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No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!: Gay Male Effeminacy and the Culture of Shame.

Steven Dam

A Thesis

In

The Department

Of

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ABSTRACT

No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!: Gay Male Effeminacy and the Culture of Shame.

Steven Dam

Male homosexuality has long been associated with effeminacy. Yet, despite the long-standing historical association between effeminacy and male homosexuality, little research has examined the monitoring and punishing of effeminacy within the gay male community. This project is devoted to the study of gay male effeminacy and the shame that often accompanies its presence. What is it about effeminacy that continues to haunt the gay male community today? How, and why, is masculinity enforced by so many gay men, and what is at stake in the fight against all things flaming? What is wrong culturally about shaming effeminacy?

Looking at personal ads and specifically the phrase “No femmes, queens or flamers!,” this thesis examines the gender hierarchy within the gay male community that privileges the masculine by subjugating effeminacy. I argue that the gay male community employs a practice of shame and shaming in order to consciously reject, suppress and oppress effeminacy. Integral to this thesis is how a culture of shame fuels the process of inclusion/exclusion by, and among, gay men. This thesis also examines the intersection of race, gender and sexuality, examining how both the gay male and the Asian male bodies have been discursively constructed as effeminate. Overall, this thesis critiques current modes of gay and lesbian politics that strive for normalization, elsewhere known as assimilation, tolerance, or sexual ‘minority rights,’ particularly with respect of gender.

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Introduction

As an on-again-off-again single gay male, I often spend time procrastinating on the internet chatting with other gay males, perusing through gay personal ads, or looking at online profiles of other gay males my age -- strictly for research, of course. Although this was once the secret cabal where I uncovered and discovered my first taste of a new gay world, filled with the social and sexual desires of other curious gay males, it has since become an everyday habit born out of repetition and boredom, much like smoking or biting my nails. In many ways, gay chat rooms and personal ads have shaped my own understanding of gay identity, in particular and the gay community, in general. In my own personal hunt to find out about all things gay, chat rooms and personal ads have been especially fundamental – a textual world of queer desire accessed in the comfort of my own private bedroom.

The personal ads are always a treat. I read them more out of curiosity than of need or interest – like the horoscopes, they simply make up a part of my daily routine. The act is an exhilaratingly voyeuristic activity – spying on otherwise unsuspecting victims whose only crime is the desire for a date, a friend or a relationship, sexual or otherwise. Particularly in the gay and lesbian community newspapers, where they are cozy neighbours with the seedy telephone sex-lines, erotic massage services and pictures of half-naked escorts, reading the personals is at once a thrilling and provocative, sometimes romantically hopeful, and other times hopelessly lonely.

In my decade-long habit, one of the most striking phrases I have come across in gay male personal ads is the phrase “No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!” The advertiser of this personal ad states explicitly that he is not interested in finding an effeminate gay

male partner...but why? Is this a bias in favour of masculinity, or a bias against effeminacy? If this were simply a matter of personal preference, surely I would come across a similar statement to the effect of “No Butchs, Machos or Beefcakes.” Yet, such a statement is nowhere to be found.

In his own study of gay men’s personal ads, J. Michael Bailey discovers a similar phenomenon. In his research¹, Bailey examines more than 2700 personal ads placed by gay men in gay community newspapers across the United States. For each ad, he looks for gender-related words and keeps count of how often the advertiser (1) requested a masculine partner (2) requested a feminine partner (3) describes himself as masculine (4) describes himself as feminine. Bailey notes that one of the differences between gay male personal ads and heterosexual male personal ads is that the gay men’s ads use many more words related to gender conformity and nonconformity, such as “masculine, feminine, butch, femme, straight-acting, straight-looking and flaming” (Bailey 77).

Bailey’s observations are telling: When advertisers requested either masculine or feminine characteristics in a partner, they requested masculine traits 96% of the time. Furthermore, when they described themselves as masculine or feminine, they described masculine traits 98% of the time. In all the ads in which an advertiser was explicit about what kind of gender related trait he did *not* want, it was a feminine trait: “no femmes” or “no flammers” was the most common request (Bailey 78). Bailey’s research notes the same circumstance of masculine-boasting ads coupled with the fear and revile of all things femme and flaming. But what is the function of the line “No femmes, queens or

¹ Bailey, J Michael, The Man Who Would Be Queen. Joseph Henry Press, USA, 2003.

flamers?” What is at stake for those who utter it? What are the consequences for those targeted by it?

The line “No femmes, queens or flamers!” is significant for a number of academic and theoretical reasons. Being a gay male who studies, and is invested, in gender and queer theory, I realize the implications of the hateful, exclusionary statement. But on a personal level, I also feel strangely interpellated by the gay male personal ad listed at the beginning of this chapter. I suppose there is always some sort of personal self-evaluation when reading personal ads, measuring one’s own qualities to those sought in the ad. Loves to have fun? Of course. Outgoing? Definitely. Good sense of humour? I’d like to think so!

But the request “No femmes, queens or flamers!” creates a sense of anxiety and discomfort. I don’t necessarily consider myself the most masculine or macho of men. Even the idea of calling myself a “man” seems somehow ill-fitting, when I think of my own scrawny, boyish body and especially young-looking face. And while I am quite confident and secure in my queer sexuality, I do not identify as straight-acting or straight-looking – in the same way that I do not identify as straight, period. The advertiser of this ad also works under the assumption that I understand *straight-acting* and *straight-looking* to be synonymous with “masculine” rather than “desiring the opposite (female) sex.”

Yet, I don’t necessarily consider myself a ‘femme’ or a ‘queen’ or a ‘flamer’ though I recognize I may have my flamboyant moments. But my apprehension of the request “No femmes queens or flamers!” makes me apprehensive because, ultimately, it isn’t me who decides whether I fit that description, but rather left to the opinion of the author of the ad. When he advertises “No femmes,” what is it exactly that he is

eschewing? Does he judge (dismiss?) effeminacy as related to interest? Voice? Movement and gesture? Lisp? Profession? Style and fashion? Body, physicality and fitness?

The apprehension of my own gender nonconformity has been evident since my childhood. As a boy, I was often called a sissy by my peers. I preferred playing with girls rather than boys. I often felt that I had more in common with girls. I disliked competitive sports such as football, baseball and soccer, though my parents registered me in as many afterschool sport activities I could fit in, despite my horrible coordination and general lack of interest. In the privacy of my own bedroom, I made up intricate dance routines front of the mirror to my favorite pop songs of the time. For all intents and purposes, I was an effeminate boy. A sissy.

As a twenty-something adult, I still continue to enjoy stereotypically effeminate interests: I enjoy musicals over pro-sports, I enjoy the Fashion section of the newspaper over the Front Page, Sports or Automobiles, and – even at 26 – I continue to make up dance routines in front of the mirror. Although I formally tell people that I “came out of the closet” at 17, I had actually been “outed” at a much earlier age. I had been called “gay,” “fag,” “queer” and “homo” all my life, even before I knew the meanings of the words. When I finally came out at age 17, to myself, to my friends and finally to my family, it came as no great surprise. Instead of revealing what was concealed, I had seemingly confirmed what most people already knew. Thus, the question remains... when the advertiser from the personal ad states, “No femmes, queens or flammers!” is he directing this to my attention? What is it about this exclusionary phrase that motivates my own personal investment in its utterance?

This phrase "No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!" is the inspiration for this thesis. This project is devoted to the study of gay male effeminacy – fey, flaming², swishy, queenish, loud, in-your-face flamboyant effeminacy. Looking at a variety of seemingly disparate sites, this thesis examines the gender hierarchy within the gay male community that privileges the masculine by subjugating the effeminate. What is it about effeminacy that continues to haunt the gay male community today? How, and why, is masculinity enforced by so many gay men, and what is at stake in the fight against all things flaming? What is wrong culturally about shaming effeminacy? What does the shaming of effeminacy, both within and outside of the gay community, enable? Conversely, what does it disable?

Employing a critique in queer theory and sexuality studies, this project seeks to 'queer' effeminacy and the culture of shame that often accompanies its arrival. In this work, I employ Silvan Tomkins' reconceptualization of shame, as described by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1995) and Elspeth Probyn (2005). Reframing shame through the polarity of shame-interest rather than the dichotomy of pride-shame, this project highlights the importance of studying shame, of confronting shame and of speaking about shame as an emergent practice of queer politics. My intentions, however, are not to reinscribe queerness or effeminacy as shameful. Rather, I will illustrate what the culture of shame enables: the politics of normalization, and the exclusion of difference.

² In this thesis, I use the term "flamer" to identify gay men who visibly and openly express their effeminacy and queer sexuality through physical, and cultural flamboyance. I also use the term "flaming" as the adjective to describe the display of queer effeminacy through physical, gestural and cultural flamboyance.

History and Context

Many gender and queer historians have written about the connection between heterosexual men's homophobia and their prejudice against effeminacy (Harry 1995; Hopkins 1992; Pronger 1990). The focus of these studies has been mostly on the societal prejudice against homosexuality – homophobia – rather than against effeminacy. Yet, despite the long-association between effeminacy and male homosexuality, little research has examined the particular loathing, disgust and shame of effeminacy *within* the gay male community. Gay men still often express negative attitudes towards effeminacy, ranging from the subtle to the openly hostile (Bergling 2001). Gay men live in a culture where the policing and self-monitoring of gender conformity is heightened (Pronger 1990; Levine 1992). Likewise, gay men scrutinize the gender-conformity of their peers, and either reward them with privilege or punish them with shame (Warner 1999). As such, effeminate gay men have become increasingly marginalized in their own community. More than simply an extension of dominant gender ideology, the reluctance to accept effeminate gay men in gay communities is motivated by the belief that flamboyance, flaming extravagance and queenish behaviour reinforces and repathologizes the effeminate stereotype. The goal of this thesis reveals how, in the process of consciously rejecting effeminacy, gay male culture fuels a culture of shame that enables hegemonic white masculine ideology and compulsory heterosexuality. In other words, the desire for normalization through the constant denial of effeminacy maintains an investment in a culture of shame. Moreover, I argue that the strategy of adhering to gender-conforming hypermasculinity and “straight-acting” uses structures and discourses that continue sustains a gender system that marginalizes and oppresses not

only effeminacy but other non-masculinities including: women, femininity, female masculinity, and other forms of gender-nonconformity.

Methodology

In her discussion of female masculinity, Judith Halberstam (1998) writes that one of the questions often posed by queer theorists is how we should collect and interpret information on sexual identity. In a course outline on queer methodological practices³, Halberstam writes,

Apart from the institutional questions raised by the history(ies) of queer studies, most queer projects bring with them a set of methodological questions. If one wants to study gay male sexual subcultures for example should one be studying personal ads, reading gay porn or engaging in ethnographic research in gay cruising areas? ... If the answer is "all of the above" then how do we become competent in multiple methodologies and how do we combine them in competent and responsible ways. In this course, I hope students from a variety of disciplines will feel encouraged to come with wide, wild and varied research interests into sexuality and its relations to race, class and gender in order to explore the possibilities for producing our own queer methodologies. Different methodologies of course allow for different research projects and extend indefinitely the parameters of queer studies. (Halberstam "Grad")

³ Halberstam, Judith. "Grad Course Description Winter 1998." Department of Literature at the University of California Home Page. 30 Sep 2004 <<http://literature.ucsd.edu/cds/1998/wi98g.html>>.

In her book Female Masculinity, Halberstam (1998) describes the creation of a more fluid interdisciplinary methodology. In order to pursue the multiple forms of gender presented within female masculinity, Halberstam deploys what she terms as a “queer methodology,” using a combination of other available disciplinary practices. A queer methodology, as Halberstam explains, “is a scavenger methodology that uses different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from the traditional studies of human behaviour (13). Distinguishing from simple interdisciplinary studies, Halberstam asserts that this methodology is queer “because it attempts to remain supple enough to respond to the various locations of information on female masculinity and betrays a certain disloyalty to conventional disciplinary methods” (Halberstam 10). Moreover, she argues that this form of ‘queer methodology’ is aligned with the politically charged ‘queer’ in that it typifies a form of refusal and indifference towards convention (Halberstam 10).

In my own work, I argue that my methodology can also be considered queer. First and foremost, my work can be broadly defined under the branch of queer theory. Based on Judith Butler’s (1990) seminal work Gender Trouble, queer theory asserts that identity is performatively articulated as the effect of “regulatory regimes” – a constraint that queer theory attempts to transgress, subvert and disrupt (Butler 3). Challenging the previous work in Lesbian and Gay studies, queer theory questions the usefulness of stable categories of sexual desire. For Butler, categories such as male, female, gay and straight are not givens but rather social constructions we constantly perform and reperform in order to naturalize them. Queer theorists seek to speak about gender, sexuality and desire in ways that problematize the referent. Paradoxically, however, queer is itself used as a

category of identification, as an umbrella term for those who fall outside the range of heterosexual and heteronormative practices, as well as transgendered and transsexual identities or gender-queer.

One of the important aspects of gender theory coming from queer theory is the distinction between sex and gender. Sex – male/female – is seen as distinct from gender – feminine/masculine – in that sex has been taken to relate to a biological division between men and women and gender to refer to the social constructions masculine and feminine. In other words, gender has been regarded as that which we make out of the biological sex difference. However, my analysis also questions the limitations of distinguishing between only these two categories, masculine/feminine. In chapter one, borrowing from the work of Sedgwick (1996), I ‘queer’ a binary understanding of gender, carving space for new genders including, but not limited to, effeminacy, female masculinity, butch, femme, etc. In this sense, I am also attempting to ‘queer’ effeminacy by calling into question how we conceive of effeminacy in relation to “normal” gender conformity.

I would argue that my methodology can be considered ‘queer’ by its refusal of conventional methodological practices. While my project might most readily be recognized as cultural studies and textual analysis, or of interdisciplinarity, I would argue that my own methodology can be considered ‘queer’ in the scavenger combination of multiple forms of media. My investigation is primarily concerned with personal ads as my site of exploration. As a medium that straddles the public and the personal, personals are particularly revealing in terms of how identities are described, and what identities are desired. Gay male personal ads are especially revealing in their heightened concern with

regards to gender identity and gender normativity. As such, personal ads are a fitting illustration of gender, desire and gender shame. However, it isn't necessarily personal ads that are my key site to critique. My inspiration is not necessarily the entire world of personal ads in general, but rather the specific exclusionary line "No femmes, queens or flammers."

However, my investigation is not limited to the site of personal ads. Anti-effeminate sentiment can be found in many varying forms, and I am more interested in the culture that fuels the declaration of the term "No femmes, queens or flammers" than the actual line itself. In chapter one, I examine both popular and academic writing about effeminacy, particularly with respect to the renewed interest in men and masculinities' studies. Looking at the body of writing on masculinities, I reveal how these discourses limit their discussion and conception of masculinity in a particularly contained way – one that is hegemonic, white and patriarchal.

In the third chapter, I complicate current arguments made about the expression "No femmes, queens or flammers" by authors Tim Bergling, Francisco J. Gonzales and J. Michael Bailey by examining effeminacy in relation to the construction of race. In this chapter, my exploration focuses on two sites, a popular magazine feature and an Asian video pornography star to illustrate how historical interpretations of race – specifically, the Asian male body – have been constructed in relation to effeminacy and gender-nonconformity. The examination of pornographic video can also be tied to personal ads, in the ways they both construct and disseminate ideas about sexual desire. In all, these sites work in relation to one another to construct a critique of masculinity as

white, hetero and gendernormative and patriarchal. Combined, these sites also illustrate the complex intersection of racial, gendered and sexual identity.

Like Halberstam, this project is more interested in collecting information on effeminacy, particularly when its discussion has been stifled or ignored. Precisely because of this lack, my methodological practice forgoes traditionally rigid notions of media studies methodologies in exchange for more fluid practices that allow for a more developed analysis of effeminacy when and where it appears. The desire to theorize effeminacy supercedes the desires to remain loyal to a consistent or traditional methodological output. In this way, I am very much indebted to the notion of a queer methodology as an open-ended interdisciplinary practice to explore ideas of effeminacy and the culture of shame.

Autobiographical Narratives of Shame as a Queer Practice

I would also like to appeal for autobiographical narratives of shame as an emergent queer practice. Generally, shame is a difficult thing to write about. It is, what Elspeth Probyn (2005) refers to as an “exposure of intimacies of selves in public” (130). One of the difficulties of speaking about shame is that we are often ashamed to admit our shames. But in the case of this project, the confession of shame through personal narrative seems only fitting. As Probyn writes,

shame is produced out of the clashing of mind and body, resulting in new acts of subjectivity consubstantial with the words in which they are expressed. In this sense, shame cannot be simply represented as if it were a quality of the person or an aspect of the situation to be

reproduced....Shame cannot be conceived of as an external object that could be dispassionately described, nor is it a purely personal feeling. Shame is subjective in the strong sense of bringing into being an entity or an idea through a specific explosion of mind, body, place and history. It must also have effects that are subjective, in that strong sense, for the writer and the reader. (148)

Probyn offers a strong argument in support of personal narratives of shame. Of particular relevance from this passage, I would like to highlight that shame is not an external object but rather a subjective product of bodies, histories and contexts. In this thesis, I begin each chapter with a textual object of study as an entry point into my analysis of effeminacy and the culture of shame. In the first chapter, this takes the form of a magazine clipping celebrating what the author calls “the new masculinity.” In the second and third chapter, I enter my analysis through the example of personal ads. What I would like to highlight is not my examination of these specific bits of texts, but rather the personal act of reading them. In some cases, this may be confusion, anger, or indifference. In other cases, this may be feelings of shame. As the reader, you may not necessarily understand or sympathize with my own feelings of shame, nor might you relate to them explicitly. In these precise histories and contexts, the effects and affects of shame are not universal. We are all, however, familiar with the feeling of shame. It is these feelings of shame, and how we go about negotiating these feelings that one can relate to. As a subjective product of bodies, places, histories and contexts, how else to talk about shame if not in terms of autobiography?

Additionally, many academics and theorists shy away from narrative, particularly with respect to autobiography. This is multiplied when writing about personal narratives of shame. Ien Ang describes her own anxiety of being too ‘autobiographical’ in her book, On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West, and her fear of “coming over as self-indulgent or narcissistic, of resorting to personal experience as a privileged source of authority, uncontrollable and therefore unamendable to others” (23). Writing autobiographically in academic research might provoke fears of self-indulgence, or privileged authority but I argue that for many, it is also the fear of being taken less seriously. Fortunately for Ang, she finds comfort in a quote by Stuart Hall (1992), who writes that “autobiography is usually thought of as seizing the authority of authenticity... but in order not to be authoritative, I’ve got to speak autobiographically” (Hall 277). In a similar vein, Janet Gunn (1982) writes that autobiography is not conceived as “the private act of a self-writing” but as the “cultural act of a self reading” (Gunn 1). Gunn asserts that “what is at stake in autobiographical discourse is not a question of the subject’s authentic ‘me’ but one of the subject’s location in a world through an active interpretation of experiences that one calls one’s own in a particular, “worldly” context – a reflexive positioning of oneself in history and culture” (2). I argue that writing personally about shame is one of the best ways to locate it in history and context. In “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s Art of the Novel,” Sedgwick suggests that shame is what makes us queer, “both in the sense of having a queer identity and in the sense that queerness is in volatile relation to identity, destabilizing it even as it makes it” (Sedgwick qtd. in Crimp 64). I argue that the study of shame – in this case, the autobiographical accounts of my own queer shame – can be considered emergent practice of queer theory,

in its attempt to both claim and destabilize effeminacy. The attention to autobiography can be considered a queer cultural practice of self-reading, in its specific investments in shame at a particular time, and within a specific context. It would be impossible to convey moments of shame in this thesis without locating them in the personal.

Paying respect to the academic practice of ‘outing oneself’ within one’s work, I argue that speaking about shame autobiographically can, and should, be considered a queer methodological practice. These personal narratives of shame can also be considered ‘queer’ in that they are politically charged – they voice my own opposition and indifference to normative shaming practices that maintain the dominance of heteronormativity and gender-convention. My investment in the study of shame and the public airing of my own shame-filled anecdotes, along with the dismissal of traditional methodological practices in lieu of a fluid scavenger approach to methodology can be considered distinctly and politically queer.

Outline

This thesis is divided into three chapters, moving from the general to the specific. In chapter one, I critically examine the lack of desire to discuss effeminacy and outline how academics and popular media writers alike have held fast and tight to rigid notions of masculinity. Looking specifically at the field of men and masculinities’ studies, I illustrate how two “improper” non-normative forms of gender – female masculinity and male effeminacy – are ignored. While Judith Halberstam (1998) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1996) rightfully assert that this lack of discussion is due to the essentialist logic of many gender theorists, I argue that the omission of male effeminacy in the study

of gender is also due to a culture of shame. I argue that shame silences, punishes, and oppresses effeminacy, and this happens academically, politically and culturally. More than invisibility, this chapter is about critically examining the culture of shame by, and within, the gay male community. As such, chapter one confronts this shame head on by speaking openly about effeminacy, defining the terms as I see fit, and hopefully liberating it from the culture of shame that seeks to stifle its discussion.

Chapter two of this thesis examines the lack of desire for effeminacy in personal ads, as well as shame of declaring (or in the case of many gay men, admitting or confessing) their own gender non-conformity. This chapter begins by looking particularly at the phrase “No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!,” revealing how and why their participants are so open to shame. I argue that participants of gay male personal ads are particularly vulnerable to gender shame in the public airing of private desires. In this space, certain genders are valued and privileged over others, exemplified by the abundance of “masculine straight acting men seeking same” or alternatively, “No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!” This can be seen as creating a scale of acceptability – what I refer to as a hierarchy of shame – within queerness, where gay males who do not threaten gender normativity are given preferential treatment over those whose gender nonconformity feeds the discursive association between queerness and effeminacy. Integral to this chapter is how a culture of shame fuels the process of inclusion/exclusion by, and among, gay men. As I argue, the unrelenting shaming practices requires gay men to conform to gender-role expectations in the politics of inclusion.

In chapter three, I critically re-develop arguments made in my prior chapters by including race into a discussion of gender and sexuality. This chapter highlights the

paradox of effeminacy, as both a marker of colonization and a moment of self-identification – moments of both pride and of shame. Historically, both “queer” and “Asian” male identities have been constructed as effeminate. Using precisely this intersection of race, gender, sexuality and nationality – specifically my own race (Asian), gender (male), sexuality (queer) and nationality (Canadian-born and raised), I argue two analogous points. First, I contend that in the conscious rejection of the effeminate Asian stereotype, citizenship within the “model minority” Asian-Canadian male community demands compulsory heterosexuality. In the political project of defending diasporic Asian masculinity, the visibility of Asian queerness is denied. Second, where and when queer Asian visibility exists, it happens at the expense of re-effeminizing queer Asian males, particularly in the form of sexually available “bottoms.” In either case, I argue that the resistance to these stereotypes cannot take place by replacing them with a politic of “good” or “positive” representation, or of “model minority” rights. This strategy, rather than dismantling various gender and racial hierarchies, instead reinvokes the very discourses it hopes to refute.

Finally, this project critiques current modes of gay and lesbian politics that strive for normalization, assimilation, tolerance and ‘minority rights,’ particularly with respect to gender and sexual normativity. Far from dismantling the sexual and gender hierarchies that exist, I argue that a politic that strives for normalization does little to disrupt or contest the culture of shame that continues to haunt the gay male community. While this thesis is primarily concerned with the public shaming of effeminacy, I argue that a queer politic invested and united against the culture of shame can contest other inequalities currently silenced, oppressed or ignored.

Chapter 1 – Effeminacy and the Culture of Shame

*“New man, metrosexual, homosexual, sensitive new-age guy, or someone who defies categorization... today’s man is undergoing profound changes. Through the Western world, men are re-evaluating their values, daily lives, and pride. In this special feature, we explore **the new masculinity.**”*

- VIA Destinations Magazine, August/September 2004⁴.

It seems that nowadays, masculinity is everywhere. Rather, what I mean to say is that both popular media as well as academic writing seems interested in everything to do with “masculinity.” Everywhere I look, someone is declaring *new* masculinities, a *shift* in masculinities, or “renewed interest” in all things masculine. Most recently, the New York Times devoted a number of features to metrosexuality⁵ – the great movement of heterosexual men to become more daringly “feminine” or “gay” with their style – inspiring other nightly news segments and cable TV shows to look anew at masculinity. My favorite magazine, iD, recently devoted its February 2005 issue to the topic of Masculinity.⁶ The View, a popular daytime talkshow featuring five women discussing current issues, has renamed their Wednesday as “Men’s day,” focusing their attention on the issues that affect men and masculinity. Even academic writing and cultural theory

⁴ VIA Destinations Magazine. Ed. Luc Belanger. Aug.-Sep. 2004: 31.

⁵ Mark Simpson is credited with coining the term “metrosexual” in 1994, in an article in The Independent. His description of someone who is a metrosexual was printed on the internet’s Salon.com. He wrote, “The typical metrosexual is a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis – because that’s where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are. He might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference.” Warren St Jean picked up the term and made it a prominent feature of the New York Times, which fueled its popularity in mainstream North American popular culture. For more information, please see: McFedries, Paul. Word Spy: The Word Lover’s Guide to Modern Culture. New York: Broadway Publishers, 2004.

⁶ “The Masculine Issue.” i-D Magazine. Ed. Jones, Terry. 1 February 2005.

can not escape the grip of the masculine imperative, where bookshops quickly make room for the growing field of Men and Masculinities' studies, shelved next to women's studies and gender theory.

Recently, the VIA Destinations magazine proudly declared its Fall 2004 installment "The Men's Issue." Boasting "15 pages devoted to men!", editor-in-chief Luc Boulanger writes that "[masculinity] is one of the hottest topics of our time" and that "the new masculinity is an essential component to a freer, more just society." The sentiment of "new masculinity," displayed here in Destinations magazine, typifies the current discourse in popular culture celebrating masculinity at great lengths. In many ways, it asks us to pat ourselves on our masculine backs for all of the changes we've made to capital-m masculinity. Central to this new inquiries into our changing ideas and ideals about masculinity is the notion of pride. The words – the choice of words used – to accompany this interest in masculinity all share in the same celebratory sentiment – "Cheers to masculinity," they declare. "Be proud of your new masculinity" these writers assure us, "but just in case, we'll keep reminding you of how manly you are!" The idea of *new* masculinity, or a *renewed interest* in masculinity seems funny to me, as though "old" masculinity went on a little vacation for a while, quietly hidden away... but all of makes me wonder, did masculinity ever disappear? Has masculinity even changed? And were we ever ashamed of masculinity in the first place?

This thesis has little to do with masculinity. Unlike the proud masculine sentiment that seems to be growing around me, I am not interested in discussing masculinity – and especially not for the sake of celebration. Rather, quite the opposite.

When people ask me what my thesis is about, I often reply as simply as possible: “Effeminacy. More specifically, gay effeminacy. Gay male effeminacy” whereupon people nod, as if they understand completely. “Effeminacy. Male effeminacy. Gay male effeminacy, yes, of course,” they often reply, as if what I am saying makes perfect sense to them. But their eyes are curious for more. “Do you mean that whole metrosexuality thing? Queer Eye for the Straight Guy?” But no, I do not mean metrosexuality or Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, although they may come up in my discussion. “I mean effeminacy. Gay male effeminacy. Flamers. Flamboyance. Faggy gay men. The revile, the loathing and especially the shame of the flaming, particularly within the gay male community.” Again, most of my friends nod as if they are in complete understanding. “Yes, flamers. Flamboyant gay men. My gay friend <insert name> is a total flamer!”

As a concept, gay male effeminacy is something that doesn’t take much explaining – to most people, the concept is fairly familiar. Ironically, however, there is very little writing about the notion of gay male effeminacy. While articles on “new” masculinity have made recently headlines, hidden beneath the rhetoric of masculine cheer lies the deep, shameful secret of effeminacy, particularly the kind of wimpy, weak and faggoty effeminacy that makes everyone nervous and that no one cares to discuss. This chapter is interested in exactly this type of effeminacy – Flamboyant, excessive, loud, queer, revolting, in-your-face faggoty effeminacy.

This chapter examines the lack of discussion about effeminacy in academic studies. This lack is evident in gender theory, queer theory and especially the field of men and masculinities’ studies. Deviating from this pattern, this project lays its interest

in effeminacy and why we attach to much shame to its utterance, its associations and its declaration. This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first, I examine the current academic body of work on masculinity, and outline how writing on masculinity is framed. Critiquing specifically the field of men and masculinities' studies, this section argues that masculinity is celebrated in a particularly normative, patriarchal manner, and one that essentializes the link between men and masculinity. In the second section, I contend that shame is inherent in a discussion of effeminacy, particularly queer flamboyant effeminacy. This section argues that shame monitors, restricts, silences and punishes effeminacy, all the while elevating the status and privilege of hegemonic, heteronormative masculinity. In the final section of this chapter, I lay out the key terms and definitions that will be used in the subsequent chapters of this project. This defining of terms is politically-charged: in addition to articulating what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls a "nonce-taxonomy," it also refuses to succumb to the culture of shame by speaking openly about queer flamboyant effeminacy. Overall, this chapter argues that the study of effeminacy is integral component to both gender studies and queer theory.

1.1 A Critique of Men and Masculinities' studies.

Like the current trend in popular culture, academia – particularly cultural studies and gender studies – has taken a particular interest in men and masculinity as well. Emerging from the fields of feminism, women's studies and gender studies, there has been an increased interest in research relating specifically to men and masculinities. This eruption of work on men and masculinities has become large enough to constitute its own "new" field of academia, spanning a variety of disciplines and employing a wide range of

theoretical resources. Similar to feminist theory, the focus of *men and masculinities' studies* varies enormously, taking on a broad range of subjects pertinent to masculinity – schooling (Mac and Ghail 1994), fatherhood (Pleck 1987), post-war bachelorhood (Osgerby 2002), sports and sexuality (Pronger 1990), etc.

Ironically, traditional scholarship has always been implicitly focused on men. Written by and about men, conventional histories have by and large treated male experience as central, “to the extent that women’s lives have remained largely hidden from history” (Rowbotham qtd. in Osgerby 7). Harry Brod (2002), a popular editor and author in the field of *men and masculinities*, writes that “academia as a whole already constitutes one grand course in Men’s studies” (163). However, Carrigan, Connell and Lee remark that “though there had been books about masculinity before the 1970s, there has not been a *genre* debating the nature of masculinity and its social expression” (567). Influenced and informed by feminism and gender studies, Brod asserts that the field of *men and masculinities studies* seeks to “situate masculinities as objects of study on par with femininities,” hoping to advance the notions of masculinity and male experience as “specific and varying social-historical cultural formations” (2). According to Lynne Segal, “it focuses upon men’s own experiences, generates evidence of men’s gender specific suffering and has given birth to a new field of inquiry” (160).

Judith Kegan Gardiner provides a thorough outlining of the field in her introduction to the book Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions (2002). As Gardiner describes, the history of *masculinities studies* is one ripe with feud and antagonism. As she explains, “the women’s liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s argued an antagonistic relationship between feminism and masculinity that was

reciprocated in much popular discourse, while masculinity studies within the academy in the 1970s and 1980s developed a conflicted dependency on feminist theories and often housed its courses within women's and gender studies programs" (Gardiner 2). In the 1990s, a masculinist men's movement emerged in the public and political spheres, seeking to "restore" male dominance over women and deny feminist advances (Gardiner 2). These movements were motivated by the desire to ameliorate the condition of men, while ignoring the oppression of women (Gardiner 2). At the same time, within the academy, queer theory emerged, influencing gender studies through the destabilization of heteronormativity, and post-colonial discourse contributed to the field by intersecting discussions of sex and gender with that of race (Gardiner 2). Gardiner asserts that the current field of *masculinities' studies* has progressed into an academic realm influenced and informed by its history, and the varying shifts and changes in theoretical positions. She summarizes that the current field of "academic masculinity [has] matured as an independent field that is influenced and informed by queer theory, critical 'race' studies and various post-structuralisms as well as by the full range of feminisms" (Gardiner 2).

Gardiner's account of the emergence and maturation of *masculinities' studies*, however, idealizes its history. Despite Gardiner's suggestion that the field of *masculinities studies* has been influenced and informed by queer theory, gender studies, post-colonial studies and post-structuralism, the majority of work within this field suggests otherwise. One common criticism of *masculinities' studies* is its treatment of masculinity as a singular unit, and one that is usually white, heterosexual and gendernormative. Classified as "hegemonic masculinity," it reinscribes one particular form as the dominant, normative masculinity where the burden of "difference" is placed

on racial, sexual, ethnic or class-based subjectivities, articulated as “alternative masculinities.” This classification of hegemonic/alternative masculinities pays little attention to the complex interrelationship between gender, race and sexuality (for further discussion, see Chapter 3 of this thesis).

In addition, the majority of work within this field tends to examine masculinity only in relation to men and vice-versa. Masculinity, for these authors, is about men. In turn, the only gender afforded to men is masculinity. The relationship between men (as sex) and masculinity (as gender) is essentialized. This overly simplistic link between men and masculinity lies at the very heart of *Men and Masculinities’ studies*, to the point that it ignores an entire body of work pertinent to men, masculinity or gender that does not fit into its essentialist understanding of men, on the one hand, and masculinity, on the other. As such, many important works on men and/or masculinities by women are overlooked, or excluded from its anthologies, bibliographies, and mythologies. Feminist, gender and queer theorists such as Judith Halberstam, Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Sally Munt have all contributed to the study of masculinities, but are rarely considered by authors working under the guise of *Men and Masculinities’ studies*. The work of these particular feminist, gender and queer theorists destabilizes the link between systems of sex and gender (between the biological body and the socially constructed “masculinity”) and undermines the very foundations upon which *Men and Masculinities’ studies* is based. The acknowledgement by these theorists of a division of the sex/gender system challenges the assumption that masculinity belongs exclusively to men and that men must be restricted to the gender known as “masculinity.”

Thus, even as authors and editors such as Brod, Kauffman, Whitehead, Gardiner, Segal, Pronger, etc may pay lip service to a social constructionist framework, they often retain a division between men and women, and the implicit essentialist assumption that masculinity belongs to men and femininity to women. This is illustrated most obviously in the tendencies of *Men and Masculinities' studies* to propose notions of “new,” “shifts” or “crises” in masculinity, rather than complicating the male/female and masculine/feminine divisions – demonstrated in particular by the works of Adams (1997), Brod and Kaufman (1994), Clare (2004) and Clum (2002).

As a consequence, more critical, non-essentialist discussions of men and masculinity have been excluded from this field of study. As Judith Halberstam (1998) notes, what emerges from *Men and Masculinities' studies* is instead “a body of work on masculinity that evinces absolutely no interest in masculinity without men” (13). The field leaves unquestioned the validity of the sex/gender distinction and the link between biological “men” and the culturally constructed “masculinity.” Despite the best interest of many authors to present a men’s version of feminist/gender studies, or a post-feminist response to men and gender, *Men and Masculinities' studies* retains outdated assumptions on the sex/gender system, while neglecting to view gender through a critical eye. As a consequence, two particular issues that are left out of its study are female masculinity and male effeminacy.

Essentializing Masculinity.

In an otherwise ordinary anthology on men and masculinities titled Constructing Masculinity (1996), editors Berger, Wallis and Watson compile an expected and standard

collection of texts on men and masculinities. For the most part, the texts that make up the anthology fall victim to the same criticisms plaguing *Masculinities' studies* in general. However, the inclusion of a text by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in the anthology stands out in striking defiance. In her article, "Gosh, Boy George, You Must Be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity!" Sedgwick uses an interview between a radio disc jockey and androgynous pop icon Boy George to help stimulate, and disrupt a conversation about masculinity. The title of her text is inspired by a disc jockey who was so overcome with excitement while interviewing Boy George, and declared "Gosh, Boy George...!" Using this tiny anecdote as her source for theorization, Sedgwick outlines how the "hapless" Long Island DJ forms his understanding of gender. As she examines the DJ's conception of Boy George's gender identity, she rationalizes:

Gosh, Boy George must really be secure in *something* when he has the courage to perform in drag – and he is a boy, at least his name says he is, so what he is secure *in* must be 'masculinity,' 'his' masculinity. (Sedgwick 12).

Sedgwick's point here is an important one. The presupposition that assumes Boy George must be secure in his masculinity (because masculinity is the only gendered trait available to the subject of men) retains an essentialist understanding of the system of sex/gender. This exemplifies the same uncomplicated and essentialist understanding of sex/gender from which most writers in *Men and Masculinities' studies* begin.

Sedgwick's intentions here are two-fold: first, she uses her article to carve out a space for her (and others) to write about masculinities separate from men, emphasizing that sometimes masculinity has *nothing* to do with men. Secondly, her inclusion

consciously undermines the anthology by disputing the presupposition that everything pertaining to men must be classified as masculinity, and everything that can be said about masculinity pertains only to men. Sedgwick critiques the editors (and by extension, the field of *Men and Masculinities' studies*) for remaining committed to an essentialist linking of masculinity to maleness. Instead, Sedgwick stresses that it is “important to drive a wedge in, early and often and if possible conclusively, between the two topics, masculinity and men, whose relation to one another it is so difficult to presume” (12). Highlighting the distinction of systems of sex and gender, she elaborates that “like men, women are also a producer of masculinities and a performer of them” (Sedgwick 13).

Sedgwick provides one of the most helpful and useful assertions for the complementary study of male effeminacy. As an amendment to Sedgwick's assertion, I would like to highlight that men are not only consumers, producers and performers of masculinity, but also consumers, producers and performers of femininity and effeminacy as well. By acknowledging this, we can recognize the importance, the value and the potential for empowerment offered by male effeminacy. In this way, Boy George's comfort may not arise from his security in masculinity but rather his own security of his effeminacy.

Judith Halberstam's Female Masculinity (1998) undertakes the same conceptual practice for which Sedgwick advocates. In her text, Halberstam employs Judith Butler's notion of gender as performance to demonstrate that, much like femininity, masculinity is constituted through a set of culturally recognized acts that can be utilized by individuals regardless of their biological sex. Halberstam articulates the sex/gender distinction by removing the analysis of masculinity from the site of the male body and revealing how an

essentialist-conception of masculinity is false. Instead, she exposes the construction of masculinity as a “performative” gender – a copy for which there is no original.

Female masculinity, as Halberstam argues, “disrupts the contemporary cultural studies accounts of masculinity within which masculinity always boils down to the social, cultural and political effects of male embodiment and male privilege” (345). To Halberstam, these accounts only read masculinity as the powerful and active alternative to female passivity. For her, the term “female masculinity” stages several different kinds of interventions into contemporary gender theory and practice:

First, it refuses the authentication of masculinity through maleness and maleness alone, and it names a deliberately counterfeit masculinity that undermines the currency of maleness; second, it offers an alternative mode of masculinity that clearly detaches misogyny from maleness and social power from masculinity; third, female masculinity may be an embodied assault upon compulsory heterosexuality, and it offers one powerful model of what inauthentic masculinity can look like, how it produces and deploys desire, and what new social, sexual and political relations it can foster.

(Halberstam 345)

Halberstam articulates the social and political significance of the gendered performance of masculinity, arguing that women who perform masculinity and pass (through dress, mannerisms and/or body changes) can access status and power assigned to the masculine. Halberstam’s analysis of female masculinity destabilizes the binary distinction between male-female and masculine-feminine. By exploring masculinity as detached from the male body, she undermines the category man/woman and, like Sedgwick, serves to “drive

a theoretical wedge” between men and masculinity. Moreover, as Halberstam (2002) writes in her later text, “The Good, The Bad and the Ugly: Men, Women and Masculinity” separating masculinity from an automatic association with men may facilitate other theoretical breakthroughs:

I hope that a female masculinity can be provocative enough to force us to look anew upon male femininities and interrogate the new politics of manliness that has swept through the gay male communities in the last decade. (Halberstam 345)

Following Halberstam’s appeal, this project examines the implications of the complementary male femininity/effeminacy. Although very similar projects, the rewards and the threats faced by men who do not gender conform are different than that of women. Far from it, the resulting implications of male effeminacy cannot be predicted simply by an inverse equation of female masculinity. While female masculinity and male effeminacy share theoretical similarities, this project reveals how they diverge in many surprising ways. My own goal in queering gender follows Halberstam’s work by examining male femininity, and examining the social and political significant of the gendered performance of effeminacy: what happens when men perform effeminacy physically, culturally and politically? What is at stake in men who perform the feminine, particularly with respect to power, privilege, desire and shame? How might the study of male-femininity and effeminacy destabilize our understanding of compulsory heterosexuality, gender-normativity and the concepts of man-woman and masculine-feminine. By removing men from the discussion of masculinity, and looking instead at

male-effeminacy, how might our discussion inform notions of power in relation to effeminacy, and gender studies overall?

1.2 Gay Male Effeminacy and the Culture of Shame

In general, a relative lack of research has focused exclusively on the concept of male effeminacy, or 'doing' gay male genders. This is true even within gay and lesbian studies, gender studies and queer theory. Author Michael J. Bailey writes that he is surprised by the lack of discussion in academic circles about effeminacy, particularly with respect to fear, loathing and shame. He notes that it is "such a widespread phenomenon that one might think it would already be the subject of dozens of books" and yet, this is obviously not the case (Bailey qtd. in Bergling 58). The emphasis of studies on gay male masculinity and the lack of work on gay male effeminacy within academia also reflects a similar position within contemporary gay political movements.

In "How To Bring Up Your Kids Gay," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1994) notes that the gay movement has never been quick to attend to the issues of effeminate men and boys (233). She argues that this has created "the marginal or stigmatized position to which even adult men who are effeminate have often been relegated in the movement" (Sedgwick 233). As Sedgwick contends, this is due to "the conceptual need of the gay movement to interrupt a long tradition of viewing gender and sexuality as continuous and collapsible categories – a tradition of assuming that anyone, male or female, who desires a man must by definition be feminine" (233).

This reflects recent contemporary work in identity politics and feminism that distinguishes between systems of sex, gender and sexuality. Sedgwick notes that

theorizing gender and sexuality as distinct though intimately entangled axes of analysis has been a great advance of feminism, gender studies and queer theory. However, Sedgwick also warns against a tendency to deemphasize the link between adult gay males and gender-nonconforming boys. The danger of this advance in queer thought may leave the effeminate boy in the position of the abject – “the haunting abject of gay thought itself” (Sedgwick 233). This is especially dangerous, as Sedgwick argues, because many number of studies from varying theoretical and political positions have suggested that:

for any given adult gay man, wherever he may be present on a scale of self-perceived or socially ascribed masculinity (ranging from extremely masculine to extremely feminine), the likelihood is disproportionately high that he will have a childhood history of self-perceived effeminacy, femininity or non-masculinity. (Sedgwick 233)

Sedgwick asserts that a childhood history of self-perceived effeminacy, or a sissy childhood, is marked by a stigma of shame. In “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s Art of the Novel,” Sedgwick associates the susceptibility to shame with “the terrifying powerlessness of gender-dissonant or otherwise stigmatized childhood” (4). All young boys, whether masculine, feminine, macho, sissies, bullies or wimps, are taught that “femininity, in a person with a penis, can represent nothing but deficit and disorder” (Sedgwick 235). Shame by the gay boy is induced by institutions of family, medicine, health, government (Sedgwick 237). We can see this in everything from parents restricting their sons from playing with Barbie, to schoolyard coaches telling boys to “stop throwing like a girl.” More overt institutional practices from school to health often

offer services to “correct” the gender non-conforming behaviour of young boys. The point I would like to emphasize from Sedgwick’s work is how a childhood marked by sissyness and effeminacy becomes marked and reinscribed as shameful: “Shame on you!”

Sedgwick (1993) also argues that shame is the strong force that creates and maintains the closet. The fear to acknowledge or disclose a deviant sexual identity becomes the shameful secret that marks the gay male’s life. Michael Warner asserts that gay people are especially familiar with the “shaming effects of isolation” (8). As he writes, “almost all children grow up in families that think of themselves and all their members as heterosexual, and for some children this produces a profound and nameless estrangement, a sense of inner secrets and hidden shame” (Warner 8). Gay males who grow up hiding a childhood polluted and tainted by sissiness and effeminacy carry this burden as, what Sedgwick (1994) refers to as “the open secret of many politicized adult gay men” (233). In “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s Art of the Novel,” Sedgwick suggests that shame is what makes us queer, both in the sense of having a queer identity and in the sense that queerness is in volatile relation to identity, destabilizing it even as it makes it (Sedgwick qtd. in Crimp 64).

In the work Blush: Faces of Shame, Elspeth Probyn presents a unique perspective on the topic of shame, and why we consider it shameful to admit to shame. While other emotions such as anger and rage and guilt and sadness are regularly discussed in both popular and academic accounts, we often shy away from shame. Shame, as Probyn writes, only appears in a discussion of Pride, and only then as a shameful feeling. Gay pride, for example, is a political project clearly focused on denouncing shame – the shame of sex, and the shame of sexuality – replacing our often guilty feelings of shame

with new-found feelings of Pride. The political project of gay pride (along with National Pride, Black Pride, and now Fat Pride) are all projects premised on the eradication of shame. But rather than eradicating, denying or denigrating shame, Probyn questions what other options we may have in trying to deal with shame. How do we feel shame? How do we know shame? What can we do with our feelings of shame? Instead of erasing them, how might we be able to use them in more productive ways? Why are we so afraid of shame in the first place?

Probyn provides an interesting approach to dealing with shame, sexual or otherwise. For Probyn, to consider shame is not to wallow in self-pity or in the resentment that accompanies guilt (Probyn xiii). Rather, it is to recognize that the reduction of interest that prompts shame is always incomplete. Probyn argues that this is why studies of shame (in this case, the studying of effeminacy) are important. As Probyn describes it, shame is to “re-evaluate how we are positioned in proximity to the past and to rethink how we wish to live in proximity to others” (Probyn xiv). Rather than denying or avoiding the topic of shame, Probyn asks us to embrace the sometimes painful ways shame makes us reflect on who we are – individually and collectively. To quote Probyn directly, “wouldn’t it be interesting if we could talk about shame in more productive ways?” (Probyn xv).

Unfortunately, this appeal has been overlooked by the majority of male gender theorists, gay or straight. *Men and Masculinities’ studies* is implicated in a political project of pride. In this conception, masculinity is to be revered. It celebrates all the various forms of masculinity, but it does so by repressing and oppressing the shameful sorts of masculinities – female masculinity and male effeminacy – that do not fit into its

project. Academically, when theorists celebrate “new” or “alternative” forms of masculinity, they do so at the expense of denigrating effeminacy, pushing it to the sidelines or maintaining the shame that surrounds it. This uneasiness with shame may also explain why many gay, lesbian and even queer authors may tiptoe around issues of effeminacy, female masculinity, etc. On a cultural level, rather than trying to decipher and make sense of our uneasiness with effeminacy and the shame that may (or may not) be attached to it, many gay men have instead found pride in the culture of (hyper)masculinity. There is no shame in being masculine, straight-acting, or adopting gendernormative and sexually-normative practices. Effeminacy, flamboyance and being “gay-acting,” however, are muddled with shame.

The shame of effeminacy cannot be eradicated by keeping it a secret. Gay men may feel ashamed (or more often the case, *be* shamed) when they flail about with exaggerated gestures, but nothing productive can come of it if we never speak of it, or pretend it doesn't happen. Eradicating the shame of effeminacy doesn't come from learning to throw a football like a man, or learning how to run without flailing my limp wrists about. Equally, shame cannot be dealt with by ignoring it and hoping it goes away, but rather by addressing what and why we feel the shame in the first place. As Michel Foucault reminds us, we keep things secret because they are shameful – not valuable. Perhaps by opening up a discussion of effeminacy, and dealing with the shame, we can find productive and valuable uses for effeminacy. Perhaps we can find ways to eliminate shame, reduce shame, or simply to say “I'm not ashamed to be shamed!” One way of approaching this is to delve into the topic of effeminacy, to speak about it, to define it and to declare it boldly.

1.3 Defining Effeminacy.

Following in this vein, I would like to take the time to clarify my terminology, as I will be using it in this thesis. To the (limited) extent that the notion of male-femininity has been discussed by authors in gay and lesbian studies as well as queer theory, the range of work on male-femininity within academia has focused predominantly on the culture of men performing femininity in the most traditional sense, particularly with respect to drag culture, drag performance and drag queens (Newton 1976, Senelick 2000). Other work on male-femininity has explored the various experiences of transsexual and transgendered (male-to-female) identities (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon 1999; Bailey 2003). However, this project does not examine male-femininity in the same manner. Whereas much research has used the notions of male-femininity and male-effeminacy as synonymous, interchangeable concepts, I would like to make a clear and separate distinction between the two. In fact, despite the careful attention given to the sex/gender distinction by authors in the field of gender studies, the difference between male-femininity and male effeminacy has been relatively overlooked.

My own conceptualization of gender borrows from Sedgwick (1998), who proposes to think of gender as “orthogonal, a leap from two-dimensional to n-dimensional space as a way to think about not only masculinity and femininity, but also effeminacy, butchness, femmeness and other superficially related terms as independent variables” (16). Sedgwick emphasizes men who are both highly masculine and highly effeminate, but not a bit feminine (16). Although she does not provide an example, one might imagine the smooth, muscled gay circuit queen as typifying this description. Using her conception as a springboard to (re)conceptualize my understanding of non-binarial

gender, my own assertion of gender as an ever-expanding constellation of identities avoids the over-simplistic mapping of effeminacy onto a continuum of masculine/feminine. Such an understanding of effeminacy as its own separate and distinct gender allows for the conceptual break that removes effeminacy from a binary understanding of gender, male/female or masculine/feminine.

The theorization of effeminacy might be considered what Eve Sedgwick calls “nonce taxonomy.” As she describes them, nonce-taxonomies are “categories that we use daily to make sense of our worlds but that work so well we actually fail to recognize them” (Sedgwick qtd. in Halberstam 8). The opening up of genders, and the resulting production of new taxonomies can intervene in the process of naming and defining, but may also bear political power as well. This appeal for new taxonomies, or “nonce-taxonomies,” is what motivates my work to conceive of effeminacy as its own distinct gender, and to distinguish effeminacy separate from traditional femininity or masculinity. It is this new taxonomy – the bold declaration of effeminacy – that moves the physical, the cultural and the personal productively into the political.

Commonly understood notions of effeminacy are constituted through a series of both visible and invisible markers. Most obvious markers of effeminacy range from the physical (the “gay lisp,” slender build, attention to beauty and aesthetic, etc) to the gestural (being delicate, flailing grand gestures) to activity (interested in traditionally effeminate activities such as the arts, musical theatre, opera). In his book, The Man Who Would be Queen, Michael J. Bailey provides a list of traits traditionally associated with (gay) male effeminacy. Two distinct traits emerge from Bailey’s conception of effeminacy: The limp- or flailing-wrist, and the gay lisp—or what Bailey terms “the gay

accent” (27). Limp-wrist action, as he describes, is characteristically associated with gay male effeminacy. In fact, Bailey notes limp wrist action as a characteristic of walking, standing and even sitting. Equally interesting, Bailey notes that when effeminate gay men speak, they often speak with a “gay accent” (also referred to as lisp or ‘snap’). The expression “He opened his mouth and a string of pearls fell out,” popular within the gay community, exemplifies how an otherwise masculine man can be “outed” through his effeminate voice, flamboyant tone and/or gay lisp.

My own definition of physical effeminacy differs from male-femininity in that male effeminacy continues to perform an understanding of “maleness” and the body is consequently read as “male.” In distinction, male-femininity performs both the socially constructed notions of “femininity” and “femaleness.” The glamorous dragqueen performing on stage might typify male-femininity, while the flamboyant barqueen watching from the side might exemplify male-effeminacy. While male-femininity is traditionally associated with the performance of femininity by men (man-performing-feminine-woman), male effeminacy is traditionally associated with “stereotypically feminine behaviour in a man” (man-performing-effeminate-maleness). An effeminate man may be effeminate but he is still read, and culturally understood, as a man⁷. As such, an effeminate gay man may identify closely with heterosexual female femininity in many ways, but this does not remove his own position in relation to patriarchy, misogyny, etc.

⁷ In the afterward to Sally Munt’s *Butch/Femme*, Judith Butler describes a similar understanding of Butchness, where “a butch is not a man, does not want to be a man, but is a woman who wants her women in a certain way. For more, see: Munt, Sally R., ed. *Butch/Femme: Inside Lesbian Gender*. London and Washington: Cassell, 1998.

However, effeminacy in men is also marked, read and constituted culturally and politically. In these instances, effeminacy is constructed in the relation and relationships between people at given histories and contexts. As I argued in the introduction, gay men have been defined by effeminacy in medical and scientific discourse at the beginning of the twentieth century. The conception of inversion constructed male homosexuality as a woman trapped in a man's body, or the hermaphroditism of the soul. Effeminacy is read through the historical pathologization of gay men as effeminate, flaming creatures. In this instance, gay male bodies are read as effeminate in relation to the normative heterosexual male body. In addition, effeminacy is also marked culturally across racialized bodies. As I will discuss in chapter three, the colonial construction of Asian male bodies has been historically associated with effeminacy, asserting a gender inversion in Asian men. In this context, the Asian male body is culturally projected as effeminate in relation to the Western, white body. In each of these cases, this construction of the cultural 'Other' enables the white, heterosexual body by asserting it as masculine, gender-normative. The act of constructing white, heterosexual masculinity as the dominant normative masculinity is created in inverse-relation to the foreign other'd body. Consequently, it secures its position top the social hierarchy by subordinating and excluding the effeminate bodies it has project as falling below.

As such, I am concentrating specifically on queer male effeminacy almost to the exclusion of heterosexual male effeminacy. While heterosexual male effeminacy may provide a discussion of equal merit, it also offers an acceptable degree of male effeminacy as compared to the excessive effeminacy of the flaming flamboyant queen. An example of this can be found in contemporary popular writing about the metrosexual,

who may display physical/aesthetic effeminate qualities but who also adheres to what Adrienne Rich (1980) has termed compulsory heterosexuality.⁸ In these recent texts on the metrosexual, the underlying discussion revolves predominantly around notions of class and consumer-based forms of effeminacy, displayed through beauty, aesthetic and form. This discussion, however, is always accompanied by an emphasis on heterosexuality. In the case of the gay male, I am more interested in examining the long prevailing historical association between non-normative gender and male homosexuality, and how this enables heterosexual masculine privilege through the monitoring and policing of effeminacy.

1.4 Current work on Effeminacy

Finally, I would like to critically examine one particular work on gay male effeminacy. In his text, "A Note on 'Kids in the Hall' and the Queerness of Canada" Thomas Haig contends that Kids in the Hall empowers and politicizes its use of effeminacy. In particular, Haig illustrates one particular scene in which the effeminate character, Buddy Cole, a flamboyant bar queen, sips fabulously on martinis while dishing bitchy opinions, and Oscar Wildean witticisms. Haig contends that this representation

⁸ Compulsory heterosexuality is the assumption that women and men are innately attracted to each other emotionally and sexually and that heterosexuality is normal and universal. This institutionalization of heterosexuality in our society leads to an institutionalized inequality of power not only between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals, but also between men and women, with far reaching consequences. Under a regime of compulsory heterosexuality, men control all aspects of women's lives, including their sexuality, childbirth and rearing activities, safety, physical movement, labor, and access to knowledge. Compulsory heterosexuality leads to discrimination against homosexuals and the intolerance and/or invisibility of gay men and lesbians in society.

Moreover, compulsory heterosexuality routinely punishes those who do not conform to heterosexuality. Thus, same-sex relationships are made taboo and, often, criminalized, while pressure is placed on people to form heterosexual relationships and bonds. The need to enforce male-female relationships as a social norm suggests that heterosexuality may be less an innate response and more of a social conditioning. For more information, see: Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5 (Summer 1980): 631-660.

demolishes stereotypes of the effeminate queen as sexless, unappealing or pathetic but rather empowers effeminacy by striking back at the culture that routinely dismisses it. Haig asserts that Buddy Cole refuses the limitations that usually accompany the effeminate stereotype and instead plays up the complete discontinuity between gender and biological sex that effeminacy affords him. The self adoption of the normally perjorative “queen” as the title also serves as a function of empowerment, replacing the usage of the “queen” as a derogatory label with a politically-motivated category of identification.

In many ways, Haig’s text demonstrates a refusal of normative masculinity and the acknowledgement of effeminacy as powerful, valuable and worthy of study. However, more critical examination reveals the limitations of Haig’s analysis, especially in the non-engagement with race. For one, Scott Thompson, the actor who plays Buddy Cole, and the other men who make up Kids in the Hall are all white. Haig does not bring into question Buddy Cole’s whiteness. As Judith Butler (1998) warns: “If the norm is white, and if the opposition to the norm is also white, then this is a staging of struggle that, to a certain extent, remains within racially dominant paradigms and extends their power” (227). As I will discuss in chapter 3, it is important not to ignore the complex interrelation between sex, gender and sexuality in relation to race. How does race cut across the relation of margin and centre? Would the character Buddy Cole be afforded the same empowered tone and humour if he were further marked by race? How might the addition of black, Asian, latino, etc complicate Buddy Cole’s bitchy refusal of dominant (white) masculinity?

Secondly, it is equally important to distinguish between *performative* male effeminacy and *performing* male effeminacy. Buddy Cole's character, as portrayed by actor Scott Thompson, is an act framed within the security of comedy and situated within the safety of the television screen. Here, we are presented a staged and contained representation of effeminacy. The effeminacy that I examine is not the performance of campy gay male effeminacy, but rather the practice of effeminacy, the everyday experience of gay male effeminacy, what it means to be effeminate for me, and the implications of adopting effeminate "flaming" gay male identification. As a *performative* gender, rather than the performance of effeminate gender, gay male effeminacy is a lived practice that is not protected by the context of a satirical comedy television show. Haig contends that effeminacy may threaten traditional heterosexual masculinity, but I argue that it is also likely to be threatened *by* traditional heterosexual masculinity – particularly with respect to personal safety and the threat of violence. Buddy Cole's performance may provide a mocking refusal of dominant masculinity in the confines of both the gay bar and of the television screen, but the same may not be possible if his actions were to take place on a crowded bus full of rowdy male teenagers, or in a busy heterosexual pub.

In this chapter, I outlined how masculinity is narrativized and celebrated. This narrative happens at the expense of essentializing men and masculinity. As a result, it fails to acknowledge other related genders – female masculinity and effeminacy – in its discussion. By complicating the sex/gender system, and reconfiguring gender as an ever-expanding constellation of identities, I have attempted to make room for a discussion of effeminacy, removed from the study of masculinity but all the while interested in

discussing men. In the second section of this chapter, I argued that one motivating factor for overlooking effeminacy is the culture of shame. Thinking about effeminate shame productively is both difficult and taboo. Attempting to discuss flamboyant, queer, in-your-face, revolting faggoty effeminacy is even worse – we must confront shame upon shame. Overall, this chapter appeals for the opening up of new discussions on effeminacy, and the culture of shame. These productive, valuable and potentially empowering discussions of effeminacy lie at the very heart of this chapter, and this thesis overall.

Chapter 2: No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!

Straight-acting masculine rugby-build looking for other masculine MEN for fun. MUST be straight acting, goodlooking and have a good sense of humour. NO FEMMES, QUEENS OR FLAMERS!

Historically, gay men have been associated with effeminacy. The discursive association between effeminacy and gay men can be traced throughout the history of homosexuality. One of the earliest links between gay males and effeminacy is outlined in Sedgwick's work "Epistemology of the Closet" in which Sedgwick identifies tropes of gender through which same-sex desire can be understood. The trope of inversion explained homosexuality as a "woman's soul trapped in a man's body and vice versa" (Sedgwick 57). Both popular and medical discourse subscribed to the conception of homosexuality as inversion and that homosexuality was a hermaphroditism of the soul (Sedgwick 57). The openly 'inverted' German writer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895) asserted in the 1860s that male homosexuality was a result of a female mental development in the body of a male (Levay 13).

In his seminal work on the history of gay male culture, George Chauncey (1994) contends that the derogatory vocabulary for gay men reflects this equation of men's sexual desire for other men with feminine qualities: In 18th-century England, gay men were referred to as *molly* and *nancy-boys*; in early 20th century America, the terms employed included *buttercup*, *pansy*, *she-man* and *androgyne*. In the present day, gay men are all too familiar with the terms *sissy*, *fairy*, *queen* and *faggot*.

As a response to the long association between homosexuality and effeminacy, George Chauncey detailed the New York "queer movement" in the 1910s and 1920s in

which middle-class gay men, angered by their long-association with femininity, identified themselves as “queers” to distinguish themselves from effeminate gay men. To the queers, the term “queer” was not pejorative because, while differentiating themselves sexually, the term did not imply effeminate gesture and composure. The “queers” reserved the labels they considered derogatory, “fairies,” “faggots,” and “queens” for the effeminate gay men whom they despised. The term “fairy” was used for the effeminate gay men who managed to be flamboyant regardless of their attire (Chauncey 4).

Using oral histories, diaries and medical texts, Chauncey documented some of the anti-effeminate sentiment in the predominantly white, middle-class gay community of the 1910s and 1920s. As one man states in an interview, “Men who speak in an effeminate voice, who refer to each other as ‘she’ or who make feminine gestures, are repugnant to me” (Chauncey 99). The “fairies” were resented because they were frequently the most visible representatives of the community, and for their failure to abide by the queers’ conservative ideals that valued gender-conformity.

This anti-effeminate movement was not unique to the queer movement of New York at the beginning of the century. The French writer Marc-André Raffalovich (1864-1934) was one of the first gay men to write scientific papers on homosexuality, and his prolific work became a prominent part of the medical discourse on homosexuality at the turn of the century in France. According to historian Vernon Rosario II (1996), Raffalovich and many other 20th-century gay male intellectuals influenced by him attempted to depathologize homosexuality by “glorifying ‘classical,’ masculinist values and marginalizing the effeminate ‘pervert’” (Rosario 163). Foreshadowing the work of other early-20th century theorists and sexologists, including Havelock Ellis, and Magnus

Hirschfield, Raffalovich distinguished between two types of invert: the virile ones who were “superior, interesting, honest and moral” (Rosario 163) and the effeminate ones who were “the product of vice and tended to be perverts, seducers of the young and dishonest” (Rosario 163). Raffalovich openly condemned effeminate invert, asserting that for a homosexual man, “the greater the moral worth..., the less he is effeminate” (Rosario 163).

I remember my first encounter reading Chauncey and Rosario’s respective accounts of gay history at the beginning of the century. It was an enlightening moment. Something about the passage between the masculine ‘queers’ and the effeminate ‘fairies’ resonated with me. It was as if this narrative between the ‘queers’ and the ‘fairies’ – and the subsequent dismissal of all things effeminate – was a lesson that I had subconsciously internalized since my own act of ‘coming out.’ In the present day – a century after both Chauncey and Rosario’s account, and many years since the gay and lesbian movement erupted with the riot at Stonewall – this distinction between the masculine-confirming gay men and the effeminate swishy flaming men is as persistent as ever. More than a distinction, a clearly divisive hierarchy continues to privilege the gender-conforming masculine men and shame all those who fall on the more effeminate side of the gender scale. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the gay male personal ads, where “macho,” “masculine,” and “straight-acting” men distinguish themselves from the effeminate men through the exclusionary phrase, “No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!”

This chapter uses the phrase “No femmes, queens or flamers!” as an apt entry point to interrogate notions of effeminacy and effeminophobia in the gay male

community, particularly with respect to the culture of shame. When it comes to gay men, what is it exactly that has created such fear and anxiety about effeminacy? Earlier, I asserted that shame was the force that stifled the discussion of effeminacy in men's studies, in masculinities' studies, and by men in general. In this chapter, I further examine the lack of desire to discuss effeminacy, focusing specifically on the shame of declaring, admitting or confessing one's own gender-nonconformity. Looking at the world of personal ads, this chapter focuses on the hierarchy of gender that presents itself, ranging from the flamboyant, flaming queen (illustrated by the phrase "No femmes, queens or flammers!") to the muscular, masculine and gender-normative demonstrated by the phrase "Straight-acting masculine looking for the same." How do masculinity, gender normativity, and the culture of straight-acting maintain their gender supremacy in gay male personal ads? How is effeminacy monitored and policed?

Integral to this chapter is how a culture of shame fuels the process of inclusion/exclusion by, and among, gay men. As a medium written by gay men for other gay men, we might expect personal ads to be a space of inclusion. Unfortunately, gay male personals reveal themselves as a space of exclusion, where non-masculine and gender-nonconforming subjects are not only excluded but also mocked, punished and alienated. In the public declaration of interest – both "I am interested" and "Are you interested in me?" – I argue that the culture of shame restricts the ability to speak openly about effeminacy, and teaches us to loathe flaming, flamboyant effeminacy in our yearning for acceptance and inclusion.

In the utterance, "No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!" who is the shamer and who is the shamed? Regardless of where one may stand on the gender scale, I argue that gay

male culture is both the shamer and shamed; the utterance “No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!” fuels a culture of shame. My argument unfolds in three distinct sections. In the first section, I look to medical, historical and scientific discourses to outline how male homosexuality has been pathologized as effeminate, or gender-nonconventional. I reveal how many gay men have sought to refute this stereotype of gay men as flamboyant, flaming, swishy creatures by claiming rigid notions of hegemonic masculinity. This happens at the level of the private and the public, as well as politically and academically. In the second section, I argue that a hierarchy that enables and privileges masculinity motivates the vehement refusal of effeminacy. This is exemplified by, but not limited to, the phrase “No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!” in gay male personal ads. Finally, I argue that by actively denouncing effeminacy and investing in a culture of shame, gay male culture contributes to dominance of hegemonic masculine ideology that fuels their own marginalization and oppression. In the process of consciously rejecting effeminacy, gay male culture feeds the culture of shame that enables compulsory heterosexuality.

2.2 Why Personal Ads?

Although the fear, and loathing of effeminacy pervades the gay male community in numerous ways, I rationalize my specific examination of personal ads in their relationship to the culture of shame. As a textual medium of desire, personal ads inhabit a unique cultural space that collapses the boundaries between public and private. As Francisco J. Gonzales (1998) writes, “Personals straddle the personal and the public, written in private but consumed in public, mass-produced but inexpensive and accessible, transient but leaving an inky trace that lasts until at least the recycling bin” (19). They

are public displays of our intimacies – brief and candid textual descriptions openly expressing our most personal social and sexual desires. Personal ads boldly declare interest – our interest in desire, in others, in acceptance, and in inclusion.

As a result of both the process of self-evaluation and the public declaration of private interests, I argue that personal ads are especially open to shame. My conception of shame borrows from the work of Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank (1995), who edited a collection of psychologist Silvan Tomkins' work, reframing his work on shame from a cultural perspective. Rather than the common linkage of shame with pride, Tomkins conceived as shame at one end of the affect polarity shame-interest (Sedgwick 5). Tomkins reframed shame in a way that differed from conventional expectations, where shame is the incomplete reduction of interest. Tomkins argues that shame can be activated only in situations where interest and/or enjoyment are not completely reduced⁹: "If another individual with whom I am identified or in whom I am interested or with whom I have experienced enjoyment lowers his eyes or head to me as an object of his interest or enjoyment, then my own positive affect can be sufficiently reduced to evoke my shame" (Sedgwick 152).

Although other methods – such as studying pornography or doing ethnographic work within the gay male community – may provide similar findings, the cultural phenomenon of the phrase "No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!" is especially fitting in this

⁹ Tomkins illustrates this understanding of shame in a melancholic bit of prose:

"If I wish to touch you but you do not wish to be touched, I may feel ashamed. If I wish to look at you, but you do not wish me to, I may feel ashamed. If I wish you to look at me, but you do not, I may feel ashamed. If I wish to look at you and at the same time wish that you look at me, I can be shamed. If I wish to be close to you but you move away, I am ashamed. If I wish to suck or bite your body and you are reluctant, I can become ashamed. If I wish to hug you or you hug me or we hug each other and you do not reciprocate my wishes, I feel ashamed. If I wish to have sexual intercourse with you but you do not, I am ashamed" (Sedgwick 152)

reconceptualization of shame. As a textual mediation of desire, personal ads are all about interest. The authors are interested in finding a relationship – socially, sexually or otherwise – and the readers are equally interested in the authors. In many ways, authors expose themselves for all others to judge: “This is who I am, and I hope you are interested.” Equally, authors list what would interest them in potential partners. Interest is inherent in the participation of personal ads, and as Tomkins’ suggests, when there is potential for interest, shame looms. While other areas may provide analyses of equal merit, personal ads are particularly useful in their explicit declarations of interest, where gay men record their personal desires textually. As such, the anti-effeminate sentiment is most easily and readily reflected by this particular medium.

2.3 The Personals Are Political

The notorious re-occurrence of the expression “No femmes, queens or flammers” has been the focus of a few studies on gay personal ads (Bailey 1997; Gonzales 1998; Bergling 2001). Yet, while these studies have observed the anti-effeminate phenomenon in great detail, the findings by these authors have been descriptive in nature and lacked adequate theorization. I would like to further develop this work by reframing them around ideas about gender hierarchies and the culture of shame. In the text, “GM ISO (m)other: A Gay Boy in the World of Lesbian Personals,” Francisco J. Gonzales (1998) writes that the writing and reading of personal ads defines a space in the gay community, and that the personals constitute a social marketplace that resides in a collective imaginary. He continues,

Personal [ads] constitute a middle ground in the social construction of queer sexuality, not big budget cultural representations (like film or the internet, for example, or even books) but nonetheless a privileged place in the gay community where fantasies are screened for public consumption. They consolidate and disseminate a lexicon of available fantasy categories in the chat voice of the many, unfiltered by an interpretive discourse. (Gonzales 19)

Indeed the personal ads play a significant role in the shaping and configuration of gay male sexual identities. Gay male personals are written by, and for, gay men. Consequently, they reflect the values and attitudes of the gay community, written by the members of their own community and “unfiltered” by the editors of the newspaper in which they are found. They speak volumes as to which fantasies, personas and patterns are popularized and which sorts of partners, romantic, sexual or otherwise, are desired.

Gonzales remarks that when gender surfaces in gay male personal ads it was often to reinforce the masculine imperative, “as in anxious and almost ubiquitous exclusionary rule of gay men’s ads: No fems” (26). Second, Gonzales notes the popularity of certain fantasies, such as the jock, the athlete, the surfer, and the skateboarder. Equally, he is quick to point out the fantasies that are unavailable: “The dragqueen and the girlie boy make rare appearance” (26). Lastly, he asserts that (within the framework of the gay male personal ad) gay males “operate under the hegemonic sway of male power,” and “the result is a marketplace that values ‘straight acting, straight appearing’ masculine” (26).

My own observations of personal ads confirm those of Gonzales: certain fantasies reign – the jock, the athlete, the “swimmer’s body”, as well as timely new masculine archetypes such as the skater/skateboarder, the “thug” and the raver. Other fantasies are hidden from public consumption: the dragqueen, the figure skater, the flamboyant bar bitch, or the ballet dancer.

In my own research, the number of personal ads examined was quite extensive and have been compiled from a range of sources. In my own observations of gay male personal ads, I looked at a variety of newspapers, including Montreal weeklies (Hour, Mirror), Toronto weeklies (Eye, Now), Montreal gay community newspapers (To Be, Etre, Fugues) and Toronto gay community newspapers (Fab, Xtra). This survey of newspaper and other personal ad services ranged in time from May 2002 until January 2005. For the most part, however, newspapers offered fewer personal ads than expected. On the other hand, the internet (with its myriad of chat rooms, online profiles, online dating services, sexual-encounter websites and other hooking-up services) offered an abundance of textual examples ripe for analysis. Online personal web services (gay.com, m4m2sex.com, manline.com, priape.com) offered a large sample of frequently updated personal ad listings daily, with the added ability to connect instantly to an advertiser via email and other means.

Although this work is not quantitative in nature, I read several thousands of personal ads and online profiles. Because of the concise nature of each ad, it is possible to read several hundred personal ads in one sitting. And yet, despite the large scope of ads, and time spent scouring through the classifieds and online services, I elected to use only the one personal ad listed at the beginning of this chapter. This specific personal ad

is not unique, nor is it especially rare. Rather, I am using this one ad as representative of the body of ads and the culture of anti-effeminate sentiment that is reflected and reinforced throughout these ads. One only needs to read a handful of gay male personal ads to discover the rules of the medium: masculinity is desired, and effeminacy is shunned. And while I've mentioned the infamy of the phrase "No Femmes, Queens of Flamers," variations on the theme also include:

"No Fats or Fems"

"If I wanted a woman, I'd be straight. So all you flamers, don't bother."

"Please do not be effeminate."

"Limp-wristed fags should leave me alone."

"Straight-acting, not looking for pansies."

But the question remains, what motivates these dismissive and exclusionary phrases? What is at stake for the authors who declare this dismissive phrase, and for the readers who receive it? What is it that sparks so many gay men to verbally, textually, and sexually dismiss all things femme, queenish or flaming?

In Sissyphobia: Gay Men and Effeminate Behaviour, Tim Bergling (2001) articulates a similar phenomenon in his study of effeminophobia in the gay male community. Bergling writes that "the conflict erupts not only in personal ads, but wherever and whenever some gay man finds himself turned off, intimidated or embarrassed by the effeminate, sometimes loud or flamboyant behaviour of another" (10). As Bergling elaborates, "what is it about *society* – And I'm absolutely talking about gay society as well as the outside straight world – that makes effeminate behaviour

in men so objectionable?” (1). Bergling identifies the effeminate man (or boy) as one who behaves in a fey, effeminate or flamboyant manner. As he writes,

to use the word sissy¹⁰... is to recall, for some, the stinging shame of not measuring up to another’s expectations, either as a child or adult. Combined with ‘phobia’, it is intended simply to describe a phenomenon whose existence is undeniable a fear or loathing of men who behave in a ‘less manly than desirable’ or effeminate way. (3)

In particular, Bergling examines the excessive and blatant “sissyphobia” illustrated in personal ads, online dating biographies and chatroom profiles¹¹. Bergling’s observations confirm those of Bailey and Gonzales. He observes that masculine themed ads accounted for nearly 40 percent of the range of ads he looked at, while effeminate-themed ads (though present) barely registered at 1 percent (Bergling 13). More distressingly, while the effeminate-themed ads were usually affirmative, upbeat or hopeful in tone, he notes that many of the masculine-themed ads were often dismissive of, or showed outright hostility toward effeminate men (Bergling 13).

Crucially, Bergling argues that one of the fundamental fears outlined by these effeminophobic men who adhere strictly to “straight-acting” masculine culture and shame those who do not (or cannot, or desire not) to embrace hegemonic masculinity, is the idea of stereotype, and of being a “stereotypical gay male.” As he asserts, the long-lasting

¹⁰ In his work, Tim Bergling defines and refers to the sissy, the common/slang terminology for effeminacy. Although I will be using effeminacy/effeminate as opposed to sissy/sissies, I think the term sissyphobic is a very useful and powerful term, recalling (as he asserts) the stinging shame of not being masculine enough to another’s expectations. Also of note, while I use sissy and effeminacy interchangeably – as does Tim Bergling – in our everyday common parlance, sissy often relates more to the corporeal body (not measuring up in terms of physical features, or not being able to perform physical feats) while effeminacy is often attributed to forms such as culture, interest, gesture, etc.

¹¹ As Bergling asserts, “users on the net are placing a [type of cyber personal] ad virtually every moment they are online, particularly when they’re cruising through chatrooms” (14).

stereotype of the gay male has been predicated on the ideas of gender inversion and effeminacy, that many gay men fight back to reclaim notions of gayness, and gender by adopting explicit (even exaggerated hyper-) masculine identities. Bergling argues that many gay men are reluctant to accept effeminate gay men (and by extension, effeminate gay male partners) because they believe it reinforces stereotypes of gays as flaming beings. The declaration “No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!” distinguishes the gay men actively seek to refuse the effeminate stereotype by dismissing the femmes, queens and flamers who they blame for preserving the effeminate stereotype.

As a response to the historical association¹² between homosexuality and effeminacy, gay men have sought to refuse the flaming, flamboyant stereotype by claiming rigid notions of masculinity. As discussed in the introduction, George Chauncey (1993) outlined the “queer movement” of the early twentieth century, in which gay men who were dissatisfied with their woman-like gender status, identified themselves as “queers” in order to distinguish themselves from the effeminate gay men. More recently, the hypermasculine gay emerged in the early 1970s, exemplified by the macho look known as “Gay Clones” (Levine 1992). Like the ‘queers’ before their time, this hypermasculine appearance announced a new masculine gay identity intent on replacing the image of the limp-wristed swish with a new masculine ideal: bikers, policemen, cowboys, soldiers, sailors, lumberjacks. This new gay masculinity quickly became

¹² The work of Siobhan Somerville (2000) highlights the integral role of scientific literature and medical discourses on the conception of the invert, and later the homosexual. Similar scientific research continues to examine the homosexual body in relation to the trope of inversion. As recently as May 2005, researchers at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm Sweden found that the brains of homosexual men respond more like women when reacting to a chemical derived from the male sex hormone.

highly visible in gay men's aesthetics, fashions, recreations and even erotica in the 1970s¹³.

Bergling argues that the same "identifiable rift ... that divides men who are deemed 'straight acting' and those whose style and mannerisms run more towards effeminacy" is reflected in the world of personal ads (9). The strategy employed to reject the effeminate stereotype has been by declaring non-stereotypical "straight-acting" masculinity. As a part of our common vernacular, the term "straight-acting" itself is rich in meaning. Most obviously, the word "straight" in straight-acting refers to heterosexuality. However, almost always restricted to men, the notion of "straight-acting" also comes to be understood as gender-normative and traditional hegemonic masculinity. Where there are no obvious visible markers of sexual identity, the notion of "straight-acting" uses gender to serve as the chief sign. This is how "straight acting" and "straight looking" in the personal ad comes to be understood as "masculine" rather than "engaging in sexual relations with members of the opposite sex." The second part of the term – "acting" – implies that the doing of this type of masculinity is in itself a performance, or what Judith Butler would call a performative gender: "I happen to have sex with men, but I still act like I am straight." Thus the gay male who is "straight-acting" is in fact performing the signs of heterosexuality through the performative act of normative masculine gender.

The argument in support of "straight-acting" is said to be that it subverts the premise of the sex-gender system, by attributing traditional "straight" masculinity to the gay male body. It attempts to reject the stereotype of the effeminate, weak, flaming sissy

¹³ The predominance of this new beefy macho gay image even reached mainstream public consciousness, exemplified by the popularity of the pop group "the Village People," with their hypermasculine archetypal costumes and their song "Macho Man."

as the model gay male but replacing this with a more “positive” stereotype of the masculine, gender-normative man. This strategy, however, is conflicting and problematic. I argue that the potential for subversion is illogical – at once, continuing to perform “straightness” and maintaining the status quo, while simultaneously maintaining outdated notions of “straightness”, and in turn, “gayness.” Far from dismantling stereotypes, the notion of “straight-acting” plays into them.

But more than simply a response to the effeminate stereotype, Bergling contends that the celebration of masculinity and the loathing of sissies in personal ads reflects a larger attitude by both the dominant, as well as gay community¹⁴. He asserts that “the persecution of sissies is a necessary inducement to other boys not to give up their own struggle toward manhood by showing them what happens to those who fail” (Bergling ix).

Bergling’s assessment of personal ads recalls E.E. Maccoby (1987)’s conception of a “gender school,” where men are taught the importance of performing and

¹⁴ Ironically, Tim Bergling’s book itself cannot escape the masculine imperative. In his introduction, Bergling is careful to note his own normative gender: “I emerged from adolescence with a bearing most would describe as masculine, with few outwardly-appearing feminine traits, and a strong attraction for heterosexual and heterosexual-appearing men. A seven-year stint in the U.S. Marine Corps only served to further instill in me an appreciation for all things masculine, along with a generally dim view of men who move with a definite ‘swish’” (Berling 10). Despite his inquiry into the ever apparant disgust of all-things-effeminate, Bergling is quick to declare his own position firmly on the ‘masculine’ side of the gender scale. Furthermore, the cover of Bergling’s book is graced with a handsome, butch, straight-looking man with arms crossed and muscles bulging. Bergling bookends his chapters with illustrations by artist Joe Phillips, whose familiar work can be seen in popular mainstream gay magazines.

These gay-oriented cartoons depict macho-looking military men in homoerotic situations, jock and skateboarder-type masculine teens hanging out, and well-built Adonis-like men sporting clothing from Abercrombie and Fitch (a well known national clothing retailer whose marketing campaign relies on athletic twenty-something masculine boys in homoerotic poses). It is as though the fantasies listed in personal ads have been drawn out in visual form to further underline their value and popularity. Ironically, even the few illustrations of effeminate fairy types, and representations of flamboyant men are depicted as well-built and muscular types. Despite this irony, Bergling’s work is telling: the celebration of masculinity and the loathing of sissies in personal ads reflects a larger attitude by both the dominant, as well as gay community.

maintaining masculinity. Maccoby argued that schoolyard playgrounds are a form of “gender school” where boys taught other boys masculine behaviour and enforced it strictly. In these playgrounds, gender nonconforming boys were not simply ridiculed or bullied but also alienated and excluded. In the “gender school” of personal ads, gay men are taught that, in order to be included in the privileged “desireable category,” they must adopt and conform to gender standards through the betrayal of their own associations with effeminacy. In the absence of other teachers and authority figures, gay men learn to actively monitor and enforce dominant gender ideology. Gender standards are particularly significant in personal ads, where participants are evaluating themselves against the desired qualities in the descriptions. This self-evaluation process is a constant reminder of whether one is gender-conforming or gender-nonconforming, and whether one is included or excluded as an “attractive” partner. The body of personal ads set the rules for this “gender school,” and these standards alert participants to whether they align with the norms, and whether they is desired or desirable. These anti-effeminate attitudes are motivated by the need to be accepted and valued by others. In the constant reminder of what is considered desireable, gay men seek to enhance their appeal by aligning themselves with the anti-effeminate sentiment that they perceive to be popular. Most dangerously, however, I argue that many gay men perceive the negative attitudes towards effeminacy to be common and accepted, even attractive and normal.

Bergling also argues that many in the gay male community (predominantly those on the “more masculine” side of the fence) believe that men who behave in an effeminate manner do so intentionally, even maliciously to the point of excessiveness. Further, certain effeminophobic gay men believe that this ‘flaming’ behaviour holds the gay male

community back from reaching a 'promise land' that accepts men who just happen to love and desire other men" (Bergling 2). The world described by these men in Bergling's work is one where sexual freedom is accepted, but it is at the cost of normalized gender convention. As the argument assures us, "Sure we might be gay, but we're just like you!" Subsequently, the dismissal of the femmes, queens and flammers suggests "Shame on you for being one of *those* (stereotypical, effeminate, flaming, flamboyant, faggoty, femme) gays." This division creates a hierarchal understanding of gender, where masculinity is valued over effeminacy or other gender nonconformity. The gay men who enforce this division create a scale of acceptability, where only the most conservative and contained expressions of queerness are accepted. These gay men seek to be accepted by dominant society, but this happens by actively denying the femmes, queens or flammers who they blame for maintaining the effeminate stereotype.

2.4 Hierarchies of Gender

In her influential text, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," Gayle Rubin outlines what she calls a "hierarchal valuation of sex acts" (278). As she notes, Modern Western societies appraise sex acts according to a hierarchal system of sexual value, where "strong, long-term lesbian and gay male couples are verging on respectability, but bar dykes and promiscuous gay men are hovering just above the groups at the very bottom of the pyramid" (Rubin 279). Rubin contends that people sort sexual acts into a series of hierarchies, where "good", "normal," and "natural" acts place in the centre of the figure – what she calls the "charmed circle" – and where bad, abnormal, unnatural or damned sexuality places in "the outer limits" of the figure.

Rubin highlights the central motivating aspect of the sexual hierarchy: the need to draw and maintain the imaginary line between the good and the bad. As Rubin asserts, this hierarchy functions in the same ways as do ideological systems of racism, ethnocentrism, religious chauvinism, and I would also add gender-normativity -- they rationalize the well-being of the privileged (in our case, the gender-normative or the "straight-acting"), but this happens at the expense of those who fall on the "wrong" side of the scale (the femmes, queens or flammers). This hierarchy "grants virtue to the dominant groups and relegates vice to the underprivileged" (Rubin 283).

In The Trouble with Normal, Michael Warner amends Gayle Rubin's hierarchy of sexual acts to assert that conflicts over sex stem from a fundamental failure to understand the politics of sexual shame. As Warner points out, the main distinction between the good side and the bad side is that "if you are on the wrong side of the hierarchy you will be stigmatized in a way that could entail real damage" (26). Both Rubin and Warner also note that distinctions tend to be ranked in an ever-shifting continuum of more or less serious deviation, where some kinds of deviation have become more respectable over time. Unmarried sex acts have become more tolerable over time, as have gay/lesbian relationships, whereas sadomasochistic sex, cross generational sex and commercial sex currently remain beyond the grip of respectability for the majority of people. As Warner argues astutely, "people who stray into the wrong category on one score or another may well reject with disdain any suggestion that they belong in an alliance with the perverts who stand below them on a scale of disgust" (27). This echoes the sentiment of the straight-acting masculine gays who so vehemently distinguish themselves from the flaming faggots and flamboyant queens, in the politic of "we're gay but we're not one of

those gays.” For these men, gayness and queerness is accepted, provided you fall on the “right” side of the gender hierarchy. Subsequently, the dismissive phrase *No Femmes Queens or Flamers* attempts to draw a line between what they consider “good and respectable” and those they would rather not be associated with. The femmes, queens and flamers must pay because they stand out from the norm, as gender and sexually deviant. As Warner writes, “they become a lightning rod not only for the hatred of difference, of the abnormal, but also for the general loathing of sex” (23). For the “straight-acting men seeking the same,” the only thing more repulsive than radical sexuality and gender deviance is the ability to flamboyantly revel in it. Unfortunately, as Warner argues, while the “straight-acting” men may fall on the “good” side of the gender-normative hierarchy, this does not exempt them from the sexual shame that they may have. Lacking an ethical or productive way of dealing with sexual shame, Warner contends that the usual response is to blame it on someone else. Again, we might consider the utterance “No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!” as a prime example of such a practice. Despite all of their best intentions to mask their shame, blaming the femmes, queens and flamers does little to eradicate sexual and queer shame. In fact, Peter Cummings, the editor of XY magazine, writes that straight-acting is pure oppression – it is someone who buys into the shame about being gay (Cummings “Why?”).

Unfortunately, the consequences of “No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!” are not limited to the confines of the gay male community. In addition to building a hierarchy within the gay male community, I also argue anti-effeminate attitude among gay men reflects the dominant gender ideology that has been adopted from greater society. The

strategy of claiming hypermasculinity is damaging in its investment in this overall dominant gender hierarchy that traditionally men are superior to women and masculinity as superior to non-masculinities, including effeminacy but also femininity, female-masculinity, and gender-nonconformity in general. As Pleck (1989) writes, "Patriarchy is a dual system, a system in which men oppress women and in which men oppress themselves, and each other" (27). Patriarchy asserts a hierarchy over women, but also in and amongst men based on the criteria of masculinity gender-normativity and sexuality. One of the most obvious rankings is in the division between gay and straight men, where patriarchy privileges the heterosexual. The privileged position of masculinity in the patriarchal order is maintained by the constant subjugating of women and the degrading of gay men. I argue that negative attitudes towards effeminacy are tied to the preservation of heterosexual male dominance in the social hierarchy.

The men who sit atop the gender hierarchy strive toward privilege by masculinizing themselves and subjugating those who they perceive as falling below. Those who already have power retain their advantages by subordinating the disadvantaged. This hierarchy works through a politic of inclusion/exclusion. The phrase "No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!" can, and should, be considered one manifestation of this power.

By actively punishing effeminacy and investing in a culture of shame, gay men contributes to the dominance of patriarchal masculine ideology that fuels their own marginalization and oppression. In the process of consciously rejecting effeminacy and actively seeking to adopt hegemonic forms of masculinity, gay male culture enables hegemonic masculinity, compulsory heterosexuality and by extension, homophobia.

Chapter 3: “Gay or Asian?” The Paradox of Effeminacy.

Shy, 5'11, masculine, bottom attracted to cute, fit, straight acting, guys 20-32 interested in dating/long-term relationships. No Asians!

GWM50s, West Toronto, I like them smooth, cute and young (under 25 pref) 'ASIANS +++

Consider the two personal ads listed: In the first, the advertiser states explicitly that he is not seeking a gay Asian male partner. Although we are not explicitly told the advertiser's race, we are alerted what race the advertiser does *not* want: “No Asians!” In the second example, the advertiser highlights what he is looking for in big bold capital letters: **ASIANS ++++**, and young ones at that. In my two examples, race is ‘made visible’ by the advertisers who have inscribed it, included it within their descriptions – and have reminded me of my own visible racial identity. In the first, my racial identity is raised for purposes of rejection and refusal. In the second, I am sought out – fetishized – because of this very racial identity; because of my racial ‘difference’ and all of the other Orientalist qualities that it carries with it. Neither ad is tempting, nor particularly flattering. While they are also two extremes, these two personal ads highlight the bizarre and quite contradictory stereotypes of gay Asian male sexuality, presented on the one hand as “available” exotic objects of fetish, and on the other hand as effeminate, asexual bodies – the very anti-thesis of manhood¹⁵.

¹⁵ In the famous David Cronenberg film *M. Butterfly*, beneath the eyes of a judge and under oath, the Asian character Song Liling defeatedly declares, “I am an Oriental. And being an Oriental, I could never completely be a man.” This statement is Liling’s rationalization of how René Gallimard, a white French diplomat, could have mistaken him for a woman for the duration of their relationship. Underlying Liling’s declaration, however, is one of the crucial issues that haunts Diasporic-Asian¹⁵ male subjectivity – the notion of Oriental is what David Eng articulates, “the very antithesis of masculinity.” For more

This chapter engages in a discussion of race and gender, asserting that race cannot be excluded in a discussion of gender. Although the terms sex, sexuality and gender are often grouped as an interrelated package of identifications, the inclusion of race is often overlooked. Queer – as a methodology and a study – investigates the terms sex, sexuality and gender intrinsically, and without question. However, the inclusion of race in the study of queer theory cannot and should not be overlooked. I will argue that a discussion of sex and gender to the exclusion of race maintains the hegemonic social power afforded to whiteness through its unmarked ‘invisibility.’

This chapter examines the paradox of effeminacy and Asianness as both a historical marker of colonization and a moment of self-identity – moments of both Shame and of Pride. As a complement to the last chapter, this chapter highlights the invisibility of whiteness in the conception of gender normativity, where the notion of racial “others” further complicates my investigation of effeminacy. As such, I critically examine the complex and often contradictory positions that I have found myself in having to negotiate my own identity and subjectivity in different contexts of marginalization. Focusing specifically on gay Asian Males, I argue that the stakes of claiming normative and/or “straight-acting” masculinity are heightened by the intersection of race, gender and sexuality.

The chapter begins by asserting that race is imperative to a discussion of gender, sex and sexuality. I argue that a discussion of gender and gender “difference” to the exclusion of race is distinctly limited. Examining the work of David Eng, Judith Butler,

Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer, I illustrate how the omission of race in the discussion of gender reinforces the power of both ‘whiteness’ and hegemonic masculinity.

In the second section, I outline the historical colonial discourse that has constructed the Asian male body as sexless, desexualized, feminine and effeminate. Looking particularly at the bizarre case of a magazine feature entitled “Gay or Asian,” I illustrate how both historical and contemporary representations of the Asian male body are constructed in interrelation with the ‘normalized’ gender-normative white male body. Moreover, I argue that the controversy of the specific “Gay or Asian” feature is fueled by the continual dissemination of this discourse, but also by the insistence of Asian American heterosexuality, and the subsequent silencing and denial of queer Asian men.

In the final section of this chapter, I re-examine the sexual hierarchy that distinguishes between “good” and “bad” citizens, but re-framing my investigation in the intersection of race, gender and sexuality. Looking at gay Asian male pornographic representation, I argue that the shame often embodied by the Orientalist understanding of the effeminate Asian body cannot simply be eradicated by reversing stereotypes and adopting gender-normative conceptions of Asian masculinity. Rather, I argue that the strategy of claiming a “hegemonic” masculinity for gay Asian males may provide a new, improved, “positive” image of gay Asian males, but it reinscribes the very discourses it tries to deconstruct. As a result, it continues to enable white, masculine and heterosexual privilege. Moreover, I argue that more is at stake for gay Asian males, with respect to “positive” desirable masculinity – where an equal footing with his straight-acting masculine white buddies requires more than simply gender-normativity, but also racial assimilation in various degrees. As such, the argument in support of “straight-acting”

normative masculinity is critiqued as a distinctly limited approach that retains both racist and gendered hierarchies in place.

Considering Race and Gender Together

A discussion of effeminacy would be shortsighted without the acknowledgement of racial difference, in relation to gender and sexual difference. In the introduction to his book Racial Castration, David Eng considers the intersection of racial and sexual differences, stereotypes and fantasies with respect to the racial and sexual formations of Asian American men. Examining popular literary and filmic representations of Asian American (gay) male sexuality, Eng argues that it is impossible to think about racism and sexism as separate discourses or distinct objects of analysis. Rather, he asserts that they must be understood as mutually constitutive, “drawing their discursive legibility and social power in relation to one another” (Eng 2). Eng states firmly:

...the conceptualization of racial and sexual difference as if they were distinct categories of analysis is a false construction that serves the political power, economic interests and cultural hegemony of a mainstream social order. We cannot isolate racial formation from gender and sexuality without reproducing the normative logic of domination that works to configure these two categories as opposed, independent discourses in the first instance. (Eng 19)

For Eng, what makes the discussion of sex and gender without reference to race and racial “difference” so critically flawed is the long and complicated ways that they continue to inform, implicate and complicate one another, particularly in relation to power. As Eng argues, the construction of racial difference is conceived in relation to the

sexual and gendered order ascribed to the White body, asserting continued racial dominance by reconstituting notions of its own sex, gender and sexuality as “normal.” The very declaration of “difference” in reference to race underscores how whiteness is conceived and reinscribed as the norm. These instances happen in relation to the white body where, as Halberstam (1998) points out, “masculinity and femininity signify as normative within and through white middle class heterosexual bodies” (29).

Unfortunately, the exclusion of race from the study of gender and sexuality has often remained the status-quo. An example of this type of distinctly limited analysis can be found precisely in the work of Francisco Gonzales, Tim Bergling and J. Michael Bailey discussed earlier in chapter 2. While all three captured a sense of the anxious experience reading through the personal ads and noticing the utter disdain for all things flaming, their major oversight was the treatment of the personal ad columns in a non-raced or race-neutral framework. While the authors construct their argument around the basis of sex (restricting their inquiries to men/males), gender (masculine, macho, effeminate, feminine, ‘straight-acting’) and sexuality (gay, bisexual, straight, gay-curious), they fail to recognize the implications of adding race and racial identity to their exploration of gender-normativity.

This omission of race, in an analysis of gay male personal ads, may be one that is not immediately obvious by Bergling, Gonzales and Bailey. The failure by these authors to include any reference to race in their respective analyses, critical or otherwise, is a remarkable oversight considering the abundance of GWMs, GAMs and GBMs that make up the world of personal ads. These coded three-letter conventions are acronyms where the first letter represents sexuality, the second letter representing race and the final letter

offering sex/gender of the advertiser, such that GWM is read as “gay white male” while GAM30s reads as “gay asian male in his thirties¹⁶.” With these acronyms and their explicit reference to race, it seems rather odd that neither Bailey, Gonzales or Bergling offer an examination, nor a mere mention, of race in their research.

Richard Dyer (1997) argues that the dominance of White culture has afforded “Whiteness” a quality of virtual invisibility – images and representations of white culture naturalizing themselves as the norm from which all others diverge. As Eng’s analysis suggests, the failure by Bergling, Gonzales and Bailey to recognize race in their analyses unwittingly produces whiteness as “the universal and unmarked standard, a ubiquitous norm from which all else and all others are viewed as a regrettable deviation” (Eng 138). Dyer contends that if Whiteness is to be dislodged from a position of centrality, it needs to be studied and made “strange” (10). He calls for a critical study to reveal the ways in which whiteness (like other racial categories) has been historically fabricated. And as Kobena Mercer (1991) appeals, “for all our rhetoric about ‘making ourselves visible’, the real challenge in the new cultural politics of difference is to make ‘whiteness’ visible for the first time, as a culturally constructed ethnic identity historically contingent upon the disavowal and violent denial of difference” (206).

By not considering racial difference, the work of Gonzales, Bergling and Bailey fail to understand whiteness as a perspective of racial difference. As Butler (1993)

¹⁶ The three-letter acronym phenomenon described above pertains specifically to the advertisements observed in my own research. As a point of interest, it should be noted that the first letter of many heterosexual personal ads may refer to marital-status: ie: “SWF” referring to “Single, White, Female.” This is interesting, as “Single” must also be read and understood as “Straight” -- the same can be said for SWM (Single, White, Male) or SBF (Single, Black female). In each of these cases, where sexuality is not referred to specifically, readers of personal ads read “Single” and assume straightness due to the naturalization of heteronormativity and the subsequent “invisibility” of heterosexuality. As we will see in the later argument, the same can be said for descriptions based on race.

charges, this concedes from the very outset that “whiteness...is yet another power that need not speak its name” (Butler 182). Eng adds, “this attention to the discursive erasure of whiteness is a necessary amendment to the critical ways in which feminism and queer studies have hitherto framed issues of gender and sexuality” (Eng 142).

Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer highlight the particular significance of interrogating race in queer studies, in their text “Race, Sexual Politics and Black Masculinity: A Dossier.” As they point out, “whiteness’ ethnic location remains invisible in the gay community just as it does in the mainstream” (Julien and Mercer 92). Placing colonial desire in the context of gay subculture, Mercer and Julien explore issues of identification (or general lack thereof) among men of different ethnicities in the gay community, what they describe as *on the margins of the margins*. In another text, “True Confessions”, Julien and Mercer (1995) assert that “ethnicity is a crucial factor in the social construction of masculinity, suggesting the racial dialectic of projection and internalization through white and black men have shaped their masks of masculinity is a key point at which race, gender and the politics of sexuality intersect” (192). They argue that “the new “macho” and ‘straight-acting’ styles that have been appropriated by gay white men to challenge stereotypes of the effeminate weak queer carry racist and fascist connotations of white masculinity that maintain overdetermined racial structure in place, regardless of whether or not those styles merely serve to eroticize masculinity” (Julien and Mercer 192). Informed by their appeal, the discussion of race and racial identity is integral to my own thorough discussion of effeminacy and gender-non-conformity. As Eng, Butler and Mercer and Julien point out, the inclusion of race in a discussion of gender is not only important in highlighting the gendered construction of race and the

racial construction of gender, but also the social power that circulates by and through the discourses that constitute our understandings of racial difference and gender normativity.

3.2 “Of Shrimp Balls and Shaved Balls...”

In his text, “Eunuch Mandarins, Soldats Mamzelles, Effeminate Boys and Graceless Women,” Frank Proschan (2002) examines the early writing of European explorers and missionaries, where French colonial observers conceived of the Vietnamese male body as androgynous, effeminate, impotent, and “inverted” (436). As Proschan states, “these constructions coincide with the familiar process of colonialism, exoticism and Orientalism: the Asian male is typically effeminized” (436). In most instances, the Asian male was viewed as effeminate in terms of physicality and physiognomy. Colonialist writers described the Vietnamese males as “elegant and gracile figures,” “light and slender,” “small statured” and “svelte and supple bodies” (Proschan 439). Others described the Asian male body as “distinguished by the perfection of his lines, the slimness of his bust, the extreme fineness of his joints, wrists, knees, ankles” (Proschan 439). European novelist Jeanne Leuba wrote that “the man has lost the rough and strong character of males” and that his body was “prepubescent with his naked mouth, hairless chest, smooth armpits, ambiguous voice and female hairstyle” (Leuba qtd in Proschan 439). In regards to body hair, scientist Jean Marie Antoine de Lannessan wrote in 1886 that “the other parts of the body that are normally hairy among Europeans are much less so among the Annamites” (Lannessan qtd. in Proschan 440). Even the French medical writers attested that beardlessness and hairlessness were signs of impotence and emasculation: “*Natura infecundum* [By nature what is hairless is

unfruitful]" (Proschan 440, his emphasis). Ethnically variable secondary characteristics were nevertheless taken by Europeans as the normal attributes of all human males" (Proschan 440). In Proschan's own analysis, he emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the colonial's constructions of the sex, genders and sexualities of the colonized. The construction of Asian (Vietnamese) sex/gender is conceived in relation to the "normal" sexual and gendered order ascribed to Western (French) men, while also reflecting and reconstituting notions of their own sexes, genders and sexualities. Thus, the Western white body was masculine and virile in relation to the impotent, effeminate Asian body.

The emasculation of Asian men is also informed by how Asian men have been positioned historically in American society. Within Asian American history, Lisa Lowe (1996) describes how Chinese American immigrants occupied a "feminized" position in relation to the national white male citizen. In the early twentieth century, America's capitalist economy wanted Chinese male workers but not their families. Since women and children were considered detrimental to profit margins, racist immigration laws did not allow Chinese men to bring their wives from China. Asian men were restricted to menial and unskilled labour, often as domestic workers. David Eng writes of the "high concentration of Asian American male immigrants in what are typically thought of as "feminized" professions – laundries, restaurants, tailor's shops – further illustrates a material legacy of the intersectionality of gender and race" (17). These unequal employment opportunities, coupled with forced bachelorhood, positioned Asian American men outside of heteronormative gender roles and family formation. Additionally, Lowe articulates how the historical collapsing of race and gender was written into the legal discourse of Asian American citizenship:

Racialization along the legal axis of definitions of citizenship has also ascribed 'gender' to the Asian American subject. Up until 1870, citizenship was granted exclusively to male persons; in 1870, men of African descent could become naturalized, but the bar to citizenship remained for Asian men until repeal acts of 1943-1952. Whereas the 'masculinity' of the citizen was first inseparable from his "whiteness," as the state extended citizenship to nonwhite male persons, it formally designates these subjects as 'male' as well. (Lowe II).

Lowe's explanation illustrates how immigration laws qualified national citizenship based on maleness and masculinity. Since these Asian men were excluded from American citizenship, they were seen as emasculated and effeminized.

The historical medical, scientific and legal discourses attributing effeminacy and non-masculinity with Asianness continue to persist in the present day. In the April 2004 issue of Details magazine, culture writer Whitney McNally sketches a popular conception of the contemporary diasporic Asian male living in North America. Titled "Gay or Asian," and labeled as the "Anthropology" section of the magazine, a series of text captions accompany a photography of the "typical" North American Asian male. (See Fig. 1 on next page). Using a collection of puns, sexual innuendo and satirical play-on-words, six captions employ long existing colonialist constructions of the Asian male – culturally, physically, aesthetically, and through physiognomy. One caption¹⁷ reads: "*Whether you are into Shrimp Balls or Shaved Balls, entering the dragon will require imperial taste!*" while another states "*V-neck nicely showcases his sashimi-smooth chest; What other men visit salons to get, the Asian gene pool provides for free!*" echoing early

¹⁷ For a larger version of the image, please see the appendix at the end of this thesis.

colonialist interpretations of the smooth, hairless Asian male body. Other captions capture the colonial interpretations of the slender, effeminate lines of the Asian male body: “*Delicate Features: Refreshed by a cup of hot tea or a hot night of teabagging*” and “*Ladyboy Fingers: Soft and Long. Perfect for both waxing on and waxing off, plucking the koto or grabbing the kendo stick.*”

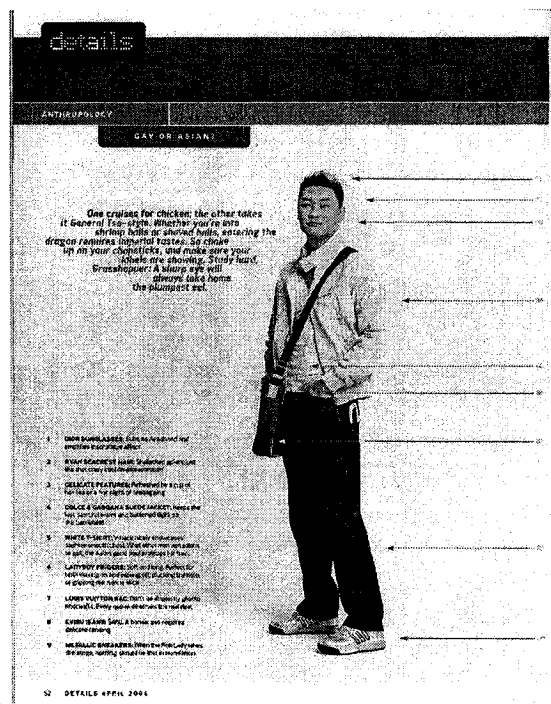


fig. 1: “Gay or Asian?” By Whitney McNally, *Details Magazine*, April 2004

As an occasional buyer of *Details*, a magazine targeted to both a straight and gay male audience, I was surprised by my own reaction to this feature. As a diasporic Asian myself, the jokes employed by this feature were nothing new and yet, on this rare occasion, I felt strangely ambivalent about McNally’s column. The “Gay or Asian” feature was actually part of a monthly series that poked fun at a range of demographics,

ranging from “Gay or British,” “Gay or Guido¹⁸,” “Gay or Magician” “Gay or Democratic National Party Nominee” and even “Gay or Jesus” (See fig. 2-8 in Appendix). As a whole, the series is open to a number of obvious critiques: (1) it improperly conflates effeminate with gay, (2) it hypersexualizes the gay citizen (3) it happens at the expense of a certain cultural group (Asian, the British, Europeans), social classes (Yuppie, Preppy, Socialite Husband), etc. But despite the history of the column, and its reputation for poking fun at stereotypes, none of these other pieces caused quite as much controversy as that of the “Gay or Asian” feature.

When the April 2004 issue of Details magazine was released, the “Gay or Asian” feature became the subject of a great debate, particularly within the Western diasporic Asian community. Making local, national and international news, the magazine was surprised to see thousands of angry letters and emails criticizing their latest target. The Asian-American community's response was of outrage, and many Diasporic-Asian community groups focused their attention on an online petition with over 25 000 signatures. The petition demanded a public apology, as well as the firing of Whitney McNally from Details, and the refusal to buy any of the advertised products of Details Magazine. The magnitude of the online petition brought the attention of the mass media to Whitney's article, where numerous newspaper, television and blog articles erupted. The editors defended themselves by pointing to the history of the series, illustrating how they had satirically mocked other groups and stereotypes, for the purpose of taking “a humourous swipe at social stereotypes.” But many Asian and Pacific Islander groups argued that, unlike the other examples, the “Gay or Asian” feature differed in its

¹⁸ The term “guido” is a derogatory and racist euphemism for Italian males.

stereotypes based on a long-standing history of colonialism and Orientalism¹⁹. Many of the Asian men who reacted angrily towards this article were upset by the continued reliance on Orientalist stereotypes. As they argued, Asian males in North America have been combating colonial stereotypes of effeminacy and the female gendering of the Asian body, and this feature only aids to reinscribe this racist understanding of North American Asian male citizenship. As John Won, co-chair of Gay Asian Pacific Islander Men of New York (GAPIMNY) declares, "by using outdated and confining racial stereotypes, McNally has boldly written Orientalization into the history of its magazine while perpetuating the ongoing two-dimensionality of Asian American identity."²⁰ Two weeks later, succumbing to the pressures of the numerous protests and petitions, Daniel Peres, editor-in-chief of Details Magazine, issued a statement on April 16 apologizing to those offended by the feature "Gay or Asian?" The statement read:

Over the past three weeks, I have received an unprecedented number of letters regarding the "Gay or Asian?" piece, which ran in the April issue of Details. It has been made abundantly clear to me that this story, which is part of an ongoing series challenging male cultural stereotypes, was insensitive, hurtful, and in poor taste - an obvious point that I regret not recognizing prior to publication. There's a line that should never be

¹⁹ In this paper, I will be using the term diasporic Asian to refer to the Asian population who were born, or have moved outside of their homeland, particularly with respect to the movement to North America. While many other authors may use the terms Asian American (both with/without hyphen), as well as Asian Canadian, but my own term diasporic-Asian hopes to incorporate the multitude of nations where diasporic Asians may now reside. For more information, see Eng, David L. Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

²⁰ Wang, Lee and and Diana Ming Yin. "Divided Unity: The 'Gay or Asian' Controversy. Exoticize My Fist. Aug 2004. 19 July 2005 <<http://www.exoticizemyfist.com/dividedunity.htm>>

crossed in any satirical humor, and Details crossed it. I, on behalf of the magazine, deeply regret this misstep, and apologize to those who were offended. (Peres “I love”).

But I would like to argue that the controversy surrounding this particular article did not resonate for these reasons. If, in fact, this were solely about race and racism, many of the other features could be construed as racist. Both the “Gay or British” and the “Gay or Guido” features played on stereotyped constructions of cultural ‘Others’ in the context of straight white middle America. The use of the term “Guido” as a derogatory euphemism for the term Italian American is additionally racist. It is also important to note that the “Gay or Jesus” feature did not cause any sort of controversy, despite the religious makeup of America, the explicit sexual play of words on the “second coming of Jesus,” and the hypersexualized depiction of Jesus Christ as an emaciated gay male wearing only a small loincloth and showing pubic hair. And while many argued that this particular feature was homophobic, I point out that the entire series relies on the construction of homosexuality as hypersexual, material, consuming. As such, I argue that these particular criticisms of the feature are secondary to the underlying root of the controversy.

More to the point, the Details magazine feature reveals the complex intersection of racism and homophobia. Many of the Asian community groups reacted with strong homophobia, angered by their association with the gay citizen. I would argue that the controversy of the McNally feature was, in fact, fueled by the homophobic reaction of the predominantly heterosexual Asian American community, who wanted to maintain the

division between Gay and Asian in order to maintain the straightness of Asian American men. For these men, the ideal Asian American citizen is based on a hegemonic version of masculinity. This version of masculinity plants itself firmly on the side of heterosexuality.

The angry reactions echoed earlier sentiments of the Aiiieeeee! Group of the past, a Yellow Power Asian American activist group who wanted to counter dominant mainstream stereotypes of the passive Asian American sissy, through their consciously oppositional voice. Unfortunately, many past and present Asian American feminist and queer writers challenged the Aiiieeeee! Movement's narrowly defined conception of its citizens as strictly heterosexual Asian American men. Like the Aiiieeeee! Group, the Asian American men who adamantly opposed the "Gay or Asian?" feature rely on compulsory heterosexuality in Asian American cultural nationalism²¹. This is exemplified by the angry reactions posted in various online petitions. In message board posts by angered API community members, comments ranged from subtle ("Apparently all Asians do the following: cruise for chicken, are into shrimp balls, and have soft and long fingers. If that's not fucked up enough, apparently these things make for someone being gay") to more homophobic ("I do hate being compared to a fag just because I'm an Asian"; "it's similar to a bully calling you a 'faggot' for no reason.")²² Maintaining the

²¹ David Eng writes that "Critics observe that by staking their cultural nationalist project on such an inflexible and strict notion of identity – on the recuperation of a strident Asian American masculinity and a 'pure' heroin Asian martial tradition – the Aiiieeeee! Group reinscribes a dominant system of compulsory heterosexuality with all its attendant misogyny and homophobia. Paradoxically, then, cultural nationalist tenets mirrored the mainstream heterosexist and racist structures by which stereotypical conceptions of Asian American men as "efficient housewives" as effeminate, illegitimate and divided – were produced in the first instance (Eng 210). For more information, see David L. Eng. Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000

²² These comments have been taken from the generationrice.com online discussion forums. They can be accessed at "Online Forums." Generation Rice. Apr. 2004. 13 Aug 2005
<<http://generationrice.com/forum/cgi-bin/topic.cgi?forum=11&topic=24>>

straightness of Asian America is imperative to many of these men, as one means of resisting the link between Asianness and effeminacy, and asserting a normalized (heterosexual) masculinity. The strategy adopted by these straight Asian American men renounces the colonial stereotype of the effeminate Asian male, but it does so by maintaining the invisibility of queer Asian American men. In this particular case, heterosexual Asian American men as asserted as the “positive image” (or “model minority”) of Asian American male citizenship in comparison to their gay Asian American brothers. Gay Asian men become oppressed and subjugated within the context of marginalization. Thus, a discussion of effeminacy would be shortsighted without the acknowledgement of the intersection of race, gender and sexuality, especially for gay Asian men whose histories are doubly-marked with effeminacy, through both racist and heterosexist constructions.

3.3 Visibility at a Cost: From Bottom to Top?

In his seminal work, “Looking for my Penis: the Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn,” Richard Fung (1993) describes his experience as a diasporic gay Asian male growing up in Canada, and a predominantly white gay community. Fung addresses the role of colonial discourse that has attributed blacks a hypersexuality and relegated Asians to the opposite extreme of asexuality. Fung argues that these racialized stereotypes have “permeated the global popular consciousness,” as exemplified in popular Western visual culture such as television and advertising (146). As such, Asian men are portrayed as undersexed and feminized. Consequently, Fung illustrates the invisibility and oppression

of queer Asian men: “If Asian men have no sexuality, how can we have homosexuality?” (148).

Furthermore, in his analysis of gay male porn videos employing Asian actors – the one area of gay Asian visibility – Fung articulates the “role the pleasure of porn plays in securing a consensus about race and desireability that ultimately works to our disadvantage [as Asian men]” (158). Fung demonstrates how the representation of (gay) Asian men focuses on their submission to the pleasure of white men. In Fung’s video examples, pornography from the mid-1980s, Asian men almost always adopt the bottom role in relation to a white top: “Asian and anus are conflated” (Fung 153). Fung refutes Richard Dyer’s (1999) claim that more equality among sexual participants exists in a gay context than it does in a straight context, arguing that this is only true when all the participants are white. This is ironic, considering Dyer’s earlier cautions about the invisibility of whiteness. Fung reveals how these early gay porn videos privilege gay white male desire by relying on Orientalist stereotypes of Asian passivity and effeminacy. Specifically, this happens in relation to role, where Asian partners are almost exclusively assigned to the role of sexual bottom.

The effeminate Asian bottom stereotype is a current example of how early colonialist discourses continue to circulate in the present day gay community. Gay video pornography reinscribes the structure such that white is reciprocally understood as virile/masculine/top/desireable in relation to the impotent, effeminate, passive Asian bottom. In a world already dominated with images of gay masculine white bodies, and the invisibility of gay Asian representation in general (particularly with respect to sex, sexuality and desire), the sole representations of Asian bodies as effeminate bottoms is

additionally damaging. This racist sexual representation results in the contradictory conundrum illustrated by the personal ads at the beginning of this chapter. Gay Asian males are presented on the one hand as sexually rejected – asexual, desexualized, antithetical to masculinity – and on the other hand represented as sexually available bottoms – objects of fetish.

In the text, “The Resurrection of Brandon Lee: The Making of a Gay Asian American Porn Star” Nguyen Tan Hoang amends Fung’s work to include the career of Brandon Lee, an anomaly in the representation of Asian American male sexuality²³. What makes Lee’s gay porn career remarkable is the fact that he is popular for being a “fierce top,” a significant departure from the actors described in Fung’s historical work (Hoang 226). The myth of Brandon Lee is that he was discovered while delivering Chinese food to a porn set, where the director asked to see his egg roll and was so astonished by his large penis that he was cast in the video²⁴ (Hoang 223). Starting at the age of eighteen, Lee began acting in gay porn videos for Catalina’s Far East Features, a series directed towards the niche Asian market. Following a rapid success, Lee crossed over into mainstream gay porn videos. Since his beginning in 1997, Lee’s career had led to the distinction of being the only Asian American porn actor with having a *Best Of* compilation (Hoang 225).

²³ Despite the overwhelming presence of Asian and Asian American women in heterosexual pornography, there is a notable absence of Asian American men, let alone a “named” straight male Asian American porn actor. For more information, see: Hoang, Nguyen Tan. “The Resurrection of Brandon Lee: The Making of a Gay Asian American Porn Star.” Porn Studies. Ed. Linda Williams. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004. 223-270.

²⁴ This fictional narrative of Brandon Lee’s discovery is in fact false; as Chi Chi LaRue (a well known director of gay porn videos) explains, Lee was discovered at a gay bathhouse in Los Angeles (Hoang 226).

Initially, many within the GAM community celebrated Lee's arrival as a mainstream video pornography star. Unlike the passive bottoms described by Fung, many believed that Lee's position as an exclusive top, and as the instigator of sexual activity in his videos challenged the dominant view of gay Asian American men. As Hoang points out, this "remasculinization ... creates a space in which [Lee] plays a performer who acts on the bodies of other men, in the narratives of videos, as well as outside of them, in the reception of the tapes" (233). Unfortunately, as Hoang points out, Lee – the big-dicked, Asian American top – does not challenge the racial hierarchy that devalues gay Asian male sexuality but actually complies to its rules. For one, Hoang argues that the creation of this gay Asian American porn star is accomplished through the coding of Brandon Lee as an assimilated (Asian) American, and the case of Lee "shows how American masculinity underlies topness, which then confers the status of gay porn star" (226). In the film "Asian Persuasion" (1997), Lee is differentiated from his Asian peers. The video begins with Lee playing an Asian American real estate agent to the Japanese house buyer. In this scene, Hoang argues that Lee's position as top is "aligned with [Lee]'s coding as an American, associated with his Valley Guy English, youth, butchness, muscularity, and big dick in relation to the bottom's broken English (hence marking him as non-American), older age, femme-ness, skinny build and smaller dick" (236). This coding of Lee as Americanized represents the larger body of his work, where his narratives rely on similar differentials: Lee inherits a boy brothel, where the other non-English speaking Asian males are sex workers; Lee is the owner of a pool cleaning company that employs working class immigrant Asian pool boys; Lee is a porn star model for another Asian character's porn ambitions (Hoang 235).

Secondly, Brandon Lee's particular uniqueness surfaces in the numerous references to his big dick. As Hoang illustrates, the majority of comments made about Lee are in surprise and pleasure of the sight of such a large dick on such a small Asian man. The director of Catalina who has directed Lee in several videos, Josh Eliot recalls his "great surprise came after the first sight of Brandon's dick" (Hoang 240). The porn magazine *Adam Gay Video XXX Showcase* writes, "18-year-old Brandon has a hard-on almost as big as he is!" (Hoang 240). In *Fortune Nookie*, Jacob Scott "comments repeatedly on the size of Brandon's big, hard cock, as if indicating a mild shock" (Hoang 240)²⁵. Although these comments emphasize the large size of Lee's penis, they do so in relation to his disproportionately small, boyish body. This, as Hoang argues, recasts the image of Asian men as small and youthful (Hoang 240). The dialogue within the porn narratives in which Lee fucks white men further underscores this diminutive construction, where his partners consistently refer to him as a "boy". Although another famously popular porn actor Jeff Stryker has a similar build and proportion to Brandon Lee, Hoang notes that no one remarks that Stryker's dick is out of proportion with his body or that it is as big as he is (241).

Although Lee's work does offer an alternative to the passive subservient bottom that Fung protests, Hoang cautions that this new "positive" representation of the big dick Asian American top comes about "at the expense of relegating other Asian men to the same old, tired, abjectified position of inassimilable, forever bottomhood" (Hoang

²⁵ Hoang is equally quick to caution that in spite of the numerous comments about Brandon's penis, "in the world of gay pornography the size of Brandon's dick is not that extraordinary. The exaggeration and hype around Brandon's sizeable equipment, I would contend, can be attributed to its attachment to the body of an Asian man" (Hoang 241). For more, see Hoang, Nguyen Tan. "The Resurrection of Brandon Lee: The Making of a Gay Asian American Porn Star." *Porn Studies*. Ed. Linda Williams. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004. 223-270.

238). The construction of Brandon Lee as a gay porn star has insisted on his status as an assimilated American, English-speaking, well built, well hung and aggressive sexual top. Lee may be distinguished as a model example of queer Asian masculinity but Asians who cannot live up to his ideal image will continue to suffer from the same racist and sexist discourses of exclusion. This echoes the same phenomenon described in chapter two, where the masculine, “straight-acting” men may resist the stereotype of the flaming effeminate gay male, but they do not deconstruct the sexual hierarchy that continues to privilege their gender-normative masculinity. Much in the same way, the colonial conception of the effeminate Asian body cannot simply be denied by reversing stereotypes and adopting hegemonic conceptions of masculinity. The strategy of overwriting the passive houseboy stereotype by prescribing more “desireable” positions for gay Asian American men as fierce tops, power bottoms or an aggressive combination of the two. By rejecting one set of “negative stereotypes” by attempting to reverse them simply reinscribes another set as more “positive.” It replaces one set of one-dimensional stereotypes (the passive, weak, effeminate Asian) for another one (the masculine, big dicked, assimilated Asian top). This strategy, rather than rejecting, instead invokes and reinforces the very colonial discourse that it hopes to contest. It reaffirms the oppressive racial hierarchy and uses its structure as a strategy, rather than questioning and dismantling the structure as a whole. As Hoang sums it up, “In looking at the more positive and progressive depiction of Brandon Lee as Americanized, we can see how this is accomplished at the expense of the business-as-usual, Orientalist marking of other Asians as being forever foreigners, exoticized and repudiated, and presented as forever bottoms for the white sex tourist’s consumption.” (252). Ideas about “positive” or

“model minority” rights only serve those who are privileged to switch from the “wrong” wide to the “right” one. The strategy of reversing the stereotype of the passive, Oriental, skinny, houseboy bottom and replacing it with hypermasculine, active, assimilated American, big-dicked, butch tops is a distinctly limited approach.

Moreover, I argue that more is at stake for gay Asian males, with respect to “positive” desirable masculinity – where an equal footing with his straight-acting masculine white buddies requires more than simply gender-normativity, but also racial assimilation in various capacities. As such, the argument in support of “straight-acting” normative masculinity reveals itself as a flawed approach limited to normative (white, masculine) bodies, and retains both racist and gendered hierarchies in place. Eng warns of “the unteneable predicament of wanting to join a mainstream society that one knows clearly and systematically excludes oneself delineates the painful problem of becoming the instrument of one’s own self-exclusion” (22). In the strategy of racial and gender assimilation, or by seeking “model minority” rights, gay Asian males actively participate in their own racist, heterosexist and homophobic marginalization.

Conclusion: Good and Normal Gay Citizens

Despite the varying approaches and subjects, each of the chapters of this thesis has examined the lack of desire to declare effeminacy. In chapter one, I outlined how academics and popular media writers alike have held fast and tight to rigid notions of masculinity. As a result, non-normative genders such as female masculinity and male effeminacy are ignored, particularly in the field of *men and masculinities' studies*. This is due, first and foremost, to the essentialist logic of the many theorists who worked under this umbrella field of gender studies. However, as I have attempted to illustrate, many young boys have been shamed for their displays of effeminacy and as such, the omission of a discussion of male effeminacy might also be due to the silencing nature of shame. By speaking openly about effeminacy, carving out a space separate from masculinity and male-femininity, I hope to confront the shame that often accompanies its discussion.

In the second chapter, I confronted the world of personal ads, where the gay male community provides a particularly alarming example of gender-shame specifically in relation to identity and desire. The dismissive phrase “No femmes, queens or flammers!” attempts to shame those who are fey, faggy, effeminate, queenish, flamboyant and downright flaming. This particular practice of shaming happens by distinguishing the masculine, straight-acting and gender-normative as ‘good citizens’ while condemning those who cannot conform to these conventions. Unfortunately, as citizens accustomed to and often targets of shame, I argue that gay male personal ads are especially vulnerable to shame, regardless where one may sit on a gender scale. The writing (or subsequent

reception) of personal ads highlights our interest and investment in the opinions of others, and the phrase “No femmes, queens or flammers!” polices and monitors our gender through its shaming utterance.

In the third chapter, I expressed my own bizarre intersection of racial and sexual shame. Speaking about my own experiences as a gay Asian male born and raised in Canada, I highlighted the bizarre paradox of effeminacy, as both a marker of colonization and a moment of self-identity – moments of both pride and of shame. Using precisely this intersection of race, gender, sexuality and nationality – specifically my own race (Asian), gender (male), sexuality (queer) and nationality (Canadian, born and raised), I argued two analogous points. First, I illustrated how the shame of effeminacy that haunts the diasporic Asian male community often demands compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity. In the political project of defending diasporic Asian masculinity, the visibility of Asian queerness is denied. Where and when queer Asian visibility exists, it happens at the expense of re-effeminizing queer Asian males, particularly in the form of sexual “bottoms.” In either case, I argue that the resistance to these stereotypes cannot take place by replacing them with a politic of ‘good representation’ or ‘model minority’ rights. Far from it, I argue that we must dismantle the structure that produces the practice of shaming.

In this conclusion, I would like to end by critiquing current modes of gay and lesbian politics that strive for a strategy of normalization, also known as assimilation, tolerance, or sexual ‘minority rights,’ particularly with respect of gender. Far from dismantling the sexual and gender hierarchies that exist, I argue that the politics of

normalization do little to disrupt shaming practices and the culture of shame. While this thesis project is primarily concerned with the practice of shaming effeminacy, I illustrate how a queer politic invested in the study of shame can enlighten other areas currently silenced, rejected or ignored. The study of shame is also imperative for dismantling and deconstructing hierarchies that privilege some but not all, and the admission of shame is integral to how we go about our journey towards pride. What I hope to have stressed in this thesis project is the importance of not abandoning or denying shame outright, and instead finding productive uses of shame, or at the very least, not feeling ashamed to speak its name.

Particularly within the gay community, there is a tendency to reproduce hierarchies of shame. This is because we see shame and pride as either oppositional or mutual exclusivity, where as Probyn asserts, “shame necessarily detracts from pride” (Probyn xviii). Thus, in the political project of achieving Pride, many within the gay and lesbian community have sought to deny shame, to silence shame and to condemn those who continue to be shameful. In The Trouble With Normal, Warner writes that many “gays and lesbians tend to believe that the way of overcoming stigma and shame is to win acceptance by the dominant culture and be re-categorized on the side of the ‘good’ citizen” (50).

Efforts of this strategy includes adopting and conforming to gender conventions – rewarding those who are ‘straight-acting’ and reviling the men who are ‘femmish, queeny or flammers’ and the women who are too ‘butchy’ – and most recently, this can be seen in rallying energy for monogamous, co-habiting same-sex marriage “rights.” For many

within the gay and lesbian community, the easier way to be proud is to adopt the practices of the dominant culture, rather than changing the self-understanding of our culture (Warner 50). This political project is assimilationist in nature, as the formerly 'bad' gay citizens become accepted into the category of 'good' gay citizens, provided they adhere to all the other rules of the charmed inner circle.

But as Warner warns, this current project of many gay and lesbians is not simply assimilationist, but worse – normalizing. As Warner contends, nearly everyone wants to be seen as normal (53). This is especially true, “if the alternative is being abnormal or deviant or not being one of the rest of us?” (Warner 53). So what is the problem with normal? Why not elevate the status of the normals, as a means of gaining entry into acceptance? What is the problem with taking baby steps in our efforts towards normalization? Shouldn't even small movements forward be considered positive? Unfortunately, as Warner points out, the problem is that embracing normalization sustains the shame of those who stand farther down the ladder of respectability. Warner sums it up best:

Those whose sex is least threatening, along with those whose gender profiles seem least queer, are put forward as the good and acceptable face of the movement. These, inevitably, are the ones who are staying home, making dinner for their boyfriends. The others, the queers who have sex in public toilets, who don't “come out” as happily gay, the sex workers, the lesbians who are too vocal about a taste for dildos or S/M, the boys who flaunt it as pansies or leathermen, the androgynes, the trannies or transgendered whose gender deviance makes them unassimilable to the

menu of sexual orientations, the clones in the so-called gay ghetto, the fist-fuckers and popper-snorters, the ones who actually like pornography – all these flaming creatures are told ... that their great moment of liberation and acceptance will come later [as a result of the trickledown] effect. (66)

In addition, how does one measure and determine what is normal? For Warner, normal is “census figures, market demographics, opinion polls, social science studies, psychological surveys, clinical tests, sales figures, trends, the ‘mainstream,’ the current generation, the common man, the man on the street, the ‘heartland of America’” (53). What if we were to include personal ads in this list? What if we were to include pornography in this list as well? Particularly in the case of personal ads, is it possible that the fantasies expressed to be interpreted as the mainstream, common or “normal” desires? Might this desire for normal idealize how we both describe our own identities, and shape the identities we desire?

Perhaps the utterance “No Femmes, Queens or Flamers!” and all its myriad variations are re-invoked, not because we are disgusted by effeminate beasts, but because many gay men think it is *normal* to shame effeminacy. Likewise, maybe gay men continue to dress up in straight-acting strait-jackets because they believe these are *normal* desires. Moreover, if these markers of normal determine what is attractive, then who in their right mind would choose to make themselves abnormal and thus, undesirable? In the personal ads, where the rules of normalcy enforce what is desirable, is it surprising that gay men are shamed into adopting gender convention as a way of feeling included? But is it possible that, in the repetition of “straight-acting” and the dismissal of “femmes,

queers or flamers,” gay men are taught to think internalized homophobia, genderphobia and self-hatred are *normal* as well?

Assimilation, Normalization and Instruments of Self-Exclusion

In his own book Beyond the Closet: The Transformation of Gay and Lesbian Life, Steven Seidman notices a similar emergence of what he calls “The Normal Gay.” As Seidman writes, “Gays have the same needs, feelings, commitments, loyalties, and aspirations as heterosexuals and accordingly deserve the same rights and respect” (17). The logic of the “Normal Gay” politic stresses that gays are just like any other citizens. Seidman writes that the ‘Normal Gay’ hopes to legitimize himself by claiming space on the ‘good’ side of the hierarchy and attempts to rid himself of shame by joining with the dominant normative population.

However, like Warner, Seidman cautions that normal carries another normative sense: “the ‘Normal Gay’ is expected to exhibit specific kinds of traits and behaviours... he is supposed to be gender conventional, well adjusted, and integrated into mainstream society; she is committed to home, family, career and nation” (17). Moreover, as Seidman points out, this claim to normality justifies assimilation and social integration but only for normal-looking and acting gay and lesbians. Moreover, Seidman writes that “to the extent that the Normal Gay aspires only to be a full-fledged ‘good citizen’ does not challenge heterosexual dominance” (17). This ‘Normal Gay’ strategy involves minority rights through an assimilationist politic, not the end of heterosexual privilege. In his own critique of assimilation-based politics, David Eng writes that “the unteneable predicament of wanting to join a mainstream society that one knows clearly and

systematically excludes oneself delineates the painful problem of becoming the instrument of one's own self-exclusion" (22).

In this sense, assimilation-based political strategies encourage gay men to continue passing as straight by means of exhibiting conventional masculine persona. Rather than dismantling the culture of shame that creates and maintains the closet, it privileges those who succumb to its power. Those who hide their sexuality through the closeting of effeminacy are deemed desirable and attractive. In this sense, gay men are not rewarded for 'outing' their gender non-convention, but rather punished because of it. Simply put, this gender school teaches gay men to remain committed in a culture of shame. Far from prideful, this strategy is counterproductive, marginalizing and oppressive. Rather, a queer politic must not invest energy in rewards and privileges of 'good citizens' but recognize and dismantle the structures that support them. It should also recognize and celebrate difference, rather than exclude it.

Embracing Gay Shame

The argument of this thesis is not particularly new, nor especially unique, but rather one that reflects a new queer political phenomenon. The Gay Shame²⁶ movement is an outgrowth of a younger and more radical generation's critique with commercialized, homogenous and assimilationist-based pride celebrations. Not unlike the emergence of the word queer and the radical politics it brought forth a decade ago, a politic of shame asks to transform our personal shame into the queer. It challenges us to ask important questions about queer consumption, normalization and tolerance.

²⁶ The Anti-capitalist Ass Pirates and Les Pantheres Roses are two examples in Montreal, although other examples include GayShameSF in San Francisco, and LimpWrist in Toronto.

As a relatively new movement, Gay Shame's visibility has been mainly in response to over-commercialized pride celebrations that are infused with corporate sponsorships, celebrity grand marshals, expensive parties and consumerism than they are about celebrating the radical post-stonewall queer movement. More recently, Gay Shame groups across North America have begun battling the normative institutions of same-sex marriage and adoption rights. However, it is important not to forget that Gay Shame's politic can, and should, be extended to a queer activism that fights the assimilationist, normal gay monster that creates and maintains the dominance of the straight-acting gay and the statement "No femmes, queens or flammers!" to whom he is lawfully wed. Gay Shame re-emphasizes a politic based on difference, not on assimilation or minority rights. Gay shame does not so much rebel against outsider status but revel in it.

Effeminacy may continually reinvok the stereotype of the homosexual as a flaming creature borne of inversion, but I would like to argue that it is also a form of resistance. What removes effeminacy from the claims to stereotype, or aligning with outdated medical discourses is the simple reconfiguration of the question, "*On whose terms?*" Where a politic of assimilation strives for acceptance based on *their* (hetero- and gender-normative) terms, I appeal for a queer politic based *on our terms*. It removes our interest in the dominant and claims a space for the 'queer.' This is what transforms effeminacy into a subversive and defiant status. As Marlon Riggs describes, it says "Yes, I'm different and I'm also proud of it" (Riggs "Listening"). Riggs asserts that this affirms the physical, the cultural, and the gestural, which the dominant culture looks down upon and considers inferior, stereotypical, or flawed. As he declares, "We take that and reverse it in a way, so that it becomes a virtue rather than a vice or flaw" (Riggs

“Listening”). In a similar argument, Judith Halberstam writes that this constitutes rebellion not in opposition to normative conventions but in the indifference of it. It asserts political power by its refusal – It screams out in a defiant tone, “Well I don’t care” (Halberstam 9)²⁷. Framing it in relation to the culture of shame, I would amend this statement to proclaim, boldly, “Well I don’t care... because I am not ashamed!”

The admission that “I am not ashamed” resists investing in the dominant normative structure and the judging eyes of the normal. This thesis was inspired and energized by my own flaming effeminacy, and my own resistance to effeminate shame. The autobiographical account of my encounters with the culture of shame is one resistant strategy in a journey towards not simply being proud, but *becoming* proud.

Future Projects

Personal ads are one instance of where gender is monitored, policed and enforced but they are certainly not the only example. Expanding the examination of effeminacy – especially the punishment of effeminacy by and amongst gay men – requires further analysis into how we are taught masculinity, rewarded for performing it ‘correctly’ or shamed for failing to reproduce it fully. In the third chapter, I expanded my own analysis to include a magazine clipping from a men’s magazine as well as gay video pornography to cultivate a more challenging look at effeminacy through both a racial and sexual lens. If I were to continue this project, I would expect my examination to continue in a similar manner, looking at other myriad ways effeminacy cuts across identity and identification.

²⁷ Here, Halberstam does not suggest the futile action of what Foucault might critique as “saying no to power,” but rather asserting power by its in-your-face defiance. For further discussion, see Halberstam, Judith. Female Masculinity. Durham, Duke University Press, 1998.

The notion of the “twink” would make for an interesting examination. As a phrase made popular within the gay male community, “twink” refers to boyish-looking, smooth, skinny young gay teens. Bearing in mind my argument from chapter three, it is also important to highlight that this term is often restricted to white males. The term “twink” is used as an identification, as derogatory slang, as a term to describe a subculture within gay male communities, and as a distinct – and popular – category of gay pornography. How might an analysis of twinkles enlighten and expand our examination of effeminacy? Where “twink” often refers to youth and youthful looks, how does age inform our understanding of effeminacy, and how might ageism cut across an argument of normalization and assimilation?

A more thorough examination of sexual bottoms is also worthy of further investigation, particularly where Michael Warner asserts that even many well-adjusted gay men often suffer from “bottom shame.” Fung has asserted that Asians are almost always cast as bottoms, where “asian and anus are conflated” (153). Twinks are another example where age and body type feed into our cultural conceptions of bottoms. Where effeminacy is constructed in relation to masculinity, and where bottom is constructed in relation to top, how might a further analysis of the relationship between bottoms and effeminacy inform my own discussion? How are cultural discourses of effeminacy prescribed and reproduced through the prescription of identities in relation to sexual positions “top” and “bottom?” What if, as I imagine is most often the case, one does not identify as a top or bottom in the first place?

And while this thesis has concentrated on effeminacy in gay men, I hope that this project can also be broadened to study the range of non-normative, unconventional and challenging forms of gender that exist in everyday contexts, but are often overlooked. Halberstam's female masculinity is one relevant and insightful example, but I imagine there are many more. Other important projects would include the examination of the uses of effeminacy in heterosexual men. This discussion may be hinted at in the popular writing of metrosexuality, but I hope these conversations be broadened from notions of effeminacy based strictly in terms of fashion, aesthetic and material consumption. But how what about effeminate straight men in relation to desire, socially and sexually? Likewise, I hope our study of gender can be expanded to include examinations of female masculinity in heterosexual females. What happens when tomboys grow up? What about effeminacy in females, gay or straight? And, again, how are these all affected by race? Even as I attempt to describe these, I am sure there are a number of other fascinating examples that continue to question, challenge or complicate our understanding of gender and gender theory.

Finally, this thesis is not the "final word" on a discussion of effeminacy and the culture of shame – rather, it is only the beginning. I hope this thesis brings about further exploration of effeminacy, and the shame that may be invoked by its discussion. I imagine there are many discussions to be had, but few have been written. I hope my own openness and willingness to resist the shame of effeminacy will encourage others to do the same.

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ANTHROPOLOGY

GAY OR ASIAN?

One cruises for chicken; the other takes it General Tso-style. Whether you're into shrimp balls or shaved balls, entering the dragon requires imperial tastes. So choke up on your chopsticks, and make sure your labels are showing. Study hard, Grasshopper: A sharp eye will always take home the plumpest eel.



- 1 **DIOR SUNGLASSES:** Subs as headband and amplifies inscrutable affect.
- 2 **RYAN REACREST HAIR:** Shellacked spikes, just like that crazy cool Americanoooooo!
- 3 **DELICATE FEATURES:** Refreshed by a cup of hot tea or a hot night of teabagging.
- 4 **DOLCE & GABBANA SUEDE JACKET:** Keeps the last samurai warm and buttoned tight on the battlefield.
- 5 **WHITE T-SHIRT:** V-neck nicely showcases sashimi-smooth chest. What other men visit salons to get, the Asian gene pool provides for free.
- 6 **LADYBOY FINGERS:** Soft and long. Perfect for both waxing on and waxing off, plucking the koto, or gripping the kendo stick.
- 7 **LOUIS VUITTON BAG:** Don't be duped by ghetto knockoffs. Every queen deserves the real deal.
- 8 **EVISU JEANS:** \$400. A bonsai ass requires delicate tending.
- 9 **METALLIC SNEAKERS:** When the Pink Lady takes the stage, nothing should be lost in translation.

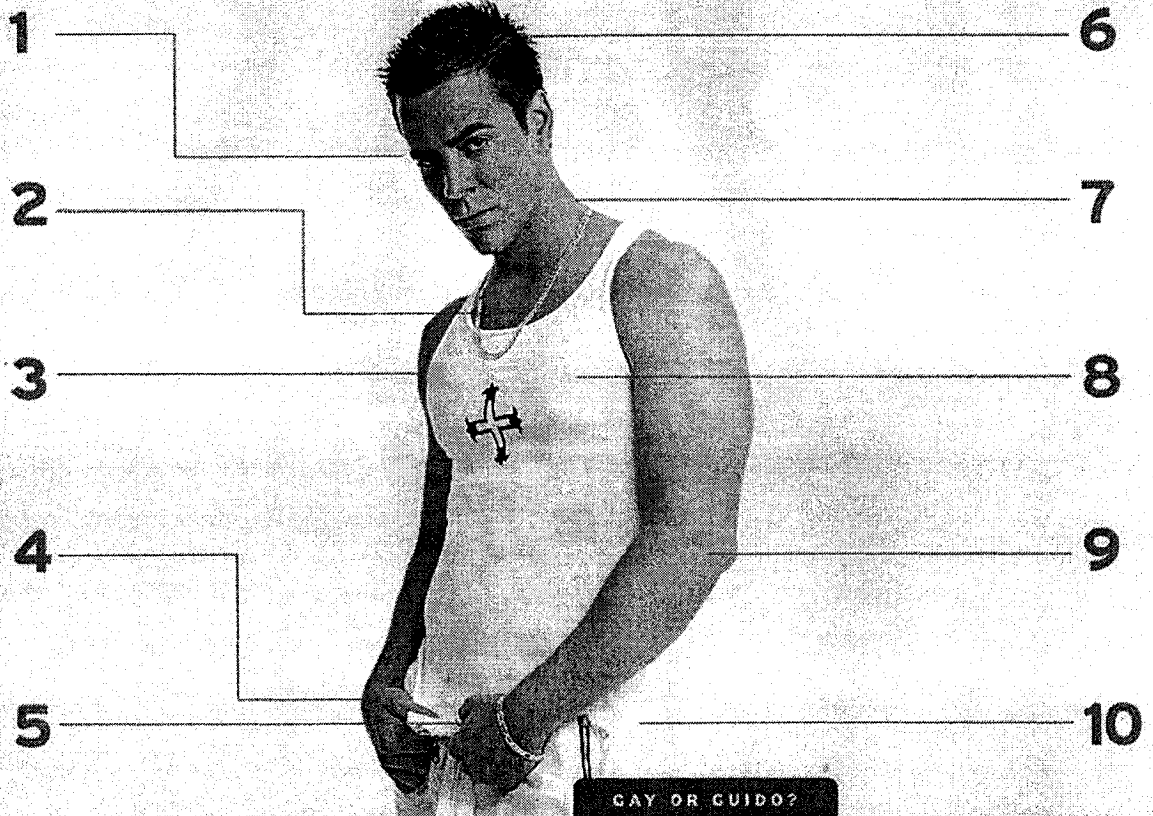
HAIR BY LOUIS VUITTON; SUNGLASSES BY DIOR; SHOULDER BAG BY DIOR; JEANS BY EVISU; SNEAKERS BY EVISU; T-SHIRT BY GIANNI VERSACE; JACKET BY DOLCE & GABBANA; STYLING BY JIMMY FORHER CAMPBELL

Fig. 1 – “Gay or Asian” Details Magazine, Apr. 2004

details

KNOW TELL

ANTHROPOLOGY



GAY OR GUIDO?

ONE CRUISES BENSJAMIN, THE OTHER, FIRE ISLAND. THEY'RE DIFFERENT SPECIES, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO MATTERS OF STYLE, THE ITALIAN STALLION AND THE CHELSEA BOY ARE INDISTINGUISHABLE.

1. Plucked eyebrows: Because a uni is worse than uncapped teeth, and Mom always said shopily arches make the eyes look bigger.

2. Waxed chest hair: The ultimate, point-of-no-return decision. Requires triweekly upkeep, with interim stubble shaved at all costs.

3. Pecs and pipes: Payoff for a diet of MET-Rx protein shakes, burgers (no buns), and 58 minutes a day on the Bowflex.

4. Manicured nails: Buffed, with one coat of clear polish. This weekly ritual includes a pedicure and free white flip-flops at the corner Korean salon.

5. Thumb ring: Looks great clinking against an apple martini or the CD case of the new Deborah Cox album.

6. Spiked "wet look" hair: Styled messy to cover the bald spot or straight up to add a much-needed inch in height.

7. Silver chain and matching bracelet: A butch contrast to the gallon of cologne and glistening baby oil.

8. Tank-top: Ribbed, two sizes too small. Can be tucked into belted jeans and accessorized with a short-sleeve unbuttoned shirt, preferably a black stretch poly-blend.

9. Spray-on bronzer: Two minutes in the Mystic Tan and there's no reason to weekend in South Beach. Total cost: \$30.

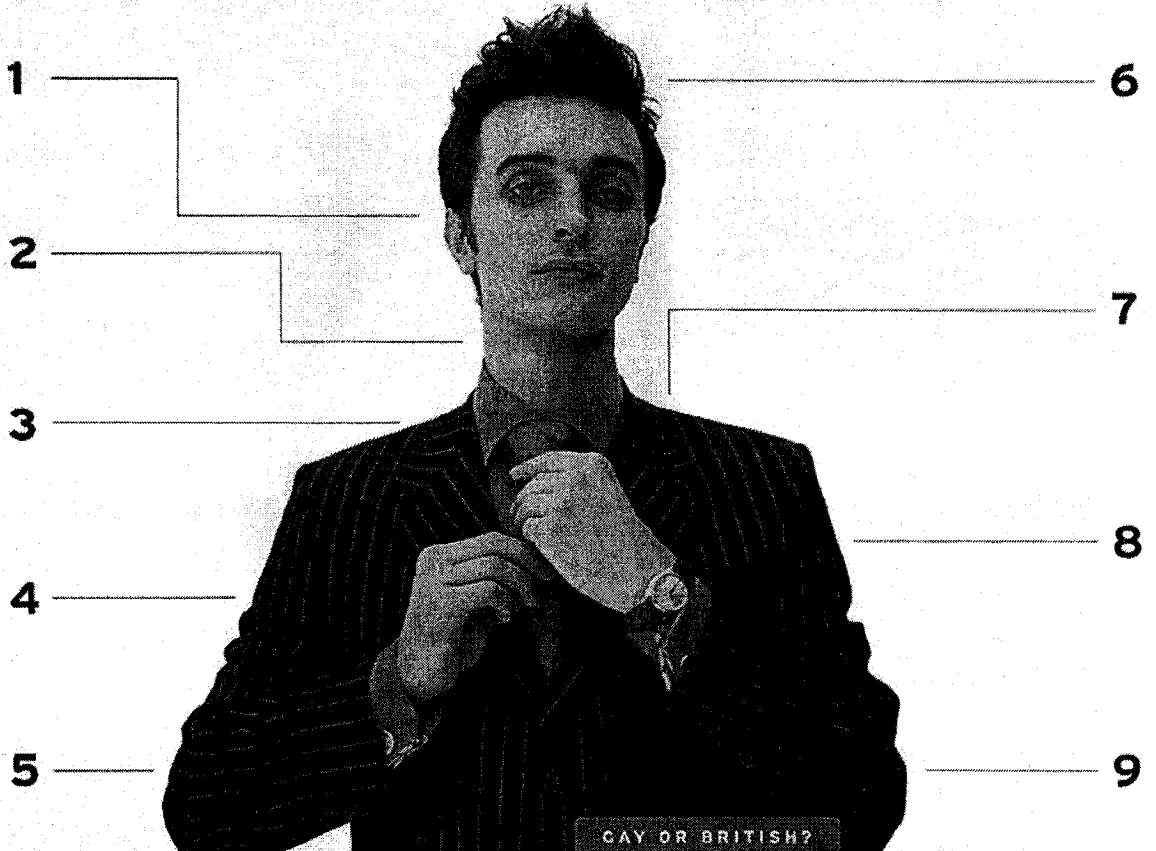
10. High-waisted pants: Any Euro label will do, as long as they accentuate the butt. On Saturday nights, whoever has the most zippers wins.

Fig. 2 – “Gay or Guido?” Details Magazine, Aug. 2003.

KNOW TELL

ANTHROPOLOGY

BY VINCENT J. BROWNE



GAY OR BRITISH?

ONE CRUISES THE WEST END; THE OTHER, THE WEST SIDE. FROM LONDON TO NEW YORK, WHEN IT COMES TO STYLE, THE BRITISH POP AND THE AMERICAN QUEEN ARE CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH.

1. CLEAN-SHAVEN:

The inability to grow a mustache speaks louder than a family crest.

2. PALE SKIN:

Bronzed biceps are for Greek heirs in Saint-Tropez. A curdled-goat's-milk complexion signifies the subtle sophistication of fox hunting in a light drizzle. God forbid there should be any little brown ones in the bloodline.

3. DOUBLE WINDSOR KNOT:

Manicured at Salon of course. Leaned with color-tinting dimples to compensate for some (very) else (perhaps)?

4. DOUBLE CUFFS:

Collar then finger, cuffs to the outside; Parisian chic people too.

5. CUFF LINKS:

Just in case the fuchsia shirt and floppy coil aren't dandy enough for the fourth floor of SoHo House.

6. HUGH GRANT HAIR:

Never curls, perpetually tousled. Suggests bred-to-be-royal-without-a-day-job look.

7. CHALK STRIPES:

Because pin-stripes say Wall Street working-class and solids are too stuffy for vodka sodas at noon.

8. VINTAGE WATCH:

Leather band, brown only. (Black is for new-money rustics.) Stainless steel simply unforgivable.

9. SLIM-CUT SUIT:

Nymphette bone structure must be advertised, preferably in Duncan Quinn or Gieves & Hawkes.

Fig. 3 – “Gay or British?” Details Magazine, Oct. 2003.

KNOW TELL

ANTHROPOLOGY

BY JENNIFER MONAGHAN

GAY OR PREPPY?

ONE JETS TO THE CAPE; THE OTHER SKIPS TO SAMPLE SALES. WHETHER IT'S A PICNIC IN KENNEBUNKPORT OR A BLOCK PARTY IN THE CASTRO, THE FASHION IS THE SAME: PRETTY-BOY PASTELS AND ENOUGH KHAKI TO CANVAS CONNECTICUT.



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1. PINK CASHMERE CABLE-KNIT
Simple sartorial Darwinism. Pastels are the province of the rich. Worn loosely knotted, over the shoulders à la Boris Becker.

2. RIBBON BELT
Holding up pants with a swath of cloth says I-can-still-kick-it-casual. Hot-pink flamingos or red lobsters, optional.

3. KHAKI PANTS
Otherwise known as The Slacks. Cropped at the ankle to show a sliver of accentuated with Tod's or Rainbow flip-flops. Finally, in direct violation of pleated, Papa, flat-fronts.

4. THE WAVE HAIR
Same bowl cut as the Little League; grown-up side part in perpetuity. Sun-bleached blond suggests three-day workweeks followed by Nantucket sailing tours on the USS Warp.

5. COLLAR UP
When you're on your sixth Tanqueray and tonic and you've got to run the Boomer to Miffy's house for cocktail hour, it's best to maintain a smidgen of decorum.

6. SLIM-CUT POLO
The shirt of champions. Because what's more dignifying than a colorful little horsey?

7. ROPE BRACELET
A show of solidarity between ex-druggies shipped to outdoorsy Knolls camps, where digging ditches serves as respite from Rituals.

8. NO WEDDING RING
Commitment is for Cro-Mags.

Fig. 4 – “Gay or Preppy?” Details Magazine, Nov. 2003

details

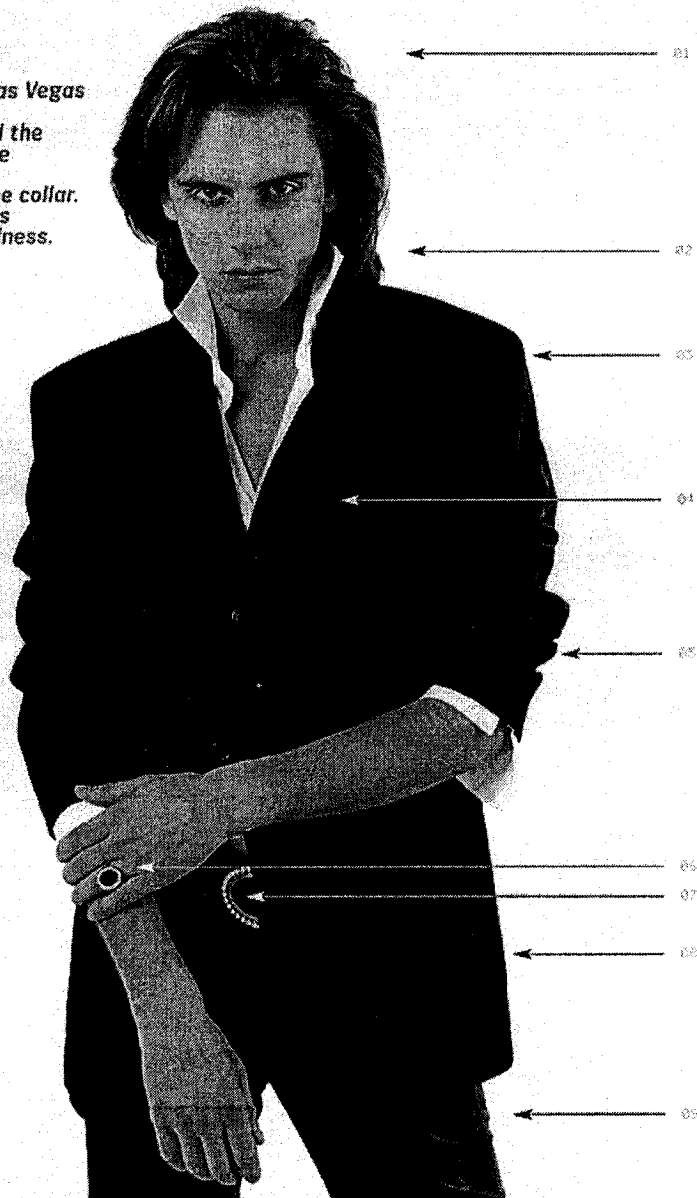
KNOW TELL

ANTHROPOLOGY

BY VERNON J. FANALE

GAY OR MAGICIAN?

One hides in closets; the other comes out of them. From the Las Vegas stage to the South Beach sands, one thing is for real: The gay man and the gallant magician deal from the same deck of cards. Blow out the hair. Pluck up the collar. Bedazzle something. Because there's no business like show business.



- 1 **BLOWN-OUT HAIR:** Bordering on bouffant, fluffed back in a semi-crisp state. Suggests the presence of a powerful wind machine. Blond tips optional; natural look strictly forbidden. Remember, it's of an illusion.
- 2 **WHITE SHIRT:** Unbuttoned, sub-ripple. Turned-up collar makes a face mask of sorts, framing pouty lips and cocked eyebrow, those universal signifiers of mysterious powers.
- 3 **SHOULDER PADS:** Creates the mirage of added height. And how else to protect the neck from catty animals?
- 4 **WILLOWY BUILD:** The result of too many years spent indoors building a rapport with rabbits and doves.
- 5 **SCRUNCHED-UP SLEEVES:** Always let the hands do the talking.
- 6 **SPARKLE RING:** Hypnotizes while simultaneously paying homage to Liberace.
- 7 **RHINESTONE BELT:** Because you can't be expected to carry around a strobe light.
- 8 **BLAZER:** Underneath the handcuffs, codpieces, and sequins, a sensible jacket is the only way to go.
- 9 **LEATHER PANTS:** A must. Breathable but still repellent when props suddenly go berserk. Plus, leather makes that wand look more magical than it really is.

Fig. 5 – “Gay or Magician?” *Details Magazine*, Dec. 2003.

DETAILS

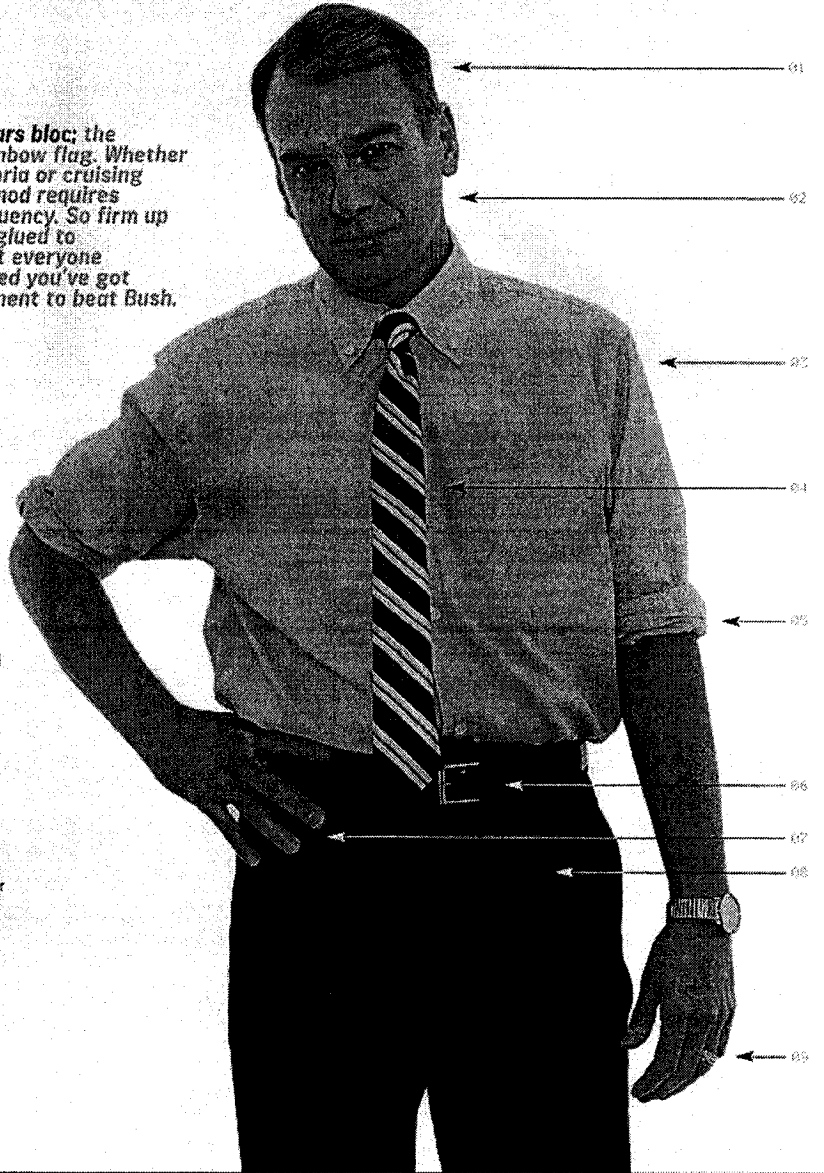
ANTHROPOLOGY

BY WHITNEY MCVAUGH

GAY OR DEMOCRATIC FRONT-RUNNER?

One covets the stars-and-bars bloc; the other flies a rainbow flag. Whether you're canvassing Peoria or cruising Provincetown, getting the nod requires an inflamed constituency. So firm up that stump speech and stay glued to the polls, because not everyone is convinced you've got the right equipment to beat Bush.

- 1 **GRAY HAIR:** Pat and perfect for Madison Avenue academies or private East Hampton beaches.
- 2 **BOYISH SKIN:** Lack of wrinkles indicates political naïveté and potential willingness to kneel at the feet of tyrants.
- 3 **BLUE SHIRT:** Transcends white-collar Beltway Establishment—and recalls man-of-the-people prison movies, especially the ones where the cons wear tight-fitting jeans and pump iron and ... is it getting hot in here?
- 4 **SUPER-THIN TIE:** Don't ask. Don't tell.
- 5 **SLEEVES:** Rolled up above the elbow. Shows off buff forearms. Better to wrestle the occasional bear of the Vermont or Chelsea variety.
- 6 **BLACK BELT:** Cinched up tighter than the seal on a former governor's records.
- 7 **HAND ON HIP:** Says you're always ready for the next Meetup.
- 8 **PLEATED PANTS:** Provides extra room to swing the bat.
- 9 **WEDDING RING:** Allows for more visible display than other kinds of rings, and adds color when you're pounding the podium. Plus, gay marriage rocks the vote!



PHOTOGRAPH BY TAMMY SCHROEDER; SHIRT, PANTS, AND BELT BY BANANA REPUBLIC; TIE BY TOMMY HILF; RING BY DAVID YUDMAN; WATCH BY TUDOR; WATCHING BY GUYANA; JAVIER; GROOMING BY JEFFREY; HAIR BY JEFFREY; MAKEUP BY JEFFREY

Fig.6 – “Gay or Democratic Front-runner?” Details Magazine, Jan. 2004

KNOW TELL

ANTHROPOLOGY

GAY OR JESUS?



One hoards Madonna's records; the other calls her Mother. Whether you're stealing a kiss from Peter or cruising for disciples with Paul, a good son requires a righteous staff. So come out of the wilderness, remember that man does not live by bread alone, and switch that Poland Spring to Pinot Grigio. From St. Barts to Bethlehem, it's not officially a party until the Second Coming.

- 1 **TOUSLED TRESSES:** The reward for a long day of sand-blasted soul-saving or island-hopping with Valentino. Also available at Bumble and bumble for \$250.
- 2 **SPARSE FACIAL HAIR:** The only way to stand out among all those smooth-shaven centurions.
- 3 **MULTIPLE NECKLACES:** Because you'll need a handful of symbols for them to still be talking about you in 2,000 years.
- 4 **SLIM BUILD:** It's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a boy with a spare tire to pass muster on the beach.
- 5 **LEATHER SATCHEL:** Carries sunblock, bronzing lotion, exfoliants, and other necessities for on-the-spot anointing.
- 6 **LEATHER BANDS:** Accentuates slender wrist on bedpost or crucifix.
- 7 **CROTCH-BARING PLUNGE:** The meek may inherit the earth, but their cabanas can get pretty lonely on Friday night.
- 8 **SARONG:** Sheer fabric makes sure people notice when He is risen.
- 9 **SANDALS:** Easier to walk on water when light in the loafers.

Fig.7 – “Gay or Jesus?” Details Magazine, Mar. 2004

GAY OR SOCIALITE'S HUSBAND?



One sashays around Palm Beach; the other swishes through the Pines. Whether you're escorting Mitzy to Bridgehampton or Marty through the back door, it takes a jim-dandy to infiltrate the richest openings. So grin and let them eat cake, noble man. Sugar's ready for her dessert.

- 1 **WISPY HAIR:** Flicked to the side or straight back. This loosey-goosey can handle any position.
- 2 **WRINKLE-FREE SKIN:** One afternoon with a Park Avenue dermatologist can erase years of damage from frolicking in the sun.
- 3 **STRIPED SHIRT:** Pink, pecan, or periwinkle. Anything but purple—indicates a royal pain in the ass.
- 4 **POCKET SQUARE:** The crowd at Bice thinks orange silk is simply a sartorial flourish. But to the discerning eye, it signals that Mr. Howell wants to come out and play.
- 5 **DOUBLE-BREADED JACKET:** Navy wool crêpe, brass buttons optional. Hello, sailor!
- 6 **HAMILTON WATCH:** A gift from dear old Dad before he got mixed up in that dreadful contretemps with the Brazilian gardener.
- 7 **WEDDING BAND:** His wife may have paid for his wardrobe, but she can only rent what's underneath.
- 8 **SIGNET RING:** Those towel-snapping locker-room days at Deerfield are never far from mind.
- 9 **WHITE PANTS:** Because black won't do unless it's Djimon Hounsou.
- 10 **BARE ANKLES:** Sockless look indicates both naked ambition and a complete lack of tan lines.
- 11 **BELGIAN LOAFERS:** You need to stay light on your feet when dashing from the Bentley to the Brads and Bobbys.

Fig. 8 – “Gay or Socialite’s Husband?” *Details Magazine*, May, 2004