenting her crown.” Abraham later tells his sons that as he watched, entranced, “the Fur Queen smiled enigmatically, and from the seven stars on her tiara burst a human foetus, fully formed, opalescent, ghostly” (12). Nine months later Champion is born, only to be transformed into Jeremiah by the priests at his school.

The mythic figure of the Fur Queen thus becomes one of three spectres who haunt this novel, from within and from without. The other spectres are, first, the ghost of Highway’s brother, Rene, who died of AIDS and whose shadowy image dances on the front cover of the novel, superimposed on a snowfield and a clouded winter sky; and second, the repeated invocation within the novel of the memory of Helen Betty Osborne, a 17 year old Cree woman who was brutally raped and murdered in 1971 in The Pas, Manitoba, by four young white men. The spectral nature of these memories of trauma to the native/gay body allows Highway to invoke their stories in ways that surpass the limitations of the (auto)biographical and the factual. Furthermore, rather than locking the novel into a mimetic, that is *pure*, reproduction of the tragedy of native/gay lives, a narrative that cannot help being at once partial, marginal, circumscribed, and ultimately unfaithful to the complex reality of how native (and gay) people live in the present, Highway creates a hybrid of western and native practices that allows his story to move beyond the generic conventions that normally separate mythic from realistic narratives, tragedy from comedy, and fiction from fact.

As Sheila Rabillard notes of Highway’s best-known plays, *The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, Highway’s writing employs “the strategy that Bhabha terms the hybrid—in language, form, frame, even acting style, venue, and audience” and thus partakes of “the power of hybridity to disturb colonial authority and the universalizing tendency of literary criticism manifesting itself as yet another form of control via cultural institutions” (17). While Highway seems less inclined than Beth Brant to say “I do not write for those of you who are white[,] I write for my own” (*Writing* 52), there are moments in both the plays and the novel when the dialogue switches from English to Cree; although the Cree is glossed in the novel (with the exception of the dedication), translations were certainly not accessible to non-Cree/Ojibway audience members at performances of the plays. Mark Shackleton argues that the deployment of the forbidden indigenous language is a form of resistance in its own right, but adds also that

The untranslatability of cultures is, in fact, one of the themes of *Kiss of the Fur*

Queen, and humour, an important aspect of Highway's work, is in particular culturally specific. Highway has said, 'When you speak Cree you laugh constantly,' and in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* he contrasts Cree humorous delight in what is bawdy and physical with the stuffy puritanism of English. ("Language" 219).

Susan Knabe suggests, in a discussion of language and embodiment in the novel, that "[f]or both Gabriel and Jeremiah ... language, complete with its ambiguities and inadequacies, obstacles and possibilities, is experienced corporeally: the taste of alienation, and of desire" ("Body" 134). Throughout the novel, the two brothers negotiate the linguistic pitfalls of hybridity and biculturalism, as concepts like AIDS, sexual abuse and even concert pianist prove untranslatable from English to Cree, just as Cree concepts of "matters sensual, sexual, and therefore fun" are unspeakable in English (*Kiss* 190). It needs to be noted, however, that Highway combines the deployment of native humour, translatable or otherwise, with queer western traditions of camp to reinstate the supposedly excessive sexualities and bodies of the queer and the native within the text, producing a hybrid text that is both Cree and western, both funny and tragic, but that makes no clear cross-identifications between the terms — the western can be funny, the Cree tragic within the text as easily as the reverse. The last scene of the novel and of Gabriel's life is hilarious, campy and tragic all at once, as the sweetgrass smoke sets off the hospital fire alarms, the hospital staff, fire chief, and priest all bang on the locked door, and Jeremiah scoops his mother inside from under the noses of western authorities, Gabriel's weeping lover Robin holds him in his arms, and Ann-Adele Ghost rider, the shaman, hangs the mother's rosary, symbolic of banished and vanquished Catholicism, around the neck of "a Ken doll sporting cowboy hat and white-tasselled skirt" (303). Little wonder the *Fur Queen* ends the novel by winking at Jeremiah, even if locating the humour embedded in the tragedy offends western sensibilities.

While the various hybridities in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* thus work to disrupt "colonial authority" and to disturb the universalizing (white) assumptions of traditional literary criticism,³⁹

³⁹ Dickinson notes that critical readings of Highway's work have, by and large, been inflected with heteronormativity:

What I find most remarkable is that in virtually all of these analyses the 'crisis of authenticity' that most agree is enacted in Highway's plays is situated solely within the context of ethnicity and gender, leaving sexuality, for instance, as an undifferentiated aspect of the intersection of these two categories rather than, as I would argue, the 'critical' site of their articulation. (182)

the intertextualities between the novel and “reality” also work to disturb the notion of heterosexuality as History and to re-place a subaltern (native/queer) subjectivity from the margin to the centre of the narrative. In other words, Highway’s novel employs strategies that emplace an entirely different understanding of both native and queer subjectivity and thus agency, that “challenge, as Andreas Huyssen suggests postmodernism must, *the ideology of the subject* (as male, white, and middle-class [and we must add, as he does not, heterosexual])” (Edelman, “Mirror” 111). Leaving aside for the moment the issue of class, Highway’s move to foreground the subjectivities of native people, particularly women, children and two-spirits, also serves to embed the novel in the realm of the social, rather than of the purely psychological: the novel’s critique is not that these traumas occur to these specific individuals within the story, but that reader and writer alike live within a societal structure that permits and even encourages a variety of acts, both large and small, that take as their central premise the idea that harm is only of importance if it occurs to someone who occupies the ideological position of subject within the dominant culture — that is white, male and heterosexual.⁴⁰

Thus, despite its many invocations of their lives, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is not about Rene Highway or Helen Betty Osborne—or even about Tomson Highway. As Diana Brydon demonstrates, Highway “both invites and deflects such [autobiographical] readings, insisting that the novel must be read as a complex engagement with personal and social history, an engagement that locates the personal experience within a specific colonial context, and that seeks to carry the force of that personal anguish back into the public sphere to find appropriate forms of redress and progress” (“Compromising” 23).⁴¹ Thus Gabriel’s likeness in the novel to Rene Highway

⁴⁰ This is not to say that class is not itself an issue for these writers, particularly for Beth Brant, who points out that writing from more than one perspective confuses the desires of both the literary and publishing establishments for neat categories. Brant notes that “I would like to be reviewed in my many complexities as a human being — mother, grandmother, Mohawk, lesbian, feminist, working-class, mammal and on and on” (*Writing* 79).

⁴¹ Because the autobiographical elements are particularly clear, it seems to me that many readers, knowing that both Tomson and Rene Highway are gay, read that knowledge back into the text, even though Terry Goldie argues, based on the title’s reference to Manuel Puig’s *Kiss of the Spider Woman* as well as on his conversations with Highway, that Jeremiah is intended to be heterosexual. Regardless of authorial intent, however, Jeremiah is sufficiently ambivalent sexually to be read as gay or bisexual, as well as straight, by different readers, all of whom bring different experiences and expectations of sexual identity to the text.

— both are younger brothers to piano-playing Cree, both were born on their father's trapline in Northern Manitoba, both were trained in classical dance, both died of AIDS — evokes not only Highway's pain over his brother's death, but also resonates within the sphere of the political. The imported homophobia of Native communities, the sexual abuse in the residential school system, the systemic heterocentrism of western society, and the genocidal indifference of the dominant culture to the effects of AIDS on gay men and other unwanted people: all of these inform Gabriel's presence in *Kiss*. This transition from the personal to the political is perhaps even more clear in the way in which the spectre of Helen Betty Osborne haunts the novel. As a teenager, Highway attended high school with Helen Betty Osborne in The Pas. In a 1995 interview, he says specifically that his rage against sexual violence towards women started when Osborne

... was gang-raped by four young white guys when she was trying to get home one day; her cunt was stabbed with a screwdriver fifty-six times. She died on the side of the road after they tossed her out of their car. And for sixteen years no one said anything, even though everyone in the town—the town council and the police—knew who did it. And then more than sixteen years later, one of them was charged and imprisoned, while the others went free. (Qtd. in Tompkins and Male 22)

Highway adds that, "What I want my work to do is (a) prevent that kind of thing happening to another native woman and (b) to educate our sons and our sons' sons that it's cruel to go around shoving screwdrivers up the cunts of women. That's the kind of event that changes the lives of people around it. It changed me, and I will write this sort of stuff until the world stops treating women so poorly" (22).

Crimes like the rape and murder of Osborne, as well as the sexual abuse of untold numbers of native women and children, are constructed within western discourse as having as little importance as their victims, who are subaltern in race and in gender and/or in age. The discursive dismissal of violence against native women within Western culture is indicted in this novel alongside the homophobic violences that enable everything from queer-bashing and murder to the epidemic of signification that has both rendered AIDS a 'gay disease' and welcomed it as a way of ridding western society of homosexuals.⁴² Brought together, as they are in *Kiss of the*

⁴² While official discourse does not acknowledge the genocidal potential of AIDS — and may, in fact, not have it as a conscious goal — the fact remains that the majority of AIDS funding in western countries does not go to the gay community where the disease, even now, affects the greatest

Fur Queen, these ghosts of an alternative — perhaps precolonial but also perhaps hybridly postcolonial — world where women and queers may be valued clarify for the reader the inextricable imbrication within western culture of misogyny and homophobia. Thus all of these spectres, both fictive and metafictional, are adjurations of a native world that survives, but is compromised by, the effects of colonization: the colonial past /present is the fourth spectre that haunts this novel, as it does Brant's "This Place" and others of her stories. These are also the spectres that Highway raises in his epigraphs: the Indians who, like Rene Highway, still dance and "the dead [who] are not powerless" (ix).⁴³

The metafictional aspects of the novel, its intertextualities with 'real life,' work in a doubled fashion to ironize 'straight' readings of both the text and of the 'facts' of native existence.⁴⁴ After the performance of "Ulysses Thunderchild," the play for which Jeremiah writes both text and music and which Gabriel directs, choreographs and dances in, the brothers and Amanda Clear-Sky (actor, Ojibway, Jeremiah's former classmate and occasional girlfriend) read a white reviewer's response to the play: "But the cannibal spirit shedding his costume at death, revealing a priest's cassock, confuses the viewer. The image comes from nowhere. And goes nowhere." Jeremiah's response is to ask, "What's she talking about?" Gabriel replies, "You didn't say it loud enough" (285). By this point, the reader of *Kiss of the Fur Queen* should be well aware not only that the Weetigo is the cannibal spirit who eats little boys in Cree legend, but also that the Weetigo is the priest who rapes little boys both in the novel and in real life. If the fictitious reviewer misses this point in Jeremiah's play, does it mean, as Gabriel says, that Jeremiah "didn't

numbers of people. This is also true of AIDS in the third world, where AIDS research and treatment is strikingly underfunded, thus making visible the way in which the disease is discursively constructed as a means to rid the (straight) (white) world of its unwanted others.

⁴³ The first epigraph is a 1921 memorandum from Duncan Campbell Scott, urging members of the Department of Indian Affairs to curb "excessive indulgence in the practice of dancing"; the second is a quote from Chief Seattle of the Squamish, from 1853, saying in part that, "The whiteman will never be alone. Let him be just and treat our people kindly. For the dead are not powerless."

⁴⁴ Terry Goldie, in particular, argues trenchantly for the need for non-native critics to avoid "the assumption that the Native text in some way documents Native culture and thus allows the reader to 'see' that culture If Highway presents a Cree window, I am trying to avoid looking through it. Instead, I wish to consider the sociocultural implications of the text as an aesthetic construct" (205). While this statement is both necessary and elegant in its offering of alternatives to the authoritarian critical stance, I need to add that I am trying, however unsuccessfully, to avoid treating any of the texts in this thesis as a window into the author's particular culture, including the culture of those who seem most 'like me,' but may, in fact, partake of important differences.

say it loud enough”?

This question is not an idle one. To begin with, as Beth Brant points out in “Keep the Drum Playing,” many natives write, yet few get published. Furthermore, editors and publishers may attempt to propagate their own beliefs about native people’s lives. Brant gives the example of the white editor who rejected “This Place” because he believed “that the older Native woman in the story would not have been accepting of her son’s homosexuality” (*Writing* 39). Noting the insidiousness of this type of cultural imperialism, Brant adds that white editors often want to see Indians only in stories “full of pathos and victimization . . . They like to see us as ‘plight’ rather than the dedicated survivors we are” (39). The story Highway tells in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* could have been a story of “pathos and victimization,” but Highway is able to use the admixture of Cree and western narrative styles to address serious issues of misogyny, racism, homophobia, alcoholism, violence and sexual abuse.

If “Ulysses Thunderchild” does not “say it loud enough,” in part because Jeremiah hasn’t yet unlocked the memory that will make the transformation of the Weetigo into the priest signify for him — and thus for the audience — as it already does for Gabriel, it also recalls the complex of arguments raised by Highway’s second play, *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (1989). *Dry Lips* situates itself primarily as a critique of the way in which gender relationships on the reservation, including the problem of misogynist violence, are played out within the context of the colonial present. While I do not particularly want to reanimate that debate,⁴⁵ the crucial scene bears considerable relevance to the work Highway seems to be doing in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. When Dickie Bird Halked, a young man suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome, rapes Nanabush (the Trickster has, at this point, become the young woman, Patsy Pegahmagahbow) with a crucifix, the crucial image is not that of a native woman being raped by a native man, but of a native person raped by the seminal symbol of european/Christian religion. What the audience sees on stage is both an individual act of violence by a man against a woman and what Brant calls “the legacy of our community rape” (*Writing* 73).

The complicity of the crucifix itself in the act of rape is repeated in *Kiss of the Fur*

⁴⁵ Alan Filewod discusses the accusations of misogyny raised against Highway by both white feminist and native critics in the context of both performance history and of issues of cultural authenticity.

Queen: “Father Lafleur bent, closer and closer, until the crucifix that dangled from his neck came to rest on Gabriel’s face. The subtly throbbing motion of the priest’s upper body made the naked Jesus Christ . . . rub his body against the child’s lips, over and over and over again” (78). It is at this moment, when Jeremiah, at the age of eight, realizes what the “dark, hulking figure” bent over Gabriel, “the Weetigo feasting on human flesh” actually is, that he takes refuge in denial: “Had this really happened before? Or had it not? But some chamber deep inside his mind slammed permanently shut. It had happened to nobody” (80). Thus the reproduction, in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, of a reviewer’s inability to hear what the playwright is saying suggests both that Highway is responding to criticisms of his own play and that Jeremiah will not be able to “say it loud enough” until he comes to terms with his own past. Ironically, it is Gabriel’s response to the white reviewer that unlocks “the padlocked doors” of Jeremiah’s memory: “Now he remembers the holy man inside him, the lining of his rectum being torn . . . cigar breath billowing somewhere above his cold shaved head” (285-87). Jeremiah had been dreaming of his father and of the Fur Queen when Father Lafleur woke him; like his biblical namesake, Abraham Okimasis sacrifices his son to his god and the Fur Queen vanishes, unable, it seems, to protect him from the priest. The seeming impotence of the Cree in the face of Christianity is symbolized in the loss of both the boy’s name and his hair.

Throughout *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Jeremiah deals with his own trauma by focussing on what happens to Gabriel, as well as to other native people. All of the various traumas that occur to the characters are, in a sense, governed by the equation that the teenaged Jeremiah makes while listening to a high school history lecture. Highway recreates, in the heavily German-accented voice of Jeremiah’s teacher, Herr Schwarzkopf,⁴⁶ the populist european account of the arrival of white people in the Americas, which Jeremiah, the seventeen-year-old Cree scholar, translates into only two words: “Penetration . . . 1492” (122). The teacher’s account of this penetration by europeans into the New World is set explicitly within a larger discourse of religious violence against women, which equates the missionary zeal with which Christianity was thrust upon the native peoples with the Spanish Inquisition and the burning of nine million women

⁴⁶ It is worth noting that the teacher’s name — ‘Mr. Blackhead’ in German — at once recapitulates both the history of the Holocaust and the genocidal relationship of white and black; in the context of the white colonization of Americas this history is the history of enslavement and forced relocation. Typical of Highway’s humour, it could also be (mis)translated as ‘Mr. Acne.’

as witches. At the same time that Jeremiah is learning this important lesson (a lesson he has absorbed thoroughly enough that he does not, at the time, notice that Herr Schwarzkopf's history elides any possibility that the Cree people might also have a historical account, from their own perspective, of these events), Gabriel is also learning an important lesson. Confronted with the "essence of maleness" as illustrated by both the prostatic gland of a fetal pig and the not inconsiderable attractions of his (male) biology teacher, Gabriel contemplates what is "wrong with the essence of femaleness ... that it should leave him as cold as stone" and remembers Father Bouchard's teachings that "the union of man and woman" is "the union of Christ and his church" (125). In these few pages, Christianity is effectively imbricated with misogynist violence, with homophobia, and with the rape of the New World.

I would suggest that the invocation in the novel of these particular acts of sexual and racial violence can best be understood in the context of the connection Jeremiah unwittingly makes when he reduces the history of European colonization of his people to the words "penetration ... 1492." What Highway intimates, it seems, is the ironic reversal of the very trope of sexual perversion with which the conquerors rationalized their own violent inhumanity towards the conquered. Where the Spaniards, in particular, figured the "Indian" as sodomite, Highway recasts the figurative 'Spaniard' — especially the priest — in the role of sodomitical rapist. In doing so, he parallels in fictional terms precisely the argument made by queer theorists, such as Jonathan Goldberg, in their examinations of the sodomitical narratology so prevalent in the journals and diaries of the Spanish invaders. Goldberg notes that

... if the accusation of sodomy is meant to signal how unlike the Spaniards the Indians are, how repugnant their practices and very beings must be, how much their relations to each other and to their own bodies fail to communicate with Spanish practices, they also offer an uncanny mirror of Spanish desires, above all the desire to violate. For the Spaniards want these bodies, to trade them as possessions, to enslave them to do their work. They want the gold that distends their orifices. ("Discovering" 196-97)

That this argument can be extended to the ways in which the colonizers both created and exploited a narrative about the sexual behaviour of all natives, women as well as two-spirits, to rationalize their rapacity as the benign spread of civilization to the 'savage' is delineated by Beth Brant in "Physical Prayers:"

Those first whitemen who stumbled across our world had no experience of how we thought and believed ... They couldn't grasp the concept of peoples living with the sun and the moon ... Peoples who were not ashamed or afraid of bodily functions or sexual acts. Peoples who had a rhythm that pulsed to that of Earth. The whiteman saw none of this except for the unashamed celebration of sexuality. They were so spellbound, they wrote reams of paper on the subject. The Jesuits especially gloried in recounting every sexual act. The Spanish and French wrote home to Europe about the sexual 'looseness' of Native women. Of course, these men did not mention the word rape, a common occurrence perpetrated on my women ancestors (*Writing* 59).

Sexuality becomes the sign of difference, the mark by which the colonizers differentiate themselves from the colonized; for Brant and Highway, however, it also operates to become the sign by which natives can distinguish themselves from the sexual cruelties of the colonizers, a sign most accessible to those who, as women or as gay men, are also most vulnerable to attack from both worlds, white and (colonized) native. Heteronormativity, with its inbuilt notions of female inferiority, thus comes to signify the "plague of discourse" brought to native peoples along with the penetration of Christian missionaries into the New World. Walter L. Williams argues in *The Spirit and the Flesh* that it is in large part because the patriarchal structure of Christianity devalues women that Christianized natives were induced to repudiate their own traditions of sexuality along with their particular sex-gender systems, pointing out that

Just as the status of Indian women declined with the adoption of patriarchal Christianity, so did berdaches. Since Christianity views men as superior ... then the berdache is likewise inferior because he is 'less than a man.' No longer is he combining the power of both women and men; in Christianity he is seen as subverting his natural male superiority to take an inferior female form. (Williams 1986: 89)

Thus the various instances of sexual violence by native people reflect the destruction of native systems of understanding sex, gender and sexuality, as well as of the theft of language. Simon Starblanket, in *Dry Lips*, insists that Cree, a genderless language, is better than English:

... weetha ('him/her' ... ie., no gender) ... Christ! What is it? Him? Her? Stupid fucking language, fuck you, da Englesa. Me no speakum no more da goodie Englesa, in Cree we say 'weetha,' not 'him' or 'her'.... (110-11)

Beverley Curran quotes Highway as saying in an interview that learning English and French was difficult, in part because they insisted on gendering his reality in ways that often made no sense:

“... the biggest stumbling block I faced at every point was the issue of gender.... I couldn’t believe, for instance, that in French ‘vagina’ is masculine and a prostate gland ... is feminine. It’s just so outrageous” (Qtd. in Curran 120-21). The imposition by colonialism of a foreign system of understanding sex/gender and sexuality has threatened to deculturate the most intimate levels of First Nations lives and both Brant and Highway are explicit about linking this loss to forced acculturation into the heteronormative regimes of Christianity. Highway, in particular, links gendered language to patriarchal religion, arguing that “... in the Indian language, and in the whole linguistic structure, and therefore the whole theological structure such as it was before it became seriously affected by the whole missionary effort, there existed very much a concept of God as a woman” (Qtd. in Curran 121).⁴⁷

The rape of Patsy in *Dry Lips* by Dickie Bird Halked thus recalls both the influence of Christianity in the devaluing of native women and the devastation of alcohol, which deformed Dickie Bird even before his birth. Several critics, notably Denis Johnston, have expressed dissatisfaction or puzzlement with the ending of *Dry Lips*, where it is revealed that the events of the play were not ‘real’ but were instead a dream. The dreamer, Zachary Keechigeesik, wakes up butt-naked on the couch, at the point where the play began, and is joined by his wife, Hera, and their baby. While this recalls the traditional interpretation of Shakespeare’s comedies, in which marriage is supposedly always the proper resolution, it also suggests a more postcolonial reading. What takes place on the reservation during Zachary’s dream resonates with Highway’s choice of a quotation from Lyle Longclaws as the epigraph of the play: “before the healing can take place, the poison must first be exposed.” In both *Dry Lips* and *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, the narrative exposes the poisons of misogyny, of homophobia, of childhood trauma, of alcohol, and of despair. When Zachary wakes up and lifts his baby in his arms, it seems that he is awakening from the nightmare of colonialism. But he does not do so in a return to a pre-colonial world; his awakening occurs within the context of colonialism — the poster of Marilyn Monroe on the wall, the couch, the accoutrements of western life — and suggests the need to go forward, rather than

⁴⁷ This criticism of the violence apparently inherent in patriarchal religion is not limited to First Nations artists, but is played out in various ways throughout many parts of queer Canadian culture. A particularly humorous example is lesbian folk singer Heather Bishop’s “Did Jesus Have a Baby Sister?” which includes a consideration of what a female Saviour might be called: “Saviourwoman, Saviourperson, save your breath.”

back. *Dry Lips*, like *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, thus partakes of what Goldberg has named “the history that will be,” the reclamation of both past and future from the stranglehold of whiteness and heterocentrism. In Sedgwick’s terms, while both Highway’s plays and his novel necessarily mobilize paranoid strategies — revealing to a primarily white audience the colonial violences they may not wish to see — their larger impetus is reparative, following the desire to “let the healing begin” after the poison has been exposed. As Peter Dickinson argues with respect to *Dry Lips*, “the dominant figure/ground frameworks of indigeneity tend to get deliberately skewed in Highway’s plays. The performance of (ab)originality on stage requires white, heterosexual audiences, in particular, to reimagine their relationships not only with Indigenous peoples, but with other marginalized communities as well, including women and queers” (186).

8. Weesageechak Dances with History

As an incarnation of the Trickster, the Fur Queen’s kiss, smile, laugh and wink, are repeated throughout the novel at moments of crisis in the brothers’ lives. Her very duplicity as both mythic figure (the Trickster is, of course, itself duplicitous) and as adolescent white beauty queen invokes a complex hybrid of white colonialism and native survival and resistance. The latter are figured in the novel primarily through the twin weapons of humour and art. In this sense, the novel itself partakes on a metafictional level of precisely those duplicitous, ludic and even sly qualities it ascribes to the Fur Queen. The shadowy photograph of the dancer Rene Highway on the cover further implicates gender/genre crossings: the gender ambivalence of the Trickster and of the Cree language, the hybridization of fiction and (auto)biography. The resonances in the text with the real life histories of Highway and his brother are complicated, at least in terms of western precepts of narrative genre, by the prefatorial insistence that “all the characters and what happens to them are fictitious” (vi). What appears to the reader as the refusal to demarcate the text as either fiction or (auto)biography troubles western/colonial expectations of the gulf between fiction and fact, between story and history, in ways that I would suggest are both queer and postcolonial. The Trickster’s presence in the text is a destabilizing force, disrupting western expectations of gender, genre, narrative form, and the truth of History.

The history that will be is, after all, as much how we recount what happened as how we project a future; the history that will be is, inevitably, a history of the

present, that divided site that must look both ways at once (Goldberg, “History” 386).

Both Brant and Highway demonstrate that it is possible to do just this — that in negotiating what it means to be both native and a two-spirit, it is possible to “look both ways at once” and thus to begin to reclaim History for precisely those people who have always been invisible to it, except, perhaps, as its victims. This is a history that may make white people uncomfortable, or that straight people may not wish to hear. It is, as Diana Brydon points out, the history that is told “from the Cree perspective, showing non-native readers ‘a new world’ in which they — that is, most of us — are the Weetigo” (“Compromising” 25). It is also, however, a history of hope, a history in which alliances are possible across and among identity groups.

This is the world that Beth Brant shows us a glimpse of, if only as something that might come to be, in the story “Turtle Gal.” When nine-year-old Sue Linn’s mama dies, she is taken in by her friend, James William Newton, Sweet William. Sweet William is elderly, black, gay, and alone after the death of his partner, Big Bill. And yet he’s prepared to help one little Indian girl stay with someone who loves her, safe from the hands of the government agencies neither he nor Sue Linn trust. Turtle Gal’s new family is a hybrid one, no more likely to be recognized by the government than Sweet William’s marriage to Big Bill. Yet Sue Linn is already learning a new history at school, where a black teacher explains the relationship between the enslavement and transportation of Africans, the genocide of Indians, and the colonization of the Americas in terms a child can understand (*Food* 101-16). As Brant says in one of her essays, no matter how much colonialist discourse may try to define the other as belonging on the margins of the Canadian nation, even those of us who are ‘outside’ of the so-called centre still exist inside our own perspectives: “As a Mohawk, I am very much inside my own world-view, my own Nations, and I am looking at you” (*Writing* 49).

CHAPTER FOUR

“CAN YOU SEE ME YET?”: (IN)VISIBILITY, THE QUEER ARCHIVE AND CANADIAN PUBLIC CULTURE

CASSANDRA: See her? ... Every day we all hear the same thing, voices: radios, loudspeakers, friends, our consciences. God. Voices, every way we turn. Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt, Ma Perkins. Yes: and Aimée Semple McPherson. Why do we listen? Why do we pay attention? Why do we obey? I can not say, except to say there's something eager and malignant in us that yearns to cringe, wants to be obedient. That is the secret of their power. Our willing weakness. We are the horses they ride, the beasts they hunt, the cattle in their abattoirs. We are their victims — everyone — because we are afraid to be ourselves.

Timothy Findley, *Can You See Me Yet?*

It is thus, in this *domiciliation*, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutionalized passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret.... With such a status, the documents, which are not always discursive writings, are only kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged *topology*. They inhabit this uncommon place, this place of election where law and singularity intersect in *privilege*. At the intersection of the topological and the nomological, of the place and the law, of the substrate and the authority, a scene of domiciliation becomes at once visible and invisible. I stress this point for reasons which ... all have to do with this *topo-nomology*, with this archontic dimension of domiciliation, with this archic, in truth patriarchic, function, without which no archive would ever come into play or appear as such.

Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*

1. Looking Queer/ly

In the last chapter, I examined the ways in which sexuality, gender and race are

interwoven in the construction of a colonial norm which is white, male and heterosexual and the ways in which work by queer artists variously reveals, critiques, contests and attempts to disarticulate the normalizing power of that imbrication. Although there has yet to develop a coherent body of work dealing with the analytical utility of looking at texts from both a queer and a postcolonial perspective, the field of queer postcolonial work is exciting a rapid growth in interest. I hope, at least, that I was able in the previous chapter to demonstrate some of the ways in which the supposedly essential categories of identity mobilized in discourses of race/ethnicity and gender/sexuality function both to construct and to reinforce each other, while at the same time I attempted to retain an awareness of the specific histories and the micropolitical particularities of lived experience that differs not only from 'group' to 'group' but from person to person.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. argues, in the foreword to *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities* (2001), that "[w]hat makes the race analogy complicated is that gays, as demographic composites, do indeed 'have it better' than blacks and yet in many ways contemporary homophobia is more virulent than contemporary racism..." (xiv). By contrast, in "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn," Richard Fung argues that

... there is a kind of doubleness, of ambivalence, in the way that Asian men experience contemporary North American gay communities. The 'ghetto,' the mainstream gay movement, can be a place of freedom and sexual identity. But it is also a site of racial, cultural *and* sexual alienation sometimes more pronounced than that in straight society. For me, sex is a source of pleasure, but also a site of humiliation and pain. (159)

In "Skin Head Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imaginary," Kobena Mercer suggests that the importance and indeed excitement of work by black lesbians and gay men is not a result of their racialized and sexualized identities *per se*, but a consequence of their making

cultural and political choices out of their experiences of marginality that situate them at the interface between different traditions. Insofar as they speak from the specificity of such experiences, they overturn the assumption that minority artists speak *for* the community from which they come. This is an important distinction in the relations of enunciation because it bears upon the politics of representation that pertain to all subjects in marginalized or minoritized situations, whether black, feminist, lesbian, or gay. In a material context of restricted access to the means of representation, minoritized subjects are charged with an impossible 'burden of representation.' (204-05; italics in original)

The “burden of representation” enunciated by the requirement to “speak *for*,” to be always *the* representative of one’s community is doubled in Mercer’s exposition by the negotiations necessary between identities formed out of discursively disparate communities, whether racialized, gendered, sexualized, or classed. Mercer’s attempt to formulate doubly or triply minoritized artists as ‘speaking *from*’ rather than ‘*for*’ represents one way out of the double bind of multiple and sometimes contradictory affiliations, because it both interrogates and complicates the arrogant assumption that it is possible to speak for others, as well as the equally privileged assumption of the ‘normal’ that it can require the ‘other’ to speak for those constructed as being ‘like *them*.’ Additionally, it suggests a way to think of multiple identifications and subject-formations outside of a hierarchical ordering of oppressions. It is thus, I believe, a mistake to suggest that racial oppression, sexism and heterocentric oppression are interchangeable with each other, but it is also a mistake to assume that these oppressions are unrelated. Equally, I am unconvinced by arguments, from any perspective, that depend on the construction of a hierarchy of oppressions. Lisa Walker believes that the creation of such a hierarchy in the works of, for example, bell hooks and Sue-Ellen Case tends to assume “skin color as the privileged signifier” on the basis that queer people are presumed to be able to pass as heterosexuals when the need arises, whereas many, if not most, people of colour cannot pass for white. By contrast, Walker argues that, when hooks and Case overlook the ability of some light-skinned people to pass and the inability of some queer people to do so, “the complexities of passing are elided from their discussions of race and gender because they threaten the identities that the two writers define on the basis of visibility” (198).¹ Such identities must then function on the basis of the expectation that each of us can only look like what we are.

If visibility is foregrounded as the *sine qua non* of the construction of identity, then the issue of how to recognize, quantify and categorize what is seen becomes crucial to the constitution of a supposedly coherent epistemology of difference, even though, as Sedgwick notes, not only are ‘*people different from each other*,’ but it is “astonishing how few respectable conceptual tools we have for dealing with this self-evident fact. A tiny number of

¹ It is important to note that gender marks the bodies of some queer people in ways that make them unable to assimilate themselves into the norm; some women look like drag queens in a dress, while some men are unable to perform masculinity in ways that allow them to pass.

inconceivably coarse axes of categorization have been painstakingly inscribed in current critical and political thought: gender, race, class, nationality, sexual orientation are pretty much the available distinctions” (*Epistemology* 22; italics in original). According to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, the construction of identity generally functions, regardless of the specific axis of categorization, through visual (dis)identification, so that “everything presenting itself as different can be reduced to identity. This may take two forms: either appearance is a mere artifice of concealment, or it is a necessary form of a manifestation of an essence” (21). However, both postcolonial theory and queer theory tend toward skepticism about essences, whether represented or concealed by appearance. In theories of visibility, though, particularly those applied to lesbian and transgendered bodies and/or texts, there has been a distinct tendency to theorize an essential subject who disguises her or his true identity through masquerade and artifice, thus conflating, as Walker argues, “sexual style with sexual consciousness” (203).

Judith Butler attempts to denaturalize such a conflation by arguing that it rests on a false binary of inside and outside, in which inward gender and outward sex are presumed to match. In Butler’s most famous example, the drag performance, such assumptions are reconfigured as inherently fallacious, as the mismatch between inside and outside in the drag performance deconstructs the assumption that such a match can ever exist. Gender is, in Butler’s terms, revealed as always already a failed performance, one which can only ever approximate, but never successfully correspond to, its ideal. Nevertheless, Butler’s argument depends, once again, on visibility: the drag queen, or king, is the visible sign of the performativity of gender. Similarly, in “Critically Queer,” Butler states that “. . . heterosexuality can be said to operate through the regulated production of hyperbolic versions of ‘man’ and ‘woman.’ These are for the most part compulsory performances, ones which none of us choose, but which each of us is forced to negotiate” (22). Once again, the recognition of the deconstructive hyperbole that forecloses the possibility of a natural or innate sexuality is dependent on a recognition that must necessarily be visual, even if it is also read as textual.

If the visual, then, is central both to the construction and the deconstruction of gendered, sexualized or racialized identities, subjectivity itself comes to be understood as founded in and supported by the visual. In Walker’s terms, we need to (not) look like what we are — we can either use the visual signification of identity to confirm or to conceal our identifications. Whether

we conform to expectations about the visual presentation of our identities or not, visibility remains the ineluctable criterion for being. However, since visibility functions at the immediate level of the constitution of the subject's identity, it cannot escape the question of agency: who is looking and who is being constructed through looking?² It is thus the perceived centrality of the visual to identity and subjectivity that grounds the question of representation in its apparent urgency. On the one hand, representation can be understood as a copy or a simulacrum of an original, as a photograph is presumed to reproduce the true image of its subject; on the other hand, it can also be understood as being ab-original, representing nothing but representation itself. And finally, representation also functions at the institutional and governmental levels of the public sphere, through the processes of what Michael Warner calls "political interest-representation" ("Introduction" xxvi).

It is thus not surprising that wresting control of — or at least a veto over — the production of visibility and representation has frequently been foregrounded as a necessary political strategy both for the lesbian and gay liberation movement(s) and for those seeking human rights-style advances on the basis of equivalence and subjunction. Lisa Walker begins her recent book on lesbian identity and visibility, *Looking Like What You Are: Sexual Style, Race, and Lesbian Identity* (2001), with the comment that "[d]emanding visibility has been one of the principles of late-twentieth-century identity politics, and flaunting visibility has become one of its tactics. If silence equals death, invisibility is nonexistence" (1). The flip side of the assumption that visibility and correct representation (representing me as who I truly am) are politically and culturally efficacious is, as Leo Bersani points out in *Homos* (1995), the marking of the visible body as a target for identification and surveillance. Drawing on Foucault's description of the panopticon, Bersani concludes that, "Once we agreed to be seen, we also agreed to being policed" (12). And Lee Edelman argues in *Homographesis* that the production of the family and

² Because invisibility and unspeakability are constructed out of the same discourses that privilege the dominant half of every binary, Kobena Mercer makes the parallel point when he says that the question of enunciation — who is speaking, who is spoken to, what codes do they share to communicate? — implies a whole range of important political issues about who is empowered and who is disempowered in the representation of difference. It is enunciation that circumscribes the marginalized positions of subjects historically misrepresented or underrepresented in dominant systems of representation. To be marginalized is to have no place from which to speak, since the subject positioned in the margins is silenced and invisible. ("Skin Head Sex Thing" 181)

the nation as spaces of safe and visible heteronormativity is fractured by the anxieties propagated by the concurrent and paradoxical belief that homosexuality is marked on the body of the gay man as always visible, while at the same time he is understood as always invisible and able to pass. Edelman notes further that, "Once sexuality may be read and interpreted in light of homosexuality, all sexuality is subject to a hermeneutics of suspicion" ("Homographesis" 7). Visible queerness, particularly when it is understood to mark the body as a legible and comprehensible text, is always both excessively visible, and thus offensive, and never visible enough, and thus frighteningly difficult to identify.

Allaying the contradictory fears of the mainstream is one of the assumed abilities of visibility politics, as images of 'normal' lesbians and gays are presumed to possess not merely a symbolic but an agentive, indeed perhaps a magical, value in cleansing heteronormative culture of stereotypes and fallacious (mis)identifications. At the same time, visibility politics presumes that visibility itself is efficacious, simply by marking an LGBT presence in a place (the family, the nation) discursively constructed as antithetical to queerness. Knowing a queer person is understood as sufficient to cause an unreflexive heterosexist to question, if not actually to rethink, his or her homophobia — an assumption which is the basis of many visibility strategies, such as the invention of a 'National Coming Out Day' and the controversial tactic of 'outing' famous queers.³ And, finally, visibly queer people, particularly those who are successful or famous, provide role models for young LGBT people struggling to understand what is made available and what is foreclosed by their newfound sexual identities. None of these rationales for visibility as a political strategy are unproblematic, however. There is always the question of which queer people get to be visible — especially when such visibility is translated into popular culture. It is not hard to realize that all but one significant LGBT character on American television is white, or that eighty-five percent of them are male. In both cases, the gay non-white and the lesbian

³ This is a tactic that also works through shame and the revelation of presumed hypocrisy in the case of politicians and celebrities who engage in same-sex behaviours or who identify as closeted gays and lesbians while maintaining an anti-gay public stance for political, religious and/or financial gain. How effective the tactic of outing is remains unclear, while the unresolved and perhaps irresolvable moral issues surrounding the question are the focus of controversy.

characters belong to the supporting cast and are not the central focus of the show.⁴ Similarly, the primary issue that Walker addresses, the problems of ‘femme’ representation when both mainstream and queer cultures often understand a certain ‘butch’ style to be the proper visual representation of lesbianism emphasizes yet another problem in the construction of queer visibility. Furthermore, in *Entertaining Lesbians: Celebrity, Sexuality, and Self-Identity* (2003), Martha Gever complains that

visibility politics neglects how such social categories as gender, race, sexuality, and class always posit a relationship between two asymmetrical terms — man/woman, white/nonwhite, hetero/homo, upper class/lower class — where the second group is always defined as the opposite and inferior to the first. In other words, the power relations entailed in disparities between terms within each category are reinforced every time they are reproduced. [Peggy] Phelan allows that visibility politics may create feelings of pride among members of underrepresented groups but cautions that ‘the ideology of the visible ... erases the power of the unmarked, unspoken, and unseen’ Invisibility is characteristic of what passes without notice, what qualifies as normal and hence is unremarkable. (27)

However, as I argued in the first chapter in relation to the work of Eve Sedgwick, D.A. Miller, Paul Morrison and Richard Dyer on the paradoxical effect of normalizing discourses in rendering both heterosexuality and whiteness as the only thing that can be seen, while at the same time the only thing which can pass unseen, in/visibility is an awkward and uneasy category. While being visible may mark one for surveillance, policing and general hostility and may or may not be politically efficacious in its assertion of the right to symbolic representation — if one is not straight, white, male and thus already inserted into discourse as normal, as the one who looks and not the one who is looked at⁵ — there are perhaps greater difficulties in being positioned as the

⁴ There are two gay men and two straight women on *Will and Grace*, all white. There are five white gay men on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. And there are five more white gay men on *Queer as Folk* (US), along with a straight woman and two lesbians. There is one white gay man and one black gay man on *Six Feet Under*, although that is not primarily identified as a queer show. Even so, that makes the current ratio of queer whites to queer people of colour on television 13 : 1, while the ratio of gay men to lesbians is 14 : 2.

⁵ Refer to Laura Mulvey’s contentious article, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) on fifties cinema and the scopophilic power of the male gaze for an early and influential discussion of the differential authorization of the right to look and the requirement to be looked at in the construction of the gaze.

invisible, the *unspeakable*, the *unrepresentable*. And the more one is located on the wrong half of the binaries — or on the outside of the charmed circle that Gayle Rubin uses to illustrate the functioning of discourses of inside and outside to delimit what constitutes ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sex, or sexual citizenship and sexual disenfranchisement — the more one’s life and person are considered to be unrepresentable. It is ironic, in fact, that the more a specific body is marked as visible — the obvious example being the clichéd disabled black lesbian who is said to have unlimited hirability at the expense of the invariably more qualified able-bodied straight white man — the more the representation of that body, that person becomes impossible within mainstream culture, save as the butt of bigoted jokes and the scapegoat of the self-exculpatory.

This chapter examines the play of visibility and invisibility in the constitution of the sexual citizen and the construction of the Canadian public sphere; it looks, in part, at the various ways in which LGBT artists in Canada have attempted to reconstitute a queer(ly) Canadian public culture, a form of publicness that is inclusive of differences without requiring that the very differences that today constitute our identities, however slippery, ludic and postmodern — or not — be abjected in the requirement of subjunction as the prerequisite for publicity. As a result, many of the artists whose work I discuss in this chapter assert a strategic demand for visibility that is not necessarily dependent on an essentializing belief in its political efficacy. Instead, they mobilize the issue of representation as a demand both that the reader or audience see the LGBT person as ‘normal’ without simultaneously erasing her difference, and, at the same time, that they also see heterosexuality for itself, instead of, as Sedgwick argues, an alibi for history, family, and nation, as well as normalcy. This is not necessarily an assimilatory tactic aimed at the creation of the sexualized equivalent of a colour blind society, although it can be and is used that way by some LGBT artists, so much as it is often an attempt to render normalcy itself so excessive a capacity that its meaning and efficacy are evacuated. It was in this vein that British film-maker Derek Jarman, for example, once remarked that “heterosexuality is not normal, just common,” a comment that elicited howls of outrage from those whose heavily invested claims to normalcy had been affronted.⁶

⁶ I once wore a t-shirt with this slogan to a class in which we were discussing the work of a gay author in the third week of September, only to have two students comment on it (one positively and one negatively) in their course evaluations the following April.

The point is not to render difference invisible, but rather to deconstruct the normal/other category so that everyone is understood as transcending identity categories and as partaking of a difference that can be celebrated rather than moralized, for or against. Thus, while some Canadian LGBT artists choose strategies that are confrontational and many that require the necessary and important deployment of a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” the arrogation of the right to (self)-representation often functions through strategies of reparative reading, strategies which work not only to insert queer bodies into the public sphere, but also to construct a queer archive, a way of preserving LGBT culture, memory and history while remaking it as part of a national, rather than just a queer-national, project.

2. Out in Nature: The Reclamation of Lesbian Habitat

Canadian performance and video artists Lorri Millan and Shawna Dempsey target a whole range of discourses of citizenship, rights, institutions, the landscape and the ‘natural’ in one of their performance pieces, the *Lesbian National Parks and Services (LNPS)*. The success of this piece in both Banff and Sydney (at both the 2000 and 2002 Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras) attests to the fact that these issues are not uniquely Canadian, but shared, albeit with different valences and specificities, in countries with similar dominant settler-invader cultures. Although Millan and Dempsey use humour and satire to make their point, their targets are precisely those discursive regimes of culture in which heteronormativity has been most profoundly naturalized and rendered invisible to itself. In responding to heteronormativity by reappropriating some of its most nationalistic and seemingly unproblematic icons, Millan and Dempsey foreground the relationship between issues of representation and questions of identity, especially those circulating around the binaries of visible/invisible, speakable/unspeakable and marked/unmarked.

Dempsey and Millan thus use their *Lesbian National Parks and Services* performances to actively intervene in discourses of nationhood, both in Canada and in Australia. The *LNPS* was developed by the artists for a three-week performance in Banff in 1997 and was part of the ‘Private Investigators’ project which — if you’ll forgive the pun — set a series of performance artists loose in Banff to make comments upon the implication of nationalism, capitalism, and colonialism in the production of the town, and the national park, as a tourist site. Millan and Dempsey were already well-known as performance artists, having produced a series of



Figure 5: “Ranger Dempsey Advises Sydney Lesbians.” Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, 2000. Photo by Wendy Pearson.

performance pieces and videos, including *We’re Talking Vulva*, in which Dempsey sings about female genitalia while dressed in a 6' foam-rubber vulva, and *A Day in the Life of a Bull-Dyke*, in which Millan plays the role of Sal, a cross-dressing butcher who picks up girls in bars. Most recently, Dempsey and Millan have turned their repeated live performances of the *LNPS* into a book, but a book with a difference. Not a documentary of their work, but a ‘fieldguide,’ the book imitates perfectly the tone and style of all those fieldguides to nature and the wilderness to which aspiring Canadian rangers, girl guides, scouts and 4H-ers have been exposed, right down to the “This book belongs to _____” on the frontispiece. At the same time, it parodies and subverts the ways in which fieldguides embody nature and the natural, while poking fun at heteronormativity and reproducing many of the slyly confrontational effects of their live performances.

In the photographs included with the chapter on Millan and Dempsey’s performance in Banff in 1997 in Kathryn Walter’s and Kyo Maclear’s *Private Investigators* (1999), the *LNPS* is shown working to preserve and improve “lesbian habitats” in Banff: we see Lorri and Shawna

at a lookout, educating a member of the public; our two intrepid Rangers recruiting; and, finally, Shawna in a canoe (within Canada, itself very much a symbol of nationhood and one of the archetypal ways in which that nationhood is represented visually). The effect of introducing the *LNPS* performance into the ‘natural’ environment of Banff, one of Canada’s biggest tourist attractions and a national icon in its own right, is evident, not only in the level to which Millan and Dempsey’s presence in the town is difficult to process because it is, from a discursive point of view, culturally incoherent, but also in the meaningful contrast with the reproduction of a CPR tourist poster from the 1950s advertising holidays in Banff with which Walter and Maclear begin their book. In this poster, a man and a woman, deep in obviously purposeful conversation, are posed against a backdrop of lakes, forests and mountains; “Banff in the Canadian Rockies,” as the poster proclaims, is as clearly heterosexual as it is possible to be.

Indeed, the whole ‘Private Investigators’ project, which included not just Dempsey and Millan, but also performances by Faye HeavyShield, Shelley Niro, Evelyn von Michalofski, Millie Chen, Kathy Kennedy and Judy Radul, was intended by its curator, Kathryn Walter, as a performative deconstruction “of the commodities, vanities and ideologies associated with tourism” (10). Kyo Maclear elucidates in her introductory essay the links between the economic imperatives to sell the landscape for eco-tourism, the iconic status of the town and park as emblems of Canada, and the necessary erasure of othernesses both historically and contemporaneously:

Without leaping into the archives, how are Banff initiates to know that the land they walk on is a part of a Siksika Nation land claim ... that the Rockies served as a physical and symbolic border for Japanese Canadians who were not allowed west of the mountains until the late 1940s ... that the peaks are unmarked graves for Chinese railroad labourers who *died in the thousands*? (“Accidental” 10; italics in original)

Dempsey and Millan’s performances thus reiterate the ineluctable imbrication of sexual and racial discourse in the production of Canada as both a nation and a marketable commodity: if we need to be ‘normal’ for our own comfort, we also need to be able to sell ourselves as ‘normal,’ as safely heterosexual as nature is discursively, if counterfactually, presumed to be.⁷ Banff may be

⁷ Bruce Bagemihl’s *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (1999) provides an exhaustive catalogue of homosexual and bisexual behaviour in literally thousands of

picturesque, but it is not supposed to be queer. All of the ‘private investigators,’ including the *LNPS*, thus took part, each in their own ways, in drawing attention “to Banff’s historic inhabitants, its ongoing social divisions, the uses and abuses of its land, its increased commercialism and the experience of nature that has made a ‘return’ to it so obstructed in colonial mythology” (10-11). During the performances, Banff thus becomes more visibly what it is at all times: a microcosm of the nation as a colonial project of heteronormative whiteness and consequent economic exploitation.

Within Canada, Dempsey’s and Millan’s performances of the *LNPS* are an intervention into discourses of the nation — indeed, a particular way of performing Canadian that aims to make visible the taken-for-granted as natural performance of the nation as heterosexual, of heterosexuality as nationhood.⁸ That much is abundantly clear. Kyo Maclear, indeed, notes that “The Lesbian Park Rangers, unlike the Mounties co-opted by Disney, can be touted as 100 per cent Canadian” and, evaluating their performance in Banff, notes that their “starched uniforms and earnest demeanour have encouraged a Pavlovian response — visitors all seeming to cry ‘Lead me!’” (76). For Maclear, the largely bemused public response to the *LNPS* allows the Rangers to “make it clear that social scripts, determining who will be loved, hated and revered, can be easily scrambled. Identities can be cross-wired and reprogrammed because they are based on unstable attributes” (77). Similarly, bj wray argues that the *LNPS* exploits the simulation of authority in order to begin a process of resignifying citizenship

... through an exploration of the ways in which national identities come to be ‘naturalized.’ Dempsey and Millan’s spectacular, hyperbolic performance transforms lesbian invisibility within discourses of Canadian nation-ness into a showy, campy display of ‘official’ lesbian presence. The ‘naturalness’ of national and sexual identifications is taken to task by Dempsey and Millan’s parodic invasion of a significant site of Canadian nationalism (163).

Thus the *LNPS* performances are a transformation of the invisible — queer people in a ‘natural,’ largely rural landscape like Banff — which simultaneously effects a transformation of the

species, as well as noting the existence of many single-sexed parthenogenetic species who engage in sexual behaviour that is completely unconnected to reproduction.

⁸ During Millan’s and Dempsey’s performances of the *LNPS* at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras they hand out flyers with the Three Sisters, a geographic landmark constitutive of Australian national identity, on the cover, along with the legend, “More than sisters, more than friends.”

discursive construction of the nation as a place where lesbians *should* and *must* be invisible. In a report of their findings during their visit to Banff, Rangers Dempsey and Millan write:

The lack of openly lesbian populations of any species was even more marked than initially feared. However, the Banff area itself is distinguished by an ethic of ‘unlimited growth,’ as evidenced by the exponential increase in tourism After much careful study, we concluded that it seems possible that within this framework the introduction of homosexual species indigenous to the area might also lead to an exponential multiplication, transforming the gay-wasteland-that-is-Banff into a virtual Galapagos of homosexual wildlife. (“Lesbian” 75)

As Margot Francis notes, in both of her articles on the *LNPS* performances, Dempsey and Millan were able to ‘get away with’ some rather surprising feats in the course of their performance, not merely attempting to induce an “exponential multiplication” of homosexual species, which certainly goes against the heteronormative ethos of reproduction and population growth, but also running a recruiting table to which adults and children were equally welcome. As Francis says, speaking of the calm reception of the *LNPS* Recruitment Day,

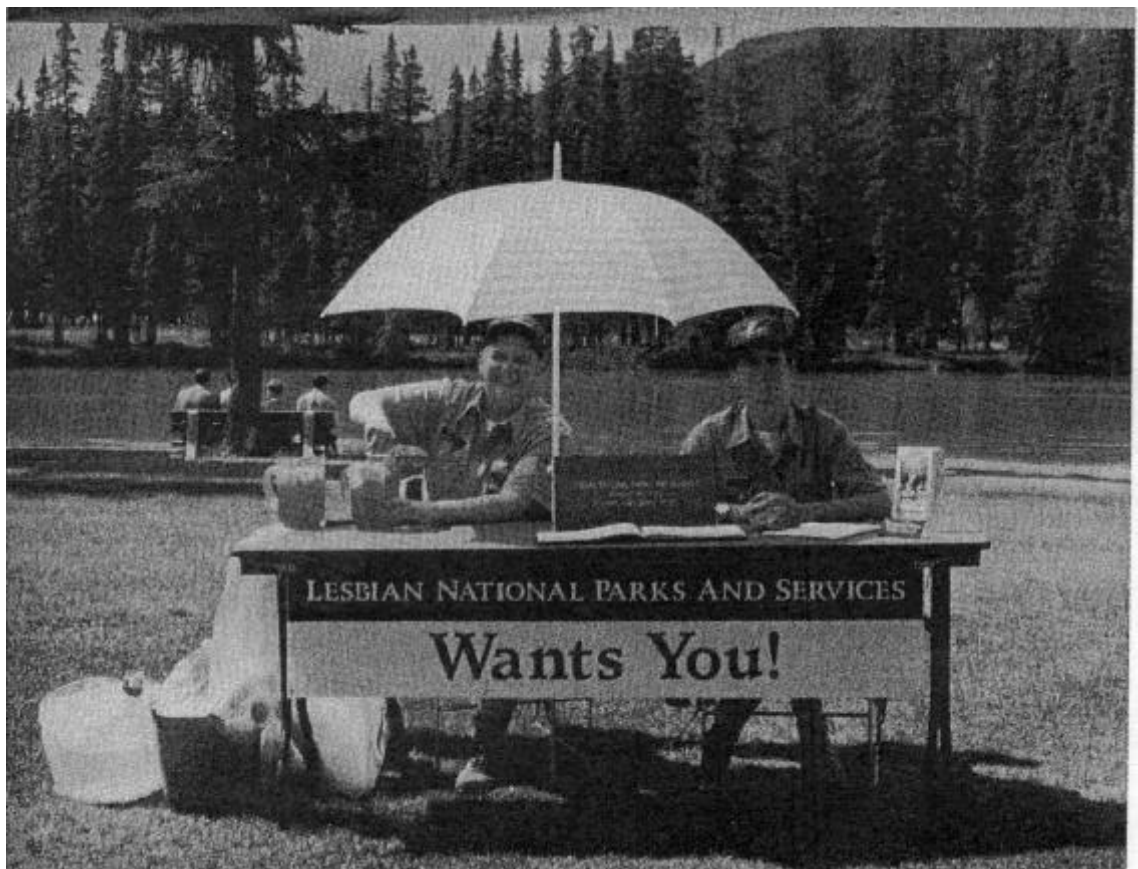


Figure : *LNPS*’ Recruitment Table, Banff (1997). Kathryn Walter and Kyo Maclear, ed., *Private Investigators*, 54.

[a]nyone who has ever been involved in anti-homophobia work in schools, or human rights work on lesbian, gay or bisexual issues cannot fail to be astonished by this. Here the accusation levelled at educators is always that our *real* agenda is indeed: recruitment. In constructing a LNPS recruitment table, the artists tackle these fears head-on. So how did they pull it off — and particularly in Alberta?” (“Unsettling Sights” 43)

Francis argues that Dempsey’s and Millan’s whiteness was sufficiently normalizing and comforting to the audience, particularly in concert with their location in a park, where diverting spectacles are expected, that it worked to allow tourists to consume “the spectacle of the LNPS recruitment table as an incidence of manageable, albeit risky, difference” (43). Francis ties this in to the function of national parks generally, noting that Banff is a colonial invention, a “place of ‘staged authenticity’ where a century of imperialist nation building has settled into every nook and cranny. This respatialization suggests that Banff was stripped of a whole range of earlier or alternative meanings. More specifically, as Rob Shields has argued, the native has been made to vanish into the wilderness” (“The Lesbian” 132). While Francis, like Maclear, concentrates on the racial elements of the park’s construction and its erasure of the First Nations presence, as well as of the Chinese immigrant labourers (visible only in the now-altered name of the mountain called Chinaman’s Peak)⁹ and the others who are simply rendered invisible in the discursive production of Banff as a consumable commodity for predominantly white tourists (although current tourism and ownership of businesses also reflect a significant Japanese presence). This resonates with other discussions of the erasure of the native from the landscape, such as Jonathan Bordo’s work on the way in which the native presence vanishes from Group of Seven landscapes. Eva Mackey, drawing heavily on Bordo’s work, argues that

The absence of Aboriginal people in this wilderness art constitutes a serious rupture with the nineteenth-century wilderness ethos, in which wilderness was identified with the Native presence. In the Group of Seven’s paintings, the erasure of Aboriginal presence, and the production of a notion of uninhabited wilderness, were necessary to create ‘wilderness landscape’ as a signifier of Canada that differentiated Canada’s northernness from European northernness. (44)

Given the iconic, nearly archetypal status of the Group of Seven in the creation of a style of

⁹ Protests against the name forced the Alberta government to agree to rename the mountain Ha Ling Peak after the Chinese worker who first climbed it.

representing Canada that was identifiably ‘Canadian,’ the disappearance of the aboriginal is a serious charge and one profoundly linked to white colonial aspirations. In his discussion of the *Tarzan* films, Richard Dyer notes that,

The treatment of nature is a central aspect of colonial enterprise. The latter is understood to involve mastery and ordering, but also a depredation that distances the white man from nature. A lament for a loss of closeness to nature has run through a very great deal of white culture. With Tarzan, however, one can have colonial power and closeness to nature.” (*White* 157)

Visiting Banff may not make the white tourist into Tarzan, but it is indubitably understood as bringing ‘him’ closer to nature. However, although Francis, Maclear and Mackey all concentrate on racial discourse — the disappearance of First Nations people and people of colour from the discursive construction of Banff as a national/natural site — the *LNPS* performance also forcefully reminds us of the equivalent disappearance of queer people from the history of the area — both two-spirited people amongst the First Nations and queer colonialists, labourers and explorers. As Richard Fung’s *Dirty Laundry* (1996) shows us, some of those unheralded Chinese labourers whose sweat, toil and frequent deaths actually built the railroad were involved in same-sex relations, sometimes across racial borders, creating relationships which have been hidden from history even within the Chinese Canadian community. The *LNPS* project seeks to reimagine lesbians back into the natural and national surroundings of the park and the town, not by making visible the particular LGBT people who live in Banff today, but rather through inserting the knowledge of lesbians as a local phenomenon into the heterosexual discourse of the park. Their performance thus foregrounds questions of representation, visibility, and the naturalization of discursive constructions of heterosexuality in opposition to homosexuality. In Foucauldian terms, these naturalized discourses inevitably function as disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms for controlling sexuality, particularly dissident sexuality, while at the same time denying the homosexual any place within a notion of ‘public’ that delimits the public sphere by marking specific areas of ‘identity’ as private and thus without either interest for or access to public discourse. This is particularly the case when, like Dempsey and Millan, queer artists deal with issues surrounding questions of identity, belonging, home, memory, disease, the archive, the queer body, the gendered and/or transgendered body, and sexuality itself.

The importance of recognizing and deconstructing the binaries that both authorize and constrain the possibilities for the representation of gendered, racialized and sexualized subjects — and bodies — is central to much queer theory and, indeed, to much work in lesbian and gay studies that might not be considered, or consider itself, queer. The titles of just a few books should suffice to reinforce this point: Bad Object-Choice's anthology *How Do I Look?: Queer Film and Video* (1991); Richard Dyer's *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (1990) and *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations* (1993); Marjorie Garber, Jann Matlock and Rebecca Walkowitz's *Media Spectacles* (1993), a book on the media whose section titles all begin with the word 'watching'; Martha Gever, John Greyson and Pratibha Parmar's *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video* (1993); Peter Horne and Reina Lewis' *Outlooks: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities and Visual Culture* (1996); Lisa Walker's *Looking like What You Are*. bell hooks' *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992) can serve, in this same vein, as a useful reminder that issues of representation and in/visibility bedevil the racially marginalized in ways at once similar to and different from those that trouble the lives of LGBT people. While many of these books are focussed quite literally on the visual, their theoretical focus on looking and being looked at, on seeing and being seen — and on the ways in which the visual is read as marking, or failing to mark, particular bodies — reverberates with the paradoxical cultural discourses that enunciate homosexuality both as pre-eminently and necessarily visible, a literal homographesis, in Lee Edelman's terms, that endangers the social through its very excess of visibility, and at the same time as inevitably and ineluctably invisible and thus dangerous precisely because its presence in an individual is impossible to detect.

Edelman's discussion of visibility in "Tearrooms and Sympathy," is perhaps one of the fundamental texts for the discussion of the imbrication of "politics, desire, gender, sexuality, representation" (Turner 30) in any attempt to understand how identity constructs and is constructed, let alone how it relates to subjectivity and to what Foucault terms "power/knowledge." After discussing the arrest of Walter Jenkins, Lyndon Johnson's chief of staff, in 1964 for having sex in a basement toilet of the Washington YMCA (an ironic foreshadowing of the queer role that institution came to play in the music and club culture of the gay and lesbian community through the eponymously named song by the Village People),

Edelman makes a clear link between Jenkins' invisibility as a 'gay man' (despite a previous arrest in 1959 for the same offense in the very same toilet) — respected political adviser, married for nineteen years, father of six and, according to President Johnson, "not 'biologically' a homosexual" (149) — and an article in *Life* magazine that same year containing "a photo-essay offering a spectacular view of what it called the 'secret world' of 'Homosexuality in America'" (151).¹⁰ One of the passages that Edelman quotes is particularly revealing: "'Today, especially in big cities, homosexuals are discarding their furtive ways and openly admitting, even flaunting their deviation. . . . And for every obvious homosexual, there are probably nine nearly impossible to detect'" (151).

Labelling homosexuality a "social disorder," *Life* claims the necessity to reveal its existence precisely in order "not to condone it but to cope with it." Inevitably, *Life* invokes homosexuality against the family ("parents especially are concerned"), in part because of the rhetorical red herring by which the incidence of familial child abuse was displaced onto 'strangers,' considered by definition to be gay men and lesbians, but more specifically, in this case, because the male homosexual is figured in the article as "vengefully mak[ing] use of his ability to 'pass' in order to frustrate the happy ending of a heterosexual romance" by luring the supposedly innocent straight man away from the "girl" (153).¹¹ The anxiety induced by the possibility that those who should, indeed must, be marked by their bodily specificity as perverse and deviant, can, in fact, be "'nearly' impossible to detect" (152) reverberates throughout *Life's* insistence on the importance of teaching heterosexuals the semiotics of homosexuality. Edelman concludes that:

Such readings of gay men as identifiably different thus coexist in the essay with avowals of the disturbing invisibility that homosexuals generally rely upon, and

¹⁰ *Life* is often taken as symptomatic of American culture in general. Paul Morrison begins a discussion in a very similar vein with a quote from a 1985 issue of *Life* in response to the announcement that Rock Hudson was suffering from AIDS: "AIDS was given a face everyone could recognize," the magazine trumpeted, thus once again linking the invisible homosexuality of the closeted Hudson with the public face of AIDS (and thus discursively of homosexuality) as a disease (Morrison 54).

¹¹ It is noteworthy that these discourses of the contamination of the heteronormative "happy ending" of a proper marriage are very similar to twentieth century discourses about miscegenation as a deliberate despoiling of white racial purity by the 'passing' other. See, for example, Adrian Piper's "Passing for White, Passing for Black."

the tension or contradiction between these competing assertions produces a space for the discursive enterprise that I have designated as homographesis. For the article posits homosexuality as a legible phenomenon while simultaneously acknowledging the frequency with which it manages to escape detection; it constructs male homosexuality in terms of what the 'public eye' can recognize even as it situates it in an ontological shuttle between perceptual sameness and difference. (154)

In the face of this insistence on 'deviance' as at once visible and invisible (and thus both speakable and unspeakable), the questions of identification and representation have carried great social and political significance in both activist and theoretical circles. Indeed, the (mis)representation of homosexuality as deviant, perverse, written on the diseased body effectively necessitated and thus, in a way, produced the drive by lesbians and gay men for self-representation and the link between issues of in/visibility and political representation in its governmental sense. I would now like to examine a particular textual example of the problems of visibility, representation, and marginalization in relation to reading practices, public culture and the construction of a queer archive by looking at Timothy Findley's *Can You See Me Yet?* (1977), which was written in 1974-75, when Findley became the National Arts Centre's first playwright in residence (Brydon, *Timothy Findley* 15). I have chosen Findley's first play for three reasons: it rehearses all of the motifs that preoccupy his work; its own critical reception duplicates its title and theme, as Findley's plays are generally ignored in favour of his novels; and it is supremely queer, yet has rarely been the subject of a queer reading.

3. The Importance of Being Cassandra

Can You See Me Yet? is set in an insane asylum in Britton, Ontario, in the summer of 1938. The protagonist, Cassandra, lives apparently schizophrenically between her present in the asylum and her past in a family in which she and her younger brother, Franklin, were marginalized by their father's insistence on the perfection of their elder brother. These memories of the past are commemorated — and perhaps constructed — through the photograph album which Cassandra cherishes. From the outset, the play works through doubling, as each of the actors, save Cassandra, plays two roles: the role of an inmate in the asylum and the role of a family member in Cassandra's rehearsal of her memories. In her introduction to the play, Margaret

Laurence notes the degree of danger, hostility, and sheer horror in the worlds both of the inmates and of Cassandra's family; Laurence emphasizes as central the tension between the play's despair and its apocalyptic feel and the possibility, never wholly extinguished, of hope. The play's central themes, Laurence says, are crystallized in Cassandra's cry to god: "Can you see me yet?" The central trope of the play is thus in/visibility, literally doubled as in/audibility through Findley's choice of name for the character. The link between Cassandra and homosexuality is evidenced not merely by her mythological antecedents, but by a historical one. 'Cassandra' was the pseudonym of William Conner, a columnist for the *London Daily Mirror*, who lost a famous libel suit brought against him by Liberace after Conner called him, among other things, "this deadly, winking, sniggering, chromium-plated, scent-impregnated, luminous, quivering, giggling, fruit-flavoured, mincing, ice-covered heap of mother love" (Qtd. in Pyron 225). Unlike Oscar Wilde, who is infamous for losing a similar suit against the Marquess of Queensberry in 1895, Liberace won his case, although his success involved the public and mendacious denial of his homosexuality. There is thus considerable irony, and indeed duplicity, in Findley's choice of a name for his protagonist that not only creates a direct reference to the issue of homosexual identity, closetedness and denial, but that also plays off of the tension between the 'low culture' of English tabloid journalism and pop music and the 'high culture' of the *Iliad* and Greek mythology.

'Cassandra' was also the name of the daughter of Priam, King of Troy, and infamous in Greek legend for being the prophet to whom no one would listen (an apt enough metaphor in itself, as I will show, for the attempt by queer people to speak themselves into audibility). The story, as Catherine Hunter notes, inscribes the tension of desire and frustration onto the drama, as Apollo revenged himself on Cassandra's failure to fulfill her half of the bargain — to have sex with him in return for the gift of prophecy — by making that prophetic gift equally, if not more, frustrating to her. "In the structure of the original myth, both the bargain and the revenge impose an economy in which the frustrated desire to tell is linked to frustrated sexual desire" (Hunter 23). Although sexuality and desire are emphasized in the myth and are, in many ways, central to Hunter's reading of *The Last of the Crazy People*, as discussed in Chapter Two, Hunter never quite makes the connection back to the possibility of reading the play as being, at least in part, about sexual desire and the (im)possibility of sexual identity in a hopelessly heteronormative

world, even though she argues that the short story “About Effie” is “the first in a series of early narratives concerned with sexuality, mental illness, and violence — issues that later become the focus of Findley’s major works” (13-14). Hunter’s relative silence about sexuality may be in part a reflection of her emphasis, in what is largely a very insightful reading of Findley’s early fiction, on the silences in the texts themselves:

Like the boys in his early fiction, Findley continually tries and fails to break the silence on mysterious and taboo subjects. And this is where the desires of story and the desires of narrative intersect: because the ineffable in the story is often taboo, most of the characters avoid it, and the immature boys who seek to penetrate it are incapable of doing so. And what remains hidden by the characters in the story is usually the very thing that is unnarratable. There is, of course, no story that literally cannot be told. Even the highly mysterious areas (madness, sexuality, violence) that Findley explores *can* be spoken of and even explained — most notably by political, psychoanalytic, or religious discourse. But his fiction resists such explanations, desiring to preserve the silence that surrounds these subjects. (20-21)

This is a very revealing passage, even if Hunter’s ultimate explanation (“If the adults in the story were to reveal what is hidden ... there would be no story, or at least there would be a very different [and certainly not Findleyesque] story” [21]) seems to me to fall somewhat short of the mark. Indeed, what goes unstated in Hunter’s article is the degree to which the explanations that Findley resists (“political, psychoanalytic, or religious discourse”) are precisely the discursive grounds of regulation and discipline, both contemporary and historical, that Foucault has elaborated.

Rather than seeking an explanation in narrative structure, as Hunter does, I would thus prefer to point to the congruity between the possible explanations that Findley’s early fiction resists and the grounds of oppression experienced by those on the wrong end of these explanatory discourses. All three, of course, have been instrumental in creating oppressive, sometimes lethal, material conditions in the lives of queer people; it is important not to lose sight of the corporeal consequences of discourse — as can be attested, at its most extreme, by hate crimes against LGBT people. Moreover, all three — politics, psychology and religion — are implicated in what Foucault calls the incitement to discourse; in countering the repressive hypothesis, Foucault argues that, even if the language of sex may possibly have become more demure in the nineteenth century, the requirements of confession, while less frank than in the

Catholic pastorals of the past, became ever more stringent. “According to the new pastoral, sex must not be named imprudently, but its aspects, its correlations, and its effects must be pursued down to their slenderest ramifications” (*History* 19). Religious discourse is thus linked to psychoanalytic and political discourse through the exercise of power/knowledge. For Foucault, what is important

... was the multiplication of discourses concerning sex in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail.” (*History* 18)

For most people in the west (and probably elsewhere), Foucault’s argument against the repressive hypothesis seems counter-intuitive precisely because discourses of sexual repression and liberalization have been so thoroughly naturalized as to become invisible in themselves; the narrative of the progressive liberalization of sexuality and desire (and thus one’s true self) is also reinforced by ideologies of progress more generally, especially when discourses about sexual liberalization combine with the discursive ‘belief’ in the positive advancement of science and technology in the technologies of sex and reproduction (contraception, prophylaxis, antibiotic treatments for syphilis and gonorrhea, abortion, fertility drugs, *in-vitro* fertilization, even viagra). This is, of course, the specific nature of discourse itself, the object of Foucault’s desire to “free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently” (*Uses* 9). This is a position Foucault elaborates in the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*, the second volume in his unfinished *History of Sexuality*:

There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. People will say, perhaps, that these games with oneself would be better left backstage But, then, what is philosophy today — philosophical activity, I mean — if it is not the critical work thought brings to bear on itself? In what does it consist, if not in the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known. (8-9)

I ask here how it is possible to read *Can You See Me Yet?* in ways that do not legitimate the already known, but rather that ask us to think differently; but I also ask what happens when we bring the already-known but discursively illegitimate fact — at least in the traditional bounds

of literary criticism — of Findley’s own queerness to bear on a reading of his work.¹² *Can You See Me Yet?* is not a play that has received much critical attention, despite the fact that it rehearses many of the recurrent concerns of Findley’s writing. There is the introduction by Margaret Laurence to the published edition and there are partial discussions in books and articles by a number of scholars. Hunter, as mentioned above, reads the play’s apparent silence on the “mysterious and taboo” topics of madness, sexuality and violence as a key to its narrative structure. Diana Brydon, in a similarly brief discussion, links Findley’s choice of a poem by Margaret Atwood as an epigraph (“I move/and live on the edges/(what edges?)/I live/ on all the edges there are”¹³) to Cassandra’s schizophrenia — although the emphasis on edges necessarily suggests the importance of borders and margins in the construction of otherness, whether this is a function of sexuality, gender, psychological state, class or race. Consistent with her overall argument, Brydon postulates that “Cassandra embodies both the uncompromising drive for perfection and the complicit abjection that in Findley’s view enabled fascism’s triumph as the ultimate expressions of modernism’s desire to create a new god in its own image” (*Timothy Findley* 117). Finally, Brydon points to the way in which Doberman, the inmate who believes he is a dog, is able to save Cassandra from suicide. This is, however, a gift at once blessed and tragic:

Before [Cassandra] dies, the ‘dog’ Doberman and the other inmates ‘see’ her, giving her the reciprocal gaze she has craved; but the price of this recognition is a fiery death, not just for her but for all of them. The fire that consumes her is both her own longing for perfection and its mirror in the Nazi declaration of war and launching of the fires of holocaust and the reciprocal response in the bombs of nuclear annihilation dropped by the Allies on Japan. (*Findley* 117)

This reading is ineluctably bleak, but that is not surprising; most mainstream readings of Findley are invariably bleak or transcendent and often both — as the bleakness authorizes the transcendence and the transcendence redeems the bleakness

¹² While the majority of criticism dealing with Findley’s work has tended to ignore the queer, there have also been some notable exceptions, including particularly the work of Susan Billingham, Diana Brydon, Peter Dickinson, Barbara Gabriel, Terry Goldie and David Jefferess. My point here is primarily about the structural heteronormativity of what was, but may now no longer be, the dominant tradition of literary criticism.

¹³ These lines are from “Evening Trainstation before Departure,” from *The Circle Game*.

In “Performed and Performing Selves in Findley’s Drama,” Karen Grandy reads Cassandra not as a character in search of perfection, but as an active performer of the past, a “memory dramatist” (182) who, using “the [photograph] album as script . . . sets the background, casts her fellow asylum patients, observes, directs, participates in, and interprets the performance of her past. We watch her mount a production of her memories” (182). Highlighting the impossibility for the audience of knowing whether, in her construction of the past, Cassandra is making it or making it up, Grandy argues that the (re)construction of the past is essential to Cassandra’s search for both safety — asylum — and identity. Like Brydon, Grandy identifies Doberman’s intervention in Cassandra’s suicide attempt as the climactic moment at which recognition occurs. For Grandy, it is the moment which relocates Cassandra in the ‘real world’ and forces her to perform the present, rather than the past. However, she also notes the recurrence in Findley’s work of the dissolution of boundaries between the real and the unreal and argues that this uncertainty

. . . forces us to see the work in the context of our own lives. In the asylum scenes, a radio belonging to one of the guards is always playing in the background. We can hear, faintly, voices from the extradramatic world: songs, commercials, radio programs, Hitler. The intrusion of our reality into Findley’s surreality, and vice versa, is disturbing, because it implies that our pasts and presents may be as constructed as Cassandra’s. (186)

I want to preface my own reading of the play by noting that I don’t disagree *per se* with any of these readings; each has a particular perspective and a specific critical aim that is not my own. But these are not queer readings and so they will likely seem, to a queer reader, unavoidably partial, combining a sometimes uninterrogated acceptance of dominant discourses of sexuality and the normal — if less so, as feminist critiques, of gender — with a well-honed literary depth that can seem, sometimes, to be plumbing another sea entirely. What most critics see, when they read *Can You See Me Yet?*, or indeed almost any of Findley’s works, is not what I see — or, indeed, what other queer critics, such as Peter Dickinson and Terry Goldie, see when they read Findley.¹⁴ Indeed, even when what we see has striking resemblances, it is not

¹⁴ I would like to emphasize here that there is no ‘party line’ on queer readings of Findley; each of us takes a markedly different approach to reading his work, although the central similarity is the consistent acknowledgment of the influence of Findley’s own homosexual subjectivity in structuring and thematizing his *oeuvre*.

uncommon for sexuality, despite Findley's open proclamation of his sexual identity as a gay man, to drop out of the critical frame entirely. Thus, for instance, I agree completely with Anne Geddes Bailey's comment that, throughout Findley's work, "[o]n the one hand, literature is dangerous because it can be the avenue of challenge and rebellion, on the other, it is dangerous because it is the producer of repression and violence" (7). What I'm looking for, as a reader of Findley, is the next step, however: the one in which this paradoxical implication of literature in both the subversion and the replication of authoritarian structures and violences is given force by linking it to the material conditions of Findley's characters' lives and of his own life as a homosexual (a term Findley himself preferred to 'gay'). Barbara Gabriel, for instance, argues that:

Findley's life history makes of his fiction a *theatre of gender* in a double sense — one characterized by theatrical values but also by representations of gender instability and masquerade that dramatize masculinity and femininity alike in a performative mode. It is also alert, like the theatre of Jean Genet in which Findley performed as an actor, to the ways in which structures of domination and subordination have informed both sexualities and historical fascisms. Findley returned on two occasions to the Fascist moment on the world stage, but relations of power and hierarchy, almost always played out on a field of gender, dominate all his fiction. ("Staging" 170; italics in original)

I would argue that, as much as gender, relations of power in Findley's works are played out on a field of (homo)sexuality which is always already imbricated with discourses of gender and structures of domination/subordination. Lee Edelman makes explicit the link between the doubleness of literature (or writing) and homosexuality when he argues for understanding sexuality through the process he designates homographesis. "Like writing, homographesis would name a double operation: one serving the ideological purposes of a conservative social order intent on codifying identities in its labor of disciplinary inscription, and the other resistant to that categorization, intent on *de*-scribing the identities that order has so oppressively inscribed" ("Homographesis" 10). If the doubled possibilities of literature both to subvert and to repress are understood through the focus of homographesis, it becomes immediately apparent that Findley's works are — I hesitate to say 'essentially' — utterly homographic in their construction of a hermeneutics of both literature and bodies. What is doubly inscribed on Findley's texts is precisely that which is duplicitously inscribed on the body of the homosexual: the demand to be

read as different and the impossibility of infallibly identifying that difference *as* difference and not, dangerously, as identity or sameness.¹⁵

That many of Findley's characters are queer (many are, indeed, homosexual) is a fact that has often gone if not unnoticed, then at least unspoken, in the proliferation of critical work on his novels and plays. Even Peter Dickinson, reading Findley's work from a queer perspective, begins his study of Findley wanting to ask, from at least a "strategically essentialist" perspective, "[w]hy are there so few positive representations of gay sexuality in [Findley's] fiction?" (*Here is Queer* 57). But must representations of gay sexuality from a gay author be positive — or even 'strategically essentialist'? And what does 'positive' mean within the discursive expectations of literature or even of culture in general? Come to that, what does 'gay sexuality' mean? It is perfectly possible, for example, to have positive representations of gay (and lesbian) sexuality that utterly fail to reflect on or to critique either the discursive or the material conditions of life as a queer person in the late twentieth century; some would argue that most contemporary 'queer' television shows suffer precisely from their seamless insertion of apparently positive images of gay men (lesbians, *pace Ellen* and the brief outburst of 'lesbian chic' in the mid-nineties, remain largely invisible on the small screen) into a 'larger' heteronormative world that they do not challenge, or even name, at all.¹⁶ There is also, of course, considerable controversy over whether or not shows like *Queer as Folk* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* are 'positive' representations or mere reiterations of heterosexist stereotypes.

These are questions, however, that are somewhat aslant my own view of the potential

¹⁵ Writing of the attempt to redeem heteronormativity from the genocidal regime of the factually heterosexist Nazis (by insisting on an unprovable but also undisprovable 'latency'), Paul Morrison says, "... let us remember the dreary sameness with which the discourse of difference is now advanced, and the social-fascist heterosexual community (and all heterosexual communities for whom there is no other way of thinking otherness) whose murderous agenda it serves. Even etymologically, heterosexuality construes itself as the dispensation of difference, and here the ritual invocation of the 'other race' — in effect, the erasure of the difference between the categories of sexuality and race — merely serves as a p.c. alibi for heterosexism as usual" (146-47). Thus, the validation of difference (as with Luce Irigaray's construction of sexual difference [female v. male] as the only difference that matters, hand in hand with her dismissal of gay men as "hom[m]osexual") against the presumed 'sameness' of homosexuality will always prove dangerous to those who are factually different.

¹⁶ Negative portrayals of heterosexual characters, which make up the bulk of literature and a goodly part of film, are — not very surprisingly — not seen as negative representations of heterosexuality itself. Whereas the negative representation of a queer person is always a reflection on their sexuality, the negative representation of a straight person never is.

of queer reading to reveal the often contradictory and unpredictable ways in which the domains of sexuality, gender, politics, representation and desire interact, as well as the ways in which these interactions inform and direct cultural responses to their discursive imbrication in one another. In other words, I argue that it is impossible to talk about the family without raising the spectres of desire, gender, sexuality, government, regulation, the law, the nation, reproduction and production, race, class, violence and power; impossible to address madness without bringing into view its relations to authority, power, knowledge, class, race, sexuality, gender, identity and subjectivity; impossible to depict violence without, however unconsciously, revealing its affiliations with family, medicine, psychiatry, the judiciary, institutional authority, power, knowledge and, of course, sexuality and gender. Each of these lists is, of necessity, incomplete, not so much because I am selecting from a long list of potential examples but because each act of representation will invariably illuminate or obscure different relations amongst these discursive and material domains.¹⁷

Edelman's notion of homographesis enunciates the contradictory but ultimately irresolvable ways in which language and materiality are interimplicated and indeed identified. For Edelman, the homosexual body is both marked as a text which can be read within contemporary cultural categories while, at the same time, calling into question the possibility that any body can be read textually in a stable and coherent manner. Linking this to the cultural designation of male homosexuality as a failure of masculinity, a discourse still prevalent even in the early twenty-first century, Edelman argues that

the historical positing of the category of 'the homosexual' textualizes male identity as such, subjecting it to the alienating requirement that it be 'read,' and threatening, in consequence, to strip 'masculinity' of its privileged status as the self-authenticating paradigm of the natural or the self-evident itself. Now it must *perform* its self-evidence, must represent its own difference from the derivative and artificial 'masculinity' of the gay man. The homosexual, in such a social context, is made to bear the stigma of writing or textuality *as his identity*, as the very expression of his anatomy, by a masculinist culture eager to preserve the authority of its own self-identity through the institution of a homographesis whose

¹⁷ I do not mean here to suggest that language is not material, but rather to emphasize the materiality of discourse through lived experience. Turner makes it particularly clear when he argues not only for the materiality of language, but also for "the important ways in which identity functions like a language. From a finite array of elements, manipulated according to a finite set of rules, both produce an infinite, yet infinitely intelligible, array of outcomes" (32).

logic of legibility, of graphic difference, would deny the common 'masculinity,' the common signifying relation to maleness, of gay men and straight men alike. ("Homographesis" 12)

4. Not Exactly Aimée, Not Quite ~~Dog~~ God

The interlinked domains of sexuality, gender, madness, religion, politics, violence (both between humans and toward animals), family and war make up the textual field Findley explores in *Can You See Me Yet?* Cassandra's body is textualized in a specific instance of homographesis that is produced through its doubled insertion into the play: Cassandra is at once the unfeminine and unappreciated daughter of the family and the 'mad' inmate of the asylum. Although Findley never overtly identifies Cassandra as a lesbian, her spinster state, her descriptions of herself, and her attachment to her 'friend' Jessie all add up to precisely the kinds of lightly-coded readings in which queer audiences are well-versed (and which heteronormative audiences are equally well-versed in ignoring). At the start of scene seven, Cassandra says of herself, "I never was an artful child. No fancies. Only what I saw. My sister Rose was artful: actress, living in a book ... with dolls and dresses ... music on my uncle's knee. Pianos everywhere. Some scales: a little practice equals beauty. Guile. Romance" (84). In constructing her younger sister, Rose, the baby of the family, as feminine (the equation with an actress suggests both make-up and artifice — an early version of gender as performative — while dolls, dresses, guile and romance are all obvious markers of femininity in the late thirties), Cassandra constructs herself as Rose's opposite: no 'art' of femininity, no fantasy nor guile. She even says directly, "No romance for me," just as earlier in the play she rejects as ridiculous her 'Aunt Doretta's' suggestion that she has come home with a man or a baby: "No, of course not" (75). In scene ten, Cassandra says to Rosemary, "You know I'm not the marrying kind," but admits that their mother would be proud of Rosemary for getting a man at last (111). What Cassandra has instead of a man is the church, her desire to be a missionary, which is inspired by meeting Jessie; Cassandra recognizes overtly that Jessie represents distance from the suffocatingly heteronormative, perfectionist family and her father Edward's constant dismissive comparisons of herself and her younger brother with her 'perfect' older brother and her 'baby' sister. Jessie herself is textualized through a process of homographesis when the asylum nurse, Alma, who also plays Jessie, says "Sometimes I wish I were a man" and Franklin replies

“Sometimes I think you are a man” (28), thus revealing the ways in which sexuality is written on the body (and the text) through the instability of gender identity. Dykes, homographically, are always masculine, although their supposedly more feminine lovers may prove more of a puzzle. Thus, when Cassandra ‘comes home’ (a scene staged by Cassandra and the inmates of the Asylum), Edward, playing her father, says to her, “... you haven’t changed, Cassandra. Still a question. Still a riddle” (96). But Cassandra answers, “Am I? When I understand myself so well?” She implies a self-knowledge that exceeds what others are able to see of her, especially the father who is blinded by his desire for the perfect children, the perfect family. Cassandra’s desire to get away from Edward and his horrendous expectations is symbolized in the (failed) mission to China and the constant interpellation of her by others as a preacher or an evangelist (like Aimée Semple Macpherson, a comparison which Cassandra rejects sharply, identifying herself instead as a missionary¹⁸), but it is also literalized in her attachment to her “friend and companion,” Jessica Hogan (76).

Of course, ‘companion’ and ‘friend’ have long functioned as euphemisms for ‘partner’ and ‘lover’ in queer interactions with the heterosexual world; the former has particular resonance, and poignancy, in the post-AIDS gay world, where “longtime companion” appeared in one ambivalent obituary after another.¹⁹ It is also a word that has frequently been used to describe

¹⁸ The text contains several unflattering references to Macpherson, and her name is included in the list of authority figures, along with Hitler, Mussolini and Roosevelt, that Cassandra accuses the human race of blindly following. Furthermore, Findley reiterates Macpherson’s early life history in Cassandra’s: born on a farm in Ontario in 1890 to a ‘Bible-thumping’ mother, Aimée’s brief flirtation with atheism ended when she fell in love with a preacher named Robert Semple. Burning her sheet music and dancing shoes, symbols of her ungodly worldliness, the two left on a mission to China, where Semple died of dysentery, leaving Aimée with a one-month old baby. She travelled to New York, where she remarried and started her own evangelical Pentecostal church, quickly becoming famous and extremely wealthy. She divorced and remarried several times, in defiance of the literal reading of the Bible she preached, and was involved in a bizarre kidnapping episode which was likely a sensational cover for an affair with the engineer of her radio station. Despite publicly proclaiming strict adherence to the letter of the Bible, including its supposed prohibitions against homosexuality, Macpherson was rumoured to have had numerous affairs, fought publicly with both her mother and daughter over control of the church, and was the object of some fifty-five lawsuits; she died of an overdose of sleeping pills on September 27, 1944.

¹⁹ I make this statement in full consciousness that it is important to remember that AIDS never was a ‘gay disease,’ despite its presentation in the western media, and that there are millions of HIV+ people worldwide, most of them heterosexual and almost all of them black, brown or Asian. AIDS has gone from being discursively a disease of ‘those people’ to being a disease of those people ‘over there.’ It is still ideologically distanced from the white heterosexual population in ways that are at once racist

Findley's relationship to his own partner, William Whitehead, along with the phrase "enduring friendship" (Levine and Stern 1985). Adding up all of these markers of Cassandra's sexual identity as seen by both the dominant culture and the queer audience, we get two decidedly different pictures: in the former, Cassandra is a not very feminine young woman, troubled by her father's demand for an unachievable perfection, who finds her vocation as a missionary to China but ends up failing to raise the money for the trip and watching her would-be companion, Jessica Hogan, sail off by herself, only to die of illness en route, after which her incipient schizophrenia condemns her to the Asylum in Britton; in the latter, however, Cassandra is an unfeminine young woman who is not at all at home in her family of origin, who falls in love with a somewhat more experienced woman, Jessica Hogan, in whom she sees the possibility of the most complete escape possible — the extreme distance of China — but who has last-minute misgivings about the relationship, lets her companion leave without her, and suffers agonizing remorse at Jess's solitary death, which leaves her mentally ill. Almost any LGBT audience will recognize the latter immediately, although it references a genre that has, fortunately, gone out of style; despite AIDS, it's no longer necessary for every homosexual character in a novel or play to end up bitter and alone, diseased or dead.

Jane Rule's *This is Not for You* (1970), the product of a very similar era, when (at least in Canada) homosexuality had only recently been decriminalized, tells a story that has much in common, if somewhat less melodramatically, with Cassandra's, as its protagonist, Kate, watches from a distance the lives and loves of her three friends from university, including Esther, whom Kate loves but will not let herself have, despite Esther's willingness and apparent bisexuality, all for Esther's own good. A similar self-abnegation can only be deduced from the agony of Cassandra's description of the loss of her 'friend':

How was I to know that she would die? ... My Jess. Jessie. Jessica Hogan. Friend ... and ... disciple. Or that it would be my fault? How could I know? If you're meant to die by fire, you die by fire. If not She perished on her way to China. Oh. God. And I had promised her I'd go. 'We'll go together,' I said. Then, it became impossible: the two of us to live — to try to live — to scrounge our existence door to door any longer. Impossible and I said so. I said: 'This isn't fair to you, Jess,' and I drove her away. But that was a lie. I

and homophobic and that also literally *unwrite* the identities of straight, white HIV+ people.

should have said: 'I can't and I never will.' So I drove her away, and she went.
Got on a boat. And went. (131-32)

Is this the story of someone who cannot bear the burdens of becoming a missionary to a distant country? Yes, of course. But is it also the story of someone who cannot face the difficulties of loving someone of the same sex in the 1930s? Yes, indeed it is. So Cassandra is both a missionary and a lesbian, her failed identity as a missionary standing metaphorically for her partial and, to some extent, culturally incoherent identity as a lesbian. On the one hand, then, we can read her gender identity, like Jessie's, as precisely the kind of failed performance traditionally associated with homosexuals through discourses of gender inversion and gender dysphoria (and, if we are to follow Butler, as also showing up the inevitable failure of all performances of gender, and thus its artificiality); on the other, we can read identity as something imposed on the subject regardless of the individual's own desires and sense of self. Cassandra says to Annie, "If they say that I'm a preacher, then I am. A person isn't what she thinks she is ... but what they say she is" (144). It is possible to read this as a declaration of Cassandra's failure to uphold her own homosexual desires and identity in the face of the intransigent blind heteronormativity of her family and the world.

The play thus counterposes Cassandra's aloneness — the traditional fate of the homosexual character — and her sense of failure with the final paragraph in which Alma/Jessie quite literally re-writes Cassandra's end, both diegetically, within the doubled *mise-en-scène* of the play itself, and extra-diegetically, as a reclamation not only of Cassandra's life, but also of homotextual possibility in the face of generic constraint: "Ladies and gentlemen ... 'brothers and sisters': In September of 1939, the Asylum at Britton was destroyed by fire. Cassandra Wakelin died. But her arms, in death, had gathered to her *others*, and she did not die alone. As she had lived" (166; italics in original). Grandy reads this final speech, delivered by Alma directly to the audience, as nothing more or less than a way of forcing the audience to see their own pasts and presents as being as constructed as Cassandra's. What Alma's speech actually says, then, becomes less important than its staging: ultimate proof that this is a "metadramatic memory play" about the construction and performance of identity and memory (186). For Hunter, who doesn't actually address the end, the whole play is a metaphor for the inability to talk and the impossibility of being heard, but she doesn't locate this as a problem with a distinct relationship to the issue

of homosexuality (“the love that dare not *speak* its name,” according to Lord Alfred Douglas [*italics mine*])). Hunter argues that “Cassandra is rendered powerless by the painful conflict between her missionary zeal and her inability to attract anybody’s attention” (23). It seems to me, however, that Cassandra actually receives the attention of virtually everyone on the stage, most especially her father; but their attention is to the Cassandra they (want to) see, not Cassandra as she sees herself. Thus, the play’s ending has to circulate around the question of what sort of attention Cassandra wants: how is it that she wants to be seen?

Diana Brydon, emphasizing Findley’s constant critique of the drive for perfection and its literal embodiment in the utopian longings of the Nazis, who are, for Findley, the apotheosis of the inevitable horror of the desire for the perfect, sees Cassandra’s fiery death as the price both of her recognition by Doberman and of her own “longing for perfection” (117). Brydon’s answer, then, is that Cassandra wants to be seen as perfect, even as god, and she quotes from scene fifteen, where Cassandra says that she wants to be a better god than the “blind maniac lost in the dark” (162). But, again, it seems to me that Cassandra’s speech is couched in the language — and the context — of failure, not of the quest for perfectability:

Brothers and sisters: there should be a place to go for safety: asylum, and there’s not. There is no safety — none for love, or for the mind, or dogs like this I’ve failed. I couldn’t make a place of safety. *I* should be an asylum, and I’m not. I’m just an arrogant human being who wishes with all her heart she was not human — not a human being at all. But a god. A god. A better god that is, not some blind maniac lost in the dark — but a god who could look down and see me where I stand.... See me. See me! *See* us! ... I’ve never been to China. And I’ve never saved a *dog*. (162)

When we take this speech in the context of Cassandra’s earlier speech, set against the backdrop of the encroaching threat of World War II, it is fairly clear that Cassandra aligns herself with the animals (as do all the good characters in Findley’s works, by and large): “We are the horses they ride, the beasts they hunt, the cattle in their abattoirs” (121). The whole play is set against the backdrop of the hunting and murdering of dogs, talked about with great trepidation by the inmates and heard off-stage; in scene nine, the off-screen hunting and botched killing of a dog provides the aural background to Cassandra’s confrontation with Edward, whom she accuses of making her father “like a man of pity,” (97) someone she could love, when he is actually “a BASTARD” (98). As Edward assumes that role of bastard, the dog is shot, screams

unbearably and is eventually killed. Cassandra says numbly, “In China, the dogs are holy. No one ever kills a dog ... in China. In China, no-one ever kills a dog. The dogs are holy”(101). She denies it vehemently when Doretta asserts that the Chinese eat dogs. She also claims that the dog hunters must be “INSANE” (100), thus making clear the duplicity symbolized by the very existence of the asylum: is it the inmates or those on the outside, killing dogs, obeying Hitler, Mussolini and even Aimée Semple MacPherson, and starting wars, who are truly insane? Finally, it is impossible to escape the necessity of recognizing the place of mental illness, at least as a diagnosis, in the material realities of queer lives. In the thirties, Cassandra could well have been placed in the asylum simply for being a lesbian, as homosexuality was at the time (and to a certain extent still is) recognized as a mental disease.²⁰ (Persimmon Blackbridge and Sheila Gilhooly’s *Still Sane* [1985] is the catalogue of an exhibition of the artists’ attempts to use sculpture to tell such a story in the contemporary context, as a young lesbian tries to resist attempts to ‘cure’ her by the psychiatric profession.)

Furthermore, Cassandra’s identification with the animals and against the victimizers makes her an unlikely accomplice of her father’s desire for perfection. Rather, she and her brother Franklin have resisted, resented and ultimately failed to cope with the inevitable comparisons with their brother, Patrick, who was killed in the First World War. Thus, Cassandra’s desire to be a different kind of god is an admission of failure in its own right, an admission that it’s impossible to be human in a world which only allows people to be what other people think they are (and we can read this failure of subjectivity against the imposition of social and familial identity as a floating signifier, which might be taken to refer to gender, sexuality and a host of other identitarian and authoritarian issues). It is not insignificant in this passage that ‘god,’ which is not capitalized in this particular speech, is the obverse — or perhaps the inverse — of ‘dog.’ China is the place where, according to Cassandra, dogs are holy; it is also the place where she and Jessie would have been free together. Finally, it is the place which, like safety, is

²⁰ The American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its nosology in 1973, after significant lobbying from the gay community and from gay and pro-gay members; however, many psychiatrists fought its removal and still consider it a disease, even if they are unable to diagnose it officially. In addition, Sedgwick and others have pointed to the ways in which anti-gay psychiatrists displaced their efforts to rid the world of homosexuality onto children via the diagnosis of gender identity disorder of childhood (see Sedgwick’s “How to Bring Your Kids up Gay”).

unreachable: when the ‘children’ attempt to dig a hole to China, which Maudie suggests may enable them to reach Cassandra in time for her to become a bridesmaid at Rose’s wedding, Franklin tells Maudie that it’s impossible because it’s “TOO DAMN FAR” (71). In the same passage, he refers to Cassandra as a bitch and then, as if to ensure that the audience has made the connection, he defines a bitch for Maudie as “a lady dog” (71). (If members of the audience are aware that parks in Shanghai, in the days when it was ruled as a British, French and American concession, sported signs saying “No dogs or Chinese allowed,” then the association of dogs and China may introduce a racial valence into an already queered discourse of wishing for a place free from violence and harm.)

Although Cassandra and Franklin seem like they might be allies in the fight against their father’s idolization of the perfect Patrick, they are not even friends. Family, in this place, is not a place of belonging, much less of safety, but a fractured, difficult and painful experience of being lost precisely where one should be most at home, of being devalued precisely where one should be most valued, of being alone precisely where one should be most loved. Again, this is a condition that, although not unique to gay people, is specifically recognizable; ‘coming out’ or being outed is always perceived as a risk and many horrific stories of familial betrayal circulate amongst LGBT people. What drives Franklin and Cassandra apart, however, is Franklin’s alliance with his father’s masculinity, a masculinity Cassandra specifically rejects by dismissing the phallocentricity of patriarchy. Reminiscing with Rosemary about the days when boys flirted with both of them and tried to lift their skirts, she says, “Why should I look at theirs at the cost of showing them mine, when I’d already seen what little boys had, on Patrick in the bath ... Puppy-dog’s tails, indeed! And yet they rule the world. It staggers me” (112). Patrick, of course, is the invisible epitome of masculinity, a masculinity rendered safe from any possibility of imperfection by his supposedly heroic death. “Little boys make little men,” Cassandra says. “I don’t give a damn what they’ve got. But *they* do. That’s what I’m saying....”²¹ And she

²¹ A number of critics have enumerated the ways in which Findley distinguishes between patriarchal masculinity, which includes virtually all heterosexual masculinities and some homosexual ones, and the non-phallic, associated with most male homosexuals, and all women, children and animals. For particularly trenchant discussions of Findley’s attack on certain forms of masculinity, see Goldie’s “The Canadian Homosexual,” Susan Billingham’s “Fraternizing with the Enemy,” and Heather Sanderson’s “Love, War and Fascism.”

finishes up by asserting to Rosie that “I wasn’t in competition with other girls, but boys ... *one* boy. God himself in shining flesh: Patrick” (113). Whatever sort of god Cassandra wants, in her failure to be human, to become, it’s not the phallic deity, the maniac lost in the darkness he himself has created (an insight that clearly foreshadows Findley’s depiction of Yaweh in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*). If Grandy is right in arguing that the play makes visible the performance and construction of identity, then I would argue further that it more importantly makes visible the impossibility of subjecthood, of being human, in a world where one is forced to construct and perform identities according to the rules of masculinist authority figures, like ‘Father’ and ‘God’ and, of course, Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt, and even Aimée Semple MacPherson.

5. Fun(g) in the Homographic Archive

Grandy asserts that the photograph album on which Cassandra bases her vision of her family history functions as a way to present “the past that combines mimesis with diegesis, showing with telling” (184). Because the audience never sees the photographs and because the patient playing Annie suggests that they are simply photographs of someone else’s family that Cassandra has appropriated, they function, like Cassandra herself, as apparently unreliable witnesses to the past. Grandy argues that the “Laurel scenes are significant not for what they tell about Cassandra’s past but for what they reveal about the importance of that past, remembered or invented, to her sense of self” (185). While I do not disagree that Cassandra uses the photographs to script scenes from her family’s history, real or otherwise, that shape and reinforce her subjectivity, I think it is important to recall that “while photographs do not in themselves preserve meaning” (Berger, qtd. in Grandy 184), they do function to construct an archive, even if it is one that goes against the grain of what Derrida suggests is its patriarchal, indeed, to coin a rather Derridean term, its *patriarchival* authority, both in its wresting of hermeneutic power from the *archon* (in this case, Cassandra’s father) and in its incoherent relationship to archival authority itself. However unreliable Cassandra’s photograph album is, it thus also functions, as do many queer archives, as a re-appropriation of materials not originally intended to provide positive self-affirmation for LGBT people, such as the lesbian pulp novels whose overt, but not always convincing, homophobia is re-written as affirmation of lesbian existence and lesbian loves

by the Canadian lesbians documented in Aerlyn Weissman's and Lynne Fernie's 1992 film *Forbidden Love*.²² Cassandra uses the script she writes from her family's photos not merely to recreate her past, but to insert herself into it as an active participant and critic, one who does not surrender to the dominant meanings circulating within the family and its social sphere.

In *An Archive of Feelings*, Ann Cvetkovich argues that lesbian and gay archives, like all archives of trauma, are preserved through struggle and accident and in opposition to institutional indifference, if not outright hostility:

Formed around sexuality and intimacy, and hence forms of privacy and invisibility that are both chosen and enforced, gay and lesbian cultures often leave ephemeral and unusual traces. 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)

Linking the preservation of the queer archive to the construction of queer (and other) counterpublics, Cvetkovich argues that various forms of queer culture, but particularly live performance culture, "creates publics by bringing together live bodies in space, and the theatrical experience is not just about what's on stage but also about who's in the audience creating community" (9). For Cvetkovich, queer performance culture and other ephemera of queer public cultures "act as a guard against fears about the displacement of political life by affective life and the conversion of public culture into a trauma culture" (9). I have already discussed, in the second chapter, Lauren Berlant's argument about the transformation of American public culture

²² In "In the Archives of Lesbian Feelings: Documentary and Popular Culture," Ann Cvetkovich notes that *Forbidden Love* reproduces the importance of lesbian pulp fiction to lesbian culture in the 50s and 60s:

Combining the sensationalistic covers of the novels with the images of the women narrators, *Forbidden Love* posits the centrality of fantasy and fiction to the construction of lesbian identity and community. Homophobic and formulaic as the novels might have been (in their conventions, for example, for punishing lesbianism and/or perverse sexuality), they also provided evidence that there may be other lesbians out there. In the absence of other forms of public culture, this form of print culture offered access to lesbianism within the (sometimes stolen) privacy of the home (Stephanie Ozard describes reading pulps while babysitting) or for those in small towns that did not even have bars (Bannon mentions the significance of the mass distribution of paperback novels for reaching a wide audience). (119-20)

through the widespread injunction to understand citizenship itself as a product of trauma; in this context, the questions Cvetkovich asks about the relationships between trauma, the archive and public culture are particularly important to the discussion of representation and visibility.

Cvetkovich notes that her own

... investigation into the affective life of lesbian cultures is motivated in particular by [her] dissatisfaction with responses to homophobia that take the form of demands for equal rights, gay marriage, domestic partnership, and even hate crimes legislation; such political agendas assume a gay citizen whose affective fulfillment resides in assimilation, inclusion and normalcy. (11)

These are, notably, all areas of LGBT activism which have assumed, to a greater or lesser extent, the efficacy of visibility, positive representation and the critical deployment of Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion" to reveal the (usually singular) 'truth' about both queer people and their lives within larger heteronormative cultures. However, the construction and preservation of queer archives illustrates the extent to which queer lives exceed the strictures of 'positive' representational politics, particularly when 'positive' is taken to mean being and behaving as much like the heteronormative ideal as possible.

Furthermore, queer archives foreground otherwise ignored relationships and relocate queerness within histories from which the homosexual has always already been erased. Such is the case, for instance, with Richard Fung's *Dirty Laundry*, which, not unlike *Forbidden Love*, uses a combination of documentary form — interviews with historians and other experts, archival footage, quotations from contemporary texts — and fictional narrative in order to retrieve a lost history of same-sex relationships amongst Chinese immigrants to Canada, both in the nineteenth century and today. Fung notes in an interview with Keith Beattie that the film's structure includes

... a kind of proto-drama or quasi-drama through re-enactment that holds the whole thing together but within that I use talking head interviews and archival footage. The drama's not convincing as drama, and the interviews have other things going on behind them. I wanted to create the sense that you are never on solid ground — that no one approach can contain the truth." ("History")

If Fung's work is opposed to the homogenization of historical and contemporary 'truth,' it is also, as a result, intimately concerned with the question of the archive. For instance, *Dirty Laundry* works in part to create and preserve an archive through locating and hypostatizing the ephemera that, if they do not now exist, must once have done so, and in part through the construction of

the film itself as an archive of lesbian and gay Chinese Canadian history. Several clips from the film show men scratching Chinese characters into a wall, while the voiceover identifies them as having been detained by (white) Canadian immigration officials — but just as the scene recreates the historical act, while the voiceover reads the wall-writing in Chinese, the text tells the viewer that the Immigration Building in Victoria was demolished in 1977, resulting in the destruction of this archive of immigrants' thoughts and feelings.

Although sodomy was one of the offenses for which Chinese immigrants were jailed — indeed, the historical documents cited in *Dirty Laundry* make clear the conflation of homosexuality with the already discursively 'diseased' racialized body, as well as laying out the argument that these discourses only began circulating after the CPR construction was officially 'finished' and Chinese labourers were no longer deemed a necessary evil by many white Canadians²³ — these palimpsestic archives, written and re-written on the walls, reinforce the ways in which such minoritized documents are constructed as ephemeral, transient and not worthy of recording. Although six hundred Chinese immigrant workers died in the construction of the railroad, the construction of the past in visual archives, predominantly through photography and written records, erases the presence of both racial and sexual alterity in the 'settlement' of western Canada. Nayan Shah, one of the historians interviewed in *Dirty Laundry*, notes that this elision is a function of how historians decide what constitutes history itself:

As historians, you go around finding facts and where you go usually is archives and libraries, places which are repositories of documents and material objects from the past.... One of the contradictions of history is that we don't... get to see it all, not everything was kept, not everything is deemed as important, so what we have in front of us, and in our archives, are the documents by the people in power.

In addition to this, as already mentioned in the discussion of Lai's *When Fox is a*

²³ Lily Cho points out that construction on the railroad went on well into 1916: "Long after Van Home's last spike had been driven in, Chinese labour was still essential on the Canadian railways" ("Rereading" par. 17). The 1884 Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration recommended the institution of a head tax, while recognizing the importance to the national and imperialist project of cheap Chinese labour. Cho notes that the head tax functioned "to facilitate the entry of Chinese labour while pacifying the increasingly vocal concerns of the working [white] people in British Columbia," quoting immigration statistics to show that Chinese immigration increased steadily during the period of the head tax and was not curtailed until the introduction of the Exclusion Act in 1923 (Par. 18).

Thousand, the search for records of homosexual or same-sex relationships in the history of China itself can be difficult, as issues of gender, class, religion and minoritized ethnic status within the borders of the nation state are all subject to various forms of deletion, particularly in periods when, as is the case today, the state is generally hostile toward homosexuality.²⁴ Encountering homophobia within both hegemonic and racially minoritized communities and racism within both hegemonic and sexually minoritized communities, lesbian and gay people of colour can find themselves caught within a double bind in which their lives are regarded as irrelevant, unimportant and worse. Many queer people of colour thus find themselves negotiating relationships within and between communities that are necessarily hybrid and in which each aspect is ineluctably seen as bearing the ‘burden of identity’ — but Fung himself notes that these relationships can be disarticulated in ways that problematize the assumption of hierarchies of oppression and victimization, wherein the experience of racialization or sexualization automatically equates to the experience of racism or heteronormativity: “I do not experience my Asian identity only as racism; neither is my homosexuality only apparent to me in the face of heterosexism” (“Trouble” 128). And José Muñoz notes, in a discussion of Fung’s *Chinese Characters* (1986), that the “video ‘visualizes’ the workings of power in ethnographic and pornographic films, two discourses that assign subjects like Fung, colonized, coloured and queer, the status of the terminally ‘other’ object. Many of the performances that Fung produces are powerful disidentifications with these othering discourses” (“Autoethnographic” 84).

Citing Sedgwick’s argument that for ‘queer’ to have signified meaningfully for queer children, there needed “to be sites where meanings didn’t line up tidily with each other” (“Queer and Now” 3), an argument that resonates with her demand to disarticulate the cultural spaces

²⁴ Homosexuality has been decriminalized in the People’s Republic of China in the last decade, but there are no human rights protections for gays and lesbians and current research within China indicates that familial pressure forces 90% of Chinese lesbians and gay men into heterosexual marriages. In addition, the Chinese Psychiatric Association voted in 1994 to retain the classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder, but finally removed it, in accordance with WHO guidelines, in 2001. For information about LGBT human rights around the world, see the International Lesbian and Gay Association’s (ILGA) website at www.ilga.org. For information specifically on lesbian and gay issues in China, see the Chinese Society for the Study of Sexual Minorities at www.csssm.org. However, I want to also note that comparative treatments of human rights issues are problematic in many ways; I have based my argument here predominantly on the testimony of lesbian and gay friends who have recently emigrated from the PRC or Hong Kong.

where everything means the same thing, Muñoz contends that both queerness and hybridity can be located in precisely those sites where things do not line up. “Identity practices like queerness and hybridity are not *a priori* sites of contestation but, instead, spaces of productivity where identity’s fragmentary nature is accepted and negotiated” (85).²⁵ In “Looking for My Penis,” Fung writes, for instance, of the importance of locating a gay Asian community which “... broke down the cultural schizophrenia in which I related on the one hand to a heterosexual family that affirmed my ethnic culture and, on the other, to a gay community that was predominantly white,” but almost immediately problematizes this location of a relatively comfortable identity by adding that while “other people’s rejection (or fetishization) of us according to the established racial hierarchies may be experienced as oppressive, we are not necessarily moved to scrutinize our own desire and its relationship to the hegemonic image of the white man” (149). There is no easy answer to either the queerness or the colonial hybridity of Chinese Canadian gay desire. Fung, who was born in Trinidad of ethnically Chinese parents, says in the context of antiracist activism that complicating “simplistic notions of race and power ... can only be a good thing. I also welcome the attention to the ways that local disparities of class, race, gender, and sexuality connect to various forms of regional and international domination. It suggests the possibility of all kinds of interesting solidarities and affiliations” (“Afterword” 242).

In *Dirty Laundry*, Fung tells the story of both (post)colonial hybridity and queerness through the narrative of Roger Kwong (Andy Quan), a Canadian-born Chinese writer who is travelling to Vancouver on Via Rail. Along the way, Roger encounters a number of people who help reshape the article he is attempting to write, from a discussion of new immigrants to an investigation of the history of same-sex relationships amongst Chinese living in Canada. Because nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants were recruited as labour, both for the railroad and the mines, the resulting communities were predominantly male — even though the initial Chinese immigrants in the previous century had “integrated and married Native Canadian women” (Anthony B. Chan in *Dirty Laundry*). In the late nineteenth century, as anti-Chinese agitation amongst white Canadians grew, more restrictive immigration laws were put into place. A head

²⁵ I have preserved the past tense in this statement, as it is part of Sedgwick’s overall argument that queer childhood always exists in the past, as a retroactive naming of what one felt but could not articulate.

tax of \$50 was in place by 1885, rising to \$500 by 1903, and the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1923, making it virtually impossible for ordinary Chinese immigrants or children of immigrants to sponsor family. *Dirty Laundry* points out the way in which racism and homophobia originated from the same set of disciplinary concerns with the superiority and purity of the ‘white race,’ in part through a title that notes that the head tax was introduced in Canada in the same year that Britain passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act which criminalized male homosexuality. Thus queer Chinese people are rendered doubly invisible, as they are written out of history both on racist and heterocentric grounds — and by both white and Asian histories.

One of Roger’s encounters is with the porter, a gay Chinese immigrant (T.H. Xia) who initially chides him for his ignorance of Chinese language(s), but finds him a seat in the empty dining car, where he can work uninterrupted, and eventually has sex with him. Much of the dialogue between Roger and the unnamed porter revolves around the porter’s greater knowledge of Chinese customs, especially once Roger accidentally breaks the framed photograph of his great-grandfather, revealing a second photograph hidden under the first, which shows his great-grandfather with another man, their hands touching. Holding hands, sharing a bed, these are normal in China, the porter tells him — but he adds that these customs also make it easier for lovers, as they can indulge in hand-holding or bed-sharing without having to reveal themselves in the face of societal and familial disapprobation. For Roger, however, the photo suggests a link between his own identity as a gay Chinese Canadian and his great-grandfather’s life. It also suggests the need to capture memories of his great-grandfather’s world before they disappear, a desire which leads him to contact his barely-known great-aunt in Victoria in the hope that she can add to the pieces of his nascent queer archive, whose revelation as that which is concealed and secretive is literalized in the motif of the broken photo frame and the hidden photo.

Muñoz understands this symbolic revelation as part of a “queer trend” in which the autoethnographer — which is how he understands the combination of autobiographical and ethnographic elements in the works of Fung and other ‘colonial hybrids’ — makes “an effort to reclaim the past and put it in direct relationship with the present. Autoethnography is not interested in searching for some lost and essential experience, because it understands the relationship that subjects have with their own pasts as complicated but necessary fictions” (89). Again, Fung literalizes this insight in *Dirty Laundry* by framing the ‘fiction’ of the queer Chinese

Canadian past with the literally fictitious narrative of the queer Chinese Canadian present, embodied in Roger, the porter, and the equally nameless Asian Canadian lesbian who joins Roger briefly on the train.

Dirty Laundry is marked by the specificity of its location — set on a Via Rail train travelling through the Rockies, investigating the history of the people who constructed the very tracks on which the train runs and who thus contributed to “the ideological and physical project of building the nation . . . within the context of imperial expansion and colonialism” (Cho, par. 11). The project of nation building, however, was also one of national defense against the imperialist ambitions of the USA, whose dominant philosophical doctrine, outlined in 1845 by John L. O’Sullivan, proclaimed “... the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative development of self government entrusted to us” (Qtd. in Brinkley 352). It is thus curious, but perhaps unsurprising, that several critics have read Fung’s work within the context of Asian American art, sometimes getting the basics wrong in strange ways. The NAATA website, which has copies of *Dirty Laundry* for sale, refers to Roger’s train journey through “the mountains of Quebec” and calls his great-grandfather his “uncle.”²⁶ More importantly, Zhou Xiaojing consistently confuses and/or treats as identical ‘Chinese American,’ ‘Asian American’ and ‘Chinese Canadian’ in an otherwise insightful article on the ways in which Fung and Ming-Yuen S. Ma respond both to hegemonic discourses of Asian sexuality and gender, particularly the construction of the Asian male as passive and effeminate, and to Asian American responses to those orientaling discourses that reclaim a phallogentric masculinity through “cultural nationalist identity claims” that presuppose the “indigenization” of the “person of Asian ancestry” through the acquisition of “‘American’ credentials” (par. 4). Referring to Fung as one of a number of “contemporary Asian American independent video makers,” Zhou argues that,

Rather than claiming a cultural identity in opposition to the ‘mainstream,’ Fung and Ma insist on investigating the historical contexts and subverting the ideological grounds of hegemonic discourse that construct identities of race, gender, nationality, and sexuality, while exploring alternative modes for

²⁶ National Asian American Telecommunications Association at www.naatanet.org.

articulating Asian American subjectivity.” (par. 7)

Rather than situating *Dirty Laundry* in Canada’s colonial history and its nation-building project’s relationship to the lives and bodies of Chinese labourers, Zhou foregrounds the way in which Fung supposedly subverts the distinction between FOBs (‘Fresh Off the Boat’ immigrants) and ABCs (‘American Born Chinese’) in his portrayal of the porter as a well-dressed man (he is actually wearing a Via Rail uniform), fluent in English.²⁷

Zhou goes on to argue that by citing Canadian immigration law and contemporary racist white rhetoric, “Fung raises questions about the implications of the term ‘bachelor society’ as an unproblematic trope for constructing Asian American/Canadian history” (par. 23). In the conflation of Canadian and American immigration practices and national, sexual, racial and gender discourses and practices, Zhou dislocates the film from its context, making it at once imprecise and overly generalizing, so that it loses its value as a critique of practices situated in a specific time and place. Similar assumptions about the generalizability of Chinese Canadian to Asian American experience underwrite Gina Marchetti’s argument in “Still Looking: Negotiating Race, Sex, and History in *Dirty Laundry*.” Although clearer about the film’s setting in a specifically Asian Canadian ‘ethnoscape,’ Marchetti repeatedly sabotages her own recognition of the importance of place to the film. Reading Roger’s glance at the butt of a white passenger at the beginning of the film and his sexual encounter with the Chinese Canadian porter toward the end as an ideological journey away from racial false-consciousness, Marchetti says that the “shift is from an identification with white gay Canadians to an Asian American queer consciousness based on a rediscovered history of Chinese Canadian homosexuality” (83). I remain unconvinced that (re)discovering the history of Chinese Canadian queerness will result in the

²⁷ Discussing the “institutional assimilation” of Kogawa’s *Obasan* under the rubric of Asian American studies, Roy Miki notes that the novel’s “canonic status in Asian American literature courses ... has resulted in the erasure of the difference that ‘nationalisms’ make,” but adds that recuperating the novel simply as ‘Japanese Canadian’ does not necessarily address “question of representation, historiography, and textuality which help to redress the absence of attention to the novel as a textual formation, evident particularly in the ‘thematic’ approach of most Canadian academics” (*Broken* 155 fn 15). Guy Beauregard argues that Canadian critics may learn to overcome an “aversion ... to addressing in a serious manner social processes of racialization and racist exclusion in Canada” (“What”) by paying attention to the ways in which race receives critical scrutiny in Asian American studies; he does not, however, argue that Chinese Canadian and Asian American art are identical or interchangeable, which both Zhou and Marchetti seem to suggest.

acquisition of “an Asian American queer consciousness”; Asian *North* American, perhaps, but when the word ‘American’ is so often taken, and most often by citizens of the US, as synonymous with the USA, such a distinction needs to be clarified, as does the movement from ‘Chinese,’ which is Fung’s specific field of investigation in *Dirty Laundry*, to ‘Asian,’ a term which can mean anything from Middle Eastern to Sri Lankan to Japanese. Indeed, Fung says in “The Trouble with ‘Asian,’” that

When I reflect on my own process of self-naming I realize not only the political significance, but also the constructedness and fragility of ‘Asian’ identity. Asian consciousness only displaces specific national or regional identities and allegiances under the conditions of white racism, either expressed here in the diaspora, or through Western colonialism and imperialism in Asia. The term ‘Asian’ after all corrals together people with heterogeneous, even violently antagonistic histories. (125)

‘Asian,’ then, even if it is frequently adopted by ‘Asians’ as a mode of affiliation in response to its deployment under the racist umbrella of orientalism, remains problematic in its homogenizing potency. The same is true of the homogenization of the Canadian under the rubric of an ‘American’ that is at once generalized to North America, yet specified as nothing less than the USA. Quite apart from the inclination of Canadians to dislike American appropriation of our cultural icons (an issue that raises all sorts of problematic questions around nationalism and its relation to race, sexuality and gender), Fung’s work is always clearly situated, rather than generalized. These are not any mountains, these are the Canadian Rockies, just as the landscapes in many of Fung’s other films are not just any big Canadian city, they are Toronto. Indeed, Thomas Waugh argues, with considerable force, that if

we look at Fung’s oeuvre as a whole, and even within the works that we might call most ‘migrant,’ the hybrid shifting space of the migrant is always anchored in a strong sense of locality and rootedness. We find the situatedness of the social activist and documentarist whose aesthetic integrates the postmodern and the non-referential performative in a strong realist and instrumentalist framework of localized agendas of city and nation. (“Fung” 71)

Waugh claims, in fact, that *Dirty Laundry*, “parachuted into the pristine mountain landscape surrounding the Banff Centre for Performing Arts” has “an exotic feel — not unlike Fung’s father’s China or his mother’s Trinidad. The tape seems unrelated to the Toronto urban rootedness of all of his other work” (71-72). Waugh notes that the production facilities at Banff

allowed Fung to reconstitute the “historical and geographical space of ‘the nation,’ an imagined community to be sure, but one attached firmly to the materiality of territory, economics and a state apparatus” (72). Quoting Fung’s own insistence that Canada is “a country where the nation is always viewed as fragmenting and where Canadian nationalism has always been defensive and reactive,” Waugh concludes that:

Fung’s brilliant marshalling of the ethnoscape and the homoscope, their overlaps and convergences, cannot be properly understood without reference to their rootedness in the metropolitan and the national, dynamic places not only of hybridity and dislocatedness, but also of rootedness, coalition and intervention. (72)²⁸

Waugh thus argues not for an ‘essential’ Canadian identity which Fung has somehow absorbed, perhaps through the sort of ‘cultural nationalist’ integrative project that Zhou critiques, but for a more geographically, culturally and ideologically sited understanding of the nation. To be sure, the situation of immigrants and racialized and sexualized minorities throughout North America has a certain commonality, but it must also be individuated through the difference between Canadian nationalism and American, between our ‘state apparatus’ and theirs, even if those differences are neither precise nor always clearly identifiable. Indeed, it seems to me that Fung’s overall project is the creation of a queer Asian Canadian archive that actively intervenes in the creation of a queerly Canadian public culture. Waugh’s argument thus resonates with Muñoz’s sense that it “would also be important to situate the artist’s own geography in this study of contact zones,” or regions which foster interrogations of “asymmetries of power and the workings of the colonizer/colonized mechanism” (“Autoethnographic” 98). Noting that Trinidad is a “contact zone par excellence,” in which Asians are double minorities with supremely postcolonial identities, Muñoz also interrogates the location of Canada as ambivalently (not) a postcolonial space:

A settler colony, Canada’s status as not quite first world and not quite second

²⁸ Waugh notes that he is extending Arjun Appadurai’s deployment of the term ‘scape,’ as in ethnoscape, mediascape, financescape, and so on, to describe the flows of cultural material across national boundaries, even while they appear to remain stable within the everyday life of the individual subject. Thus the ‘homoscope’ appears to be constant within a fixed cultural frame, while shifting in subtle ways as it is transformed by its movement between the local and the global. In a sense, then, the homoscope is a product of the landscape, an idea that resonates with historical constructions of Canadian identity in ways that are parallel to, but might not have appealed to, the Group of Seven.

world positions it as a somewhat ambiguous postcolonial site. Canada, for example, is an importer of US pornography. It is therefore, on the level of the erotic imaginary, colonized by a US erotic image hierarchy. I want to suggest that the geographical location of Fung's production is significant when considering the hybridity of his representational strategies. Fung's *place*, in both [sic] Canada, Trinidad, gay male culture, documentary practice, ethnography, pornography, the Caribbean and Asian diasporas, is not quite fixed, thus this work is uniquely concerned with issues of place and displacement. (98)

Is the creation of a queer archive, then, an attempt to fix oneself in (a) place, to assert one's right to citizenship in the face of hegemonic epistemologies of race, sexuality, gender and class that seek precisely to displace? Fung's archival creations refuse easy answers, even as they seek to visualize ways of being seen to belong in place, whether it is the place of nation or the place of desire. Indeed, by actively inserting 'Asian' bodies into otherwise unremittingly and restrictively white visualizations of gay eroticism, as he does in *Chinese Characters*, Fung suggests strategies for seeing oneself in place — both *in a place*, as in this specific erotic/national/racial location, and *in place of*, as in the re-placement of visible and intelligible queer Asian bodies within the discursively white space of the pornographic film, while at the same time refusing to be *put in (one's) place* within racist discourse. Fung makes a note of this specific example when he argues that sex can be a site of pain as well as pleasure: "Released from the social constraints against expressing overt racism in public, the intimacy of sex can provide my (non-Asian) partner an opening for letting me know my place — sometimes literally, as when after we come, he turns over and asks where I come from" ("Looking" 159). The creation of a queer archive for Asian Canadians is thus, as Cvetkovich argues more generally, a response to the social and personal traumas of racism, exclusion from the public sphere, and the desexualization of the 'Asian body' through an orientaling discourse that insists that it can only be one body and that it can have only one — inevitably passive — desire. However, Fung makes it very clear that he sees his project as reparative, as visualizing and re-placing the sexualized, sexual and, indeed, sexy 'Asian' bodies that have been erased from the Canadian homoscape, just as he visualizes and re-replaces the racialized/queer bodies that have been elided from the Canadian landscape.

6. Re-Placing the ‘Not Here’ of the Colonial Archive

As noted in the first chapter, Frye’s question ‘Where is here?’ has become something of a ‘Can Lit’ shibboleth. Cynthia Sugars argues that the postcolonial nature of Canadian literature gets ‘lost in space’ through arguments about the relative merit of an authentic ‘native’ literature — that is one written by the descendants of Anglo-Saxon settlers — relative to the literatures of the ‘cosmopolitan,’ which is to say imperial, centres of British and European culture.²⁹ The title of Sugars’ article ties the question of whether Canada produces an independent and thus *postcolonial* literature to the question of enunciation which has haunted subaltern and postcolonial studies since Gayatri Spivak asked whether the subaltern can speak. The question of who can speak is also, as I have indicated, central to how LGBT people have tended to strategize political interventions into discourses that silence and erase them from the public sphere and from public culture. To speak as ‘queerly Canadian’ is to answer both ‘yes; and ‘no’ to Spivak’s question, since one is clearly speaking, yet such speech is automatically rendered inauthentic even within a Canadian public culture that has historically been anxious about its own authenticity.

Indeed, Terry Goldie takes up Frye’s question in a context which suggests that, even if the Canadian can speak, the Canadian queer can only do so by abandoning the where of ‘here’:

From a point when Canadian literature was, if not a monolith, at least reasonably unitary, through the incorporation of feminism, to a series of racial divisions, one must add still more categories. Many see the sexual orientation of the author as a primary issue. More than race, it is often seen as transnational. ‘Queer Nation’ might be considered just a polemical name for one more American minority, to be placed in the box with black nationalism, but it also represents a mind-set that national borders are not logical distinctions for gays and lesbians. In what nationalists from the 1970s would see as creeping continentalism, many Canadian homosexuals feel much more in tune with gays and lesbians in New York than with the straight people next door. This feeling often extends to literature, which might be set in Vancouver but often acts more like Provincetown. (“Blame Canada” 227-28)

The question of whether queer culture is national, i.e. Canadian, or transnational, i.e. metropolitan or ‘American,’ is both crucial and possibly irresolvable. Yet I remain optimistic that, as I argued

²⁹ The full title of Sugars’ article is “Can the Canadian Speak?: Lost in Postcolonial Space.”

in the case of Richard Fung's work, while there may be nothing 'essentially' Canadian about his videos (just as there may not be anything 'essentially' diasporic/Chinese/Asian about them), they are still located in a specific place and time; in other words, they are set 'here,' and not somewhere else. More than this, however, I want to argue that Fung's re-placement of the sexualized and racialized body in the racially and sexually empty space of the nation that is conceived in Frye's question is both a relocation and a respatialization of a (national) public culture that is materially, if not discursively, 'here.'

In "Where is Frye? Or, Theorizing Postcolonial Space," Richard Cavell not only takes issue with Frye's formulation of "Where is here?," he also uses his criticism of its despatializing effects to make the larger argument for "a direction for post-colonial theory that deprivileges literature as the sole site of critique [and that]... recognizes that the enterprise of colonialism has a fundamental spatial aspect: the seizing of territories, the mapping of sites, the framing of landscapes, the construction of buildings, the displacement of peoples" (111). Cavell's basic contention is that Frye's formulation of "Where is here?" dislocates it from the social; 'here' is not a social, or even a peopled, landscape, but rather an abstraction of geography, landscape, wilderness, and North. Furthermore, Frye argues throughout his works for an understanding of literature as form or structure — something that can, in fact, be anatomized — rather than as a matter of content or social relations. It is the very emptiness of the discursive landscape as produced, for example, by the Group of Seven that allows Frye to read "the real Canada" as a utopian space "with nobody in it" (Qtd. in Cavell, 114).³⁰

Cavell's response is to look for postmodern interrogations of the suggestion that Canada, like "utopia," is most real when most clearly empty. If utopia cannot exist as a place in time or history, then it needs to be replaced in the imagination of Canada as a nation by an alternative that does not exclude social space and what one might call 'lived reality.' "To reinscribe and resituate

³⁰ Cavell quotes Frye in *The Modern Century* as noting a Portuguese etymology for "Canada" which means "nobody here," and noting the resonances of that derivation with the etymology of "utopia" (114). Notably, Fung replies to both Frye and the Group of Seven in *Out of the Blue* (1991), in which he interviews Julian Dedier on the circumstances surrounding his false arrest. Lisa Steele notes the purpose with which Fung situates their interview — one Asian Canadian man talking to an African Canadian man — precisely in the landscape of the Group of Seven ("Caption" 94); the visual comment remains unexplicated, but also supremely ironic, as Fung and Dedier confront a landscape discursively emptied of bodies save for that of the white artist whose gaze has already obliterated the racial 'other.'

the notion of space as it has been developed in Canadian cultural production,” Cavell argues, “would be to substitute the notion of heterotopia for that of utopia, what has largely governed thought about space in Canada, thanks in part to Frye’s highly influential statements” (121). Cavell quotes from Michel Foucault’s discussion of heterotopia in “Of Other Spaces” (1986) and goes on to develop an argument that takes in both Gianni Vattimo’s extension of Foucault’s argument and the Derridean tendency towards deconstruction in architectural thought.

This notion of Canada as an at least potentially heterotopian space is one which is important from a queer, as well as from a national, perspective. “Of Other Spaces” is Foucault’s later discussion of an argument he began in *The Order of Things* (1973). Foucault argues that

Utopias afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold ...
Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, ... because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to ‘hold together.’ (*Order* xviii)

To explain this destruction of syntax, Foucault gives an example from Jorge Luis Borges’ “The Analytical Language of John Wilkins” which includes a “quotation” of a (presumably fictitious) Chinese encyclopedia in which “animals are divided into (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) tame, (c) embalmed, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens ...” (Qtd. in Foucault, *Order* xv). Utopia might then be said to consist of an order of things expressed in the syntax of a comprehensible language and located in the dreamspace of an imaginary we believe (but only so long as we are not exposed to the syntax-destruction of incommensurable categorizations) to be equally comprehensible and orderly, but unattainably remote — Foucault gives the example of the place of China as “a reservoir of utopias” in the Western “dreamworld” (*Order* xix).³¹ Heterotopia, by contrast, does for us what the quotation from “The Analytical Language of John Wilkins” did for Foucault; it breaks “up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the

³¹ As noted in the discussion of *Can You See Me Yet?*, Cassandra’s specification of China as the place where no-one kills dogs clearly follows the same discursive logic of locating the utopian space in the place that is, at least discursively, the farthest imaginable, an effect provoked both by geographical and cultural distance as well as through orientalist and racist discourses.

wild profusion of existing things, and continu[es] long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other” (*Order* xv). It is thus not enough to understand heterotopia as simply a utopia of diversity which can be counterposed to a dystopia of sameness; the disjunction between utopia and heterotopia must disrupt the very syntax by which we understand the relationships between sameness and difference, between ourselves and the Other, however displaced in time and space — thus working effectively in the same mode as queer theory itself.

Although Cavell does not quote Foucault’s discussion of heterotopia in *The Order of Things*, it seems to me that it is precisely this destruction of syntax, this incommensurability of categories, which provides at least one potential solution to the homogenizing problematics of “Where is here?” Frye’s emphasis is, in its own way, very specifically on the orderliness of syntax, the tidiness of form and category, at the expense of those who inhabit, and who may even wish to speak from within, these evacuated spaces. The syntax of heterotopia — literally ‘different place(s)’ — pervades debates over the place of homosexuality, within culture, within history, within the nation, and within the individual; similarly, it pervades diasporic realizations of the embodiment of ‘race’ that attempt to adjudicate between ethnicity, national identity and racialization. Thus, in Dionne Brand’s terms, the racialized and the sexualized are always “in another place, not here.” Yet this dislocation, as I noted in my discussion of *Dirty Laundry*, is itself subject to the heterotopian dispersion of the unitary and wholly legible syntaxes of racism, sexism and heteronormativity. Similarly, the heterotopian re-replaces the homosexual, the ‘Asian’ or the ‘black’ or the ‘Native’ within the landscape — but it does so by breaking the frame of landscape painting and multiplying and fragmenting the perspectives from which the landscape — and the figures in the landscape — can be viewed. Finally, it complicates and destabilizes the dichotomy between a ‘national queer’ culture — that is generally seen as tribal, primitive and ritualistic³² — and a progressive human-rights-based transnational gay (more than lesbian) culture. Neville Hoad argues in “Arrested Development or the Queerness of Savages” that the European imperial project used the tropes of evolutionary biology to read homosexuality as either

³² For example, contemporary ‘primitive’ sexual cultures, such as those of Melanesia, and historical sexual cultures, such as the endlessly contested homosexuality of Ancient Greece, as well as approaches to Queer Nation and other forms of lesbian and gay association as ‘tribal’ (whether positively or negatively).

decadent or degenerate:

Decadence and degeneracy ... are both developmental tropes; degeneracy implying a falling back into an earlier time, an anxious space of the past in the future, and decadence connoting a bringing into the present of some very late, perhaps never-to-be-reached state, an anxious space of premature death. What the decadent/degenerate shares with the primitive is a position on the fringes of the normative evolutionary narrative. (137)

Applying this conception of the way in which evolutionary tropes spatialized time and chronologized space (present 'primitive' tribal homosexualities are always only our own 'primitive' past, whereas present 'decadence' is always only our endlessly deferred future) allows Hoad to theorize the sometimes virulent homophobia of the 'developing world' as not simply a colonized false-consciousness that denies the particular homoerotics of its own tribal — 'primitive' — history, but rather as a more complex response to colonial discourse: "anti-imperialist attacks on homosexuality can be seen [sic] as refusals to carry the imputation of primitiveness, and to counter-project the racist stereotype of retardation and/or degeneration onto its western source, by scapegoating the west's own sexual deviants or what these attacks perceive as their local proxies" (151).³³

The colonial desire to displace non-hegemonic sexual behaviours is very evident in the nineteenth century, particularly in examples such as Richard Burton's invention of the 'Sotadic Zone' "in which climate is seen to facilitate pathological love" (Hoad 138). Such inventions had a dual utility for the majority of European colonialists; on the one hand, it allowed them to disavow the possibility of local same-sex behaviours on the grounds of racial primitivism or, in Burton's case, climate; on the other hand, it provided for the "perception, and (to a limited extent) the reality, of the empire as a homosexual playground" for Europeans avoiding cultural disapproval, fleeing criminal prosecution, or seeking some quasi-utopian space of free sexual

³³ I find this formulation both useful and interesting for problematizing a simplistic assertion that one of the first things colonialism teaches its colonized 'others' is homophobia, as well as for suggesting ways to critique what Hoad calls the "overdetermination of gay and lesbian identity internationally" (158, fn 76). Problematically, however, since Hoad explicitly addresses the political urgencies surrounding the effects of European imperialism on both Western and 'developing' homosexualities, he has no suggestions about what to do for the 'local proxies' who ask for help from the developed and relatively secure lesbian and gay communities in the Western world, as for example the repeated requests by Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) for funding and political support to pressure Robert Mugabe's government into ending its homophobic rhetoric and allowing basic human rights to Zimbabweans who identify as lesbian or gay.

desire (Aldrich 5). However, the legacies of colonial heteronormativity, imperialist hetero- and homosexual exploitation, and even genuinely affectionate and potentially egalitarian cross-race same-sex relations continue to be problematic for those attempting to think through the construction of homosexualities in (post)colonial nations.

In Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996), the setting is an imagined town named Paradise on the equally imagined Caribbean island, Lantanacamara. As Dionne Brand does in *In Another Place, Not Here*, Mootoo leaves the identity of the island unspecified, allowing it to stand more generally for a geography of Caribbean colonization. An artist, videographer and writer, Mootoo herself was born in Ireland, raised in Trinidad, and arrived in Canada at the age of nineteen. *Cereus*, her first novel, was shortlisted for the Giller Prize, the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, the Chapters/Books in Canada First Novel Award, and the BC Book Prize, a fairly clear indication that, despite not being set in Canada, the story of the Ramchandin family still resonated with Canadian readers. Narrated by Tyler, the only male nurse on Lantanacamara, the story tells the tale of old Mala Ramchandin, who is consigned, following the discovery of her father's body, to the Alms House where Tyler is the new, and unappreciated, employee. The father, Chandin, has been adopted as a boy by the Reverend George Thoroughly, who raises him as white, but immediately refuses the thought of a South Asian man marrying his daughter, Lavinia, although his justification to Chandin is that he and Lavinia are 'really,' if not by blood, brother and sister. Yet when it is announced that Lavinia, away in the Shivering Northern Wetlands for her education, is to marry her cousin, Chandin without warning or forethought declares his desire to marry Sarah, another South Asian Lantanacamaran. Sarah has two children, Mala and Asha, but falls in love with Lavinia. The two plot to leave with the children on the last ship of the season, but Chandin's unexpectedly early return interrupts their escape, leaving the children alone with their father, who begins to abuse them sexually, although Mala does her best to protect her younger sister. Asha Ramchandin eventually runs away, like her mother, leaving Mala with the house, the father, and her would-be lover, Ambrose — yet even the rescue promised by Ambrose's courtship is denied to Mala. Ambrose eventually marries, although he continues to try and look after Mala from a distance, passing the task on to his daughter-turned-son, Otoh. The novel's main sub-plot involves the sweet romance between the effeminate Tyler, who takes to wearing a female nurse's uniform, and the suit-and-tie-wearing

Otoh, who has performed masculinity so well that it seems everyone on the island, except perhaps his mother, has forgotten that he was born female.

In an insightful article on sexual citizenship in Caribbean Canadian fiction, Heather Smyth argues that both *Cereus* and Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* "show the crucial links between place, culture and belonging in response to sexuality" (141). Smyth notes the anti-homophobic critique present in both writers' works, particularly in light of a now decade long debate over reggae lyrics espousing homophobic violence, most notably Buju Banton's "Boom bye bye ina de battyman head" (see Mercer [1996], Chin [1997] and Cooper [1994]). Adjudicating between Cooper's insistence that all western criticism of Caribbean homophobia is imperialist and Chin's argument that it is possible to challenge both western ethnocentrism and "formulations of Caribbean culture that rely on an assumed parallel between Caribbean or African-based culture and heterosexuality on the one hand, and between European or imperialistic culture and homosexuality on the other" (143), Smyth notes the urgency of imagining modes of "anti-homophobic resistance that has Caribbean cultural authority," that is, the authority of the 'insider' (143-44).³⁴ Yet, as Makeda Silvera has also noted, the lesbian or gay activist is both a racial/ethnic insider and a sexual and, to a certain extent, national outsider, setting up a conundrum when it comes to notions of the cultural authority of diasporic people generally and of the queer diaspora in particular.

Smyth argues that Mootoo follows Audre Lorde's *Zami* in imagining the Caribbean as a utopia, or 'paradise' (Mootoo's ludic naming of the Ramchandin's hometown echoes Lorde's language) for queer subjects "and both implicitly and explicitly links their stories to a project of

³⁴ Both Smyth and Richard Fung, in their discussions of Mootoo's work, cite M. Jacqui Alexander's article on the loss of citizenship that has resulted from the decision by several Caribbean nations in the mid-80s to criminalize lesbian sex: "Not just (any)body can be a citizen anymore for *some* bodies have been marked by the state as non-procreative, in pursuit of sex only for pleasure, a sex that is non-productive of babies and of no economic gain. Having refused the heterosexual imperative of citizenship, *these* bodies, according to the state, pose a profound threat to the very survival of the nation" (qtd. in Fung 163; emphasis in original).

Fung, however, notes that this is hardly just a Caribbean problem, even if the move to criminalize homosexuality goes against the overall trend in western nations, by remarking that Lucien Bouchard created a very similar effect when he publicly lamented the low birth-rate of francophone Québécois. This is also the case with the question of homophobic lyrics, which are hardly limited to reggae. However, the only groups that seem to have been consistent in their criticism are the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and Outrage!, which have spoken out against both Buju Banton and Eminem, whose whiteness seems to provide a perfect alibi for his misogyny and homophobia in the minds of much of the white press.

imaginative decolonization” (147) that is also a project of imagining a space for lesbians and gay men in the Caribbean. However, she notes that the

... violence surrounding Lavinia and Sarah’s absence ensures that the novel’s utopianism is still implicated in (and resistant to) very real conditions of exclusion and oppression, as does its implicit linking of Mala, Tyler, and Otoh with decolonizing politics. The novel makes this link in part through the character of Chandin, whose abuse of his daughters cannot help but be linked to his role in the text as a representative (and victim) of colonizing missionary work. (151)

Smyth does not say so, but implicit in her argument is the extent to which Mootoo re-places discourses of perversity: rather than homosexuality being the perverse result of colonization, it is (heterosexual) child abuse that is represented in the figure of the wholly assimilated but, because of his skin colour within the racist world of colonial mission politics, also unassimilable father. Homosexuality and gender role resistance, by contrast, are located both inside and outside, figured in both the western-educated white Caribbean woman, Lavinia, and her ethnically Asian Caribbean lover, Sarah, as well as in both the western-educated and effeminate Tyler and his lover, the local ‘boy’ Otoh.

While Smyth reads *Cereus* as an insertion of queer sexual citizenship into the discursively homophobic space of the Caribbean public sphere, an insertion that clearly parallels work more explicitly located within Canada, Ann Cvetkovich reads the novel as an incest narrative and response to both familial and colonial trauma. Although Cvetkovich doesn’t note it, Mootoo has spoken about her own history of childhood sexual abuse, most notably in a 1993 interview with Barbara Sherman of the BC Institute Against Family Violence. The novel thus has a certain autobiographical, as well as autoethnographic, quality that goes somewhat beyond Cvetkovich’s tentative identification of Mootoo with Asha, the sister who emigrates to Canada but never ceases to worry about Mala. Cvetkovich argues that *Cereus* is a tale of trauma:

Otoh and Tyler ... are the younger generation who seek to untangle the history of their ancestors — one in which sexual violence becomes entwined with a traumatic history of colonialism and racism, and generates queer family stories. The house in which Mala cultivates a sanctuary of cereus blooms, snail shells, and fantasy that protects both herself and a trauma history is ultimately destroyed, but the inquiry into her past that leads to this devastation also forges new possibilities for queer transnational histories that can acknowledge trauma. (*Archive* 142)

Understanding that abandonment is also diasporic migration, Cvetkovich links the two not through a victimology of (sexist, homophobic, imperialist) blame, but rather through an argument on behalf of understanding their complex relationships, as well as the incest story itself, as “embedded in the histories of colonialism and diaspora that circulate around and through it” (142). She argues that the novel offers a vision “neither utopian nor pathological” that eschews blame in favour of an interrogation of the complex colonial and familial histories which shape the possibilities for relationships among the characters. Cvetkovich thus concludes that

Queer sexuality is the productive offspring of these perverse unions and dominations — a queer sexuality that can be located in Lantanacámara, Canada, or the Shivering Wetlands equally. Mala’s story, which includes the history of her family, is taken up by Otoh and Tyler, who find in her a figure echoing their own queer locations and genders. By writing of trauma without romanticizing or pathologizing either migration or remaining rooted at home, Mootoo creates space for the outcomes of the traumas of dislocation. And she refuses to present a simple picture of homosexuality, transgender identities, and other queer sexualities, which are also neither romanticized nor pathologized. (152)

Writing down Mala and her family’s story in a work explicitly addressed to the missing diasporic sister, Asha, and somewhat less explicitly to the missing mothers, Sarah and Lavinia, Tyler is engaged directly in the construction of a queer archive through the untangling, recording and making visible of the events that begin with the adoption of Chandin Ramchandin by the colonizing missionary from the Shivering Wetlands and end with the judge’s refusal to try the aged and mute Mala for a crime he cannot be sure was a crime.³⁵ Reconstructing and resurrecting parts of the story not only from what Mala herself is eventually able to tell him, but from the tales of Otoh and his father, Ambrose Mohanty, as well as from his memory of stories told him by his cigarette-smoking Nana, Tyler sees himself as “fashioning a single garment out of myriad parts...” (113). It is an archive with a dual purpose, however, because, despite his best intentions, Tyler is unable to avoid recording his own story as well. Indeed, he begins with the

³⁵ Questions of visibility permeate *Cereus*, often in the form of understanding knowledge as both hidden and as an ‘open secret’ necessary to maintain the *status quo* of a public sphere which cannot recognize, even though it ‘knows’ about, Chandin’s abuse of his children or Otoh’s gender transformation. These are the open secrets that must remain officially invisible, as once visible they would become incommensurate with the epistemology of sexuality, gender and the family that underwrites Lantanacamaran public culture. The tangled profusion of the cereus plant and other symbols of hiding, often located in nature, further emphasize the importance of the visible/hidden and private/public binarisms within the novel.

admission that this is inevitable:

Might I add that my own intention, as the relater of this story, is not to bring notice to myself, and being a narrator who existed on the periphery of events, I am bound to be present. I have my own laments and much to tell about myself. It is my intent, however, to refrain from inserting myself too forcefully. Forgive the lapses, for there are some, and read them with the understanding that to have erased them would have been to do the same to myself. (3)

Tyler is aware of himself as an archivist, both of Mala's tale and his own. He conceives of his own life, young, effeminate, queer and Asian as it is, as having its own intrinsic interest and his desire to "refrain" from telling too much about himself is only a function of the narrative's primary purpose in locating and reuniting Asha with her sister. He is, as he says, "placing trust in the power of the printed word to reach many people" and he has confidence in the ability of such a narrative to reach beyond the confines of Lantancamara to the farthest reaches of the Caribbean diaspora, whether it be Canada or the Shivering Wetlands (3). In particular through the force of his own insertion into the text, Tyler explicitly counters the heteronormative force of the patriarchal impulse that would judge both his story and Mala's too perverse, too unpleasant and reflecting too poorly on Lantancamara's postcolonial project — in a word, too queer — to be worthy of preservation. Although he is merely a nurse, merely a "pansy," Tyler seizes the cultural authority to relate the narrative and, through it, both to critique the construction of the island's culture as heteronormative and to construct a place within that culture for himself, for Otoh, and for Mala (11). As he says, he is "the one who ended up knowing the truth, the whole truth, every significant *and* insignificant bit of it" (7).

As Richard Fung argues is the case with Mootoo's video art, the bodies in *Cereus* are sensuous, fleshly, responsive to the senses, but also

... social bodies, born into specific times, places, languages, and genealogies. They are gendered and sexual bodies, raced and placed. The pleasures they elicit and experience are usually forbidden ones that at once foreground and work against the grain of their ascribed location. It is by analyzing and subverting the regulation of pleasure, and with it the performance of identities, that these tapes both foreground and undermine the anxiously repeated stereotypes of patriarchy and colonialism. (161)

If Mootoo is the subject, the I/eye (literally, when behind the camera) of her videos, then Tyler is her stand-in in the novel whose foregrounding of transgressive pleasure matches his refusal of

patriarchival authority in order to create a postcolonial critique of the effects of colonial and homophobic violence that does not disavow the racialized body or its queerness. At the same time, as Ian Iqbal Rashid notes, Mootoo's work explicitly refuses the assumptions that diasporic culture can only exist as the inferior other of "a pure culture somewhere else: the idea of a collective sense of source, a mythical homeland, the projection and immediate loss of imaginary authenticity — the assignation in the end of another kind of difference. And so we re-enter colonization" (341). Such a refusal is an important part of an anti-homophobic, anti-racist project that aims to refute both colonization and its effects and, in particular, to resist both the imbrication of queerness with the colonizer who has supposedly corrupted an originary and entirely heterosexual colonized subject and the imputation of a virulently degrading homophobia to the (post)colonial culture by the now enlightened west. The way that Mootoo has chosen to undertake this project involves the creation of her own postcolonial queer archive that refuses to forget the violences of either colonialism or homophobia. Queerness is always 'here' and Mootoo, like Fung, wishes to make that presence visible; more than that, however, the construction of the queer archive enables a significant negotiation of the aporia between "where we're at" and "where we're from," forcibly breaking down the disjuncture between the two in a project of archiving both what seems (to whom?) significant *and* insignificant, belonging to 'here' *and* to 'not here,'³⁶ diasporic and at home, Caribbean and Canadian, yet without the reductive simplification that erases difference and suggests that it doesn't matter if where you're at is or is not where you come from.

7. Singing and Dancing at the End (of the Archive)

One can only hope that as Greyson makes his predatory way through Canadian culture, he will light upon the kayak — not to mention grunge *couriers de bois* [sic] and snowboarding Mounties — to provide us, in some future effort, say, a Busby Berkeley kayak number in the wave pool at the West Edmonton Mall. Such cultural impurities (and impieties) are necessary if we are to survive the pablum of difference dished out by those who represent Canada to us as though it mirrored

³⁶ For a fuller discussion of these terms, see Diana Brydon's "It's Time for a New Set of Questions," as well as my discussion in the first chapter of her use of Paul Gilroy's work to critique the continuing currency of Frye's "Where is here?"

ourselves.

Richard Dellamora, "John Greyson's *Zero Patience*
in the Canadian Firmament"

If the racialized and sexualized other is forced to recreate, reconstitute and even to reimagine the archive in the face of heteronormative history's insistence that only (white) heterosexual culture is worthy of memorial, the advent of AIDS made visible at once the urgent necessity of archivizing projects with the all too literal possibility of facing the end of the archive itself.³⁷ Sedgwick argues that AIDS literalized "the overarching, relatively unchallenged aegis of a culture's desire that gay people *not be*" ("How To" 164). There are many people who simply wish that homosexuality did not exist; AIDS made the realization of that wish, at least temporarily in the queer western context, entirely palpable.³⁸ One of the most urgent projects in the early years of AIDS was the creation of queer archives of all kinds, both public and private, both official and unofficial, both obviously important and seemingly trivial. Out of such impulses grew projects like the AIDS quilt which, beginning with the impetus of a few friends and lovers in 1985 to celebrate those whom they had lost, has now become impossible, at 45,000 panels and 82,000 names, to display in its entirety.³⁹ For writers and other artists, AIDS made literal Barthes' 'death of the author,' as novels, poetry, drama, filmscripts, photographs and paintings

³⁷ Reading AIDS both as a spectacle of apocalypse and through apocalypticism, many critics understand the end of the archive as both equivalent to and result of the end itself. Drawing on Derrida's work on apocalypse, especially in *The Post Card*, "The Rhetoric of Drugs," "The Ends of Man" and "No Apocalypse, Not Now," however, critics like Richard Dellamora and William Haver argue that "apocalyptic appeals must be subjected to continued critical analysis" whether invoked by dominant groups "to validate violence done to others" or by subordinate groups as "an effect of the pressure of persecution" (Dellamora, *Apocalyptic* 3).

³⁸ It is not hard to argue that western indifference to the AIDS epidemic infecting Africa and other parts of the so-called 'developing world' is genocidal, when the bodies that are marked as expendable are all black or brown. Whether such genocidal desires consciously underwrite murderous policies, such as the Catholic church's disinformation campaign falsely impugning the efficacy of condoms in preventing the transmission of AIDS (it is hard not to notice that such disinformation is *not* being disseminated by clerics in Europe and North America), is hard to tell and perhaps irrelevant. Even well-intentioned genocide is genocide.

³⁹ The Names Project website (www.aidsquilt.org) gives the quilt's overall size at 1,270,350 square feet and indicates that the number of names on the quilt represents 17.5% of all US AIDS deaths — although there are panels from all over the world, from Canada to Zimbabwe.

were produced in the shadow of the imminent death of their creators.⁴⁰

John Greyson's 1993 film *Zero Patience*, a generic but always ironic and camp blend of musical, horror film, documentary, and homoerotic romance, is a frontal attack on a particular apocalyptic (American) narrative that is simultaneously (homosexual) self-blame and a displacement of blame onto the ethnically/nationally (and, by implication, sexually) other. Randy Shilts named Gaetan Dugas, a gay Québécois flight attendant, as the 'patient zero' responsible for carrying AIDS from Africa (where, presumably, it didn't count) into the innocent, uninfected American populace; Shilts' accusation was subsequently taken up throughout American print and electronic media, including the *New York Times*. As Robert L. Cagle argues,

Like the construction of Typhoid Mary, the plague rat, or the African Green Monkey, all explicitly referred to by Greyson in his film, Patient Zero was unproblematically accepted as both the (human) origin of [AIDS] ... and as the literal personification of the epidemic itself.... In a sense, the search for a source — an origin — of the AIDS epidemic literally stopped at the border, leaving the Patient Zero story incomplete[;]... with transmission supposedly traced back to Gaetan Dugas — a safely alien source — any further investigation was unnecessary. Of course, that Dugas was Canadian further complicates matters so that even with North America the search for origins stopped at the border, specifically the one that separates the United States from Canada. (73)⁴¹

Chris Gittings agrees with this assessment, adding that, "On the level of national allegory, this mythical imagining was very convenient: a French-speaking foreigner infects America the good, the heartland of morality" ("Zero Patience" 29). The 'zero patience' of Greyson's title is thus overtly polysemic, ironizing the very notion that there can ever be a 'patient zero,' but also insisting that we have 'zero patience' with a whole series of brutally stigmatizing discourses associated with AIDS, from the rapacious desire of the pharmaceutical industry to profit from a 'gay disease' to the defensive self-congratulation of heteronormative discourse to the American

⁴⁰ See for example, Ross Chambers's discussion in *Facing It!* of the literalization of the death of the author.

⁴¹ As well as the imperialist discourse that locates the diseased body of the (sexual) other always outside its own borders, Cagle notes the apocalyptic implication in the similarity between 'patient zero' and 'ground zero,' the site of an atomic bomb blast that heralds the ultimate twentieth century apocalypse.

habit of locating blame always elsewhere.⁴² Through the character of Sir Richard Burton (John Robinson), Greyson also locates such stigmatizing narratives within colonial discourse, creating a postcolonial Canadian response to both historical and contemporary attempts to discipline the unruly presence of sexually dissident desire by locating it firmly elsewhere — whether in French-Canada or within Burton's 'Sotadic Zones.' The 'foreigner' thus becomes the villainous opposite to the local (American, hetero-assimilated even if homosexual, English-speaking) hero in what Cagle argues is the inevitable result of the history of AIDS, which "like virtually any other cultural trauma, is one that must be played out through a stock set of heroes and villains" (71).

The de-nomination of Gaetan Dugas, "lost in the processes of significations as the real person behind the constructed person was put under erasure" (Cagle 73) in the increasingly virulent obsession with blaming Patient Zero, is literalized in Greyson's film, where the character played by Normand Fauteux is named only 'Zero' — the absurdity of this is rubbed home when Richard Burton looks up Zero's mother in the phone book under "Mrs Zero" — and is both dead and invisible to everyone, including, significantly, the video camera which Burton uses to reconstruct Zero as the media construction of the medium through which AIDS was introduced into North America. That only Burton, working as chief taxidermist at the Toronto Museum of Natural Science after "an unfortunate encounter with the Fountain of Youth" in 1892, can see Zero not only reinforces the way in which the media stories make him unseeable by "those who know/knew him as someone other than a 'disease carrier'" (Cagle 74), it also functions as one of many sites of "tension between visibility and invisibility, sight and blindness" (Gittings, "Zero Patience" 32). George (Richardo Keens-Douglas), one of Zero's former lovers, is losing his sight due to cytomegalovirus (CMV), one of the diseases associated with AIDS, while the AIDS activists in the film inscribe their message about the pharmaceutical industry on a giant eye-chart with the slogan, "Blinded by greed."

References to sight and blindness thus abound in the film, often explicitly linked to

⁴² It is worth noting, in this context, that Canada was the first place the US government turned in assigning blame for the presence of terrorists within American borders after 9/11 — although it was subsequently shown that all of the people involved had obtained legal immigration status in the US. However, in terms of assigning 'otherness' to epidemic disease, little has changed in recent years: SARS was firmly associated with China and the current concern over bird flu is located in two 'foreign' populations, the Asian and the avian.

ideology, as in “Culture of Certainty,” where Burton serenades the museum director with the joys of empiricism and the possibility that science can teach the west all it needs to know about the disease: the lines “Let’s explore this foreign body / Learn the customs of its cells” not only construct AIDS as equivalent to the foreign tribes whose sexual secrets the diligent Burton has rooted out, but link the discovery of the disease to vision by the superimposition of Burton over a diagram of a dissected eye. Furthermore, the second chorus tells the viewer, “Let’s all be empiricists / Victors of the mind / Rulers of the stupid / Leaders of the blind / An empire of knowledge / Will conquer all the lot / A culture of certainty / will put us back on top.” An empire of knowledge, acquired through empiricism, not only functions to allow the imperial power to conquer AIDS by identifying its foreign nature — “If we knew where it came from / We could kill it off by force” — but also to reassert its own ‘natural’ dominance. The identification of Burton with Victorian empiricism and the British empire makes it clear whose dominance is being extolled, as does Burton’s immediately preceding conversation about the suitability of adding a ‘Patient Zero’ exhibit to his Hall of Contagion; when the director objects that, “A promiscuous irresponsible homosexual Canadian? It’s hardly a role model, Dick,” Burton slyly replies, “He’s *French-Canadian*,” thus implicating the English-Canadian with the American in the desire to produce the source of the disease as located within the other. As Richard Dellamora notes, “Anglophone culture is dominated by representations emanating from major institutions ... [which] operate along a heterosexual axis that relegates sexual and other dissidence to the sidelines. Moreover, in representing Canada, minority groups are always *already figured* before they are permitted access to ‘mainstream’ venues” (“John Greyson’s” 528; italics in original).

As the “foreign body” supposedly responsible for infecting the innocent bodies of white/anglophone North Americans, Zero becomes visible to the camera, as Gittings notes, only when his refusal of the media’s construction of him as a monster is certified by the ultimate proof, the testimony of the virus itself. Looking at his blood through a microscope (yet another visual reference), Zero converses with Miss HIV (Michael Callen), who tells him, in the midst of a Busby Berkeley style water ballet, that he is not the single person responsible for the AIDS epidemic in North America. More than this, however, the dialogue points out that Zero (Gaetan) is actually a hero who saved thousands, perhaps millions of lives, as his participation in the flawed 1982 cluster study convinced the gay community, if not the world, that safe sex was essential.

This is a very powerful reparative reading in the face of hegemonic and heteronormative insistence on the importance of discourses of blame, the production of hierarchical difference, and the dichotomy between ‘guilty’ and ‘innocent’ victims of the disease.⁴³ Rather than, as Shilts does, assenting to the dominant culture’s reading of HIV infection as the ‘natural’ and necessary consequence of promiscuous and ‘unnatural’ sexual practices, Greyson asserts head on that the queer community has confronted AIDS itself, with little hegemonic assistance, and that its victories are the result of efforts by its own members, individually and as groups. Greyson’s construction of a ‘Queer Nation’ is of a nation that refuses guilt, celebrates difference, protects its own, and rejects the “Acquired Dread of Sex” (the title of one of Greyson’s short films). *Zero Patience* substitutes queerly Canadian representations for both the hegemonic Canadian and American depictions of a queer nation that can supposedly only be Canadian when constituted from the other side of the 49th parallel — and that must therefore be a construction of the nation that heteronormative Canadians will refute, both through anti-Americanism and through producing queerness as irrelevant and minoritized. Dellamora argues that,

Looked at from within the binaries — of centre/margin; nation/region; city/small town or countryside — in terms of which Canadian representation is usually framed by organizations such as the CBC, *Zero Patience* can be construed as effacing constitutive difference. Yet, if one considers the meaning of being-queer in the anglophone hinterland, one perceives that Greyson’s insistence on a sociality that crosses lines of difference at home and abroad is an ethical demand characteristic of queer existence across Canada. (“John Greyson’s” 533)

Like Dempsey and Millan’s performance of the Lesbian National Parks and Services, like Fung’s *Dirty Laundry*, Findley’s *Can You See Me Yet?* and Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night*, Greyson’s *Zero Patience* brings questions of representation, visibility and the ability to speak for oneself to bear on the construction of the sexual citizen as the person whose sexuality is licit within the public sphere and whose culture can be understood as synonymous with public

⁴³ ‘Innocence’ has been assigned to hemophiliacs and their wives and children, people who acquired the virus through blood transfusions, and medical personnel infected through ‘needle stick’ incidents and the like; by contrast, guilt is ascribed to homosexuals, injection drug users, as well as to Haitians, Africans, and others, who are assumed to be susceptible by virtue of promiscuous and perverted (hetero)sexual practices. Two notable variants of this discourse are the assertion that Africans have sex with those infamous Green Monkeys (another now scientifically discredited but still publicly reputable source of HIV) as well as having a supposedly greater tendency than Euramericans to heterosexual anal sex, presumably as a form of birth control.

culture — a formulation that renders all non-hegemonic others, whether sexualized or racialized, virtually invisible except through those carefully controlled and authorized forms of multiculturalism that allow tokens of difference to be produced as a quaint and superficial visibility that is little hindrance to assimilation (after all, the German can take off the lederhosen, the Russian her kerchief) within the heteronormative hegemony of the nation state. As Dellamora argues in his discussion of *Zero Patience*,

Queer cultural practice necessarily engages the cultural contexts of Canadian identity in redefining what it means to be a citizen today. John Greyson ... acknowledges the centrality to anglophone existence of a popular imaginary that emanates from mass cultural production south of the border. In choosing the Victorian ethnographer Richard Burton to be the protagonist of the film, Greyson further acknowledges the interminable implication of anglophone Canadian identity in the expansion of the Empire 'on which the sun never sets.' *Some agents of Empire were queer actors....* By building his script around the figure of Burton, Greyson immediately marks anglophone Canadian identity in ethnic and sexual terms. (531; emphasis in original)

Dellamora identifies here, if by omission, one of the central tensions which Greyson mobilizes to deconstruct assumptions about identity, sexuality and disease, which is to say the distinction between the living and the dead. Is Burton, who should be dead but is not, the protagonist of the film? Or is its protagonist really Zero, who is dead but should not be?⁴⁴ Zero's very position in the film, as a ghost who is invisible to all but the one man, recapitulates this ontological uncertainty: the audience sees Zero, but does his visibility bring him to life? The moment itself resonates with the uncanniness of many AIDS memorials (and others), as the dead appear to be momentarily resurrected through the apparently living technologies of the home movie, the video, even the answering machine message, all of which, however ephemeral, speak to the creation of a queer archive and to the breakdown of the public/private divide circumscribing the positions of queer people and queer culture within the Canadian public sphere. Derrida, in fact, has notoriously connected this particular uncanniness with the deconstructive impetus of the virus itself, arguing that,

The virus is in part a parasite that destroys, that introduces disorder into communication. Even from the biological standpoint, this is what happens with

⁴⁴ In saying this, I reference both populist discourse around youth and the lesbian and gay community's mourning for those who died too young.

a virus; it derails a mechanism of the communicational type, its coding and decoding. On the other hand, it is something that is neither living nor nonliving; the virus is not a microbe. And if you follow these two threads, that of a parasite which disrupts destination from the communicative point of view — disrupting writing, inscription, and the coding and decoding of inscription — and which on the other hand is neither alive nor dead, you have the matrix of all that I have done since I began writing If we follow the intersection between AIDS and the computer virus as we now know it, we have the means to comprehend, not only from a theoretical point of view but also from the sociohistorical point of view, what amounts to a disruption of absolutely everything on the planet, including police agencies, commerce, the army, questions of strategy. All those things encounter the limits on their control, as well as the extraordinary force of those limits. It is as if all that I have been suggesting for the past twenty-five years is prescribed by the idea of *destinerrance* ... the supplement, the pharmakon, all the undecidables — it's the same thing. (Qtd. in Brunette 12)

Greyson's mobilization of the uncanniness that results from breaking down the supposedly secure borders between life and death introduces *destinerrance* into the dominant archive. Randy Shilts' message, reinforced and multiplied by the authority of the American media, creates a linear connection between infection and source, a straight-forward message of guilt and innocence, foreign-ness and homeliness. Greyson's revision of Shilts deconstructs all these certainties expected to "put us back on top," to restore Empire, political hegemony and the ideological certitude necessary to secure the heteronormative. Rather than HIV, Zero's visibility is the virus that Greyson injects into the very system that had erased him, not so much turning him into the catalyst who destroys the certainties of Empire represented by Burton, literally undermining Burton's painstakingly guarded heterosexual identity as well as his commitment to othering discourses of health and disease, as identifying him as the already visible and only discursively unseen catalyst of social change that allowed the gay community to create tactics potentially effective both against HIV and against the hegemonic desire that homosexuality should become invisible through the literal death of all homosexuals. Yet, at the same time, one of the most significant challenges to such forms of hegemonic heteronormativity lies not only in the viral, deconstructive insertion of the queer within the public sphere, but also with the assertion that queer culture *is* Canadian culture and that Canadian public culture is itself always already queer, because already impure, impious and 'infected' by difference.

CHAPTER FIVE

‘THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME’

1. ‘A Friend of Dorothy’

Setting: the “bullpen” of a Chicago police station. Civilian Aide Elaine Besbriss (Catherine Bruhier) is holding a bindle stitch and discussing fairy tales with Detectives Jack Huey (Tony Craig) and Louis Gardino (Daniel Kash). They’re talking about shoes and who makes them. Huey says it was “Glinda, the good witch in the *Wizard of Oz*,” but Gardino corrects him: “That was magic and those were slippers, not shoes.” Besbriss adds, dreamily, “I always wanted a pair of ruby slippers. I used to put on my mother’s high heels, stand in front of the mirror, click my heels together and say ‘there’s no place like home, there’s no place like home, there’s no place like home....’” Gardino nods fervently, “Me too.” There’s a split-second pause while the other two, man and woman, look at him with disbelief; then, realizing what he has revealed, he hastens to cover up: “I wanted to be the Tinman, I’d dress up as the Tinman. My sister would dress up as Dorothy.” When that doesn’t erase the sceptical gazes on the faces of his colleagues, he adds, “I almost never played with my sister.” Finally, he bustles off, blatantly pretending to hear someone calling him.

This scene takes place part way through “The Deal,” an episode of *Due South* that aired on CTV on March 30, 1995. The scene is played primarily for a comic effect which depends, quite obviously, on the viewer’s familiarity with certain assumptions about gender, sexuality and their relationship to *The Wizard of Oz*. Of course, it’s not simply that Judy Garland assumed iconic status for many of a certain generation of gay men, nor that the most famous song from the film, “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” has become something of a gay anthem. It’s also about our presuppositions about campiness, femininity, dreams, ‘fairy’ tales ... and especially about the idea that we can go home just by wishing to do so, an idea that has a particular resonance for gays and lesbians who have suffered for more than a century from the possibility that the revelation of their sexuality will result in their rejection from home, whether that is defined as the

family home, the marital home, or even the nation itself.¹ As Corey Creekmur and Alexander Doty note, in “There’s Something Queer Here,”

The Wizard of Oz is a story in which everyone lives in two very different worlds, and in which most of its characters live two very different lives, while its emotionally confused and oppressed teenaged heroine longs for a world in which her inner desires can be expressed freely and fully. Dorothy finds this world in a Technicolor land ‘over the rainbow’ inhabited by a sissy lion, an artificial man who cannot stop crying, and a butch-femme couple of witches. This is a reading of the film that sees the film’s fantastic excesses (color, costume, song, performance, etc.) as expressing the hidden lives of many of its most devoted viewers, who identified themselves as ‘friends of Dorothy.’ (3)

In revealing that he spent his childhood clicking pretend ruby slippers and reciting the mantra of home from *The Wizard of Oz*, Gardino reveals himself as not really quite manly, if not actually “a friend of Dorothy.” By failing to censor his speech according to the masculinist rules of police culture (at least as it is represented in television dramas) and the gender expectations of his colleagues, Gardino inadvertently risks identifying himself as someone who may be seen, at least potentially, as living “two very different lives,” the overt life of the heterosexual police detective and the closeted life of the queer cop. In associating himself with the campiness of the film, especially the ruby slippers and the wistful desire for home, he is thus also associating himself, in the eyes of a public educated in the semiotics of pop culture, with a certain kind of effeminacy as well as with homosexuality itself. Indeed, Moe Meyer argues that this is precisely the function of camp: “the production of queer social visibility” (5). In the face of heteronormative insistence that only sexual acts are proof of sexual identity, camp insists on queer visibility as a social and cultural, not just a sexual, performative.² As Edelman argues,

¹ Of course, the most famous example of a gay man who lost his home (and his freedom) for his sexuality is almost certainly Oscar Wilde, who lost not only his family home but was effectively exiled from his nation upon his release from Reading Gaol. Similarly, E.M. Forster has the American hypnotist tell Maurice that a man of his kind would be best leaving England and going into self-imposed exile on the continent. Of course, Maurice refuses to do so ... but then again Forster refused to allow *Maurice* to be published until after his death.

² The desire to make homosexuality visible only as sex is common to both popular culture and academic criticism alike. Teaching Wayson Choy’s *The Jade Peony*, the most common complaint from students was that they could not see the middle child, Jung, as gay, although they understood that he was meant to be, because Choy did not portray him, at the age of twelve or thirteen, either as engaging in sexual acts with other males or as self-identifying as gay.

“homosexuality comes to signify the potential permeability of every sexual signifier — and, by extension, of every signifier as such — by an ‘alien’ signification. Once sexuality may be read and interpreted in light of homosexuality, all sexuality is subject to a hermeneutics of suspicion” (“Homographesis” 7). Camp produces such significations as eminently visible, especially when it is the apparent, which is to say overt, sexuality of the signifier itself that is in question: when a man wants to wear Dorothy’s ruby slippers, the signifier is ‘alien’ to the heteronormative, but not in itself sexual. That is, the sign of the man’s desire for the ruby slippers does not overtly signify sexual relations between two men, but it can and, to a large extent, must “be read and interpreted in light of homosexuality.”

The *Wizard of Oz* is often regarded in a proprietary fashion by LGBT people, especially gay men, but it is also associated, through Judy Garland’s death, with the Stonewall riots, which in turn are understood in popular histories of the LGBT community to have initiated the gay liberation movement. Terry Goldie argues that this popular history, despite its reference to an American event that was influential primarily for the situation of US homosexuals (it took place in 1969, the same year that Trudeau introduced the bill that decriminalized homosexuality in Canada), situates Stonewall as an iconic moment for gay men and lesbians throughout North America (“Queer Nation?” 19). Our retrospective attempts to create a narratively coherent queer history tend toward precisely this sort of valorization of what seem, looking back, to be critical moments for social change.³ Thus the association between Stonewall and Judy Garland’s death speaks as strongly to Canadian gay men, particularly those of a certain generation, as it does to gays in the US (which is not to say that it carries exactly the same meaning for Canadians as for Americans, or indeed for all LGBT Americans). Canadian writer Alan Conter notes in an interview with Brent Bambury on the popularity of Judy Garland and *The Wizard of Oz* in the gay community in Canada that this historical confluence is invariably seen in LGBT popular

³ Even when one looks at the history of gay and lesbian organizing in the US, the image of Stonewall tends to elide an earlier, somewhat less sexy, history of the growth of activist movements such as the Association for Social Knowledge (Canada’s earliest known homophile association) and the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis in the US. In the early seventies, Canadian homophile organizations were largely replaced by more rights-focussed groups, such as the Gay Alliance Toward Equality (GATE) and the Front de libération homosexuel (FLH).

discourse as more than a coincidence:

The day that the riot started at Stonewall was the day of Judy Garland's funeral. In the upper east side of Manhattan outside the funeral home there were 20,000 people on a hot, sweltering day, waiting for the funeral procession [to] go by. Legend has it that the people were so upset by the death of their heroine, they became defiant and they weren't going to be pushed around by the cops any longer. Push came to shove and then the riot started.

In the same CBC program, another Canadian writer and radio personality, Bill Richardson, makes the point that one of the film's attractions for gay men can be summed up in the moment when Dorothy's world is transformed from a bleak Kansas farmhouse to the rainbow colours of Oz:

The Wizard of Oz is largely a movie about leaving the black and white behind. It's about living your life in technicolour, the remarkable shift that happens when she leaves Kansas and goes to Oz. There's a lot of campiness that's become ... a part of the gay community (Bambury)

The film's vision of a world that is not colourless, drab or mundane is certainly part of its appeal, especially to young gay men bent on escaping the strictures of heteronormative suburban existence in the fifties and sixties. Thus, the film's movement from black and white to technicolour, from an unaccepting, harsh orphanhood to a world of adventure and friendship, appears to resonate with the still common movement of LGBT people from equally unaccepting familial and educational environments to the glitter, glamour and full-on colourfulness of a gay community popularized by the media's focus on drag queens, Pride marches, and dance clubs. Think of media coverage of Toronto's Lesbian and Gay Pride March, Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, or even the opening credits of *Queer as Folk* (US), which re-presents both straight and gay stereotypes of the urban gay 'lifestyle.'

However, Richardson also makes note, as do Creekmur and Doty, that the film has a significant appeal to those searching for different ways to understand questions of gender identity, especially those gay men accused, as all gay men traditionally have been in heteronormative discourse, of a failure of masculinity. As Joseph Bristow remarks in *Sexuality*, one "of the myths that has circulated most widely about lesbians and gay men is that both sexual identities involve the inversion of assumed gender norms — so that the butch lesbian and the effeminate gay man have often been the recognizable stereotypes that serve to caricature and thus condemn styles

of homosexual dissidence” (22). For the ‘sissy’ boy who identifies with the cowardly lion or the emotionally stifled youth looking for the freedom to express what he believes are his own true feelings, the characters in the film have a powerful resonance. Richardson claims that “[t]he Scarecrow, the Tinman and the Lion are looking for qualities that are quintessentially masculine” (Bambury). However, what is perhaps most appealing to an LGBT viewer is that these qualities are defined in the film as being available, through the magic of Oz, to those who feel excluded from them in the mundane world of the film’s audience — an availability which potentially takes in those who seem to be excluded by reason of their sexuality or their gender.⁴ Looking at the multiplicity of resonances for gay men in *The Wizard of Oz*, Richardson concludes that “[t]here are all kinds of reasons, but I’ll be hard-pressed to find one reason why the movie has become so ‘cultish’ and why Judy Garland appealed and continues to appeal to a gay audience” (Bambury).

In making overt the association between gender (“I almost never played with my sister,” as well as those damning ruby slippers) and an attraction to *The Wizard of Oz*, this episode of *Due South* presupposes that a majority of its audience will be fluent in reading precisely those cultural signs that it draws upon to create the scene and will thus understand the humour that is supposed to be found in the incommensurability between Gardino’s expected masculinity, as a police officer, and his revelation of childhood gender impropriety. Obviously, since the show is aimed, in general, at a presumptively heterosexual audience, these are not predominantly subcultural discourses that are being invoked here, but rather ideas about gender and its relationship to sexuality that already circulate widely within western cultures.⁵ It is possible, then, to argue that this scene is ironically duplicitous: on the one hand, it elicits a particular response in the audience that laughs at the gender confusion invoked by Gardino’s confession and whose recognition of the gender codes conjured in the names of Dorothy and Oz is thus a recognition

⁴ Judith Halberstam’s book, *Female Masculinity*, is a useful reminder that the desire for and expression of masculinity is not necessarily limited to those who are biologically male.

⁵ The demographics of television production and marketing do not, however, elide the pleasure cited by the creators and producers of *Due South* in discovering that the show appealed to a wide variety of different audiences, from the religious right to the urban and the gay. Clearly the figure of the Mountie functions within the show as a type of floating signifier whose meaning cannot be fully stabilized by the reading(s) of any particular audience.

of the other; this audience's laughter is provoked by finding someone othered whom they had not expected to be in that position. On the other hand, the scene also signifies in such a way that a queer audience can indulge in another sort of recognition, one that invokes rueful laughter through an identification with someone who has, at least momentarily, been interpellated as a 'friend of Dorothy,' one of 'us.'

2. Queer Eye for the (Straight) Family

I have begun this concluding chapter with a cultural example that is quite clearly Canadian, if much less clearly queer, because it is a well-known exemplar that speaks to the resonances of certain conventions of 'reading' the signs of gender and sexuality in both the queer community/s and the larger heteronormative culture in Canada. That *Due South* is able, in a matter of seconds, to identify a quite masculine-appearing police detective, whose previous appearances on the show have been unremarkable, as potentially gay and not quite as masculine as he seems, articulates the power of these conventions to interpellate individuals as 'texts' which may be read at will by the viewers. It doesn't even matter if a certain percentage of viewers fail to make these connections; the point is that they are everywhere available to be brought to bear on the otherwise mute body of the individual, whose words, gestures, and very ways of being are now presumed, as Foucault has argued in the introduction to *Herculine Barbin*, to speak the 'truth' about his nature — a nature which is inevitably both gendered and sexualized. This episode of *Due South* thus works by invoking precisely those discourses of visibility, recognition, and truth that have helped to shape gay and lesbian life in the twentieth century. The trope of the 'open secret'; the supposedly 'coded' revelation in the ever recognizable symbols of the *Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy, her ruby slippers, "Over the Rainbow," and indeed the actress, Judy Garland, herself; and the paradoxical belief that queerness is both written on the body and irredeemably visible yet at the same time utterly invisible, able to 'pass' without detection into the supposedly secure confines of the modern nuclear family's happily heterosexual home⁶ — all of these underwrite the ways in which queerness has not only been represented in twentieth century culture, but also the lived experiences, however diverse in terms of gender, race, class, place,

⁶ See my discussion of Edelman's "Tea and Sympathy" in Chapter Four.

education, etc., of lesbians and gay men everywhere. It goes almost without saying that one of the strategies of lesbian and gay liberation which has had some success, however incomplete, has been to turn vilifying images and belittling tropes on their heads: 'queer' has come to have a real and positive meaning for many, although certainly not all, LGBT people, while 'a friend of Dorothy,' that campy 1950s euphemism for queerness that is so neatly invoked, yet unspoken, in "The Deal," has been reappropriated as, among other things, the name of a Vancouver store that specializes in queer pride items.

Nevertheless, these strategies for minoritizing LGBT people, through marking them as potentially legible and thus identifiable by cultural convention, continue to have a considerable, if ambivalent and inconsistent, force for the lives of lesbigay individuals. What may seem old-fashioned, humorous, camp or retro in the 'safe' space of the contemporary urban LGBT communities of Toronto, Vancouver or Montréal, may seem very real and dangerous in the much less safe spaces of the suburban tract house, the subsidized housing project, the small rural town, or even the large urban areas outside whatever geographic locale comes to be identified with the gay 'community.' "There's no place like home" may take on quite a different meaning to anyone for whom 'home' isn't necessarily a place of security and comfort. The dangers of being brought up in a home in which one is abused, neglected or even thrown out are quite obviously not limited to gays and lesbians, yet the systemic endangerment of a sense of home *is* specific to queer people when it is linked specifically to issues of sexuality: no-one is ever thrown out of the parental home for being heterosexual *per se*, although they may be banished for specific expressions of heterosexual behaviour.⁷

The idea of home, on the one hand, serves metonymically as a way to speak of our larger group affiliations, with the tribe, the ethnic group, the culture, the nation, and, on the other hand, to serve as an alias or equivalence for such 'traditional' but contested concepts as childhood and

⁷ It seems rather obvious that parents who reject, say, a pregnant teenager don't do so because they would prefer her to be lesbian, but because they don't wish her heterosexuality to be expressed as sexual activity while she's an adolescent or before marriage. Parents who reject gay or lesbian children don't do so because they wish them to defer homosexual activity, but because they will only accept heterosexuality in their children.

family.⁸ In *No Place Like Home: Relationships and Family Life among Lesbians and Gay Men* (1999), sociologist Christopher Carrington contends that family is not simply a set of prescribed kinship relations, but rather something that people ‘do.’ Noting the argument by Kristi Hamrick of the right-wing Family Research Council in the US that it is “inappropriate for a senator to cheapen the meaning of family by saying family is a ‘fill in the blank’” (Qtd. in Carrington 1), Carrington argues that

The notion that family cannot consist of a ‘fill in the blank’ — that is, person(s) of one’s choosing — contributes to concealing the labors that actually produce and sustain a family, any family. Emphasizing formal roles, a common tendency of family politics, family policy, and family law, detracts from the basic reality that various forms of work dwell at the heart of family life. (6)

Such a formulation allows Carrington to understand family as the product of affiliation and labour, rather than as the ‘natural’ result of narrowly defined forms of ‘biological’ kinship; at the same time, it emphasizes affective relations, negotiation, choice and diversity over ideological prescriptions. Indeed, mobilizing philosophy, psychoanalysis and queer theory to examine the topic of kinship and the argument that culture originates from the hypostatized child’s own beginning in the heterosexual couple, Judith Butler reaches a similar conclusion:

Pierre Clastres made this point most polemically several years ago in the French context, arguing that it is not possible to treat the rules of kinship as supplying the rules of intelligibility for any society and that culture is not a self-standing notion but must be regarded as imbued by power relations ... that are not reducible to rules.... [I]f one were to elaborate on this point, the task would be to take up David Schneider’s suggestion that kinship is a kind of *doing*, one that does not reflect a prior structure but which can only be understood as an enacted practice. This would help us, I believe, move away from the situation in which a hypostatized structure of relations lurks behind any social arrangement and permit us to consider how modes of patterned and performative doing bring kinship categories into operation and become the means by which they undergo transformation and displacement.... The postulate of founding heterosexuality must also be read as part of the operation of power — and I would add fantasy — such that we can begin to ask how the invocation of such a foundation works in the building of a certain fantasy of state and nation. (“Is Kinship” 34)

In articulating the idea that kinship is something people do rather than a structured set of

⁸ As these are central concepts in *The Wizard of Oz*, it is hardly surprising that its linkage of childhood, family and home has made it a cultural icon for much of the LGBT community.

biological bonds, critics of the family are able to break that impacted social structure loose from its inscription as being at once the locus of sexual difference, the origin of culture and the metonymic structure of the nation state. Such a rethinking of kinship resonates with Sedgwick's attempt to keep "meanings and institutions ... at loose ends with each other" ("Queer" 6). Looking back over her own practice, Sedgwick says,

I see it's been a ruling intuition for me that the most productive strategy (intellectually, emotionally) might be, whenever possible, to *disarticulate* them from one another, to *disengage* them — the bonds of blood, of law, of habitation, of privacy, of companionship and succor — from the lockstep of their unanimity in the system called 'family.' ("Queer" 6)

As I argued in the previous chapter, the attempt to disarticulate the meanings kept in close order through the rules of kinship, rules which produce some relationships as legitimate by defining other types of filiation as illegitimate, is central to many queer responses to questions of marriage, family and home — responses which often look for ways to refuse the requirement for what Clarke calls subjunction. Indeed, Butler also warns that legitimation itself can be an "ambivalent gift":

The sphere of legitimate intimate alliance is established through producing and intensifying regions of illegitimacy. There is, however, a more fundamental occlusion at work here. We misunderstand the sexual field if we consider that the legitimate and the illegitimate appear to exhaust its immanent possibilities. There is, thus, outside the struggle between the legitimate and the illegitimate — which is one that has as its goal the conversion of the illegitimate into the legitimate — a field that is less thinkable, one not figured in light of its ultimate convertibility into legitimacy. ("Is Kinship" 16)

Butler argues that such a field would "not have legitimacy as its point of reference, its ultimate desire" (16), but that its existence, as yet to be named, as yet to be thought through, more potential than hypostatized, is one where, in Sedgwick's terms, things that are supposed to line up do not do so. Butler cautions that, in accepting the terms of the 'gay marriage' debate, the queer home, the queer family and queer kinship become impossible to articulate other than through the legitimating framework of heteronormative kinship and the state:

...once we enter that framework, we are to some degree defined by its terms, which means that we are as defined by those terms when we seek to establish ourselves within the boundaries of normality as we are when we assume the impermeability of those boundaries and position ourselves as its permanent

outside.... If we engage the terms that these debates supply, then we ratify the frame at the moment in which we take our stand. And this signals a certain paralysis in the face of exercising power to change the terms by which such topics are rendered thinkable. Indeed, a more radical social transformation is precisely at stake when we refuse, for instance, to allow kinship to become reducible to 'family,' or when we refuse to allow the field of sexuality to become gauged against the marriage form. ("Is Kinship" 39)

Thus, Carrington's invocation of kinship as a form of doing, rather than as a stable biologically-based ontological state, marks an important refusal of both pathologizing discourses (those which claim, for example, that LGBT people 'obviously' cannot have or raise children) and normalizing ones (those which insist that there is nothing 'queer' about being lesbian or gay). LGBT relationships, even those dyadic forms that appear closest to sanctioned heterosexual coupledness, traverse a wide ground of possibility and are affected by both assumptions about and experiences of racial, ethnic and class difference, as well as sexuality and gender. Carrington notes the racial, ethnic and class diversity of the participants in his study and concludes that

The influence of racial and ethnic identities upon domesticity eludes parsimonious analysis. Such identity influences some aspects of domesticity in some families but not in others. Understandings of who constitutes a family are a case in point. Notions of extended or 'chosen' kin, and the stereotype that some racial/cultural groups value family more because they maintain large, extended families, impact how some lesbian-gay family members portray their family life, but not necessarily the kind of family life they lead Lesbian family life takes many forms. (26)

By situating his approach to LGBT families in notions of domesticity — that is, literally, the work needed to create a *domus*, or home, Carrington, like Butler and Sedgwick, seeks to avoid the reduction of home to a narrative of biological/patriarchal origins. Home does not have to be where you're from, according to Carrington's interlocutors; home can be where you're at, a formulation that is necessarily reminiscent of Brydon's attempt to reformulate a "new set of questions" about the nature of Canadian literature and its relationship to Canadian identity ("It's Time"). Part of the work of creating a home can thus, in the larger sense — and *pace* Carrington's sociological approach — reside in the labour of creating literary and artistic works. As Richard Rorty argues,

The process of coming to see other human beings as 'one of us' rather than as 'them' is a matter of detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like and of redescription of what we ourselves are like. This is a task not for theory but

for genres such as ethnography, the journalist's report, the comic book, the docudrama, and, especially, the novel.... That is why the novel, the movie, and the TV program have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress. (xvi)

Rorty sees cultural production, particularly in genres which can be understood as primarily descriptive, as providing the necessary imaginative detail to allow us to redescribe ourselves and our relations to others and thus to form relationships that allow, however contingently, for possibilities of solidarity. Similarly, when queer writers and artists describe the LGBT subject's relationship to 'home,' they are not merely reinscribing a discourse of family origins and partriarchal kinship structures, but are rather interrogating, re-imagining and even re-inventing the possibilities for 'family' and for 'home' that become visible through forms of queer solidarity (which includes solidarity with non-heteronormative heterosexuals). Rorty thus imagines solidarity as potentially constructing, through literature and other forms of descriptive culture, precisely those new and unexpected forms of alliances that "Michel Foucault ... called 'as yet unforeseen kinds of relationships' — which can begin to rework what we mean by love, what we mean by family, what we mean by friendship" (Bell and Binnie 140). In their work on queer citizenship, David Bell and Jon Binnie align this reimagining and reinvention of affectional relationships with the problems of sexual citizenship, arguing that by thinking through Foucault's call to imagine "unforeseen kinds of relationships," "we might be able to rethink from here what we mean by citizenship; or, perhaps, what we mean by *as yet unforeseen kinds of citizenship*" (Bell and Binnie 140).

Family, friendship, home, kinship, citizenship and nation are thus all concepts imbricated with each other within the broad arena of queer relationships to the public sphere and its habitual disciplinary divisions between public and private. Because of its fraught significance in gay and lesbian lives, 'home' is thus a concept that underlies much of the cultural production of queer people in Canada, but not necessarily in ways that are always obvious to a heterosexual audience that has not had to face and is thus not generally conscious of the particular issues facing LGBT family and kinship structures. Take Timothy Findley's work for example; the concept of the loss of and search for home runs through his entire oeuvre, from Hooker's sense of alienation from the family home in *The Last of the Crazy People* to the loss of home and all that home means

through war in *The Wars*, *Famous Last Words*, and *The Telling of Lies*, to the nearly universal and completely literal loss of home for the many living creatures whose home is drowned in the deluge in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*. *Spadework*, Findley's last novel, is very much about home as a concept, as both Jane and Griff, the married, supposedly heteronormative, couple at the centre of the story, face the potential loss of their home, while the novel as a whole is Findley's encomium to his own newly found sense of home in Stratford.⁹ Although the novel deals with Griff's willingness to risk family and home for his ambitions as an actor, it is in Jane's desire to buy a house for her family that we see the search for home most clearly realized in the novel. However, it is also clear that Griff will never find a real home until he manages to grow up. The argument over the purchase of the house is also an argument over money and thus over gender. Jane has inherited money, while Griff grew up in relative poverty. When Jane insists that they can afford to purchase a house, which she equates with purchasing both responsibility and stability, Griff argues that "I don't want to swing anything, Jane-o. I want to do it with absolute confidence. When the time is right. And the time will only be right when my salary matches your income" (26). In the face of Jane's argument that her money is their money, Griff asserts that, "It's just the way I grew up. A man pays his own way. His own way — and his children's . . ." (27). Jane musters a final argument about needing a place to be centred, a place to return to when one fails, arguing that, "You always had me to come back to. Yes? *I am your home*. Don't you know that? . . . But if you want me to be here, *need* me to be here — and you do — there has to be a *here* for me to be. When Griff responds by calling the house a trap, Jane is understandably devastated: "Was he saying *she* was a trap? The marriage? Will — Mercy — Rudyard — all their beautiful times together . . .? *A trap?*" (29). For Jane, however, the house marks not just stability and security, but freedom from the impacted familial space of Southern plantation society:

And if you owned your own house — had taken up residence elsewhere — at whatever distance you could achieve — then you were safe. No more clawing fingers — no more cloying demands. Freedom. Freedom from the dead weight of the past. (31)

⁹ Findley wrote a great deal about the home he shared for many years with his partner, William Whitehead, in Cannington, Ontario, including monthly columns about life at Stone Orchard that were published in *Harrowsmith* magazine.

While Griff manages, with difficulty, to at least begin to overcome his immaturity by submitting to another man's desires (and perhaps by admitting his own), thus surmounting his earlier identification with the phallic masculinity that Terry Goldie has identified as Findley's invariable target ("Canadian Homosexual"), Jonathan, who, despite being one of only two overtly gay characters in the novel, is as phallically masculine as the more heterosexual Griff, is punished by the irrevocable loss, through the death of his young adult son, of the family he has supposedly already lost through his homosexuality. Griff and Jonathan are very much alike, although neither quite recognizes the extent or quality of their similarities. Both are ambitious, weak men who are both attracted and attached to the supposed potency of masculinity, Griff through his insistence on sexual difference and resulting gender roles and Jonathan through his obsession with power and control. The relationship with Griff is, ironically, as pedagogical for Jonathan, who begins to understand that what he has done, no matter how carefully rationalized, is wrong, as it is for Griff. While Griff abandons his home until he learns to be more of a human being than a man, Jonathan is metaphorically homeless throughout the novel, a homelessness symbolized by his appearance only in the theatre, in restaurants and in hotel rooms; he has, through his own choice of a predatory masculinity, forsaken any place of his own, yet he cannot escape the entanglements of family and home, however much they lie in his past, or the grief of loss. All of this is perhaps most eloquently summarized not in Findley's words, but in one of the epigraphs from W.H. Auden:

For who is ever quite without his landscape,
 The straggling village street, the house in trees,
 All near the church, or else the gloomy town house,
 The one with the Corinthian pillars, or
 The tiny workmanlike flat; in any case
 A home, the centre where the three or four things
 That can happen to a man do happen?

(*Detective Story*, qtd. in *Spadework* vii)

The abandonment of one's wife and child is not supposed to be amongst the things that can happen to a man, although it does, both to men identified as straight and those who are or come to be identified as gay. Indeed, a great deal of the social apparatus is geared toward creating, supporting and preserving procreative heterosexual relationships, relationships which are grounded in the triad of man, woman, child. The equation of home with childhood and the

problematic assumption that the origin of the child in the heterosexual couple metonymizes the origin of both culture and the nation is an issue that Findley also returns to, in a number of ways, in many of his works. Like Hooker, Will lives in a world he can't quite grasp; he is both angered and mystified by his father's sudden disappearance, first emotionally and then physically, from the family home; he is also angered by his mother's inability to deal with Griff's absence and her own disappearing act in the twin consolations of alcohol and sex — even if the sexual is mostly enacted in her art, rather than in actual acts. Unlike *The Last of the Crazy People*, Will's family eventually reunites, when his father returns to the rented house and asks, "May I come home?" and finally accepts that Jane will purchase that house — that home — with money given her by her mother in an act of tentative reconciliation between Jane and her past. The transformations that Griff has undergone are marked by the shift from announcement — the patriarchal "honey, I'm home" that marks so many visions of family, childhood and home from the fifties and sixties — to a request for permission: "May I come home?" Even for those brought up with the grammatical niceties of "can" and "may," the question still invokes both of the conversational usages: do I have permission to, am I able to? Griff's ability to come home is dependent upon both what he has learned from Jonathan about how to be a man¹⁰ and upon Jane's and Will's willingness to allow his return. For Will, without an adult understanding of the issues involved, that willingness has to be based on trust, on his ability to trust again, out of innocence rather than knowledge.

Jane's desire for a home that is *away*, separate from past, childhood and family of origin, is one that is familiar to many LGBT people as part of a search for identity and belonging, however these may be understood. Because *Spadework* functions as the happier redaction of *Last of the Crazy People*, as I discussed in the second chapter, both novels have strong elements of Southern Gothic. Thus Jane's desire to purchase and make a home is directly linked to the complexities of queer relationships to home through generic convention and audience expectation; the reader, especially the queer reader, is invited to identify with Jane rather than with Griff or Jonathan, just as the queer audience member has already supposedly identified with

¹⁰ The very suggestion that a predominantly heterosexual man might be able to learn anything about masculinity from a queer one — other than dress sense and home decorating tips, that is — is itself intrinsically queer.

the characters played by the likes of Elizabeth Taylor (Maggie, in the 1958 film version of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*), Vivien Leigh and Judy Garland. Furthermore, Findley makes explicit that he expects a subtextual reading of his novel in the early scene where Jonathan, Griff and Zöe discuss the two young actors' roles as Hero and Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Jonathan says, "This morning, what I want to talk about specifically is subtext What is *not* written, but implicitly there — the things not said that nonetheless have immense importance to your understanding of how to portray your people — and how we see them ..." (17). The reader is thus already primed to read subtextually and to make the kinds of linkages necessary for a subtextual reading to emerge when, slightly later, the novel goes back to the question of Jane's desire to repudiate her childhood and mark her escape by buying her own house. Thinking of Griff's denunciation of home ownership as a trap, Jane thinks:

It was all too reminiscent of her own escape from the trap of her own childhood — her money — her predestined future as the wife of another plantation owner — a mere repetition of her mother's docile hand being placed, palm down, inside her father's — and the consequential torrent of unwanted babies, unwanted social engagements and unwanted privileges.... *Oh, God* — how she hated it all and wanted only to escape. North. Northward. As far away as a person could get from cloying, possessive voices and clawing, possessive fingers — *mine, mine, mine*, her parents had said of their children — their land and their place in the hierarchy. That was when Aura Lee Terry had turned her back, clicked the heels of her ruby-red slippers and become *plain Jane*. (30-31)

Not surprisingly, given the context (that whisper reminding the reader that "there's no place like home"), the transformation enacted by the clicking of Aura Lee's ruby heels appears as both a distancing from and a reclamation of home. As "plain Jane," Jane comes home, or starts to, but only by refusing to name her childhood origins as home. The queerness of this is made apparent in many ways, not least in the connections made between Jane's repudiation of childhood, *The Wizard of Oz*, and the reminder to read subtextually. Similarly, in the context of queer life-writing, Yaakov Perry argues that

The choice of the figurative language of home as a narrative device is itself queer, however, given that coming-out narratives are often as much the story of coming out of *home* as they are of coming out of the *closet*. 'Becoming' characteristically takes place outside of the stonewalled ancestral house, on the road, 'on the way to somewhere else'.... Coming-out narratives, in other

words, register a crisis of domesticity, a rethinking of the 'in' that articulates a certain uncanniness — that is, home's de-familiarization. Resisting the homophobia that goes with home's territory, critiquing the oppressive homes the writers have grown up in and which have turned them into home-phobes (Anzaldúa 20), the architecture of queer life-writing nevertheless marks a hunger for home. (193)

This paradoxical movement between disavowal and desire underwrites much of the tension surrounding the notion of home in queer cultural production. However, not all queer work manifests as a simplistic narrative desire either to forget and move away from or to replace and/or return to the childhood home. Elspeth Probyn cautions that "[i]mages of childhood, from childhood, pull us back to a space that cannot be revisited; they throw us into a present becoming, profoundly disturbing any chronological ordering of life and being.... In this way, childhood may take on its full, visible emptiness — a void that compels other uses of childhood than ones which stake its meaning as originary" (103).

3. 'This is Home, Is It?'

When nobody looks funny to you any more, you are at home.

Jane Rule, *A Hot-Eyed Moderate*

The family of origin, its exemplary heterosexuality, its foundational position in culture, all suggest that these origin stories are enormously powerful in the discursive creation of a supposedly coherent social narrative. One of the ways in which queer cultural production responds to such narratives is to confront them head-on, which is precisely what Jane Rule does in *Memory Board* (1987). The protagonist of Rule's *Memory Board*, David Crown, is a man who has managed not to be gay or, perhaps more accurately, bisexual. In a reversal of the 'normal,' it is David who stays home from WWII to be married, while his lesbian twin sister, Diana, goes off to England to the war. When Diana comes home to take up her medical practice with her life partner, Connie, in tow, brother David is already ensconced in a quintessentially heteronormative middle class Canadian life; he not only has the wife and the burgeoning family, but what has to be the most bourgeois-Canadian of all jobs — he's a news announcer for CBC radio. David's relationship to life is essentially both passive and voyeuristic. He sits in his basement studio reading aloud the horrors of a world almost entirely outside his own experience;

in his family life, his priority seems to be the avoidance of conflict and he lives life according to his wife's mandate, even to the extent of cutting off relations with his twin sister, whose lesbianism his wife suspects and despises. *Memory Board* takes place in the era of what might be called David's emancipation, the era after his wife dies when he starts to come to terms with his own past and particularly with those parts of his past — and his present and future — that are represented by his sister Diana.

When David finally makes the attempt to reconcile with Diana, now retired from a lifetime as a successful Vancouver gynecologist and obstetrician, he finds that her partner, Constance, is suffering from memory loss. Diana and Constance each represent one potential facet of aging — Diana, while mentally acute, suffers terribly from arthritis whereas Constance, who is physically spry, has Alzheimer's disease as a result of ECT treatments for manic depression that was, in its turn, brought on by being buried alive in the rubble of a bombed building during the war. David himself, while fitter than Diana, has both arthritis and hearing loss. In *Memory Board* the process of aging, with its consequent but highly variable disabilities, plays a central role in the characters' lives. It is against this backdrop that the psychological drama of reconciliation is carried out, a reconciliation that must by necessity include not only David, but his daughters, who did not know they had an aunt, and his grand-children.

David's attempt to recover his twin is inevitably a process of coming out: David must come out to the rest of his family as the brother of a gay sister, as he drags Diana out of the closet in which he had allowed his wife to ensconce her and back into the metaphorical bosom of his family. In the process of this coming out, David's grandson introduces his friend Richard to Diana — because Richard is ill and needs medical advice he can't trust his family's physician to give. At this point, Diana is forced to deal with the living face of AIDS and is dragged willy-nilly toward a gay politics that she has previously refused to embrace. On this level, the novel is largely a work of hope, a work in which a number of human beings, related by birth, love, friendship or accident are relatively, if not universally, successful in building positive relationships amongst themselves. It is at the same time, however, a work of supreme irony. It is Diana, the lesbian, who is sure of her sexual identity at a time when her brother remains deeply malleable; throughout the novel, David's fascination with gay identity is both voyeuristic and regretful. His musings on the relationship he didn't have, the one with a man, are part and parcel of his journey

away from life under his wife's thumb, not as a rejection of heterosexuality *per se*, but as a rejection specifically of Patricia's rigid adherence to hegemonic norms of racism, sexism and homophobia. Marilyn Schuster argues that Rule marks David's movement away from his wife's ideologies in part through his lingering desire to act; in the "curious episode" in which David impersonates a beggar, Schuster sees Rule as introducing "the idea of a performative self" which "opens up a possibility for moving beyond the bondage of the gender system that defines David and confines the lives of his two daughters. The originality of *Memory Board* is the staging of (hetero)masculinity as a marked category" (*Passionate* 178). Yet, although David is "especially sensitive to Diana's indifference to convention when he considers the compromises of his own life" (*Passionate* 178), it is he who, in search of a personal identity as something other than Patricia's husband, stumbles onto gay politics, largely in the form of *The Body Politic*. And it is David who, inadvertently, puts Diana on the path which may potentially answer the question she asks: what do the politics of men who want to have sex in public places have to do with me?

The question of family and home lies at the centre of *Memory Board*, along with the question of how we remember and memorialize that which is most important to us in the face of the inevitability of aging and death. David is surrounded by family. He lives with his younger daughter, her husband and their three children and he frequently visits his older daughter, her husband and their two adolescent sons. He is haunted by the ghost of his very proper, very opinionated wife. And he has ties, acknowledged only secretly for forty years on their mutual birthday, to his twin sister and her partner. The question the novel raises, however, is the extent to which these families are equivalent. Rule may call herself a "hot-eyed moderate" in the title of her collection of essays, but her opinions on marriage and family are more radical than moderate in this decade of assimilationist LGBT politics. Rule has spoken out against gay marriage, refused to apply for survivor benefits following the death of her long-time partner, Helen Sonthoff, and called for all Canadians to lie on the 2001 census, which asked, for the first time ever, about common law same-sex relationships. Rule wanted everyone, queer or straight, both or neither, to declare themselves single and to leave blank the question about same-sex relations, arguing that "the census question is another opportunity to let the government define private relationships, something which she has always fought" ("Census"). In an interview about the census question, Rule said that, "What we're doing is we're saying, 'Oh look, the

heterosexuals get this, and that's more than we get,' instead of looking at it as a circumstance where the government — or the employer — is dictating to us things that are private to us and having nothing to do with them at all" ("Census"). It is thus not surprising that Diana and Constance vehemently refute any comparison of their relationship to marriage. When David asks Constance why she's so "set against marriage when [she has] been virtually married for forty years," Constance's reply ironizes not only the idea of marriage but her own memory problems: "I have? ... Oh, surely not. To whom?" (257). Marriage, Rule says, "was designed as a religious tool to keep women and children the property of men, and rules about common-law marriage were intended to force irresponsible men to take care of the women and children they live with" ("Love"). Calling for a wider recognition of the possibilities for human relationships and for their privatization, Rule creates in *Memory Board* a coupling between two women that is not monogamous and that even manages to function as a triad, rather than a dyad, for a period of time, a period when Constance's lover Jill moves in with her and Diana. That the three of them are not able to sustain the relationship has more to do with the recurrence of Constance's long-standing health problems from being buried alive during the Blitz than it does with issues of jealousy and sexual possessiveness. The failure of the triad is a question of health and character, not an exemplar of the superior morality of monogamous coupledness. Indeed, Constance suggests that there is nothing particularly moral in procreative heteronormativity:

Long before the rhetoric of women's liberation, Constance took the view that linking sexuality with procreation was as misused a piece of information as the splitting of the atom. In the midst of a population explosion, peaceful uses of sexuality should surely finally be considered. (84)

David's search for the family he lost — ironically — through marriage also works in terms of the creation of new and less rigidly-defined family structures, as he moves out of the family home and joins Diana and Constance in their house. It is a house beset with safeguards, because Constance's memory loss makes it impossible for her to leave without a companion — yet she bitterly resents the locks, as well as disliking having to rely on Diana to remember for her. Thus the memory board of the title, which allows the two women to structure Constance's days as a series of transitory but orderly archives. When David begins to move in, though, Diana finds Constance trying to pack and asks what she's doing. "I'm going home," Constance says,

repeating a motif that has occurred throughout the novel, as she seeks to return to something she recognizes as home. When Diana is unable to convince her that they are not moving out, Constance asks David's nephews to take her home, to which Mike gravely agrees, escorting her to the truck and driving her several times around the block. "First fright and then indignation flashed and flickered out in Diana, for they weren't simply playing a stupid trick on Constance but trying to find a way of participating in her doubt to allay it. Maybe it would work ..." (310). Constance then goes to the memory board, which she had erased just moments before, asking Diana earnestly to keep it up to date. The association of memory with home in this scene recapitulates an earlier discussion in which David asks, "Is home a house or a landscape or a country?" (229), a question which, without making the reference in any way obvious, clearly refers to Frye's question. Constance answers,

All those And people. If I'm alone and look at my board and it says, for instance, 'lunch,' it's easier for me to expect to sit down with my mother and sister than to remember it will be Diana there. I remember the forks. I remember the pattern on the dishes, the shape of the teapot. (229)

Home for Constance is the place "where we worked" (163), and Diana has to remind her, "This is home, Constance. It's just that we've got old" (164).

Because Constance's memory is so erratic, her idea of home is equally erratic in some ways. Home in *Memory Board* is a place that is always contingent, always dependent on one's ability to remember and to accept the present on faith. Despite Diana's aversion to self-identification as lesbian and to involvement with queer community politics, it seems very clear that the project the characters in *Memory Board* are involved in is the creation of a home and a community that is not dependent on state recognition or even on the ability to remember, or even to live, of each of its members. This emphasis on community is consistent with Rule's own sexual politics. Rule was a long-time contributor to *The Body Politic*, the outstanding lesbian and gay newspaper that flourished in Canada from 1971 until 1987. Although accused of being too focussed on the issues of gay men and too centred on Toronto, *The Body Politic* was radical, political and community-oriented. One of the *TBP* collective members, Gerald Hannon, wrote of it that it empowered "the transformation of The Helpless Queer with no history and an unlikely future into Someone, into a *group* of Someones, who uncovered a history, who found heroes,

who grabbed today and shook it till tomorrow fell out of its pocket and there was a place there in it for us” (Qtd. in Jackson and Persky 3). This sense of creating a place, a home, is a part and parcel of the conceptualization of LGBT people as creating and living in a community, even if one only loosely tied to geography, one as much about people as about physical spaces. This view is consistent with Rule’s. Susan Sheridan argues, for example, that for Rule, “the freedom of homosexuals, of women, and of writers as well, is connected with a secular notion of the necessity of community, and of love, both relations continually under construction” (32). The most significant metaphor for home and its relation to the archive in *Memory Board* is the perennial garden which has been Constance’s life work and which must not only be planted but also maintained, as even perennials, which come up anew year after year, must be split, pruned, dug up, replanted, never wholly under control, always unpredictable.

Rule retired from writing after the publication of her seventh novel, *After the Fire* in 1989; severe arthritis prevented her from continuing to write at any length, although she has remained active both in the LGBT community and in the community of Galiano Island, where she and Sonthoff moved after she retired from teaching at the University of British Columbia.¹¹ Because of Diana’s arthritis, it is possible that readers may be tempted to approach the novel autobiographically, but Diana is quite clearly not Rule (who was born in the US and moved to Canada as a young woman). While Diana shares some of Rule’s own political convictions, she does not share the sense of belonging to a community nor the conviction that she has anything in common with the gay men whose sexual habits she repudiates. This is an issue that Rule confronts in terms of her own opinions in “Why I Write for *The Body Politic*,” concluding, in the face of accusations by her friends that her columns appear “in a paper whose policy is to advertise and support sexual behavior which can only damage the homosexual image in the eyes of the majority and increase prejudice against us,” that, while she may neither sympathize with nor understand the sexual priorities of some LGBT people, “[p]olicing ourselves to be less offensive to the majority is to be part of our own oppression” (*Hot-Eyed* 64). In her entry on Rule in the online queer encyclopedia *GLBTQ*, Margaret Spenser Breen argues that Rule believes that art should be apolitical and universal — a belief that is a product, in its own right,

¹¹ Rule’s oeuvre also includes three collections of essays and short stories and *Lesbian Images* (1975), a pioneering study of how love between women is depicted by women writers.

of the universalizing approaches to literature in which Rule herself is educated — but also notes that “her fiction, especially in its delineation of character and theme, expresses a large-spirited commitment to diverse communities and a range of experiences.” This commitment has resulted, to some extent, in the relative dearth of criticism of Rule’s work — a major Canadian author with a significant oeuvre, criticism of her work consists of a handful of articles and a recently published book.

In part, this is because Rule’s interests and audiences are themselves diverse; she has persisted in writing about both women and men, about both queer people and straight ones. In the character of Diana, she examines what it is like for someone to live as a lesbian without any identification with, and thus without any support from, the local LGBT community. Both David and Constance have more of a sense of community than Diana has; two of her major disagreements with both involve attempts to become part of a greater community, Constance through wanting to participate in a Pride parade and David by reading *The Body Politic* to get a sense of Diana’s world. When he explains this to Diana, who does not even know what *TBP* is, she responds in a frigid voice, “I don’t have a world, David, not in that sense” and asserts that, “Reading about a homosexual subculture to understand me is insulting” (192). The crisis for Diana comes late in the novel, when she fails to respond to attempts by Richard, the boy with AIDS, to interpellate her into his community. Later, she says to David, “I wouldn’t say, even to that dying boy ... that, yes, I ‘m gay or queer or homosexual or lesbian. I am Diana Crown, a proud woman nearly turned to stone, but for Constance” (289). When she invites David to live with herself and Constance, it is not merely the sensible provision of a second provider for Constance, should she outlive Diana, but also a recognition that it is possible to gain a community, a family, a home, even, and perhaps especially, when it exceeds heteronormative expectations. Constance is as much and perhaps more Diana’s family, her kin, as is David, her twin brother.

4. ‘Home, The Impossible Place’

‘Home’ is thus invariably a fraught concept for gays and lesbians. It is equally fraught, although in different ways, for immigrants, who can remain caught between two or more cultures, two or more countries, and even two or more families. ‘Home’ may be the place left behind in the immigrant’s journey, but it is invariably also the place to which one can never return, because

it changes and is changed by the very act of leaving one place and arriving somewhere else. Similarly, what should be one's new home often remains alien in a variety of ways, some of which are common to most immigrants, such as accommodating the eye to a new landscape, a new geography, and a new architecture, but others which are more specific to issues of language, culture and skin colour — not so much whether the individual immigrant wishes to see the new place as 'home,' but whether those already there are willing to treat new arrivals as people who belong. Many immigrant artists are thus centrally concerned with what Rocío Davis refers to as "the major themes common to postcolonial literature: home, identity, belonging" (xviii). These are also, in many ways, the major themes common to queer cultural production, although the art produced by the LGBT communities is often quite different in its approach to these issues and has also necessarily to respond to a history or medical, psychiatric and criminal discourses around sexuality that have not been universally applied to immigrants or to identifiable ethnic or racial communities. Where the immigrant experience differs radically, moreover, from the gay and lesbian experience of 'home,' even though the two experiences obviously intersect in the lives of LGBT immigrants, is that the immigrant is construed as having previously been 'at home' somewhere.

Anne-Marie Fortier argues, in "‘Coming Home’: Queer Migrations and Multiple Evocations of Home," that concepts of home and of diaspora complicate and are complicated by discourses of queerness:

The heterosexual family is posited as the originary site of trauma [for LGBT people]. This is evocatively expressed by Sinfield, who draws attention to how the 'diasporic sense of separation and loss' experienced by lesbians and gay men results from being cut off from the heterosexual culture of their childhood, which becomes the site of impossible return, the site of impossible memories.... Sinfield's suggestion of home as always in the making, endlessly deferred, hints at a radical discomfiture of 'home' as a space of coherence and continuity also found in utopian visions of diaspora as radically antinationalist. (409)

Because many LGBT people have to leave 'home' — as it is most commonly understood as the site of the 'family of origin' — queer life can be understood as diasporic, in a certain sense. Some critics, however, like Michael Warner, argue that queer culture "is not autochthonous. It cannot even be in diaspora, having no locale from which to wander" ("Introduction" xvii). Warner's argument focuses on queer culture, rather than queer people, and thus sidesteps the

consideration of queerness amongst obviously diasporic cultures as well as the possibility of understanding the quite common movement of LGBT people from rural to urban areas as itself a form of diaspora. This argument is of a piece with Warner's refusal of the connections (which I attempted to delineate in the first chapter) between homophobia, sexism and racism. Warner insists that

Whatever the connections might be locally, they are not necessary or definitive for any one of the antagonisms. Any one can do without the others and might have more connection with political conflicts less organized by identity. 'Race, class, and gender' stand for different and overlapping ways of organizing people in response to different kinds of power. As styles of politics they have to be disarticulated from the national-representational space often fantasized in the very act of listing them. ("Introduction" xix)

By contrast, in the introduction to *Queer Diasporas* (2000), Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler, reading the quintessential Judaeo-Christian origin story of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden through a queerly ironic lens that sees the relationship between God and Adam as homosocially triangulated through Eve, argue that "although this is not in any obvious way a 'gay' displacement, the simultaneity of the expulsion from Eden and the installation of heterosexuality suggest that Western sexual and diasporal discourses are fundamentally, if anxiously, related" ("Introduction" 2). Also in *Queer Diasporas*, Daniel Boyarin makes precise, but not necessarily universalizable, connections between sexuality, race and diaspora in "Outing Freud's Zionism" when he argues that "[t]he situation of the European Diaspora male Jew — frequently elided as 'the Jew' tout court ... — as politically disempowered produced a sexualized interpretation of him as queer, because political passivity in Freud's world equated precisely with homosexuality" (78). Diasporic queerness can include, depending on the theoretical perspective involved, a consideration of movement between rural and urban as much as migration between nations, just as it can refer to the globalization of 'gay' and 'lesbian' and the transmigration of ideas, as well as people, amongst cultures, societies and geographies.¹² The relationship of LGBT people to the diasporic is thus a complicated one, not least in the ways in which queer diaspora overlaps with, but is mobilized differently in, accounts of racial and ethnic

¹² For a discussion of the term "transmigrant," see Martin F. Manalansan IV's "Diasporic Deviants/Divas: How Filipino Gay Transmigrants 'Play with the World'" in *Queer Diasporas*.

diasporic formation. Fortier contends that,

... both queer and diaspora compel us to rethink the problematic of home: 'diaspora' by making 'the spatialization of identity problematic and interrupt[ing] the ontologization of place' (Gilroy, 2000: 122), and 'queer' by problematizing heteronormative discourses and denaturalizing gendered nationalisms.... Which is not to say that queer or diaspora could be simply read as emphatic refusals of home(land). Queer and diasporic narratives of belonging often deploy 'homing desires' ...: the desire to *feel at home* achieved by physically or symbolically (re)constituting spaces which provide some kind of ontological security in the context of migration. (409-10)

Fortier draws on Elspeth Probyn's work on belonging to critique simplistic and nostalgic narratives of homecoming, arguing that while "narratives of migration-as-homecoming instigate a noteworthy reversal of the status of 'home' in migration, 'home' remains widely sentimentalized as a space of comfort and seamless belonging, indeed *fetishized through the movements between homes*" (412). Queerness thus becomes entrenched as "*away from home*," as seeking out and approaching a home whose realization can only be endlessly deferred (412).

A number of works by LGBT artists in Canada explore the relationship between queerness, diaspora and ideas of home, including the novels *Funny Boy*, by Shyam Selvadurai, *The Jade Peony* by Wayson Choy, *Disappearing Moon Café* by Sky Lee, *Ana Historic* (1988) by Daphne Marlatt, *Leaving Earth* (1998) by Helen Humphrey, *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (1999) by Dionne Brand, and *The Heart Does Not Bend* (2003) by Makeda Silvera, as well as Marusya Bociurkiw's short story collection, *The Woman Who Loved Airports* (1994), Deepa Mehta's 1996 film *Fire*, and Richard Fung's 1986 video *Chinese Characters*.¹³ In the last part of this chapter, however, I want to look specifically at how three particular novels — Daphne Marlatt's *Taken* (1996), Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996) and Geoff Ryman's *Was* (1992) — grapple with these issues. The first of these is *Taken*, which despite its differences from both *Spadework* and *Memory Board* in style, language, 'theme,' characters and time period(s), has the idea of home very much at its axis. Home can be many things: where you were born; where your family (however defined)

¹³ Several of the works discussed in previous chapters also make these connections, including Tomson Highway's *The Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*, and Richard Fung's *Dirty Laundry*.

lives; where your lover/partner/spouse is; where your friends, your familiar haunts, your favourite meals are; where you are most clearly tied to landscape, flora, fauna. For English colonial emigrants, home is always England, the 'mother country.' In *Taken*, home is all and none of these things, as each vision of home is troubled by the complications that attach to belonging.

Taken begins with Esme, Suzanne's mother, living in involuntary exile in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales after the Japanese invasion of Malaysia. She lives with others of the dispossessed, filled with nostalgia for a past home that is suddenly, irrevocably lost, however ambivalent the original attachment, caught between the familiarity of landscape and culture and the certainties of the colonial reality, of being English in that foreign place that is still home to the senses:

And what is nostalgia but the longing for the place the body opens to, the very taste of it on one's skin. Ah, but the Straits Settlements, about as far as one could get from England — or from Canada — as exotic a home as one could adopt, if never, never belong in, was still a colony on the fringe of the mother country's skirts.

England was no mother to Esme, born in India, though she, like her parents, continually referred to it as 'home.' Home that was not, misplaced home that could never be. Where did one belong? (7)

Esme's dilemma is the peculiarly colonial version of the immigrant's dilemma: it is not merely about living here but coming from somewhere else, it is also about the particular deformations wrought by colonial power and colonial racism on the relations between those who immigrate and those already there. The tensions between migrant and indigenous population are exacerbated in very specific ways by the colonial history of the territory and by the migrant's adherence to the colonial code which represents England as always home to those with white (or passably white) skins and English as their mother tongues. Esme in her exile waits for the return of her husband Charles, raises her oldest daughter Suzanne, and dreams of the place she has left, even if she does not call it 'home.' Yet even the return to Malaysia is emotionally labile; the power dynamic has changed. The home that was never wholly home in any case is a different place after the war.

If Esme's relationship to home is in many ways typical of the foreign-born Englishwoman living in the colonies with servants and expatriate clubs and a whole series of racially and culturally-inflected rules that both provide her with a sense of ownership yet constrain her sense of belonging, her daughter's relationship to home is incommensurable in different ways. An

immigrant to Canada and a lesbian, Suzanne finds a home with her lover, Lori, on an island off the coast of Vancouver. But as Suzanne tells her mother's story, she is also relating the story of her own losses: Lori has gone back to the States, to the 'family home,' to her ailing mother; Esme is dead; even Suzanne's childhood memories have become buried treasure, lost in the search for belonging:

These had become the markers of someone else's life, a life i kept hidden away from my North Van friends who would find it odd, a curiosity shop, this household of Chinese furniture and parents who spoke with what then seemed exaggerated politeness — another world of manners, of phrases. A world i left to belong to the new one. (120)

Some realities fade, Suzanne claims, buried in the "ordinary preoccupations of the daily" (121). She connects the faded reality of her childhood, her parents' past lives, with the loss that she's immanently experiencing of her lover, Lori. Suzanne says that

[w]hat is left behind is not left so much as embalmed in my childhood. Like a ghost it goes on living alongside this reality, occasionally felt, an inner twinge, the merest flicker of memory, unlocatable, indistinct. There are no words for these almost-recognitions, because they are not memories dressed in the detail of half-fictionalized scenes. They hover beyond our attempts to resurrect them along the coordinates of this time, this present person. Who could never have been imagined in that other reality. (121)

For Suzanne, however, the other reality is not simply the past. It is the ghost of her alternative presents, of the person she might have been had she not broken "the marriage script ... the familial ties we each were meant to perpetuate" (77). Most critics have read Marlatt's works in terms of the equation of home with the mother, the maternal body. Michele Gunderson, for example, argues in her reading of Marlatt's *Ghost Works* that

If the home is connected with the mother, the reverse is also true: the narrator's search for her mother is also connected with 'what here means,' with place and home. Her search for the mother, the first home, is grounded in the material of Mexican and Malaysian and British and Canadian soil. Moreover, these different places are always already constructed in language and culture, and her shifts from one place to another help her to see the gaps, the erasures, the contradictions in language. Marlatt searches these places as she searches the structures of language in order to figure out how to (re)write home and the mother's body, to reinvent and to construct otherwise. ("[Re]writing Home")

When Suzanne refuses to accept the marriage script, literally to re-place, to take the place of,

her mother in the multigenerational narrative of heterosexual continuity, however, the question becomes one of how this narrative of home and its relation to the maternal body is complicated and perhaps re-written. Although *Taken* has many parallels with Marlatt's own autobiography (her birth in Melbourne, her childhood in Penang, the death of her mother, the break-up of her relationship with Betsy Warland), it remains a work of fiction, a system of intelligibility that serves, in Foucault's terms, as a technology of the self. Indeed, looking at Foucault to understand the ways in which belonging is embedded inside discourses of childhood, Probyn argues that

Foucault's use of fiction reorders thinking about the relation of writing to memory, of writing experience to self. Simply put, it disorders any search for origin, any research that seeks to impute subjectivity to a closed interior. It insists on the ways in which subjectivity disappears in the recoiling of origin..." (102)

Probyn argues that "nostalgia for an irretrievable childhood" scrambles the logic of ordering and exposes an emptiness that "compels other uses of childhood than ones which stake its meaning as originary" (103).

In Marlatt's fragmentary ordering of memory, of the memory-traces inscribed in things and places, in her refusal of chronological narrative or narrative logic in her fiction, there is a similar emptying out that insists on other relations to the maternal than those which "stake its meaning as originary" and compel its replication from generation to generation. Such an emptying out, which is also an opening out, derives in part from the refusal of the familial script, which is also the colonial script, itself inscribed with anxieties about gender, sexuality, race and class. In reflecting on bottle-feeding Suzanne, Esme wonders about her own infancy, breastfed in all probability by an ayah, and wonders even more who had mothered her mother, but knows she can't ask, because Aylene would ask "what does it matter now?" Suzanne's response to this line of thought is that

... what 'doesn't matter,' what we cut off from us by cognitive amputation, comes back to haunt us, I want to say for Esme — or is it to her, standing there in the dim light of that 1940s kitchen, so much unsaid stifling in the air around her.

These assumptions the daily is grounded on, housed in. That you are 'your mother's daughter' — the likeness that phrase insists on, insinuates: a replica. (113)

Made uncomfortable by these daily assumptions, Suzanne not only refuses to become her mother's replica, she also begins to interrogate the everyday assumptions of likeness in other, queerer relationships: "The likeness of lovers — have we assumed that too?" (114).

When Lori leaves to visit her mother, Suzanne contemplates their relationship, Lori's inability to speak of it, her mother's inability to grasp it:

So you live on an island in another country with a woman your mother thinks is merely a friend. And the too-much you can't talk about moves in like fog, despite small and unexpected clearings. She is your child now and you must protect her, you say, though you always have. Smothered with responsibility but never mothered enough.

Listen, all the while you are away this land continues to hold us, enfold our life together here, even in our apartness. And yes, of course we invent so much: a home and all it is supposed to make up for. We carry marriage stories in our blood, our mother's stories shadowing the ones we're trying to invent. (47)

Like all inventions, home is contingent, fragile, dependent on the willingness of its inventors. The home Suzanne and Lori make is one haunted by ghosts, the ghosts of Aylene and Esme and of the many nameless women whose voices narrate the story of internment in Japanese POW camps that Esme and her family escaped. But for Suzanne, "family, the idea of family with its unbroken bond, haunts our connection. A thread of magic litanies running back, uncut, like Ariadne's to a safe place" (77). But like the ghost stories her grandfather enjoys, Ariadne's magic thread is as much an invention as home, as family. That family itself is an invention is made clear in the diasporic story of English dispersal around Asia and the consequent, much denied, admixture of Asian families with English ones. Three generations in South Asia, the family history only that of the men, the women nameless, and even those stories only go back as far as Suzanne's grandfather. "Who were the women?" Esme asks, fascinated with the Chinese looks of her new baby.

Chinese? Indian? Eurasian women were noted for their beauty, even if they were *déclassé*. These stories, these colonial stories that perpetuate a making-strange — was it that they had spent so long, three generations born in the East, that they themselves began to feel un-English? Or was it that they were, and it was easier to make a life, to pass as English, if you erased the mixed part? (107)

For the diasporic, the queer, "the mixed part," the notion of home is mired in uncertainties. A

lover can leave, a mother die, an ancestry be brought into question, a place once known become unknown through war, politics, abandonment, migration. Marlatt specifically links these issues to women's lives and women's histories in *Taken*. In an interview with Sue Kossew, she says, in a remark very reminiscent of Nayan Shah's comments in *Dirty Laundry* about the role of historians, that

... women's daily experiences of history have hardly been taken note of, perhaps because there's still an identification of women with the sphere of personal life, domestic life. Much of women's work, a lot of it caretaking, never enters the records, is a-historic as such. So I've wanted to look at historical events through the filter of women's daily lives, foregrounding the textures of those lives. Women's experiences of war — rape, famine, destruction of their families and homes — are often callously viewed as just 'collateral damage' in the grand heroic narrative of war. I think a lot of women don't subscribe to the grand narrative, perhaps because women are the ones who most experience the losses that go along with it. (Qtd. in Kossew 53-54)

While noting women's disappearance from official history and the likelihood of becoming 'collateral damage' — a phrase popularized by the first Gulf War, which was taking place while Marlatt was writing *Taken* and which forms the background to the break-up of Suzanne's relationship with the American Lori, who had originally fled the US seeking a place to avoid complicity in the Vietnam war — Marlatt also notes their complicity, both in patriarchal and colonial structures. As such, the stories of women's resistance are always ghost stories, particularly when they are also stories of lesbian resistance to the heteronormative pressures of familial expectations and their recreation in narratives of nation. "Ghosts," Marlatt tells us, "are those who occupy a place, but not in the flesh, those who are left with only the memory-trace of it on their tongues" (7). For ghosts, home is a ghostly place and its stories memorialized only in the most ghostly, most transient of archives. These are the archives of women, queers, migrants, taken here and there by forces outside their control, home a matter not of choice but of ephemeral opportunity, necessity, desire, and always undermined by the question of belonging, the problems of colonialism and the dangers of complicity.

5. (Not) Naming Nowhere

Will she become one of those women arrested in the long gaze of better memories even if they weren't better, just not here? Not here. Here.

There is no way of marking, no latitude or longitude, a black sand seabed, a lagoon of alligators, no discernible inclines or shapes, here is a sea belly deep and wide, to float or drown so many bodies, here is leaving, here is a highway and a house inhabited by strangers but it's called home Here is a hole in a wall opening to the sea and you ... she cannot recognize anything after that Here is not a word with meaning when it can spring legs, vault time, take you ... her away ... here is nothing to hold on to or leave a mark, here you ... hold on to your name until it becomes too heavy and you forget it.

Dionne Brand, *In Another Place, Not Here*

If Marlatt looks at one side of what colonialism, with its insistence on gendered, sexual and racial proprieties and their subsequent violences, does to narratives of home, nation and diaspora, Dionne Brand examines its obverse. *In Another Place, Not Here* investigates the movement of 'racialized' people between an unnamed Caribbean island, which is almost certainly Grenada, and Toronto, named not as a city, but as a collection of streets, parks, buildings. This namelessness is not merely an attempt to universalize the concerns of the novel by refusing a specificity that would allow some readers to say that its issues are irrelevant to them, because they are from Jamaica, not Grenada, or Montreal, not Toronto. More importantly, this namelessness is linked to issues of language, belonging, diaspora and the forced migration of slavery. Adela, Elizete's ancestor, refuses to name, except as 'nowhere,' the place to which she is brought or the things that belong to the place; Elizete thus has no names for things and must invent them in her attempt to create a sense of belonging:

I watch things and I wonder what Adela would call this if it wasn't nowhere, pull and throw bush, make haste weed, jump up and kiss me flowers I make up these names for Adela's things. I used to keep them in my head for Adela because I got to find out that Adela forget she true true name and she tongue before she leave this earth. Nowhere could make sense and I discover that Adela had to make her mind empty to conceive it. The place she miss must have been full and living and take every corner in she mind so when she reach, there was no more room for here. (20)

Linking the violence of enslavement and transportation by the Middle Passage to the refusal of 'here,' the place there is no room for, Brand connects language to home in the most intimate possible way. Elizete says, "I ask the woman I living with when we will know the names of things and if Adela reach home yet and if she will send them give we. For is home Adela say

she was going when she dead, seeing as how she couldn't make it there alive" (19-20). This passage, in which the only road home is located in death, immediately precedes and foreshadows Elizete's memory of her lover, Verlia's, death in the invasion of the island, which is when Elizete learns Adela's hardness and despair from the inside out: "Much later I myself get to understand when I look and see with my own eyes Verlia in flight, feel red explosion in my heart draining me of tenderness. I know it don't have no word for what happen then just as it don't have none now" (22).

Displacement and the violence of an exploitative, racist colonial society result in the loss of language, both historically, in the replacement by English (or French, Spanish, German, Dutch, etc.) of the original languages of the enslaved Africans and their descendants, and metaphorically, in the impossibility of (free) speech for the colonized and enslaved. In Brand's novel, Elizete suffers this loss of language literally, as she is both silenced, unable to find language in which she can either express her experiences and feelings or be listened to, and deafened, as the necessity to hide her illegal status under the pretence of deafness causes her to become deaf for three months, her left ear and the fingers of her left hand numbed by the gesture which she made to repudiate her hearing.

She hoped she would not have to give up any more, but she was losing the reasons for holding on. Like hearing. It was a spur of the moment thing but if she really thought about it maybe she had decided it, contemplated it long and found it useless, If the words were not sweet, if Verlia's tongue was not at the other end of them, then what was the use of hearing? Or speech? If she could not speak to the best thing that ever happened to her ... then what was the sense in speaking? (87-8)

Feeling and seeing also come to seem useless without Verlia, particularly when all Elizete's eyes can see is Verlia flying off the cliff, when all she can feel is the physical and sexual abuse meted out to her by men, both black and white, and not the sweetness of Verlia's skin, but it is language more than anything else that remains the field of conflict and resistance. Meredith Gadsby argues that

... patois, as a fusion of English and West African languages, is a creative subversive response to a linguistic system whose brutality mirrored the physical, social and political situation of enslavement. Trapped within the prison that English built around their experience, African Caribbeans ... constructed a new language, the Caribbean demotic, which provided a tangible psychic and

linguistic link to their histories while creating a new social/linguistic/symbolic order that would provide subsequent generations with the psychic power to resist the master. (149)

Gadsby thus finds in the use of patois, or ‘nation language,’ in the work of Canadian women writers from the Caribbean, a positive answer to Spivak’s question about whether or not the subaltern can speak. However, Gadsby also notes that speaking is not itself equivalent to being heard: “Various institutional oppressions (sexism, racism, compulsory heterosexuality, phallocentrism) render the hearers of Black women’s speech deaf” (156). The silences imposed on black women — and, although Gadsby does not specify it, particularly on black lesbians — is rooted in history and played out dialectically between present and past. Reading the novel in the light of antebellum slave narratives and the hopeful location of utopian possibility in a dream of Canada (the end of the Underground Railroad, a place discursively opposed to the US and, to a lesser extent, to the Caribbean, in African-American and Afro-Caribbean resistance writing), Pamela McCallum and Christian Olbey argue that the “significance of *In Another Place, Not Here* for an ongoing dialogue on social and political resistance may lie not so much in its utopian moments, powerful though they are, but in the articulation and exploration of the persistent markings of the past on the present” (178). McCallum and Olbey note that “even such analysis of impasses and tensions remains bound up with a utopian vision,” situating it particularly in Verlia’s flight from oppression to death in the leap from the cliff, which they compare to the final scene of the 1976 Cuban film *La última cena* (*The Last Supper*), directed by Tomás Guitiérrez Alea, in which the last survivor of a failed slave rebellion leaps from a cliff to escape his pursuers. Although they don’t put it in these terms, McCallum and Olbey posit this moment as a type of archive, which they call “the persistence of centuries of history” (178). Indeed Verlia’s leap “into the air also links her resistance with that of the Caribs in Grenada who, after fighting the French in 1651, leapt to their deaths over a cliff at Sauteurs Bay” (Smyth 156). For Heather Smyth, Verlia’s death also appears as utopian. Smyth claims that

the novel brings together the two women’s love with revolutionary action and situates these two things in the history of resistance in Grenada.... Perhaps it is this lost dream [of successful revolution] that prevents an easy bringing together of the two sides of Brand’s dialectic. Even though the final scenes of the novel may show the necessity of both utopian visions of belonging, and engaged political struggle to free places for this belonging, Brand refuses to compromise

or suggest a middle ground. (156)

Unlike McCallum and Olbey, however, Smyth re-replaces the utopian impulse in the Caribbean precisely on the basis of its sexual, rather than racial, politics and its mobilization, however understated, of the demand for sexual citizenship:

In *In Another Place, Not Here*, the ‘no place’ of utopia or Adela’s ‘Nowhere’ indicate a dialectic between an affirmative imagined space of Caribbean lesbians’ belonging and a recognition of the need for political revolution to make this vision real. The novel draws together erotic and political utopias by connecting the two women’s love with the revolutionary’s love for ‘the people.’ (156-57)

Rather than seeing Verlia’s death as utopian, however, it is possible to view it as the ultimate form of silencing, a refusal of this person’s right to speech, to place, to belonging. It is true that, in leaping, Verlia takes her own life rather than leaving it to be taken by US servicemen; in that sense, at least, it is a radical reclaiming of agency. Verlia’s actions, on the one hand, counter the belief that women have no place in history, yet, on the other hand, risk reinscribing it through the silence, the absence, the namelessness of her death (who, except Elizete, knows her sacrifice?). Yet to take the opposite road, to argue that the novel offers nothing but despair, seems equally unsupportable; Dina Georgis attempts to reconcile this dilemma through a psychoanalytics of the mother as nation, arguing that

Unable to meet their demands, the nation, their mothers, and love fails them; love is ephemeral, home is impossible, and identity is fraught in all places. However, while Elizete comes to recognize failure and persistently lives her life, Verlia’s insatiable longing for *another place* destroys her. (29)

By contrast, Joanna Luft sees Verlia’s leap into the ocean as a leap into a safe lesbian space (Luft notes the extent of water/ocean imagery in the novel and its association with women’s sexual pleasure), in a reading that is still insistent on the transcendence of the leap even while it notes that both Canada and the Caribbean refuse a home to black women, the Caribbean because of the “markers of colonial violence [which] prohibit a sympathetic connection between the land and its inhabitants,” and Canada because its “impassive surface, while offering the Caribbean immigrant a place to create herself anew, free from the constraints of home, ultimately wears away her sense of self precisely because it provides her with nothing to hold on to and with no acknowledgment of her existence” (48).

In Another Place, Not Here at once resists and repeats Anne McClintock's argument that, "Symbolically reduced, in male eyes, to the space on which male contests are waged, women experience particular difficulties in laying claim to alternative genealogies and alternative narratives of origin and naming" (*Imperial Leather* 31). If women, in general, are denied access to "narratives of origin and naming," how much more is this true for women who are marginalized by both racial and sexual identity? The possibilities for identity and, particularly, for identity politics can be understood as a function of the legitimation of the right to speak. As I argued in the previous two chapters, this thesis is deeply concerned with the imbrication of queer and Canadian identities with 'other' identities, particularly those also subject to minoritizing discourses and what Butler calls the "structuring present of alterity," which is to say the construction of race, ethnicity, gender and class as both constitutive and, often, incommensurable with each other (*Bodies* 105). In *Bread out of Stone*, Dionne Brand writes of the imbrication of racial and sexual identities and the difficulties of negotiating the ways in which both of those collide with cultural expectations of gender, erasing each other and being erased by others, all within the subalternity of being black in a white country, queer in a straight one, female in a male one:

'How was it for you?' A simple question about a dream at the window. They say it's because I am lesbian that I've asked, and that because I am a lesbian I am not a Black woman, and because I've asked I'm not Black, and because I do not erase myself, I am not a Black woman, and because I do not think that Black women can wait for freedom either, I am not ... and because I do not dream myself ten paces behind, and because I do not dream a male dream but a Black dream where the woman tells the story, they say I'm not (18; ellipses in original)

Verlia experiences some of the ways of being 'not' in *In Another Place, Not Here*, ending with the ultimate not-being of death. Elizete's experiences of not-being have their roots in the same disjunction with place, speech and the body, as she struggles to survive in two worlds, each of which denies her belonging, language, the right to be 'here.' The immigrants'

... stories were becoming lies because nobody wanted to listen, nobody had the time. That's what happens to a story if nobody listens and nobody has the time, it flies off and your mouth stays open. You end up being a liar because what you say doesn't matter. And there's no tracing or lasting to your stories. They had to end somewhere and another life had to be started and the stories had to be tucked away or secreted away They felt each morning as two people — one that had to be left behind and the other. The other was someone they had

to get to know, the other was someone they were sometimes ashamed of. (60-61)

This duplicity, this becoming-two, resonates both with the immigrant and the queer experience and is particularly exacerbated when those identities are compounded with themselves and with others, such as gender and class. However, as I attempted to demonstrate in Chapter Three, duplicity is not inherently negative, but can also offer possibilities for resistance, political struggle and change. Indeed, as I indicate elsewhere, for Hutcheon, Dellamora and others, duplicity or doubleness functions as an important marker of the construction and representation of many kinds of Canadian identities. For example, Teresa Zackodnik argues that the use of language in Brand's poetry exhibits an ambivalence toward the idea of a true homeland and an authentic language in which to express belonging, but that it "also moves toward a notion of the exiled self as place and belonging, and a conception of the language that will voice her experience as a multivoiced discourse in both standard English and Caribbean nation language" (194). Zackodnik sees Brand as locating her "critique of language not in an attempt to resurrect or construct a neutral language, nor from a liminal position between standard English and nation language, but in the heteroglossia of both languages, which articulates, even while it determines, her identity as dialogic and dialectical" (194). Brand's notion of place, here-ness, home is similarly dialectical, grounded in both the anxieties of non-belonging and in the uncertainties of becoming. Peter Dickinson argues trenchantly that, within Brand's poetry, "[d]islocation from without thus becomes a *re*-location from within. Brand's effecting of sexual/textual closure ... as a refusal to be marginalized challenges certain orthodoxies of Canadian literary nationalism, with its emphasis on a presumptive pluralism and notions of multicultural inclusion" (170). Brand herself insists that her work is not marginal, but centrally located within Black literature: "I don't consider myself on any 'margin,' on the margin of Canadian literature. I'm sitting right in the middle of Black literature, because that's who I read, that's who I respond to" (Qtd. in Dickinson 156). At the same time, however, Brand articulates, as have other racialized artists (see my discussion of Fung in the previous chapter), the problem of bearing the 'burden or representation' and the dilemma of having one's work read not in a literary, but in "an anthropological space or a sociological space" ("At the Full" 25).

In a recent interview with Rinaldo Walcott and Leslie Sanders, Brand identifies as a

peculiarly Canadian problem the insistence that Black writers represent blackness:

As it is Black writers are either reviewed for what might be plumbed from their work as a sociology of Black people or they are remarked upon for not presenting any signs of it at all. Either way it revolves around the same preoccupations. Black writers in this country still have to receive an intelligent reading. The kind of reading that says ‘No, I don’t know. I’ve never lived in this body but in good faith, I will go where the book is going because I am interested in what human beings do. (“At the Full” 26)

Similarly, and particularly in terms of the works I am investigating in this chapter, artists are almost invariably assigned the ‘burden of representation’ on singular, not multiple, grounds. One of the striking differences between critical responses to Jane Rule’s work and that of Marlatt and Brand can be found in the critical location of Rule’s work only in terms of sexuality — as lesbian writing, as making space for lesbian audiences, as lesbian resistance, as an intervention into sexual politics, as lesbian romance, and even as reclaiming the sacred within the lesbian and gay community — while the critical approaches to Marlatt and Brand are predominantly feminist and postcolonial/racial. In almost none of the critical writings on Brand and Marlatt is sexuality foregrounded as a central concern, with the exception, in Brand’s case, of Heather Smyth’s article on sexual citizenship in *In Another Place, Not Here* and *Cereus Blooms at Night*, in Marlatt’s case, of Céline Chan’s article “Lesbian Self-Naming in Daphne Marlatt’s *Ana Historic*” and, in both cases, the relevant chapters of Dickinson’s *Here is Queer*. Indeed, Dickinson pinpoints this as a significant part of the problem which blocks access to Brand’s writing as *CanLit*: it is produced by someone who has always already been consigned to the outside, to the margins, both because of her sexuality and her racial/immigrant status. Whereas the tactic with queer artists whose Canadian-ness cannot be denied is either to ignore that very queerness, as has generally been the case with Findley’s and Marlatt’s work, or to dismiss its relevance to *CanLit*, as with the erasure of writers not considered ‘literary’ enough. Jane Rule’s birth in the United States disenfranchises her, as does Dionne Brand’s childhood in Trinidad, despite, as Dickinson notes, having “one’s papers in order, owning a Canadian passport — these things are virtually meaningless in the face of an obdurate national psychology that, official government policies notwithstanding, continues to reinforce in Brand and her fellow immigrants the feeling that they are ‘stateless anyway’” (160).

In “Rhetorics of Blackness, Rhetorics of Belonging,” Rinaldo Walcott argues that it is possible “to conceptualize how the politics of belonging is mapped, charted, and articulated by Black Canadians” (4). Homosexuality complicates this conceptualization, both for its need to insistently re-present itself as a legitimate part of Black Canadian culture and for its insistence on the necessity of an anti-racist, anti-homophobic politics that refuses the re-writing of homoerotic impulses only as the ‘decadence’ of the colonizer or the degeneracy of the colonized. In his foreword to *The Greatest Taboo*, Henry Louis Gates Jr. writes that “[m]uch of black suffering stems from historical racism; most gay suffering stems from contemporary hatred” and argues further that “trying to establish a pecking order of oppressions is generally a waste of time” (xiii). Nevertheless, most critical responses to Black queer rhetorics of belonging within the Canadian public sphere have tended to insist on the legitimacy of, at most, one of these categories of identity/oppression, thus doubling the difficulties queer Black Canadian artists experience and exponentially increasing their ‘burden of representation’ within all the communities to which they may see themselves or be seen to belong. If there really is ‘no place like home,’ it remains difficult to articulate the very discrete ways in which the phrase means for different people within the discursive field of ‘Canada’ as a nation.

6. Pedagogies of Home and Nation

Belonging is about how we live in the present and about how we make our presence felt in a time or moment that can never be synchronous. Belonging is therefore about time and temporality. But belonging can and is often only understood belatedly, especially belonging to nation-state spaces. Belonging, then, is really just an after-thought, sutured into narratives of blood, land, tribe, and more multifarious discourses like generations and citizenship. Belonging is a taken-for-granted strategy of modern nation-states, intended to foreclose crucial and critical questions concerning national and state arrangement. Belonging is therefore a site for the contestation and ethical reordering of the nation-state.

Rinaldo Walcott, “Rhetorics of Blackness,
Rhetorics of Belonging”

In “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” Homi Bhabha writes that,

The emergence of the later phase of the modern nation, from the mid-nineteenth century, is also one of the most sustained periods of mass migration within the West, and colonial expansion in the East. The nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin, and turns that loss into the language of metaphor. Metaphor, as the etymology of the word suggests, transfers the meaning of home and belonging, across the 'middle passage', or the central European steppes, across those distances, and cultural differences, that span the imagined community of the nation-people. (*Location* 139-40)

Bhabha distinguishes between pedagogical and performative practices of nation: the former practice is stable, singular, coherent and anchored within a progressive narrative of history in which 'the nation-people' exist as objects; the latter are multiple, contradictory, incoherent and bound to the everyday performative practices of subjectivity. In Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*, the reader may begin to understand some of the ways in which nations teach people their place, places which are differently bounded by the discrete experiences of citizenship in Canada and the Caribbean; at the same time, Verlia, Elizete and Abena are caught up in the political work of (racial and sexual) citizenship, in a variety of attempts to create the nation as an 'imagined community' which they can imagine and which can imagine them. To queer the nation, however, is different from attempting to wrest a space in it to incorporate those marginalized on the basis of race, ethnicity, class, gender — and, yes, even sexuality. Queering the nation must, in the terms of the discussion of home, involve asserting a (non)originary right to call home, both in the sense, as discussed in the introduction, of 'hailing' or interpellating the nation as home and of calling to it from an elsewhere which may or may not be its own margins. This may, in turn, involve questioning the status of originary discourses in the construction of the nation-state, a state of the nation made possible precisely through other such originary discourses as natality and naturalization. Heather Zwicker argues, in an essay on Marlatt's *Ana Historic*, that "this originary position [of natality] is interrupted by some form of dislocation; in material terms, alienating experiences like exile, emigration, or diaspora; in discursive terms, 'differences' of class, sexuality, race, or gender" (165). These interruptions in the originary imaginary of the nation-state require recuperation "through such institutions as marriage [and] citizenship" (165) in order to revivify the naturalness of its discourses of origin. Queering such a model, according to Zwicker, involves writing a "counter-narrative of the nation as a palimpsest over the normative, heterosexual model" (166). Such a queering of the nation necessarily involves a disruption not

only to its naturalized heteronormativity, but also to its originary location in the natal/natural and to “national narratives of destiny” (Zwicker 173). Insofar as works like Brand’s, Marlatt’s, Fung’s or Mootoo’s are able to dislocate such teleological narratives, they effect a queering of the nation that, as Sedgwick suggests, “spins the term outward along dimensions that can’t be subsumed under gender and sexuality at all: the ways that race, ethnicity, postcolonial nationality criss-cross with these *and other* identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses” (“Queer and Now” 9).

One of these ways in which such “identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses” are made visible in queer, postcolonial, anti-racist work is through the symbolics of (in)visibility and (un)speakability. Responding to the difficulty of writing queerness into the vision of the nation, of making it visible, utterable or audible other than as a self-affirming spectacle of marginality, abnormality and, at best, heterocentric amusement, LGBT artists have a tendency to inscribe these invisibilities and inaudibilities into their works by literalizing them: thus Verlia vanishes from sight, Elizete loses speech and hearing, Roger Kwong’s grandfather’s sexuality lies hidden beneath a ‘safer’ photographic image, Lavinia and Sarah disappear from Paradise, lesbians appear to be an endangered species that must be reintroduced to Banff National Park, and so on. While the problem of visibility and speakability has been discussed at length in Chapter Four, I want to conclude with a discussion of the ways ideas of place and home are mobilized in Joe Lewis’ quilt exhibition, “Somewhere, Nowhere, Anywhere” (1999), and with a reading of Geoff Ryman’s *Was* that emphasizes the polysemic ways in which he employs tropes of visibility to foreground the “identificatory *lack* upon which Canadian literary nationalism has historically been



Figure 6: Joe Lewis. *Somewhere, Nowhere, Anywhere: A Triptych in Five Parts*. 1997-99. Mixed Media. 96" x 288". Courtesy of the artist.

constructed — the ‘where’ of Frye’s ‘here,’ for example — [which] is in large part facilitated by, if not wholly dependent upon, a critical refusal to come to grips with the textual *superabundance* of a destabilizing and counter-normative sexuality” (Dickinson, *Here* 4). In performing this final reading of the ways in which queer Canadians call home, I want to extend Dickinson’s contention from “literary nationalism” to cultural nationalism, reflected not just in queer literary texts but in queerly Canadian ‘texts’ of all kinds.

Joe Lewis is a visual artist whose works explore notions of home and domesticity that counter patriarchal, heteronormative narratives of gender, sexuality and belonging. “Somewhere, Nowhere, Anywhere” consists of a series of five abutting and overlapping quilts whose main theme is the relocation of the queer in (local) Canadian history and geography. Quilts represent a personalized view of ‘history’ that is domestic and familial. In a place like Peterborough, where Lewis’ quilts were first exhibited, the quilt speaks of the unwritten histories of its makers. While we can read of the experiences of a few pioneering (immigrant) women, such as Catherine Parr

Traill and Susanna Moodie, who were able to put their experiences of the ‘New World’ into words, we can only trace the unwritten histories of many other women, both immigrant and First Nations, through the domestic arts. Even the names of quilting patterns, like the ‘log cabin,’ are redolent of this history. Because women, like LGBT people, have been excluded from official histories of the nation-state, the quilt, along with other domestic arts, provides us with another ephemeral archive, a whisper from those whose voices have not been heard. It is not surprising then, that Joe Lewis, whose own history lies in Peterborough and the surrounding area, has turned to the domestic art of quilt making as a way of making visible

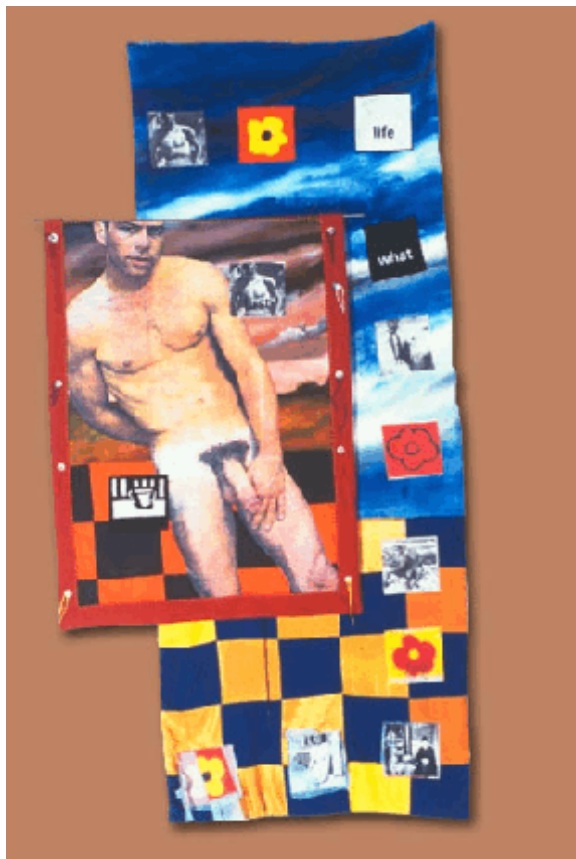


Figure 7: Joe Lewis. *Somewhere, Nowhere, Anywhere: Parts 3 & 4*. Mixed Media. 48" x 48" and 47" x 94." Courtesy of the artist.

the invisible history of queer people; it is also not surprising that, as a contemporary gay artist, the changes Joe Lewis rings on the traditions of quilt making make use both of the conventions and technologies of late twentieth century art and the images of a gay and lesbian 'family' history that have been left unclaimed and unvoiced within the heteronormative world. In Lewis' work, the viewer is struck by the forceful combination of traditional quilt making techniques, with their emphasis on regularity, harmony, and softness, and the hard-edged and more sophisticated technologies of contemporary printmaking. The juxtaposition of quilt blocks that one remembers from the family quilts with blocks of photo-transferred images reminds the viewer that this is a contemporary reclamation of history just as firmly as the contents of those photo images — the quiet unvoiced history of men who lived with other men, women who were understood as friends or companions, but not as lovers — reminds us both that LBGT people have a history within the family and that lesbigay history is not only the history of Stonewall, of political movements, or of urban 'gay ghettos.'

At the same time, Lewis does not forget that AIDS has wrought its own toll on gay men in the past two decades and these works cannot be viewed without calling to mind the memory of those we too have loved and lost. The male body that confronts us full-size on Lewis' quilt is thus both a vulnerable body — vulnerable to disease, to homophobic violence, on the one hand, and to pleasure, desire, and the pleasure of being desired, on the other — and a sexual body, even if — and perhaps because — when exhibited, its genitalia are hidden by quilted layers of history and images that invite voyeuristic exploration by the viewer. Lewis conceives of his quiltwork as participating in a political struggle both to celebrate queer life, family and sexuality and to resist attempts to erase LGBT lives and memories from a wider social understanding of what those words mean and to prevent queer people from feeling 'at home' within Canada. Lewis' quiltwork is thus both political and historical, both activist and domestic, technologically sophisticated and hand-wrought simple. It is also intimately connected, through the production of the quilt itself, to that other archive of lives lost to AIDS, the Names Project's Memorial Quilt, which now contains over 45,000 panels and, if displayed in one place, would occupy a 1,270,350 square foot space.¹⁴ As a response to AIDS, then, Lewis' *Somewhere, Nowhere*,

¹⁴ All quilt facts are taken from www.aidsquilt.org/quiltfacts.htm. Although the quilt contains more than 82,000 names, it makes only a small dent in the total numbers of people, mostly heterosexual and

Anywhere attempts to reinscribe the queer into the spaces of the Canadian public sphere, just as the title plays with the question of where that sphere can be located and whether it is in fact somewhere specific, anywhere at all, or nowhere — leaving open, as Brand also does, the question of whether this can or cannot be understood as a utopian ‘nowhere.’ Similarly the historical photographs of individuals and (same-sex) couples that are sewn onto the quilt work as a reclamation and re-location of queer history, making those lives visible, perhaps for the first time, in a public queer context which, as Carrington suggests, views home and family as something domestic, something *done* by people.

Geoff Ryman’s *Was* has similar concerns with domesticity, AIDS, visibility, the queer body, and — especially — childhood. *Was* sets both AIDS and child sexual abuse in a context that plays with and against the possibility of elucidating utopian ideas through a queer focus. There are two traditional ‘gay utopias’ in this novel: Oz and Hollywood. In playing off the identification of an entire generation of gay male subculture with the movie *Wizard of Oz* and with Judy Garland, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, *Was* reworks the utopian fantasy of “somewhere over the rainbow” in ways that first destroy it and then rebuild it in a different context. *Was* tells three interlinked stories: the story of the ‘real’ Dorothy Gael who is a sexually and emotionally abused child in 1890s Kansas; the story of Frances Gumm aka Judy Garland in the thirties; and the story of Jonathan, a transplanted Canadian actor in Hollywood horror movies, who is dying of AIDS.

Very little of this novel is devoted to AIDS *per se*; a much larger portion describes each of the main characters as a child. We see nothing of Dorothy between the ages of fourteen and eighty. Our last vision of the child Dorothy is of her ultimate betrayal when the adults in her life not only choose not to believe that she is being sexually abused by her Uncle Henry but use her admission as a way to destroy her.

Nothing is hidden, but some things are blocked out. Everyone in Manhattan

homosexual people of colour in the Third World, who have died of AIDS since the disease was first recognized. According to UNAIDS, between 2.5 and 3.5 million adults and children died of AIDS in 2003 alone, with about two thirds of all deaths occurring in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 21.8 million people have died of AIDS worldwide, with the USA accounting for just over 500,000 of those deaths. According to the AIDS Committee of Toronto, there have been 14,400 AIDS-related deaths in Canada since the beginning of the pandemic.

[Kansas] knew, really, what was wrong with Dorothy Gael. It was revealed in every twisted movement, each bitter and angry smile, each horrifically knowledgeable look, in the hefty size of her body, in the grimness of her aunty's face, in the child's rages and the way in which she could brook all pain and insult. They all knew, really, what it meant. (207)

"But," *Was* tells the reader, "nice people were not supposed to be able to recognize certain things, because they were supposed to be so untainted that they couldn't even think about them" (207). Discourses of family propriety, childhood innocence, and the apparent impossibility of heterosexual, let alone familial, child abuse allow the good people of Manhattan to "sincerely believe" that they are shocked by what has happened to Dorothy, that they are genuinely unable to understand that such a thing could have happened within their safely heteronormative community. Even so,

... [t]here were veiled preachings from the pulpit. The Devil was here, in Kansas, but how to recognize his terrible face? The Devil, the Preacher said, could lurk within each of us.... Underneath the dust and the poverty, the people of Manhattan saw themselves in Em and Henry, and they didn't want to look too deep. (208)

Because they cannot stand to look into themselves, the people of Manhattan find it easier to blame Dorothy. She is the monster. She is the one who can contaminate other children. She becomes, Ryman says, "a legendary figure of fear, as if the Devil would breathe fire on the children, on the teachers, if they got too close to her" (209). In "Viral Migrations: Fairy Tales of Family and Nation, Health and Disease," one of only a very few critical works dealing with Ryman's writing, Susan Knabe argues that "Dorothy's truth is unable to be acknowledged precisely because of the ways in which it threatens the stability of the heteronormative family and, by extension, of the community which covertly sanctions the abusive behaviours" (81).

Prior to the revelation of her abuse, a revelation seduced from her by the well-meaning but helpless supply teacher, Frank Baum, Dorothy had, in fact, survived her poverty and abuse by becoming as "bad" as possible — a monster. But her self-chosen monstrosity cannot prevent her from being destroyed by the greater monstrosities of power, indifference and self-righteousness: "... she was beyond hope, and that was that.... Badness had not been enough. Badness had not protected her. It was a shield that had cracked. So she was deprived even of that proud sensation. She was not bad; she was nothing, a hole. She was an adult" (209-210).

Dorothy the child disappears, just as her mother had disappeared into death by diphtheria, her friend Wilbur into suicide, and her dog, Toto, killed surreptitiously by her aunt and uncle:

Dorothy Gael ceased to exist. She went into Manhattan only once more.... She walked into Manhattan and no one saw her, and no one spoke to her, and no one served her in a store. She was invisible, like the Indians. She walked past the schoolyard and only one child saw her, a little boy in the first grade She thought maybe one of the teachers would come out and chase her away. Even that did not happen. (209)

Dorothy relearns the lesson originally taught her by Toto's 'disappearance,' the dispossession of the indigenous population, and the destruction of the Plains buffalo: "how long can you keep disappearing, until you fade into less than a memory?" (103). Dorothy stays at the farm, working mindlessly at her chores and walking away the nights, unable to sleep, until one night she sees the buffalo, alone, with its head in the waters of the Crossing. "Dorothy understood. This was the last buffalo. It had come back home to die. Its home would have been the hills above Zeandale. Now those were pastures for cattle, ringed around with barbed wire" (216). Understanding that the buffalo doesn't want to die alone, Dorothy remains with it and tries to follow its directions to hide its corpse, "safe perhaps from men" (217). Like everything Dorothy has loved, the buffalo not only dies, it disappears, becoming extinct as 'pioneers' advance across the Prairies. With nothing at all left to her, Dorothy leaves the farm, bidding goodbye only "to the room, but not the people in it." She thinks, "It might have been a home" (220). Heading to Wichita to become a whore, a profession of which she has only the vaguest idea, Dorothy walks out of history and into fantasy. She finds the Wichita,

... the tribe of Indians the white adults had pushed aside, marched into the desert so that they died She saw them, under the sunflowers. They were tiny brown men no taller than her knees. They were naked except for the feathers of birds and they were slightly wizened, like children that never grew up, or adults who had decided to stay children. They danced in a circle, chanting. They were Indians who had won. They were the Indians of Oz. (225)

The Wichita's chanting becomes a repetition of "To to / Toto" and Dorothy hears a dog bark. As Dorothy listens for him, the chant ceases, the sunflowers start to spin, and she sees the twister: "I made it, she thought. I spun and spun and I made it, as twisted as I am. And now it's coming for me. There is no place to hide.... I ran into the fields, the one place you're not supposed to

go in a cyclone, and I can't go home" (226). But just as Dorothy realizes that she is going to die, Toto appears and shepherds her toward a fencepost, where the loose wire wraps itself around her and holds her. "In the center of the twister, the air was clear and everything was a beautiful blue. Blue Earth. Everything stood up straight, the grass, her hair, the wire, all hauled toward Heaven. She seemed to see buffalo, swirling up into it. All the extinct creatures had been pulled up into heaven. Dorothy had time to be glad" (228). And Dorothy disappears for the final time, not reappearing in the novel until the reader finally recognizes her in the eighty-year-old 'Dotty' in the Home for the mentally ill where Bill Davison works as a young man.

Was explicitly links childhood and the destruction of childhood wrought by abuse and indifference to the colonial depredations of white invaders in the Americas, and particularly to the destruction of Native cultures, the murder of Native people, and the near extinction of the Plains buffalo. The disappearance of queer people, which is allegorized in Dorothy's childhood unbelonging and lack of a home, is linked explicitly to stories of genocide and extermination, which are in turn linked to discourses of AIDS and the observation made by Sedgwick, among others, that the advent of AIDS "is used to proffer every single day to the news-consuming public the crystallized vision of a world after the homosexual" ("How To" 164). The bodies of gay people, and especially gay men, are thus made vulnerable by discourses of disease and alterity to "the AIDS-fueled public dream of their extirpation" ("How To" 164). In a world in which children like Dorothy can find no safety, no home, no place to belong, how can anyone who is different? In the Kansas sections of *Was*, childhood represents the ultimate difference from terrifying, hypocritical, adult 'normality.'

Jonathan, the semi-autistic child from Corndale, Ontario, also tries to survive by turning himself into a monster. In his case, his childhood is not actively abusive; rather he is damaged by his inability to defend himself from the reality of adults with their monochromatic and linear views of the world. As a result, in acquiescing to his domestication to the adult world, he becomes colour-blind. As an actor, he suffers from a strange inability to say certain lines; only when hidden behind the voice and make-up of the horror film character, Mort the Child-Minder, is his voice unfettered.

Mort was the wounded spirit of the eternal hatred of children.

In each of the films, all of the adults were either fools or drunks,

wrapped up in work or sleazy sex. They had failed their children utterly. The children were left to defend themselves.

Mort materialized out of their parents. In sequences of special effects, he slimed his way out of parents' sleeping, snoring mouths.... He climbed out of the television set as adults watched the news impassively. The news, in the form of armed alerts, terrorism and serial murders, continued to flicker on Mortimer's face. The children died, slowly, horribly.(284)

Jonathan's childhood colour-blindness and his adult inability to speak except when disguised as a monster replicate metaphorically the problems of visibility and utterability that beset queer representation at all times. As an infant, Jonathan believes that everyone should understand as he does, out of love (185). As an adult, he "could remember the moment of dismay when the infant realized that he would have to use the same word each time for the same thing" (185). Falling in love with the *Wizard of Oz*, Jonathan befriends the four companions and takes them everywhere with him until his mother forces him to socialize with other children and he realizes that "there was no one there, that there never had been anyone there" (201). Shamed by the revelation that he has been living in a fantasy, that other children know this and think him stupid, Jonathan is

... blinded by anger, rising up in his gorge to choke him, overwhelming and complete. There was nothing that could satisfy it, but himself. He broke himself. He took the self he had been and broke it again and again. He called himself all the names he could think of: stupid idiot dope nincompoop sissy crybaby brat The world was diminished. It was smaller, duller, and he was unutterably bored by it.... He prowled the field of his vision like a caged beast, restless, made aged and jaded and grim. He was five years old. (203)

Jonathan sets about becoming a "good little boy" (205). He does as he's told, is polite to adults, gets good marks in school, and keeps everything he enjoys hidden. He becomes a fan of horror movies, which he watches every Saturday afternoon with another boy, who beats him.

It was one more way of being a good little boy. He was proving that he was no longer afraid of the Witch. He was proving that he could take the pain, as the other boy butted him with his head or took a switch to his backside. Being beaten was no different from watching television. The role of entertainment is to toughen us up and whip us into line. (205)

Socialization into the normative proceeds apace, as Jonathan begins actively to participate in the destruction of his own childhood, although it does not in the long run succeed in making Jonathan

heterosexual. Oz remains a place which he visits, but in secret. “He knew it wasn’t real, he knew Oz couldn’t help him, so he gave no outward sign and hated himself for it” (205). At the age of five, Jonathan does his best to turn himself into an unfeeling machine, the “good little boy” everyone, including his parents, wants him to be. The world that Ryman describes is not a good place for children; when they are not subject to active abuse, they are still made adults before their time, as is true of the third story Ryman tells, that of Frances Gumm who becomes Judy Garland and stars in the *Wizard of Oz*. At sixteen, Frances looks forty; she’s the one who has tried to assume responsibility for keeping her family together, as they are run out of town after town each time her father’s homosexual affairs with the town’s young men are discovered by the townsfolk. When she has to say the line “there’s no place like home,” she keeps bursting into tears. Vidor finally tells her, “Frances, just pretend you’ve gone to sleep, and you wake up in your own house, just like it used to be when you were little with your mommy and your daddy and your sisters. All there, all home. Just close your eyes” (127). Frances does, and the take goes perfectly. But it’s still just ‘pretend,’ and, as Wilbur tells Dorothy, “pretend was for things that could never happen” (61).

7. Where is home?

“Where’s home?” Bill Davison asked. His face looked very serious.

“Canada, I guess.”

“Okay, Canada. Were you happy there?”

In school? As a little boy tearing up sheets? “How is this going to help the AIDS?” Jonathan asked.

“Maybe it won’t help the AIDS, but it could help you.”

... Jonathan looked at Bill Davison and thought: You’ve been happy everywhere. What do you know?

“I don’t know, on stage maybe, when I’m performing.” Jonathan thought of the last play he had been in. “Oz,” he said. “I was happy in Oz.”

Geoff Ryman, *Was*

Home is often conceived in utopian terms, as the place where everyone belongs, the place you can always return to because it’s the one place that cannot refuse you. *Was*, like a number of other novels dealing with childhood, masculinity and AIDS, including Timothy

Findley's *Headhunter*, represents a movement among marginalised, and particularly among queer, writers to enter into fictive practices which work against the utopian/dystopian binarism, in part because of that binarism's parallel usage with other common binarisms, particularly those of heterosexuality/homosexuality, normal/abnormal and health/disease. Investigating the construction of feminist utopias, Robert Shelton identifies health/disease and utopia/dystopia as concepts asymmetrical within themselves but working in tandem, in which "health and utopia are regulative ideas; disease and dystopia, tools of analysis" (187). Because, as Shelton points out, "writers and readers easily associate bodily health with utopia and disease with dystopia" (187), it has become important for writers coping with the impulse to tell AIDS narratives to attempt to avoid reinforcing these metaphorical identifications. In order to redeem the spectacle of the infected body that is presented in the discourse of AIDS-as-plague, the writer rejects the very binary structure of the discourse that constructs disease as bad, and therefore immoral, and health as good, with its corollary that one must be 'moral' in order to be healthy, thus also rejecting the health/utopia and disease/dystopia paradigm.

AIDS is problematic for LGBT writers and artists. Quite apart from anything else, as Richard Dellamora has pointed out in *Apocalyptic Overtures*, this kind of dualistic view of the universe is particularly suited to our 'fin de millennium' apocalyptic fears, fears for which AIDS is sometimes seen as only one more apt trope for a world coming to a close.¹⁵ This idea is most clearly articulated in Dellamora's dialogic contemplation of Derrida, as when, for instance, he points out that in "The Rhetoric of Drugs," Derrida's emphasis on apocalyptic narrative invokes the desperate necessity for analysis in the face of the trauma of AIDS and the radical rupture that the virus has created in our relationship to the "experience of desire" (23). Dellamora's engagement with Derrida leads him to illuminate an oracular vision of a world in which "AIDS has not destroyed the memory of gay existence, but it has made such destruction imaginable. Under the circumstances, gay writers have been pressed into service as angels of the millennium. Bearing messages to gays and to others, they remind us that an archive does exist and that it is our responsibility to carry its words" (28).

¹⁵ The terrorist bombings on September 11, 2001, and since, and the consequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as an increase in apocalyptic rhetoric within parts of the public sphere, particularly in the US, make it clear that these millennial anxieties did not simply fade away on January 1, 2001.

Dellamora's sense of the gay writer — or queer writer — as an angel of the millennium, an archive which resists the destruction through AIDS (both literally and symbolically) of queer memory, suggests ways in which the intersections between memory, identity and illness can begin to be illuminated. Memory, however, is itself not unproblematic; what we remember and what we choose to memorialize are issues of particular importance in the LGBT community. Memory and issues around memorialization and the archive are also linked, as has been demonstrated in the discussion of Cvetkovich's work in the previous chapter, to issues of trauma. In *Was* issues of trauma, which mainly circle around questions of child abuse, are all linked to the way in which Ryman figures AIDS. Jonathan's life — and his death through AIDS — are memorialized through his obsession with the *Wizard of Oz*. As an adult, Jonathan constructs Oz as a link back to the 'utopian' world of infancy, when pictures had colour and words were tools of imagination. The child's world in Ryman's work is full of meaning that is lost to adult understanding; in fact, children, like people with AIDS, are amongst the disappeared of this novel.¹⁶ Jonathan's disappearance is linked to Dorothy's, who vanishes as effectively from the Kansas farm as Jonathan does a century or so later. Both characters are also linked through Jonathan's psychiatrist, Bill Davison, who as a young man discovered Dorothy in a Home for the mentally ill. This is not the happy fairy tale created by Frank Baum, in which the unhappy child is healed and empowered by her visit to and return from Oz, nor is it even the Oz of Hollywood; rather it is the damaged Oz of the real world in which children are abused and people die of AIDS. Comparing *Was* to another fictional representation of life in the era of AIDS, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, Susan Knabe argues that

In *Was*... the instability at the heart of the hetero-nuclear family, the fairy tale of uninterrogated heteronormativity, once again reveals the tension of both national and familial discourses. Moreover, Ryman's vision of this compulsory heteronormativity is both more intimate and, ultimately, bleaker than Kushner's — adults fail children at every turn in *Was*..., and that failure manifests itself as the neglect and abuse which befalls the children in the novel. ("Viral Migrations" 80)

¹⁶ While Ryman makes no overt mention of contemporary colonial contexts for understanding disappearance, there are obvious links to those 'disappeared' by totalitarian regimes in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. In Argentina, the group Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo are still fighting to find out what happened to the 20,000 people who vanished while the country was under military dictatorship.

Was creates an alternative, in this case, a queer, re-presentation of a much celebrated children's novel. It does this in the peculiarly queer light of the iconization of film the film, the *Wizard of Oz*, that I discussed at the beginning of the chapter. In *Was*, as in *Due South*, any identification with Oz is a mark of queerness and Dorothy's disappearance into Oz a potentially utopian migration away from the heteronormative world. The queerness of Oz, the desire to click one's ruby slippers and return to a home that is always already fantasmatic, is balanced against familial and national fantasies of the originary child, safe in its infantile citizenship and waiting its turn in the eternal reproduction of heterosexuality as origin and culture.

Ryman's indictment of the ways in which heteronormative fantasies of nation and family function to place people, and especially children, at risk is unambivalent. That these (queer) children must become monstrous in order to protect themselves is, as the novel indicates, inevitable. As Ryman himself admits in the last chapter of the book, the tension between realism and fantasy is an essential tool for examining the ways in which it is possible to think the world differently, and, soberingly, the reasons that that reimagining falls short of its potential. (Knabe, "Viral Migrations" 82)

Ryman appears to reject the notion that fantasy can be curative; indeed, the 'real' Dorothy who turns up in the twentieth century as an aged ex-prostitute in a mental institution is appalled by the fantasy that the well-meaning but ineffectual Baum has created out of her life:

[The patients] had their first bad reaction to the TV that night. Wasn't more than five minutes into the movie when Old Dotty stood up and shouted. "Who put this on?" she demanded.... "How'd it get there?" she shouted, loud. "That's me. How did I get there?"

"It's just a movie, Dotty."

"Who said they could put me on that thing? They got it wrong! Wasn't like that. Only one room we had and couldn't afford no hired hands, I can tell you"" (239)

Dorothy is eventually mollified by the notion that it is, after all, just an old movie on TV, even though she knows perfectly well that this is her story — and that it's been sanitized and misrepresented, as the presence of queer people in normative culture so often is sanitized and misrepresented.¹⁷ Dorothy remains invisible, even in the appropriation and retelling of her own story. What this scene reveals is both the potential and the danger of transmuting memory into

¹⁷ Ryman's 'fantasy' of Dorothy's reaction to the *Wizard of Oz* is echoed in Goto's vision of Laura's disavowal of the portrait of her life publicized in *Little House on the Prairie*, both as a novel and as a television program.

fantasy. The absences, the vanishing acts, are profound and manifold in *Was*, including not only Dorothy and Jonathan, who vanish into the Kansas dust, but also Frances Gumm, who vanishes into a fog of alcohol and drugs before finally taking her own life. These are set against a backdrop of real historical disappearances that help to metaphorically illuminate the imbricated relationships between colonialism, the destruction of Native peoples and cultures, the writing of women, children and queer people out of history, and the relations of knowledge and power that govern the way in which the nation and its citizens are able to know about such things. Ryman's insistence on the lack of innocence in the *Wizard of Oz*'s setting in pioneer Kansas thus resonates with Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat's reminder that the "comforting words" of *Oz*'s mantra, "there's no place like home," were written

... in 1900 just as U.S. expansionism was yet again displacing Native America and denying its quest for a settled share of land, now met with a 'vanishing-world nostalgia. Comforting words, at a time when the abolition of slavery had given way to African-Americans fighting against sexually panicked cross-burners. Reassuring words, filmed by Victor Fleming in 1939 at the brink of a new era in modern history: one that brought the United States an unprecedented central role in the affairs of the 'ever-shrinking world.' (1)

Ryman identifies the ability to make visible and comprehensible such knowledges, with their hidden, ephemeral and misrecognized archives, with the ability to play off the tension between fantasy and history while remaining wholly in the grasp of neither:

Oz is, after all, only a place with flowers and birds and rivers and hills. Everything is alive there, as it is here if we care to see it. Tomorrow, we could all decide to live in a place not much different from Oz. We don't. We continue to make the world an ugly, even murderous place, for reasons we do not understand.

These reasons lie in both fantasy and history. Where we are gripped by history — our own personal history, our country's history. Where we are deluded by fantasy — our own fantasy, our country's fantasy. It is necessary to distinguish between history and fantasy wherever possible.

And then use them against each other. (369)

One of the reasons so many queer novels revolve around the figure of the queer child involves the necessity not merely to recuperate queer childhood, but to relocate the possibilities inherent in seeing history anew, in altering one's perspective, and in activating those fantasies that authorize the potential for utopian dreaming, for political activism, and for the creation of non-

heteronormative epistemologies and subjectivities.¹⁸ Locating oneself, however insubstantially, in the fantasy of Oz enables the queer artist to display the processes by which heteronormativity instantiates the ‘privilege of unknowing’ and dissolves the possibility of understanding queer childhood as an originary place of queer life and culture. The words of Dorothy’s mantra, as Mufti and Shohat argue, have

a doubly complicated meaning. On the one hand, they give expression to a Euro-American masculinist ideology of domesticity, verso to the recto of ideologies of imperious gregariousness, from the Monroe doctrine to the new world order. On the other hand, they recall communities of mobilization against precisely that hegemonism, especially the antiracist and anticolonial nationalism.
(1)

While Mufti and Shohat locate resistance to the imperial hegemony of Euro-American masculinist discourses in the fight of racialized and colonized peoples to call their own places home, their words also resonate with the queer and the queerly Canadian desire for a home-place outside of the hegemony of “masculinist ideology” and the machinery of empire.

Indeed, although the artists considered in this chapter express a diverse range of viewpoints about LGBT relationships to the concept of home, they all display a marked degree of ambivalence about its usefulness as a way of conceptualizing queer belonging in the nation, particularly when that belonging is already marked as non-belonging through what Sedgwick calls “the fractal intricacies of language, skin, migration, state” (“Queer and Now”). While it is tempting to read these works as reparative in the reading possibilities they offer to the audience, their treatment of queer childhood and the queer relationship to home is too uncertain for that. Reading these texts in the light of the present, caught in the tensions between living in a country in the process of offering marriage rights to its same-sex citizens but also in a country where queer-bashing persists and draws little public outrage, paranoid readings seem more called for than reparative ones. It is too easy to view LGBT work as mobilizing a series of calls for home that rely on narratives of transcendence and plurality — to insist, for example, that home is or must become the place where all children belong and none are abused, that home is or must

¹⁸ These include, in addition to the works discussed here, Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy*, which functions as a queer bildungsroman, Wayson Choy’s *The Jade Peony*, Timothy Findley’s *Headhunter*, Dionne Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, Hiromi Goto’s *Chorus of Mushrooms*, most of Anne Cameron’s novels, and Candis Jane Dorsey’s *A Paradigm of Earth*, in which the ‘queer child, is an adult alien whose mind has been emptied in order for it to learn Earth as a child does.

become the place where all adults are treated with equal dignity and respect, where none are disenfranchised, undervalued or threatened with violence on the basis of their interpellation within a schema of disavowed identifications. Mufti and Shohat, noting that cultural criticism has accentuated “the dissonance between place and desire,” insist that,

To be critical implies not fudging over this ambivalence, not giving in to ruling ideas of total mobility and ‘universal abandon,’ but also not dreaming of permanent and secure dwellings. The postcolonial critic resists putting on the ruby red shoes only to click his/her heels three times, for in the context of strict border-surveillance and severe passport control, belonging cannot be housed simply within the material space of walls and roofs, of fenced topographies and well-drawn maps. (1)

The queer postcolonial critics must perforce note the prevalence of border surveillance and migration control of the sexually othered. In Canada, same-sex partners have only been able to apply for immigration as family members since June 28, 2002. Prior to that, the only option was to apply under the humanitarian and compassionate provision of the Immigration Act, a provision which, although often successful, did not necessarily see the separation of partners, with or without children, as causing undue hardship in its own right. In fact, up until 1997, the Immigration Act included provisions for the automatic exclusion of all homosexual applicants. There is also widespread belief among the LGBT community in Canada, based on reports in the gay press of specific incidents, such as women being stopped from crossing the border to attend the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, that cross-border excursions to the US require, if not the positive performance of heterosexuality, at least the absence of all significations of queerness. Immigration applications to the US used to ask applicants if they suffered from “homosexuality or criminal psychopathology”; the automatic exclusion of queer immigrants to the US ceased in 1990 after gay Republican Barney Frank “spearheaded a successful campaign” in Congress (Rayside 268).

Quite apart from the transmigration of queer people, there is also the question of the movement of ideas across borders, particularly when those ideas are expressed in print or on film. To detail the lengthy and on-going fight by lesbian and gay bookstores against the arbitrary and discriminatory practices of Canada Customs would take a thesis in its own right. The details of one such fight, by Little Sisters bookstore in Vancouver, can be found in Janine Fuller and

Stuart Blackley's book *Restricted Entry: Censorship on Trial* (1995). However, although Little Sister's won its court case with a December 15, 2000, ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada that "[t]he Customs treatment was high-handed and dismissive of [the shop's] right to receive lawful expressive material which they had every right to import.... Little Sister's was targeted because it was considered 'different'" (Qtd. in Cossman, "Little Sister's"), the decision of the Court did not go so far as to strike down Customs' right to censor materials crossing the border, even when those materials were created by Canadians, or to reconsider the 1991 Butler decision's test for obscenity which, despite being designed to protect women from degrading and dehumanizing portrayal in straight pornography, has primarily been used against gay male publications. Brenda Cossman notes that,

As Little Sister's argues, this is a vague and subjective test, that allows decision makers to impose their own sexual morality. (One of the first rulings out of Ontario following Butler was that of a judge announcing that pictures of vanilla sex in a gay men's porn magazine were obscene because the men clearly did not know each other — and anonymous sex is 'dehumanizing'). ("Little Sister's")

Effectively, despite the judicial indictment of Canada Customs for prejudicial behaviour — virtually all of the materials stopped at the border was being imported without hindrance by other, non-queer bookstores across the country, and the charge of obscenity was broad enough to catch novels by Jane Rule, Sarah Schulman, Jean Genet and Oscar Wilde, not to mention a Chile pepper cookbook entitled *Hot, Hotter, Hottest* — the ruling left Customs in a position to continue patrolling the Canadian borders for 'bad ideas,' and especially for depictions of 'bad sex.'

Thus when Mufti and Shohat mobilize ideas of border surveillance and passport control to problematize within the postcolonial context the assertion of transcendent and liberatory encomiums of the liminal, the borderlands, their argument applies, if with somewhat different valences, to the border-crossing attempts of LGBT bodies, ontologies and epistemologies. The same is true when they argue that

In the repeated mutual impacting of divergent trajectories, claims, and memories that constitute the cultural landscape of late capitalism, the loss of home and the struggle to reclaim and reimagine it are experiences fraught with tension.... Nation, community, race, class, religion, gender, sexuality — each names a site for the enactment of the great drama of origins, loyalty, belonging, betrayal: in

short, of identity and identification. (2)

When LGBT artists in Canada attempt to respond to the discourses and practices that construct the public sphere as heteronormative, that see the nation as ‘home’ only to the most hegemonic parts of the population (not including the First Nations), and that constitute citizenship itself as always already heterosexual, their works articulate the difficulties of finding a place “in the great drama of origins, loyalty, belonging, betrayal.” For queerness has long been seen as a betrayal of gender and LGBT people were closely surveilled throughout the Cold War as potential traitors to the nation. If the situation has changed, it has done so sporadically, in ways that begin to recognize LGBT people as having rights of citizenship, without necessarily beginning to dismantle the walls of the citadel of heteronormativity.

If the federal government enacts legislation in October making lesbian and gay marriage legal across the country, will Canada seem more homely (*heimlich*, in Freud’s formulation of the relationship between the homely and the uncanny¹⁹) to some LGBT people? If so, the country will come to seem more unfamiliar and perhaps uncanny (*unheimlich*) to those most heavily invested in the maintenance of a patriarchal, heteronormative and invariably white hegemony. But not all queer people will benefit from lesbian and gay marriage, nor do all queer people wish to do so. Its lasting effects, as I have indicated, are in any case difficult to predict. At the same time, as the representation and visibility of queer people increase across the country, and begin to reflect “the ways that race, ethnicity, postcolonial nationality criss-cross with these *and other* identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses” (Sedgwick, “Queer and Now” 9), the ways in which queer people are able to mobilize ideas of home — of being at home, of calling Canada home, of calling home to Canada — are liable to proliferate. Whether or not such a multiplication of representations, such a clamour of previously unheard voices, will dismantle the ethos of active homophobia and queer-bashing that lingers in parts of the population is another question. The queerest response of all might be to argue that what is necessary is to deconstruct ideas of home and belonging, to make them difficult to mobilize by any one group at the expense of others, and to do this by insisting that home is a desire, as well as a place. Such a reconceptualization of home might actually be capable of surviving in a postcolonial, postnational

¹⁹ See my brief discussion of these terms at the beginning of Chapter One.

world of globalized sexualities and contested identities.

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