Between the Gothic and Surveillance:
Gay (Male) Identity, Fiction Film, and Pornography (1970-2015)

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Abstract

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In this thesis I make the case for rethinking fictional and explicit queer representation as a form of surveillance. I put recent research in surveillance studies, particularly work on informational doubling, in conversation with the concepts of the uncanny and the doppelgänger to reconsider the legacy of screen theory and cinematic discipline in relation to the ongoing ideological struggle between normativity and queerness. I begin my investigation in and around the Stonewall era examining the gothic roots and incarnation of gay identity. I then trace the formation and development of identity through cinematic and pornographic representation taking critical snapshots of four identifiable epochs organized around a seismic socio-political disjuncture: after Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign in the late 70s and early 80s; during the AIDS crisis between the mid-80s and mid-90s; after the AIDS crisis in the late 90s when family politics took centre stage; and in the midst of the "bareback crisis" in the new millennium.

I argue that in order to understand the crisis in contemporary queer cultural politics heavily influenced by the rupture in uniform safer-sex practices we must trace the lineage of figurative identity through fiction and hard core film back to its post-Stonewall incarnation. It is my ultimate contention that the strategic deployment of homogeneous identity via social, personal, and sexual identification with the image double became a way to control the streets without having to be on the streets. Mainstream(ed) representation became, and remains, a brilliantly insidious form of social engineering and not a path toward liberation and freedom.

Homosexuality exists outside the field of the visible, but the gay and queer do not. I argue that through film and porn metaphysical identities were strategically manufactured which queer individuals were and are compelled and convinced to identify with and mimic, culminating in an ideological and representational schism in the twenty-first century whose effect on lived experience has had significant consequences.

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Chapter 1) Introduction

HIV: From Visible to Invisible to Spectral

My project was inspired by a lingering personal observation: in spite of the "bareback crisis" that has left the porn industry, public health organizations, and queer community workers struggling to cope with gay men's desire to see and have anal sex without condoms, there is a surprising lack of representation of people with HIV in both queer and non-queer media—save for a few television characters (*Brothers and Sisters*, *Looking*), many of whom appear on reality programs (*Rupaul's Drag Race*, *Project Runway*). Despite the continual transmission of HIV among gay and bisexual men and despite the visual and carnal proliferation of the activity that is generally responsible for the transmission of the HIV virus, there remains a deafening silence around HIV/AIDS in mainstream(ed) media. Why?

For some time now, HIV/AIDS has been reframed as a "third world" disease (Kagan 2009; 2015), something that is only a crisis in places such as Africa because in the privileged West a cocktail of medications has (supposedly) turned the virus into something benign and seemingly innocuous—for those who can afford it or have access to the luxury of universal or insurance-covered healthcare. Since the debut of the AIDS cocktail (HAART) at the 11th International Conference on AIDS in Vancouver in 1996, AIDS went from being a death sentence to something one manages—HIV is something one takes control of instead of something that controls you. But with the development of the AIDS cocktail and the sense that AIDS in the West has been "dealt with," commitment to condom use has dramatically declined (Adam 2005; Escoffier 2011). A culture of barebacking (unprotected anal sex) developed in the mid- to late 90s (Rofes 1998) as a response to liberal-normative politics that largely depended on the surveillance of sex: the promotion of health and family (values) (Foucault ([1975] 1995;

Therborn 2004) and what some see as suffocating safer-sex protocols (Dean 2009). The desire to have sex without condoms is rooted in something much deeper than visceral sensation—there is a political element to fucking without condoms.

Barebacking has been a point of intellectual interest and contention since condom use was normalized in the latter half of the 90s (Rofes 1998; Gauthier and Forsyth 1999; Suarez and Miller 2001; Halkitis et al. 2003a, 2003b; Crossley 2004; Haig 2006; Shernoff 2006), but scholarship on barebacking has increased as condom use in gay male pornography has decreased (Dean 2009, 2015; Kagan 2009, 2015; Ashford 2010; 2015; McKittrick 2011; Stein et al. 2012; Rosser 2012, 2013; Wilkerson et al. 2012; Galos et al. 2013; Isola 2013; McNamara 2013; Jonas et al. 2014; Lee 2014; Mowlabocus, Harbottle, Witzel 2013, 2014; Nelson et al. 2014a; 2014b; Scott 2015). Positive correlations between practices, fantasies, and representations of barebacking have been well-documented, and a significant amount of research and thought from the medical and social sciences as well as the humanities has been dedicated to deciphering the various common factors that connect all three discursive realms. But the complex relations between reality and fantasy implicit in the production and consumption of pornography have made definitive causal factors difficult to pinpoint.

As the practice of barebacking became visualized in porn, the semi-clandestine culture and sense of community and identity (Dean 2009; Blas 2012) that gravitated around the practice has largely dissipated. Porn brought barebacking to the surface (Lee 2104; Vörös 2014), transforming a once secretive practice into an open casual one (Harvey 2011). Looser commitments to safer sex, though, have made it more difficult to identify and control subjects and behaviour, threatening a socio-political system that has manufactured and thus requires a binary between good and bad be maintained. The return of gay sexuality to the regime of public

exposure and scrutiny has complicated the tacitly accepted separation of identity and sex that has allowed the former to flourish on the condition the latter remains off the public's radar.

Complicating this discussion is the development of PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis), or Truvada (its pharmaceutical name), and PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis). PrEP is a daily medication[1] gay men can take to prevent contracting the HIV virus. Although proven highly effective (Boseley 2014, 2015; Brady 2015), public resistance to the drug from various figures in the community has sparked an intraculture battle (Duran 2012; Tuller 2013; Adnum 2013, 2014; Crary 2014; Healey 2014; King 2014a, 2014b; Staley 2014). The development and promotion of PrEP concede to the reality that gay and bisexual men are having sex without condoms. For some, that not only means admitting safer-sex policies have failed, but also the politics that bolster them. Instead of celebrating an innovation that could potentially stop the spread of HIV and bring a slow end to the pandemic, many have condemned it[2] and more extreme measures to ensure steadfast condom use have been put into place. Unable to control the proliferation of the behaviour itself, public attention has turned to its representation.

With the passing of Measure B—an ordinance mandating condom use in all commercial porn production filmed within Los Angeles County—the, what I call, "normal majority's" need to maintain control over its non-conforming subjects has reached critical mass. HIV-negative individuals can take PrEP and engage in unprotected anal sex with incredibly minimal chances of

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[1] PEP is taken only after potentially being exposed to the HIV virus.

[2] One of the major issues currently being discussed is commitment to a daily pill-taking regiment. Missing or being spotty with dosage not only greatly reduces effectiveness, leaving one vulnerable to infection, but also opens the possibility of a drug-resistant strain of HIV developing over time.

contracting the virus, but the representation of that activity leaves the "application" of the pharmaceutical prophylaxis offscreen.[3] If PrEP is more effective than physical condoms, then why not simply mandate performers be on PrEP? And if the performers onscreen are on PrEP and those watching at home are also on PrEP, then why all the hysterical measures? Why do we still need to see the condom if the represented behaviour does not produce the health crisis it once did and may very well be more effective than blanket safer-sex promotion that has resulted in spotty use or right out rejection? There's obviously much more invested in the representation and tacit promotion of the physical condom than protecting workers' rights, which is what the AIDS Healthcare Foundation argued when it presented LA County with Measure B.

It is difficult not to see the law's oversimplified didactic intention: to use pornography as a makeshift training manual (Dines 2012)—*we can't control what people do behind closed doors, so let's institute a blanket condom policy in porn: monkey see, monkey do. Problem solved!* The attempt to retain control over sex is happening through representation. Seeing condom use in porn was one of the most important strategies deployed by AIDS activists to promote and institute condom use as the new norm (Patton 1990; 1991). The very same logic is being used here, but to a much more invasive degree. Steadfast anxieties about relations between bodies and screens have only intensified in the digital era (Chun 2006; Paasonen 2011), revealing how the porn wars and tricky terrain of media effects continue to haunt discussions of

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[3] Different studios have different policies, but most engage in what's known as "sero-sorting," partnering people of similar status with each other (HIV-positive with HIV-positive; HIV-negative with HIV-negative), and conduct serial HIV and STI testing and screening. Several actors have admitted to being on PrEP and several directors and studio heads have actively promoted its use (Lucas 2013; Webb 2014a, 2014b).

pornography to this day. Measure B is an anti-porn measure repackaged under the auspicious altruism of liberal protectionism. Not surprisingly, the language around condom use in porn appropriates typical liberal rhetoric—"for the greater good."

Questions of empowerment, transgression, and learning have permeated discussions of gay male pornography since it became a topic worthy of academic consideration, but recent debates over barebacking have complicated the legacy of queer porn research. Work that has historically revolved around feminist critiques of patriarchy and oppression (Waugh 1985, 1996; Dyer 1985, Burger 19995; Champagne 1995, 1997) tended to view gay male pornography in positive terms,[4] in part because anti-porn polemics (Kendall 1993, 2001, 2004, 2005) framed it as monolithically bad. But bareback pornography has reignited concerns about the potential negative effects of pornography on gay men's lives, placing porn scholars and activists in a precarious position. The optimistic and affirmative thrust of earlier research no longer uniformly applies.

Echoing Douglas Crimp's views on promiscuity and the AIDS epidemic ([1987] 1989), Michael McNamara writes, "Bareback porn, I believe, will save queer lives. As the Other of safer-sex campaigns relying on dogmatic condom use, bareback porn as a representation of condom-free anal sex provides a vital reference point through which gay men can make healthy and informed sexual choices" (2013, 241). McNamara's formulation of barebacking as safer sex's "other" is telling of the divide the condom instantiated when it was uniformly adopted by the commercial porn industry and mainstream gay activists in the 1990s (Escoffier 2009). Identifying barebacking as queer praxis aligns it with queerness and queer theory's anti-

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[4] Critiques of racial and ethnic representation in gay male pornography, though, were quick to point out the spectacle of gay sex did not equally empower everybody (Fung 1991, Ortiz 1994).

normative impulse, positioning it in opposition to normativity, which coalesces around practices, representations, and discourses of health and safety. McNamara's observation that bareback pornography is queer culture's salvation speaks prominently to not only the depth of normativity and queerness's divide, but also the degree to which their respective politics depend on discourses of normative sex.

The discourse around bareback pornography replays in uncanny fashion discussions that took place during the AIDS epidemic over condom use, representation, community, salvation, and empowerment (Patton 1990; 1991). Indeed, there is something uncanny about bareback pornography itself: the spectacle of all male sex without condom bears resemblance to past sex but in the present. Tim Dean (2009) has argued that barebacking is not a new phenomenon, but one that is firmly rooted in the past, and according to Stuart Scott (2015), barebacking does not exist outside the regime of uniform condom use instituted in the early 90s. If barebacking is a reoccurring and not new practice, then the removal of the condom in porn (and the bedroom) opens a metaphoric rupture, collapsing past and present (Dean 2011; McCallum and Tuhkanen 2011). Barebacking partially returns gay culture to its pre-condom roots, which is perhaps why accusations of (infantile) regression are directed at those who fuck without condoms (Ashford 2010).

According to Castiglia and Reed, contemporary gay culture suffers from an ongoing process of what they call "unremembering," a "partially achieved forgetting" that involves "a perpetual self-monitoring for inclinations to pastness" characterized by "trauma" (2011, 10)— trauma here referring to the AIDS epidemic. "Remembering the 'sexual revolution'," according to the intellectual duo, "offers models for critiquing and creating pleasurable alternatives to the normative and traumatized present" (2011, 11). Although Castiglia and Reed don't directly

implicate the condom, framing contemporary gay male experience as normative yet traumatized inadvertently situates the condom as a symbiotic entity that binds them together.

Before the normalization of condom use in the 90s there was just sex: the condom's uniformity inadvertently erected a latex threshold between past and present, whose visualization in porn always contained within it nostalgia for a period of unbridled lust and sexual possibility gone by (Scott 2015). Within this discursive context, barebacking becomes the return of the past, or, repressed. But if unprotected sex is linked to an anti-normative politics of promiscuity, then it is also linked to the sexual minority revolution that organized sex into a political movement: Gay Liberation. Metaphorically speaking, then, the condom hasn't just acted as a semen barrier, but also one that has blocked the memories of a tumultuous and optimistic (Gay Liberation) as well as horrifying past (AIDS) from flooding and unsettling the present.

The AIDS epidemic required "making a complete break with a 'diseased' past," giving way "to agendas organized around conformity to institutionalized authority vested in church, state, and science," write Castiglia and Reed (2011, 3). As the AIDS crisis[5] slowly came to an end, representations of safer sex in porn were complemented by images of normality and health in mainstream and queer representation. Together, explicit and non-explicit representation initiated a new social regime through visual representation and along with it, a new political one

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[5] My use of the phrase "AIDS crisis" should not suggest that I believe that AIDS is no longer a crisis or that the crisis that is AIDS ended abruptly in 1996 with the release of the AIDS cocktail. I, like many others, refer to the 1981-1996 period as the AIDS crisis to highlight the shift from localized epidemic to global pandemic, where AIDS was no longer an automatic death sentence, becoming instead a virus whose management and continued survival is contingent upon national/personal wealth and privilege.

too. But if liberal-normative order is contingent upon the physical presence of the condom and the metaphysical politics it embodies (marriage, family, health, safety), then bareback porn and chemical prophylaxes such as PrEP (Truvada) and PEP threaten to destabilize that order. Bareback porn and barebacking have the potential to unremember unremembering.

But Dean (2015) has recently argued that Truvada is, in fact, entirely commensurate with liberal-normative values, instituting "surveillance at the biomolecular level" (2011, 421). Truvada undermines the radical potentials of barebacking by insidiously intervening beneath the threshold of visibility. If that's the case, then why are Truvada and (by extension) barebacking seen as threats? It is because assimilationist cultural politics are predicated on normal sex (Berlant and Warner 1998; Warner 2000). AIDS made people think twice about being promiscuous and the benefits of a having a monogamous partner—the threat of AIDS instituted monogamy as an ideal form of protection. Unprotected sex is sanctioned between monogamous couples (Dean 2009), even though new research suggests one to two thirds of new HIV infections occur among men in relationships (Stachowski and Stephenson 2015), but severely stigmatised outside a relationship. In order to "guarantee" safety and have the kind of intimacy that comes without a physical barrier, you needed to be in a relationship. But if AIDS is no longer an issue, then why stay with one partner? Bareback porn and PrEP threaten a cultural political system that binds together visceral pleasure and emotional fulfilment to monogamy. Representations of barebacking transgress normative images and subvert their contingent politics, potentially becoming visual entities through which observers can unlearn, and more importantly *relearn*, how to be gay (Halperin 2012).

Dean (2015) also observes that the term "barebacking" has recently given way to "raw."[6] Raw sex is the fantasy of transcending mediation, even though "there can be no sexual experience that remains unmediated by social conceptions of what sex is or should be" (2015, 224). Raw is associated with "real," "natural" and "authentic" (Barcan 2002), captured best by the title of a recent symposium on barebacking held at the University of Toronto—"From Raw to Real." Because gay men's sex lives are "more heavily mediated than most," they are "particularly susceptible to the fantasy that 'raw sex' represents," according to Dean (2015, 224-225). The politics of "raw sex" are newly emerging but remain firmly rooted in the desire to liberate oneself from the antiseptic politics associated with regimes of intervention: to return to a period before governmental and biopolitical interventions introduced sex to a system of regimentation, calculation, and surveillance—even if Truvada is a stealthy mixture of both. To fuck without condoms is to embody the fantasy and the potentials of Gay Liberation; to relive the period before the split between safe and unsafe and past and present was erected and sheathed with latex. The return of condomless sex and its visual incarnation is likewise rooted in the fantasy of returning to the real (Foster 1996).

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[6] Dean argues that "mediations of 'raw sex,'" along with "expert and vernacular discourses rub together in a transnational context to reconfigure what some happily still call barebacking" (2015, 228). Although I agree with Dean, I maintain the word barebacking because even though "raw" takes over in the 2010s, unprotected anal sex is still commonly referred to as barebacking—amateur performers and professional porn companies still traffic in the label "bareback," and "bb" (*bareb*acking) remains a commonly used acronym on various gay male social/sexual networking platforms (Grindr, Scruff, Craigslist, Dudesnude).

The suppression and repression of the AIDS epidemic and Gay Liberation cultivated normative culture but at the same time maintained both eras as inextricable spectres. "A ghost, of course, haunts," observes David Oscar Harvey, and "a haunting instils a troublesome impression of its presence," (2013, para. 1). The past continues to haunt the queer imaginary, compelling preeminent French queer scholar Didier Eribon to proclaim that he has "always thought that gay lives are haunted lives" (2010, 311). "My life," he tenderly confesses, "is haunted by those whom the disease took away—by those, more precisely, whom I managed to survive" (2010, 310). And yet a spiraling sensation that something is in the process of returning can be detected in the writings of prominent queer theorists, whose collective work over the last decade or so has focused rather intently on memory, time, the uncanny, and the future (Cvetkovich 2003, 2012; Edelman 2004; Halberstam 2005; Freccero 2006, 2011; Haggerty, 2006; Jenzen 2007; Goltz 2009; Hughes and Smith 2009; Muñoz, 2009; Rigby 2009; Eribon 2010; Freeman, 2010; Hallas 2010; Castiglia and Reed 2011; de Lauretis 2011; Hanson 2011; Rosenberg and Villarejo 2011; Palmer 2012).

"Any verification of the ghost is dubious at best" writes Harvey. "It is intuited or felt, more so than it is conventionally perceived. It is there, or so it seems, while remaining undetectable. And so it is that HIV/AIDS—for me, but I imagine for others as well—is somewhat ghostly" (2013, para.1). It is not just the AIDS epidemic that haunts the present, but those who live with HIV too. Retroviral medications have become so sophisticated that one can have, but be unable to spread, HIV—what's known as having an "undetectable viral load." The HIV-positive individual with an undetectable viral load is HIV-positive, yet for all intents and purposes is also HIV-negative (Duran 2014b): neither, nor. The HIV-positive subject is ghostly: there but not there. And yet, Harvey contends, "HIV is not a ghost. It is in me and millions of

others, becoming within and modifying us by processes both epidemiological and semiotic. These are facts, solid things, whose truths would be abetted by corresponding representations of being HIV-positive today" (Harvey 2013, para.14). The HIV-positive subject's ghostliness is thus maintained by being denied visibility, a presence onscreen.

Movies about AIDS or with HIV-positive characters have appeared intermittently since the epidemic era (1984-1996)—*All about My Mother* (1999), *The Hours* (2002), *3 Needles* (2005)—but a recent spate of AIDS-focused dramas and documentaries have begun what could be a new cycle of representation. Films such as *How to Survive a Plague* (2012), *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013), *Test* (2013), and *The Normal Heart* (2014) have dared to resurrect the dead. But even though these films have received mainstream attention and transgress the gay/straight binary both on and offscreen, winning accolades and awards from festival prizes to Emmys and Oscars, all the films remain firmly rooted in the past—they are either set during or just before the epidemic years (1981 to 1996) or reflect on them from the present. Castiglia and Reed argue that films are "official memories" that "constitute a potent form of forgetting even as they purport to traffic in memory" (2011, 2). This small cycle, what can be called "Retro AIDS cinema," has punctured the time threshold—something is in the processes of returning.

The lauded French film *Stranger by the Lake* [*L'inconnu du lac*] (2013) speaks prominently to feelings of agitation and unrest about to be unleashed—its unclear timeframe and gothic treatment capturing the liminal materiality of HIV in the undetectable era and the unshakable feeling that something that has been repressed is set to return. Set on a remote beach in the French countryside where men spend their time cruising, swimming, and sunbathing, and where one man decides to feed his lust for murder, the pastoral setting gives the movie a timeless feel that complements the narrative's gothic qualities: shadowy, deathly, pregnant with tension

and uncertainty; isolated spaces with supernatural overtones; victims enchanted by a victimizer; nude doppelgängers; and an enticing mixture of transgression and excess (Botting 2014). The retro aesthetics saturate this eerie film with a discomforting nostalgia, imbuing it with a sense of emotional and psychological blockage. Its gothic timelessness makes the film's era difficult to pinpoint: it could be set in the present or past—or maybe it's both?—seemingly referencing Wakefield Poole's gay porn classic *The Boys in the Sand* (1971) and the French young gay romance fiction *Come Undone* [*Presque rien*] (2000) at the same time.

Casey Donovan exiting the water
in *Boys in the Sand* (1971)

Michel exiting the water in
in *Stranger by the Lake* (2013)

Donovan and Peter Fisk in
Boys in the Sand

The two young protagonists in
Come Undone

Franck and Michel in
Stranger by the Lake

It is telling that *Stranger* is primarily set on a beach. The beach is an enduring and prominent setting in queer cinema, whose popularity pre-dates Stonewall. From the gothic queer film *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959) (Miller 1999), to Andy Warhol's *My Hustler* (1965) and the Gay Liberation feature *A Very Natural Thing* (1974), to the more recent *Tan Lines* (2007) and *Shelter* (2007), the beach provides a perfect alibi for satisfying eager audience's voyeurism.

Stranger more than satisfies the requisite criteria of providing viewers with flesh to ogle and drool over, but *Stranger*'s beach setting also collapses past and present, making it difficult to pinpoint when the film is set, and allows the filmmaker to subvert the setting's innate birthing-cleansing metaphor, which also tacitly connotes "natural" and "real." If Donovan's Venus-like birth off the shores of Fire Island in 1970 symbolically inaugurated gay identity, bringing gay sexuality and identity out of the water along with him, what does Michel's birthing in 2013 symbolize?

Stranger by the Lake is as much an allegory about AIDS (Williams 2014), as captured by Owen Gleiberman's (2014) concluding remarks in his movie review for *Entertainment Weekly* that "when you emerge from it you know you've been someplace '*raw and real*'" (emphasis mine), as it is about the uncanniness of contemporary queer politics and representation. Raw sex is "natural" sex, and both raw and natural are "real." Characters never mention HIV or AIDS, but allude to "sickness" and are spotty with condom use in this hard core art film. The protagonist, Franck, is seduced by Michel, whom Franck saw drown someone in the lake. Drawn in by Michel's rugged good looks and the thrill of risk, by the end Franck is left wandering the forest in the dark as his new lover tries to hunt him down to kill him. Michel is figuratively coded as "AIDS." Even though Franck and Michel take turns topping and bottoming for each other, we only see, or at least hear, Michel finishing inside Franck. But is Michel "AIDS" before the epidemic, foreshadowing the impending crisis, or the return of the repressed, the "return" of HIV in the bareback era?

Franck before entering Michel

Franck on the lookout for Michel

How does one represent something both deadly and innocuous at the same time? How does one represent a virus that eludes visibility in a manner that isn't sensationalistic? In *Philadelphia* (1993), the image of the frail dying gay man reinforced the melodramatic narrative. But if that gay man with HIV is no longer sick or dying, if he is visibly no different from his negative counterpart, how does one go about representing HIV/AIDS? Even the "reverse money shot" (Dean 2009, 195), pushing out of semen from one's anus, in bareback porn can only prove the means have been taken, but not the results (Dean 2015; Scott 2015). Besides possibly showing a character taking his daily medication and going for the occasional blood test, the HIV-positive character would live almost no differently than their HIV-negative counterpart. Although it was the first scripted show to address PrEP, even HBO's gay male drama *Looking* (2014-2015), based in San Francisco of all places, took a full season to introduce an HIV-positive character. Why the representational and discursive schism?

PrEP, undetectable viral loads, and barebacking threaten to unravel power structures contingent upon normative privilege, leaving the direction of queer futurity in flux and up for grabs. Although the norm remains implicitly HIV-negative for the time being, normalizing strategies by HIV-positive activists have helped an aboveground community, sense of pride, and

identity that revolves around one's positive status to flourish.[7] What can be termed "poz pride" complicates typical configurations that have made someone with HIV an object of pity rather than identifiable source of empowerment. HIV was what differentiated the good, responsible gay citizen from the bad, antisocial queer—but not anymore. The HIV-positive subject is no longer the suppressed other, which is perhaps why recent films have acknowledged the momentum behind this movement while containing the threat it poses by locating it in the past. And yet the HIV-positive subject, undetectable or not, remains a noncitizen (Schulman 2014): *homo sacer* (Agamben [1995] 1998). As of yet, the HIV-positive subject remains politically volatile— potentially good, but also potentially bad—and untrustworthy—too close to, but also too far from, the normal ideal.

The repressed always returns for a reason and with a purpose: to thwart the stasis sustained by its repression and to destroy what initially repressed it. If barebacking (both the act and its representation) and those with HIV are returning from their repression, then they too are returning for a reason and with a purpose. The repressed have returned to divert the present's current trajectory and gear it toward a different future. If the future of queer politics is located in the past (Freeman 2010; Castiglia and Reed 2011), then what we need is to go back to the beginning and start from there. The manifestly circular structure of queer discourse and

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[7] Attempts to bridge the positive/negative divide have emphasized similarities rather than differences—negative and positive men have unprotected anal sex; the positive ones just happen to have contracted the virus. See *HIV=* (http://www.hivequal.org/). In addition, a number of online magazines and community forums cater to open discussions about the multiple facets of living with HIV. See *POZ magazine* (http://www.poz.com/) and *HIVPlusMag* (http://www.hivplusmag.com/).

representation beckon our return to the moment when the identifiable gay subject walked out of the proverbial water: Stonewall.

Gothic and uncanny tropes figured prominently in representation around Stonewall (Harris 1997; Powell 2011), mirroring the inbetweenness of gay identity in its nascent formation, a discursive and representational trend that continues to this day (Freccero 2006, 2011; Rigby 2009; Jenzen 2011). Although the repression takes place at the level of cognition, its manifestation often takes shape in the form of an evil double. Both doubling and the return of the repressed feature prominently in Freud's writing on the uncanny and in gothic literature (Dolar 1991), but so too does homosexuality (Halberstam 1995; Haggerty 2006; Palmer 2012). Indeed, homosexuality and the homosexual have often been described as heterosexuality's and the heterosexual's threatening double (Sedgwick 1985, 1990; Fuss 1991; Ellis 1999). And although we in the West live in a "post-closeted culture" that has chipped away at the closet's metaphysical strictures (Dean 2014), doubling remains an enduring structure and feature of gay and queer representation and discourse. It is to this issue I turn next.

Surveillance, Film, Doubling

The 2013 "propaganda" law passed in Russia and tabloid newspapers that published a list of Uganda's "top 200 homosexuals" along with pictures (Abedine and Landau, 2014) exemplify the crux of Leo Bersani's argument that "once we agreed to be seen, we also agreed to being policed" (1995, 12). According to Bersani, "visibility is a precondition of surveillance, disciplinary intervention, and, at the limit, gender-cleansing," (1995, 11), and as B. Ruby Rich observes, "When Gay Liberation arrived, it came hand in hand with the movies": "a new era was born. And with it, a new cinema" (2013c, 5). Gay identity took shape and evolved through, and

not just with, moving image representation. Although claiming to liberate, cinema became a primary vehicle for institutionalizing, disciplining, and controlling gay identity.

Gay identity is as much a symptomatic product of surveillance as it the gothic. Indeed, gay identity in its contemporary formation is perpetually caught in a struggle between the will to be, and privileges that comes with being, visible and invisible. The desire to be visible is matched by a desire to be invisible, and the privileges that come with being in the spotlight or living in the shadows also come with their respective burdens—visibility is a double-edged sword. It is no surprise that identity politics coincide with the expansion and proliferation of surveillance technologies (Miller 1999) or that cinema itself took an interest in surveillance at the very same time (Zimmer 2015). As individuals and social groups fought diligently to liberate themselves from mass culture, technologies that observed, monitored, and learned about them correspondingly grew as well. At the same time, groups and individuals who relied on representation and visibility for their liberation and validation inadvertently incorporated surveillance's central tenets into their identity and discursive politics. As resistance to gay identity and rights intensified throughout the 70s and 80s, the point of view represented in film narrowed, revealing the duality, if not duplicity, of cinema and visibility: invisibility, too, is a double-edged sword.

Cinema has long since been thought of as a disciplinary mechanism (Rosen 1986; Williams [1989] 1999; Cartwright 1995), but it is only with the proliferation of CCTV (closed captioned television) and its representation and emulation in film that a discussion of cinema as a form of surveillance itself has materialized (Gunning 1999; Turner 1999; Levin 2002, 2008; England 2004; Kammerer 2004; Lake 2010; Herzog 2010; Zimmer 2011, 2015; Muir 2012; Stewart 2012, 2015; Lefait 2013; Tziallas 2014). Although cinema studies has only recently

begun to contemplate the relations between film and practices of surveillance, the field of surveillance studies has turned its attention to the phenomenon of doubling.

One of the most important ideas to come out of the field of surveillance studies is that of the "data double" (Haggerty and Erickson 2000). In the computer age, the human body is mined for data and turned into a virtual informatic entity. The self is split into two: a corporeal self and a data self. Human bodies are abstracted from their territorial settings, separated into a series of discrete flows that are then reassembled in different locations as virtual data doubles. An assemblage of various bits of information projects a phantom double that represents its corporeal referent. Surveillance in the digital era is more piecemeal than direct, exercising control over one's physical self through one's *representation*: one's virtual or digital doppelgänger. Surveillance in its current technological manifestation is a mimetic phenomenon inextricable from doubling: surveillance no longer only observes the world but recreates a digital parallel one through mimesis.

Film too has often been described in terms of mimesis (Gaines, 1999; Marks 2000; Jayamanne 2011; Campbell 2005), and as Jackie Stacey observes, "Insofar as they both seek to imitate life, cinema and genetic engineering are both technologies of imitation: the first a cultural technology, the second a biological one" (2010, 7). Building on work by Lisa Cartwright (1995) and Hannah Landecker (2007), Stacey's study explores "the converging desires to imitate life in science and in the cinema" (2010, 8). Stacey pays considerable attention to the clone, noting that "the figure of the clone is the youngest in a long genealogy of doppelgängers who have populated our imaginative landscapes and haunted our psyches" (2010, 95). The theme of the double has been a prominent feature of mythology and superstition for millennia, but its popularity in mass culture dates back to the gothic novel (Dolar 1991). Unsurprisingly, Stacey

also pays considerable attention to homosexuality and the threat of sameness embodied by the clone and homosexual.

"The dread of sameness haunting the genetic imaginary," Stacey observes, is "connected to fears of broader changes in the practices of sexuality and reproduction." The clone combines fears about homosexuality and technology undoing natural order, whereby "the deathly practices of sameness…are contrasted with the 'life-giving' energies of heterosexuality as the foundation of culture" (2010, 33). Sameness may haunt the genetic imaginary, but throughout and after the 90s sameness, paradoxically, became something validated by genetics (Allen 2014; McCarthy 2014): gays are born that way. I argue that the (in)fusion of sameness and discursive genetics, however, meant the deathly properties within (AIDS) had to be replaced with a commitment to discursive procreation: gays are part of the family; gays want their own family too. It is precisely the transformation of gay identity from a "deathly practice" to "life-giving energy" that liberal activists sought to enact in the AIDS and post-epidemic era through concentrated mimesis: heteromimesis was the ultimate goal.

The clone Stacey examines is derived from the very same informatic surveillance that has materialized the data double, and both cinema and surveillance are observing and mimetic phenomena propagated by technologies that facilitate identity and identification through a process of doubling. I contend that when discussing gay identity and queer discourse we should conceive of moving images as a scientific technology that generates, disciplines, and propagates image clones in service of social engineering and control—the hysteria over bareback porn crystallizes the power of representation, mimesis and identity's convergence and threat they (now) pose to liberal normativity: even though PrEP and the success of anti-retroviral therapy

(undetectable viral load) have all but divorced the virus from the behaviour, the threat of identification and mimesis cannot be so easily divorced from the image.

Anxieties about the effects of film are not new (Grieveson 2008, 2009), and neither are inquiries about cinematic spectatorship and identification (Metz [1971] 1974, [1977] 1982; Baudry [1974] 1986, [1976] 1986; Mulvey 1975; Harvey 1982; Doane 1991; Silverman 1992; Mayne 1993; Sobchack 1994; Rodowick [1988] 1994; Campbell 2005). In fact, the cinematic apparatus's slow disassembling over the years (Diawara 1988; Clover 1992; Evans and Gamman 1995; Bordwell and Carroll 1996; Plantinga 2009) has recently compelled preeminent film theorist and scholar Jane Gaines to declare "the apparatus" dead.[8] And yet the disciplinary apparatus of surveillance is not only alive and well, but is also being reassembled in front of our very eyes with various types of recording technologies: CCTV abounds on every corner; drones fly above us like electric birds; GPS tracks people everywhere they go via their phones; telephones are bugged and conversations tape-recorded; computers monitor and store personal information in corporate and governmental data banks; even cinema has moved beyond representing surveillance (Levin 2002), increasingly fusing itself with the surveillance apparatus (Zimmer 2015). Far from dead, the disciplinary apparatus, if anything, is being resurrected.

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[8] Gaines made her proclamation during a roundtable discussion aptly titled "What is Left of Apparatus Theory in the Age of Multiple Screen and Exhibition Platforms?" The panel took on place on Thursday November 3rd, 2011 and was part ARTHEMIS's annual symposium. It was moderated by Francesco Casetti and included Thomas Elsaesser, Phil Rosen, and Will Straw as participants. The conference's entire program is available at http://arthemis-cinema.ca/sites/arthemis.nt2.ca/files/ProgrammeIMPACT_F-i-n-a-l%20%281%29_2.pdf

If as Catherine Zimmer argues "cinematic (and televisual) narratives of surveillance serve as such specific structural models of the dynamics within a culture of surveillance that they themselves should be viewed not just as 'reflections' of an increasingly surveillance-centred media, but themselves as *practices* of surveillance" (2011a, 439), then narratives of surveillance are also practices of doubling, too. If gay identity and subjectivity are inextricable from surveillance, then queer representation is surveillance at a distance via metaphysical doubling.

According to D. N. Rodowick, "All identity is comprised of 'data images' rather than the implied surveillance of physical bodies" (2001, 222). The data double for Rodowick is also an image, a virtual composite. Personhood, observes Rodowick, is "no longer sustained by a substantial identity under direct personal and bodily control, but rather by the statistical variables defining your 'data image.' The formulation and control of data images is fundamental to the exercise of power in control societies…" (2001, 216). Images and representations contain and are constructed with information: data doubles are image doubles and vice versa.

Speaking of documentary film, Agnieszka Piotrowska (2013) suggests that "the experience of seeing oneself on screen, re-edited and re-narrated to suit the needs of the filmmaker and broadcaster, might tap into the unconscious anxieties connected to the notion of one's double and the fears associated with it" (304). Piotrowska identifies authorship and anxieties over the control of one's image as key elements that materialize the documentary doppelgänger. These, too, are discourses that resonate deeply with queer representation and identity politics. Debates about authorship organized initial conversations about queer representation and remain points of contention with the mainstreaming of gay identity (Waugh [1984] 2011a, [1988/1992] 2000, [1997] 2011b; Watney 1982; Dyer [1990] 2003, 1991; Cover 2000; Dean 2007). The ethnographic impulse that spoke on behalf of, and purposefully

misrepresented, queer people inspired sexual others to speak back by speaking themselves. Queer authorship, biography, and autobiography became corrective autoethnographies (Russell 1999), yet the sense of misrepresentation and disconnection seem to have only intensified with each push to attain and retain greater amounts of control over representation.

Because queer people understand themselves as subjects that are always subject to more pervasive and invasive degrees of surveillance, and because queer individuals understand themselves as subjects that are always and already authored and documented primarily though visual forms of stereotyping, I argue that a documentary gaze is already grafted onto the fictional and hard core lens. The desire to see one's self "displayed to the public" and used to inform the public has structured Gay Liberation and subsequent queer and gay rights politics since Stonewall. The complex dynamics between desire and the real that take place between the documented subject and viewer (Cowie 2011) can and should be extrapolated and refitted to a queer paradigm. Indeed, for those who identify as something or as someone other than the norm the sense of being represented and not represented is common and reoccurring. Although claiming to represent queer people, the idealized and artfully crafted images on screen don't always to synch up with reality (Dean 2009). For queer-identified individuals the represented characters on screen are often uncanny figures, regardless of one's HIV status: them and not them at the same time.

Homosexuality exists outside the field of the visible, but the gay and queer do not. And despite the homosexual being fully visible, there is a sense that "the homosexual" is not known (Walters 2001), or at least compromised to a point where their dilution verges on dissolution. Queer experience is structured by disjuncture and disharmony: a separation between what is projected onscreen and to the world and one's daily experiences and sense of self. Doubling is an

enduring theme of queer representation because the gay and queer self are always and already doubled by the very process of representation itself. The queer self is split between self and image, an image that is shaped by forces far beyond the average person's control. Although identity and identification with the image have been the driving force of queer representation, anxieties about identification have played just as important of a role shaping gay identity and desire.

The threat of sameness that proliferates after Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign in the latter half of the 70s revolves almost entirely around the too visible and the not visible enough homosexual—the visible homosexual on the street, the invisible one in your child's classroom, and the image of one on the screen. Gay identity is marked by ambivalence: the desire to verify the homosexual's existence is matched by a fear of identifying with the identified homosexual. By the early 80s, this ambivalence found an outlet in what I call Hollywood's first hate cycle—*Cruising* (1980), *Dressed to Kill* (1980), *Windows* (1980)—whose reactionary politics only intensified with the AIDS epidemic. The "detrimental effects" on heterosexual identity and order's integrity are vividly and violently displayed by the array of psychotic queer doppelgängers who populate the hate cycle's screen. The homosexual became a destructive evil clone (Stacey 2010), and the evil double on screen came to embody the anxieties that permeated gay identity and visual identification after Bryant's very public campaign: through the screen and on the streets. Faced with an expanding conservative force that sought to portray all queer people as monstrous, threatening, and deadly, it is understandable that activists and filmmakers would dedicate themselves to offering correctives. But in doing so, filmmakers and activists became mirror copies of the people they sought to resist.

After Bryant, anxieties about the threats imitative and reproduction technologies pose to normativity and heterosexual order co-opt and govern gay cultural politics and representation (Youmans 2009, 2011). But it was AIDS that fundamentally changed the course of gay activism and representation. An urgent need to get the public to empathize with the hordes of sick and dying men and women deemed dangerous and deserving of punishment altered the trajectory, mode, and strategy of gay rights activism and visual representation. Direct action and DIY (do-it-yourself) intervention (ACT UP, AIDS activist video collectives [Juhasz 1995]) were met with strategic mainstream offerings that sought to procure sympathy from the majority (Waugh [1988] 2000) and a rash of art house offerings (New Queer Cinema) that attempted to grasp and communicate to a minority the collective queer consciousness during a period of immense crisis and trauma (Rich [1992] 2013; Arroyo 1993; Aaron 2002; Benshoff and Griffin 2006; Young 2013a). In the wake of the AIDS epidemic, though, it was primarily the mainstream mode of address that permeated the popular queer screen.

Beginning in the mid-90s, coming out narratives favouring youths, teens, and young adults replaced images of protest and sexual transgression. Coming out narratives were released at an accelerated rate, and the focus on young closeted queers developed into a concentric sub-cycle. In films like *Beautiful Thing* (1996), *Edge of Seventeen* (1998), and *Get Real* (1999), a desire to be reborn and move beyond AIDS could be readily detected. But the focus on youth curiously entailed the silencing of AIDS and invisibility of people with AIDS. The monstrous queer needed to be repressed so the healthy gay youth and young adult could thrive. More importantly, the (teen) coming out film coincides and overlaps with the queer family melodrama and romantic comedy—genres that are commensurate with "life-giving energies" (Moddelmog 2009).

If discursive surveillance is the primary process by which the normal is defined and the abnormal is detected and rendered visible in order for it to be corrected, then film must be understood not only as a mechanism that aided this normalizing procedure, but also as a primary vehicle by which this process took shape. But the gothic too has been theorized as a process by which the normal is defined by rendering the abnormal visible. "Gothic fiction is a technology of subjectivity," argues Judith Halberstam, "one which produces the deviant subjectivities opposite which the normal, the healthy, and the pure can be known" (1995, 2). Gothic literature was "first produced in the middle of the eighteenth century, a period when the Enlightenment was establishing itself as the dominant way of ordering the world," observes Fred Botting (2014, 1-2). "If knowledge is associated with rational procedures of enquiry and understanding based on natural, empirical reality, then gothic styles disturb the border of knowing and conjure up obscure otherworldly phenomena."

Gothic literature, a corpus of English and German fiction and theatre, whose heyday falls between 1750 and 1900, and whose best-known works include *Frankenstein* (1818), *Jane Eyre* (1847), *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), *The Picture of Dorian Gay* (1891), and *Dracula* (1897), developed in antithesis to modernity and its principles of visibility, empiricism, rationality: "darkness—an absence of light associated with sense, security and knowledge—characterizes the looks, moods, atmospheres and connotations of the genre." "A negative aesthetics informs gothic texts," writes Fred Botting, with texts often depicting "disturbances of sanity and security," portraying "uncontrolled passion" and "perversion," and displaying a "superstitious belief in ghosts" and "monstrosity" (2014, 2). The modern era was when the disciplinary society took shape and replaced older forms of order and knowledge with newer, more enlightened ones. Incitement to discourse and will to visibility ushered in a new

regime of social control, producing a darker other in the process. Gothic fiction developed as a response to the scientization of sexuality, the body, and life at a time when the disciplinary society was being assembled (Haggerty 2006; Botting 2014). But rather than its antithesis, the gothic and surveillance imbricate one another, symbiotically defining the normal by visualizing and identifying the abnormal.

Queer theory developed as a response to limiting visibility protocols imposed by gay rights activists and reinforced by media and medicine in the AIDS epidemic era. In antithesis to gay identity's dictum to be visible and known, queer theory embraced invisibility and the unknown. Queer describes "a certain unsettling in relation to heteronormativity," writes Carla Freccero, observing that "*spectrality, the trace*, and *the uncanny* all find themselves in certain ways allied with queer" (2011, 17; emphasis in text). Queer theory turned translucence and fluidity into critical weapons, embracing ghostliness as empowering. Because the gothic demonstrates "the extent to which the rhetorical construction of sex and gender nonconformity has been mediated through the uncanny," queers and queer theory "have a special relationship with the uncanny and, therefore, with the Gothic," argues Mair Rigby (2009, 54-55). "It is not simply that the Gothic is always already queer," writes Rigby. It is that "queer theory is also always already Gothic" (2009, 46).

Barebacking has been framed as act of queer resistance (Ashford 2010, 2015; McNamara 2013). If safer sex is the norm and upholds the norm, then fucking without condoms presents a challenge to the norm. But if barebacking is queer praxis, then barebacking too is inextricable from surveillance. As I will discuss in greater length in my final chapter, Treasure Island Media (TIM), one of the first studios to produce bareback gay male porn, has become so popular its brand has become synonymous with barebacking. TIM didn't make porn to sell videos to those

who bareback and those who fantasize about barebacking; TIM made porn with the explicit intention of promoting barebacking as a form of "resistance" to normative politics that are contingent upon safe-sex practices (Dean 2009; Paasonen and Morris 2014). TIM co-opted the disciplinary power of moving images to subvert their normative use and to get people to join TIM's side. TIM made porn with the desire to reanimate Gay Liberation's politics of promiscuity, to revive the spectre of the past and use it for disciplinary purposes—while making a "healthy" profit, of course.

The purpose of this project to demonstrate the central role film and pornography have played in shaping gay identity since their inception after Stonewall. In what follows I trace the lineage of queer representation through textual analysis of key films and movements and contextual analysis of related intellectual and scholarly works at key socio-political (dis)junctures. I put research from surveillance and film studies in conversation with work on the gothic and queer theory to establish the "double impetus" of visibility (Foucault [1976] 1990) as an inextricable component of gay identity and inescapable reality of gay existence. Ongoing tensions between visibility and invisibility become a disciplinary force through discourses of identification and processes of doubling. The genesis of our current problems—the "on/scenity" (Williams 2004; henceforth "onscenity") of barebacking and obscenity of those with HIV— stretches back to Stonewall when visibility birthed the gay double. In order to adequately understand the present and chart a better and more productive future, we must return to the past and start from there.

Chapter Summaries

The project is broken into a literature review, five chapters, and a conclusion. My literature review follows my introduction and sculpts the dissertation's theoretical and analytic

framework. It is broken down into three discipline-focused subsections: surveillance studies, film studies, and queer/porn studies. Each section provides a general overview of the field through an analysis of key intellectual works that pertain specifically to my project. Each subsection builds on the previous section(s) and aims to flesh out consonant and dissonant overlaps. In the subsequent five chapters I conduct close readings of representative texts and in-depth historical analysis of five general periods demarcated by crisis and/or renewal: Stonewall and Gay Liberation (1969-1977); post-Bryant/pre-AIDS epidemic (1977-1981); the AIDS crisis (1981-1996); post-AIDS epidemic (1996-2001); and the bareback crisis (2001-2010). Each era is distinguished by a major paradigmatic shift that alters queer discourse and representation with each subsequent era responding to preceding ones.

The second chapter explores the politics of authorship and the uncanny dimensions of gay representation in relation to emerging tensions between identity and sexual desire. It begins in the just-after Stonewall era and ends on the cusp of the AIDS epidemic. Taking its cue from Richard Dyer, Thomas Waugh, Rey Chow, Fatimah Tobing Rony, and Catherine Russell, the first chapter connects ethnography and autoethnography to the debates about authorship that permeated Gay Liberation thinking. This first part of the chapter makes the case for thinking of queer representation as ineluctably autoethnographic and inextricable from surveillance, while the second part builds on work by Patricia White, Brett Farmer, Paulina Palmer, and Olu Jenzen and introduces the uncanny and gothic dimensions of same-sex desire and representation. The final portion and majority of the chapter is comprised of textual analysis and puts the previous two sections into conversation, laying out the thesis's overall theoretical and discursive framework. Beginning with the polarizing feature *The Boys in the Band* (1970), I analyze the dynamics between the film's gothic themes and aesthetics in relation to emerging anxieties over

social surveillance and personal identity. I then discuss the gothic hard core offerings of celebrated gay porn auteur Wakefield Poole's first two films, *Boys in the Sand* (1971) and *Bijou* (1972). Like *Boys*, both films rely heavily on gothic tropes, but while *Sand* presents itself as a magical realist travelogue in service of connecting and informing dispersed gay men about the conditional pornotopia of Fire Island, *Bijou* turns its gaze inward, delving into and exploring the male subconscious at a moment when submerged desires had begun to flood the surface.

In the third chapter, I perform "recuperative" close readings of three key reactionary films—*Cruising* (1980), *Windows* (1980), *Dressed to Kill* (1980)—which collectively form what I call Hollywood's first "hate cycle," and compare them to the German autoethnographic fiction *Taxi Zum Klo* (1980). Building on my previous chapter's work on ethnography and the uncanny, I examine the discursive, theoretical, and cultural overlaps between surveillance and doubling. All three hate cycle films are doppelgänger narratives and thrillers that prioritize the act and representation of surveillance and exemplify a growing ambivalence toward visibility— discordant anxieties over gay visibility parallel a desire for greater degrees of visibility and discipline. As a counterpoint, I take an in-depth look at *Taxi Zum Klo* and the possibilities and limits of countercultural cinema as a form of sousveillance—a defiant look back at those above by those below. The hate cycle belongs to gay film history insofar as this is not only a series of texts but also of subjectivities, community formations, and relationships. Although the cycle is politically incorrect and sensationalistic, the activist response to the cycle forever altered the trajectory of future queer representation and the dialogue between the mainstream and queer minorities.

The fourth chapter focuses on the AIDS crisis and acts a discursive causeway between the pre- and post-epidemic eras. It explores the intellectual and representational paradoxes that

suture together AIDS activism, queer theory, and gay visibility into a strategy of resistance. I begin with an overview of how the AIDS crisis shaped the contours of queer theory and reshaped gay social and self-identity. I then examine the precariousness of film and activist video by examining three separate but overlapping visual discourses: 1) safer-sex videos; 2) New Queer Cinema; 3) and Hollywood's second hate cycle. Safer-sex videos were community-made tapes meant to educate gay men about condom use. Although made with the best of intentions, their discursive effects have also significantly contributed to current bareback crisis. Shifting my attention over to film, I take a close look at a spate of audacious festival hits B. Ruby Rich (1992) has termed New Queer Cinema (NQC). I put the home movie *Silverlake Life* (1993) and *Patient Zero* (1993) in conversation to demonstrate the paradox of visibility: while defiantly eschewing normativity, NQC remains firmly entrenched in the regime of surveillance. I conclude by comparing a select number of NQC films to yet another batch of reactionary mainstream films and argue that despite some differences NQC and Hollywood's second hate cycle are much more proximate than would appear. In comparison to its previous incarnation, the second hate cycle's emergence displays a curious intimacy and greater degree of identification with the subjects it reacts against.

The fifth chapter looks at the optimistic turn that queer representation took in the mid-90s. Around the time of the AIDS cocktail's debut in 1996, a series of narrative fictions, primarily in the English speaking world, revolving around teens and young adults coming out of the closet were released. While representation during the AIDS epidemic era was dominated by feelings of pessimism, dystopia, and despair, coming out films in the mid- to late 90s are characterized by feelings of optimism and possibility. Focusing the majority of my attention on three teen coming out narratives—*Beautiful Thing* (1996), *Edge of Seventeen* (1998), and *Get*

Real (1999)—I argue the coming out cycle develops as a reaction to both the AIDS epidemic and Hollywood's second hate cycle, visualizing the beginnings of liberal-normativity's triumph. The teen coming out cycle subtly operates under the logic of Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign and appropriates the rhetoric of saving closeted adolescents through heteromimicry. The cycle conceives of a world where young (white) people can come out to an HIV-free world and be accepted by family, friends, and society at large, but whose flourishing is contingent upon gay culture collectively embracing normativity and doing away with reckless past behaviour. Taking inspiration from Lee Edelman, Lauren Berlant, Castiglia and Reed, and David Halperin, I argue the teen in the coming out film not only represents a metaphoric rebirth of gay culture, but also helps to bring into being what it envisions.

The thesis's sixth and final chapter surveys the visual and discursive terrain of barebacking. It begins with a comparative analysis of the explicit sci-fi dystopia *Descent* (1999) and hard core art house hit *Shortbus* (2006) and explores the discursive utopic and dystopic impulses they respectfully channel and visualize. I then take a more extensive look at queer and normative formulations of utopia and dystopia by comparing two gay male porn studios whose discursive, social, and political oppositions directly correlate to the visual presence of the condom. I begin by exploring the utopic dimensions of Treasure Island Media, focusing on the polarizing *Dawson's 20 Load Weekend* (2004). I then explore the dystopic impulse and reactionary representations in Raging Stallion Studio's *Focus/Refocus* (2009). While TIM aligns the removal of the condom with release from a metaphysical prison and path toward a new queer utopia, Raging Stallion Studios perceives the same activity as the harbinger of destruction and regression. The fight over the condom, I conclude, is ultimately a fight over the direction of queer futurity.

The project concludes with an in-depth textual analysis of the narrative fiction *Pornography: A Thriller* (2009). I begin a brief overview and summary of my research paradigm and use my analysis of *Pornography* to synthesize my arguments about surveillance, identity, the gothic, and cinema. The very last part of my conclusion is a short coda that points to concurrent developments and future research initiatives.

Research Methodology

My project focuses on Western, mostly Anglo-American discourse and output. Gay Liberation, culture, and identity are Western phenomena, whose homogeneity and universalism are, at least in part, a result of American cultural imperialism (Massad 2007). I appreciate the cultural and national variances that develop throughout the world, but maintain focus on Anglo culture because it is the social and intellectual context I inhabit and with which I am most familiar. I, however, maintain a cross-cultural focus because cinema and cultural politics traverse national borders and share similar characteristics, goals, and problems—especially in the global Web 2.0 era. Prior to the internet, gay and lesbian film festivals and home video circulated images and ideas, helping to forge a pan-global, if not identity, than at least sensibility (Binnie 2004; Boellstroff 2005; Witaker 2006; Yau 2010; Dave 2012; Kugle 2013)—and continue to do so today (Gever 1991; Gamson 1996; Straayer and Waugh 2006; Zielinski 2008; Loist and Zielinski 2012; Rich 2013). Because same-sex desire is universal, but identity is more local, a study on gay identity and desire cannot fully avoid the contextual slippages that come when attempting to grasp something whose universalism affects its local manifestation and vice versa.

Although my project officially ends at the present moment (2015), I focus my textual corpus between 1970 and 2010 because 1970 saw the release of *The Boys in the Band*, the first major theatrical openly "gay-themed" film to showcase what will become a "gay identity," and

end at 2010 on the cusp of "PReP" revolution and in the midst of the "condom wars." Although films with gay content and characters were released prior to *Boys in the Band*—*Rope* (1948), *Strangers on a Train* (1951), *Some Like it Hot* (1959), *Victim* (1961), *This Special Friendship* (1964), *Teorema* (1968), to name a few—I start with *The Boys in the Band*. The movie is based on Mart Crowley's 1968 play of the same name and was released in 1970, just after the Stonewall riots. This allows me to explore the pre- and post-Stonewall era through the "anachronistic" representation of pre-Stonewall life to post-Stonewall politics and emerging sensibilities. Although gay activism and culture predate Stonewall, as chronicled and detailed by John D'Emilio ([1983] 1998), Jeffrey Weeks (1985), and George Chauncey (1994), Stonewall was a pivotal moment of defiant visibility against the normal. The Stonewall riots altered the trajectory of gay politics and made homosexuality in the West inextricable from visibility.

My corpus focuses on contemporary postclassical narrative fiction film and pornography, but also discusses and references documentaries and online material in order to ensure my analysis remains in dialogue with contiguous discourses. I approach fiction and hard core film as historical documents as much as discursive, affective, and creative works that influence the events and representations that follow—which is why I develop my thesis in chronological order. While I appreciate the legal, social, political, economic, and intellectual conditions differ between explicit and non-explicit representation, I do not treat pornography as a whole other entity; rather, I treat it as a discursive system that is in constant conversation with narrative fiction film connected together through queer cultural politics.

To discuss gay and queer identity politics and representation without engaging both porn and film fails to capture the complex dynamics at play between desire, representation, reality, and identity; to treat them as separate pursuits and entities is to capture only half the story. Calls

have been made to approach pornography from outside a film studies model (Paasonen, 2011, 2014), and to think of porn as something more than what occurs within a defined screen-space that is only available to textual analysis (Champagne 1997; Arroyo, 2015). Although I appreciate and agree with these critiques, I maintain that as with film close readings of pornography are a gateway to the queer social consciousness. Textual analysis of key works by key players in the commercial porn industry allows us to see and better understand the precariousness and always shifting location of sex within the terrain of identity politics.

My methodology consists of close readings and discourse analysis and uses the gothic and the uncanny as discursive threads to suture together queer theory and research from film studies, porn, and surveillance studies. I treat my objects of study as exemplary texts whose history I unpack and whose symptoms I read to unravel the political, social, and cultural feelings of a particular era. I maintain Stacey's (2010) arguments about cinematic genetics and Rodowick's (2001) formulation of the image double as my overall conceptual framework and approach my chosen cultural artifacts as the "genetic" building blocks of the metaphysical gay image double that disciplines from a distance. I do not prioritize one (inter)disciplinary method over another, but instead engage the frictions that develop when conducting inter and multidisciplinary research; however, as a film studies scholar and as someone who is writing a film studies thesis, it is unavoidable that the models I have been taught throughout my educational career are more likely to shape the contours of my intellectual investigation.

Before moving on to my literature review, I feel there are three interrelated issues I must address: 1) my seemingly haphazard use of queer; 2) my corpus's overwhelming focus on gay male representation; and 3) my use of use normative and its various incarnations (hetero/homo/liberal). I recognize that the terms gay, queer, and the acronym LGBTQ, or further

still, "BLLAGTITTISQQ" (bisexual, lesbian, leather, asexual/celibate, gay, transsexual, intersex, transgendered, two-spirited, intergenerational, sex-worker, questioning, queer) as Thomas Waugh has suggested (2006, 10), are politicized, loaded, subjective, and mean different things to different people. Quite often queer is, as Waugh writes of his own use, used as "a convenient shorthand umbrella term to gracefully bypass tongue-twisting acronyms and promote strategic coalition and affiliative affinities at the same time" (2006, 10).

But what about a dissertation that argues that these "affiliative affitinities" have reached a point of disintegration? What about a dissertation that suggests that certain LGBTQ's are different than other LGBTQ's? What about a dissertation being written at a time when those grouped under the T of LGBTQ have once again vocalized the need to leave the umbrella? And what about the recent popularization of "cisgender"—those whose gender identity match their biological sex—and trans-activist issues like "cisgender privilege" (Serano 2007) and the fight against "the cotton ceiling"—gays and lesbians who defend trans-people but refuse to have sex with them (Avery 2012)? Better still, what does one do with recent accusations that cisgender and certain strands of trans-activism are homophobic because they deny the ability and right to be attracted to only the same biological sex—captured in all its frenziedness on the new Facebook group "Homosexuals not Homogenderuals," whose mission is to

> raise awareness on certain issues that are sending waves through the gay/lesbian
> community. There is a new kind of homophobia surfacing as of late. This is a
> homophobia that seeks to paint Lesbian women as bigots for not accepting biological
> males as potential lesbian partners. This is a homophobia that seeks to erase

homosexuality by painting sex as irrelevant in lieu of gender expression. Sex matters to

gay and lesbian people. We are homosexuals, not homogenderuals (April 27, 2014).[9]

For radical queer and trans-activists, not wanting to have sex with a trans-person who identifies

as the same sex one is attracted to is transphobic and a form of oppressive cisgender privilege

(Faucette, 2012). For others, this wave of radical trans-activism is a form of silencing and

shaming (Curry, 2014).

Queer is a queer word. My own use of the word is both historical and affiliative.

Whether homosexuals and "homogenderuals" like it or not, we are still part of something

"queer." At the same time, "queer," as it's used today, was invented in the late 80s and became

de rigueur in the 90s as a way to protest and resist hetero- and gender normativity. Throughout

the dissertation I use "gay and lesbian," or at times just "gay" (which includes gay women) to

either refer to the pre-queer era or to highlight oppositions between queer and gay/lesbian

identity. Queer encompasses queer theory and a particular commitment to radical/

deconstructionist ideology—even though identifying as queer undermines queerness's goal by

turning queer into a definable category. Gay and lesbian generally refer to identities and

sexualities that hesitate to embrace the gender and sexual fluidities that queerness advocates and

promotes, as well as their associated further-to-the-left political ideals. Rather than LGBTQ, or

any other variations, I opt for gay and queer as an umbrella terms because queer, as far as I'm

concerned, is inclusionary of those things not captured by gay (and lesbian). I recognize the

problems and slippages that come with this divide and engage them throughout my thesis.

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[9] https://www.facebook.com/pages/Homosexuals-Not-Homogenderuals/309760142546242.
Accessed June 27 2015

As for my focus on gay male representation and sexuality, there are two reasons: 1) the majority of queer works, especially pornography, are gay male orientated and made for gay male audiences; and 2) the overarching focus on HIV/AIDS and barebacking invariably prioritizes gay male representation and discourse. I elected to write about gay identity and focus on gay male representation because my interest is in how the idea and discourse of gay identity become complicit with a system of (tele)visual disciplining. The project is primarily about examining and proving the latter and doing so via the former.

Although some have argued that "normal" has expanded beyond any clear definition as (Halberstam 2013), the idea of normality epitomized by the heterosexual nuclear family and its subsidiary attributes—procreation, courtship rituals, monogamy, etc.—continues to shape the contours of liberal democratic societies. Although divorce rates are on par with those who remain married (50%) and technology and digital culture have loosened the constraints of monogamy, "normal" per the above remains the measuring stick with which we validate and gage the average individual's success and failure as a person. Throughout this study, I use the term "liberal-normative" to refer to this idealized state of equilibrium despite its continual faltering throughout the twenty-first century. Heterosexuality, if you will, may be less "normal" than it was throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, embracing some of queer culture's implicitly anti-social undercurrents, but that shouldn't suggest that normality's staples (children, marriage, monogamy, etc.) have entirely lost their grip. Not only does "normal" still manage to constrain, but it has also managed to expand enough to include those who were once entirely outside its grip, bending just enough to appear as though it were *passé*.

Literature Review

Surveillance and Surveillance Studies

David Lyon's seminal *The Electronic Eye* (1994) essentially inaugurated the subfield of surveillance studies. Building on works by Rule (1974), Marx (1988), and Dandeker (1990), and synthesizing major social theory scholarship by Giddens, Bauman, and Foucault as well as research on computer technology, data, and privacy, Lyon sculpts a new framework for understanding the function and dissemination of surveillance in the electronic age. In the digital era, "new individuals are created who bear the same names but who are digitally shorn of their human ambiguities and whose personalities are built artificially from matched data" (1994, 71). This is the defining feature of the surveillance society for Lyon. What is ultimately at stake is self-identity, leading Lyon to conclude that "the paradoxes of surveillance return to haunt us in the realm of communication" (1994, 208).

Since the publication of Lyon's work, "a relatively smooth story can be told of the movement from Foucault's panopticism to a 'surveillance society' (Lyon, 1993, 1994), via a 'new surveillance' (Marx, 1988; 2003) of computerised and increasingly automated 'social sorting' (Gandy 1993; Lyon 2001; Lyon 2004) based on 'categorical suspicion' (Marx, 1988; Norris and Armstrong, 1999)" (Wood 2007, 245). As the twentieth century came to a close, further questions about the viability of Foucault's modernist project ([1975] 1995) continued to redirect the trajectory of surveillance studies.

A handful of scholars took issue with the validity of panopticism and the metaphoric use of the Panopticon. They questioned whether panopticism and the Panopticon could accurately describe the disciplinary function of visibility and operation of power in the computer/digital era (Wood 2007). Scholars such as Bogard (1996) prioritized simulation. Others such as Thomas

Mathiesen (1997) and Mark Andrejevic (2004, 2007) emphasized the power of media, while game researchers like Alexander Galloway (2002) stressed the importance of algorithms. Several individuals, though, have maintained their allegiance with Foucault. Although it may not operate as it once did, the Panopticon is very much alive for some, and simply exists in reassembled and more fluid form: "'super-panopticon,' 'electronic panopticon,' 'post-panopticon,' 'ban-opticon,' 'pedagopticon,' 'fractal panopticon,' 'synopticon' and 'neo-panopticon'" (Calyua 2010, 621), as well as the "reverse panopticon" (Fiske, 1993), "participatory panopticon" (Cascio 2005), "catopticon" (Ganascia 2010), and "omniopticon" (Mitrou, et al. 2014) collectively speak to how the ghost of Foucault continues to haunt the field of surveillance studies.

Although contributing several new ideas (2001, 2003b, 2006b, 2007a, 2009) and (co-) editing numerous anthologies (2003c, 2006a, 2012), one of Lyon's most compelling arguments since *The Electronic Eye* has been the view that global information networks automatically assess and slot people into pre-determined categories, a phenomenon he calls "social sorting" (2003a, 2007b). Social sorting is data-taxonomy: it is "the classifying drive of contemporary surveillance" (Lyon 2003a, 13). As David Murakami Wood notes, "the new chosen 'site' of the Panopticon *par excellence* is neither the city nor the workplace, but the 'panoptic sort' (Gandy 1993) of the database" (2007, 260). Social sorting is possible because of data mining, and data mining is how "data doubles" are created (Haggerty and Ericson 2000). Global information networks qualify and quantify individuals by monitoring their behaviour, likes, and dislikes. These preferences are then coordinated with biometrics to create individual and group composites that automatically slot people into pre-determined categories, which are then used by corporations and government entities to (pre)determine everything from criminal risk to personal and communal tastes.

The roots of digital data mining and doubling can be traced back to the early work of Jon Orwant. Orwant is now a Research Manager at Google, but when he was a student at MIT, he wrote an undergraduate (1991) and graduate (1993) thesis that outlined the algorithmic software that has made Google the behemoth it is today—an expanding and absorbing entity that, for some, doubles as a surveillance apparatus (Fuchs 2011a; Fuchs et al., 2012; Hillis, Petit, and Jarrett, 2012). Recognizing that "as computers become increasingly integrated into home and work environments, the need for knowledge about users becomes paramount" (1991, 9), Orwant developed a user-modeling system that would monitor users' behaviour and create a "shadowy replica…to *predict* a user's actions or customize the actions of a computer for that person" (1991, 10). Orwant called the program *Doppelgänger*, and his user model is the logistical foundation of digital media culture. Social media and digital technologies require symbiosis with human bodies to operate (Elmer, 2003; Andrejevic, 2007; Fuchs 2011b, 2011c; Trottier 2012; Young, 2012; Whitson, 2014): new media technology can't function without bodies to penetrate and mine for data.

Although research on data mining and doubling has fundamentally altered the way surveillance is studied and the ontology of media, it would be myopic to discount or ignore the continual disciplinary and controlling power of visibility. The "proliferation of opticons" (Caluya 2010, 621) is matched by the proliferation of "veillances"—"dataveillance" (Clarke 1988; Ernst 2002), "new surveillance" (Marx, 2003), "sousveillance" (Mann, Nolan and Wellman 2003), equiveillance (Mann 2005), "lateral" and "distributive" surveillance (Andrejevic 2007), and "liquid surveillance" (Bauman and Lyon, 2013)—the ubiquity of CCTV (Norris, Moran, and Armstrong 1998; Norris and Armstrong 1999; Dubbeld 2005; Hier, 2010), normalization of Webcam culture (Koskela, 2003, 2004; Hillis 2009) and ascent of the "viewer society"

Mathiesen (1997). The refusal to let go of suffixes that refer to observation and watching says something about the inherently visual nature of informatic surveillance and the unabated power and importance of recording technology. Our data double may not be watched in the literal sense, but they are still monitored and surveyed. If our data doubles are our doppelgängers, and if these digital replicas are inextricable from our corporeal ones, then we ourselves are being watched through our self-image from a distance.

Synopticism is what Mathiesen calls the inverse patterns of observation achieved in the media age where the many watch the few rather than the few watching the many. Although Mathiesen doesn't outright situate his work within a media effects model, he does argue that "through the modern mass media in general and television in particular… [synopticism] directs and controls or disciplines our *consciousness*" (1997, 230). Unlike in the Panopticon where the few guards (if any) in the guard tower observed the arranged inmates on the periphery, it is the majority on the periphery who are disciplined by watching the few in the centre. The process of self-discipline is in some ways lost in the viewer society. Self-surveillance in the Panopticon was a result of the gaze remaining unverifiable. In the metaphoric synopticon of the media society we are no longer watching ourselves because we are endlessly watching, and being disciplined by, the spectacle to which our gaze remains affixed. Countering Guy Debord's proclamation that we are a society of spectacle (1976] 2002), Foucault writes, "Our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance" ([1975] 1995, 217). For Mathiesen, as well as Catherine Zimmer (2015), both are correct.

But surveillance in media societies is far more participatory than synopticism suggests, occurring through various practices of consumption, which can include watching. For Foucault, "Circuits of communication are the supports of an accumulation and a centralization of

knowledge" ([1975] 1995, 217). Although his observation is correct, information is not a unilateral phenomenon in the media age. Information flows back and forth between producers and consumers. "As we watch and monitor others and are ourselves monitored" writes Greg Elmer, "our preferences are fed back to us, producing an all-too-familiar environment." The "panoptic diagram" Elmer outlines "calls upon an *all-too-familiar aggregated past* to subtly limit access to different *futures*…by an *uncannily familiar world of images*, goods, and services" (2003, 244; emphasis mine). Data mining creates *comforting* uncanny environments; as a result, "we may soon find it compellingly easy and convenient to consume 'more of the same', or conversely, increasingly more difficult to find something different" (Elmer 2003, 245). Although Elmer is making a Marxist critique, taking issue with digital media and capitalism's claim to offer consumers diversity and greater amounts choice, anxiety about the threat of too much sameness bears curious resemblance to the anxieties Stacey (2010) examines in her study.

New media and digital surveillance have fused together and are grounded in the logic of sameness, routing everything through, and back to, the self. The much friendlier "user feedback" is a euphemism for digital surveillance and has its roots in Orwant's user-modelling system. Orwant's program relied on "feedback" to make "*ethereal copies of a person that progressively become more fleshy*, but must always fall short of the real thing" (1991, 10; emphasis in text). Rearticulating Mark Poster's (1990) position, John E. McGrath writes, "Data files collected on us circulate like extra bodies, with their own lives and histories [whereby a subject]…discovers his or her self in a very direct relationship to a double created by conscious use of surveillance technologies" (2004, 159). The problem now is that ethereal copies are replacing and thus becoming the real thing. "What should user models contain?" asks Orwant. "An accurate model

of the user includes *knowledge, beliefs, goals, plans, schedules, behaviours, abilities, preferences, and misconceptions*" (1991, 10; emphasis in text)—basically, everything.

Surveillance entails monitoring behaviour in the present in order to create an archive of information that can be used to predict future behaviour. We are tethered to our past behaviour and thus haunted in the present by some earlier manifestation of ourselves. In the digital media era, this process takes place through data mining and our data doubles. But doubling and data mining have always been an intrinsic feature of surveillance. "Technologies of simulation are forms of *hypersurveillant control*" (1996, 4), argues Bogard, and "at the start of the modern age, we begin to sense in Foucault how the 'real' body as a focus of the normalizing gaze is surreptitiously doubled by the body as information, codes, probabilities—alongside the surveilled body" (1996, 63). The turn toward the biographical, the proliferation of modern archives, and the invention of "types" (Foucault [1975] 1995) split the modern self into two entities: one physical and one metaphysical.

Digital media and surveillance are manifestly gothic phenomena—conjuring doubles but maintaining them as ghosts that invisibly monitor us, subtly altering our behaviour and sense of self in the process. The roots of electronic surveillance, however, can be traced back to the Panopticon, whose conceptualization originated in the late eighteenth century the same time gothic literature had become popular and the industrial revolution was in full effect (Dolar 1991). "The entire arrangement of panoptic space," argues Bogard, "is haunted by its double—its 'immaterial' form" (1996, 66). But the Panopticon is not only a physical gothic space (Mishra 1994) haunted by an immaterial double, but a metaphysical gothic space too, a space wherein an idealized double, the corrected version of the prisoner, always haunts the prisoner's identity and sense of self.

The Panopticon's assemblage in electronic form only heightens its gothic and uncanny undercurrents. Technology and simulated gazing replace biopower with "info-bio-politics," observes Bogard, and with info-bio-politics "another figure of the body double emerges and grows in the technological assemblages that develop down to the present day, a clean, sterilized body, a shadow figure inhabiting files and data dumps" (1996 63). And "as surveillance spreads from material space to cyberspace" and when "local gazes are connected with the global community," writes Hille Koskela, "bodily individuals become, in one sense, intertwined with 'digital individuals'" (2004, 200)—"People have become 'doubled' digital individuals" (Koskela 2004, 200).

For Bogard, "The gaze is no longer invisibly on the scene; it is the *total* scene" (1996, 76). "To understand the *simulation* of surveillance," according to Bogard, "is to understand the fictive and unbounded possibilities of discipline within the telematic society" (1996, 9). In line with Virilio ([1977] 1986, 1989, 1994), Bogard stresses how surveillance throughout the latter half of the twentieth century is conducted at a distance. Simulation, he argues, "is the key to explaining the direction that surveillance societies are taking today, a movement that is more about the perfection and totalization of existing surveillance technologies than some kind of radical break in their historical development" (1996, 9).

As surveillance's reach extends, its meaning will expand. The multiple approaches to surveillance I've outlined above have helped to open the once self-contained subfield of surveillance studies to a variety of multidisciplinary interventions. Work from areas outside the subfield's housing in sociology, and to a lesser degree the computer sciences, will continue to contribute to the discussion, altering the very concept of surveillance in the process. I consider my work a contribution to this growing dialogue and hope my interdisciplinary synthesis queers

the field, as some have argued is sorely needed (Phillips and Cunningham 2007, Phillips et al. 2009), and convinces those who do queer work to pay more attention to the power and function of technological surveillance, which some, including myself, have already done (Campbell 2005; Mowlabocus 2010a; Tziallas 2015). Although radical changes have occurred since Linda Williams's groundbreaking ([1989] 1999) study, only a handful of works (Bell 2009; Mowlabocus 2010b; Van Doorn 2010; Jacobs 2012; Tziallas 2015d) have made concerted efforts to look at how new technologies evolve or challenge typical accounts of sexual power-knowledge. There remains a shocking poverty of research on the intersections between technological surveillance and pornography, but I hope the theoretical framework I've outlined above and chapters that follow will be taken up as a helpful guide by porn scholars.

Research on the overlaps between cinema and surveillance have been published with greater frequency in recent years (Zimmer 2011, 2015; Stewart 2012, 2015; Tziallas 2014), but a sustained rethinking of screen theory in light of global surveillance has only just begun. It is to this issue I turn next.

Film Studies

Surveillance (and) Cinema

Contemporary surveillance cinema has its origins in both the 1970s conspiracy thriller and science fiction film. Conspiracy films such as *The Conversation* (1974), *The Parallax View* (1974), *The ODESSA File* (1974), *Three Days of the Condor* (1975), *Futureworld* (1976), *All the President's Men* (1976), and *The Boys from Brazil* (1978) played to political fears and anxieties, while science fiction, such as, *Crimes of the Future* (1970), *THX 1138* (1971), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Logan's Run* (1976), *Demon Seed* (1977), and *Coma* (1978) played to cultural ones. The two (sub)genres overlap in surprising ways: both grapple with the potential

consequences of recording and computer technologies, both express deep concerns over the undoing of modernist epistemology, and both express reservations about observation and the modernist impulse to see and know not just more but everything. Although both (sub)genres are wholly invested in the dangers of power-knowledge, conspiracy films focus more on surveillance and geopolitics, or "exterior" issues and discourses, while science fiction is often more concerned with biopower, or "interior" issues and discourses. Conspiracy films laid the aesthetic and formal foundation of what Zimmer (2015) calls "millennial surveillance cinema," helping to normalize the postmodern symptom of paranoia (O'Donnell 2000; Pratt 2001; Holm 2009). Science fiction films, although alarmed about the very same technologies, are more concerned about the biological and psychological consequences of our techno-evolution (Stacey 2010).

"Surveillance cinema provides a reflection on cinema itself," writes Sébastien Lefait (2013, xiv). For Lefait, "including the scopic regime of surveillance in a film" reflexively shows how "the spread of surveillance directly affects filmmaking" (2013, 9), and whose convergence in the sci-fi dystopia *THX 1138* (1971) "acts as a precursor to the surveillance films made in the age of panopticism come true, which naturally evince that surveillance, by bringing the cinematic experience into everyday life, has become inherent to cinema itself (2013, 37). Taking inspiration from Cartwright (1995), however, I've argued that the representation and emulation of surveillance in cinema is neither new, nor representative of the convergence of surveillance and cinema, but is instead the return of the repressed: the return of cinema's scientific origins to the foreground (2014). Reflexivity popularized by political modernist European film (Kovács 2008) doesn't quite capture the way realism and artifice buttress each other in surveillance cinema. And using the uncanny as my conceptual framework, I argued that surveillance in cinema is not reflexive in the traditional sense, but is instead a form of autoscopy—akin to an out

of body experience (Blanke 2004). "Reflexivity now reflects our lived reality," I wrote (2014, 8), contending that "video surveillance is reality's uncanny" (2014, 13).

My article was derived from a 2011 conference paper I gave at ARTHEMIS's (Advanced Research Team on History and Epistemology of Moving Image Study) annual symposium—the same conference where Jane Gaines declared the apparatus dead. Gaines's declaration and the entire roundtable discussion got me thinking more about apparatus theory. *How could the apparatus be dead when a multitude of recording apparatuses were being assembled and networked together everyday all over the world?* As I contemplated the history of screen theory in relation to a growing corpus of films that represented and emulated surveillance technology, I noticed some fascinating correlations between literature on CCTV and early screen theory. Using the first two *Paranormal Activity* (2007, 2010) films as exemplary texts, I argued that self-examination was an undercurrent of surveillance cinema. In surveillance cinema we see cinema examining itself—its scientific origins and compliance with a disciplinary regime it attempts to disavow. The adoption of surveillance technology as a mode of filming speaks to the inherent duality of the recording apparatus: CCTV and film technology are each other's conceptual doppelgänger, I argued, and their output, alter egos. Perhaps unsurprisingly, their uncanny fusion is often a formal and aesthetic feature of the contemporary thriller, horror film, and sci-fi dystopia.

The proximity between cinema and surveillance has compelled Lyon to suggest that surveillance "is easily accepted because all sorts of watching have become commonplace within a 'viewer society,' encouraged by the culture of TV and cinema" (2006b, 36). Cinema and surveillance interpenetrate each other and have helped to assimilate us to a regime where monitoring and being monitored is normalized, desired, and fully integrated into the means of

cultural production (Terranova 2000; Andrejevic 2004, 2007). But concerns about cinema and the recording apparatus are not new. Anxieties about recording technology's ability to make people visible abounded in cinema's beginnings, and the development of early screen theory revolved almost entirely around questions of disciplinarity and identification.

At the turn of the twentieth century, "a growing awareness of a society increasingly based on surveillance in which technology stimulates a fear of constant observation" could be readily detected according to Tom Gunning (1999, 46). While Zimmer, referring to Levin (2002), reminds us that "*La sortie des usines Lumière* [*Workers Leaving the Factory*] (1895), was, after all, the filming of the Lumières' own employees, a form of corporate surveillance; however benign it was in this initial incarnation, the monitoring and control of the workplace, visually and otherwise, has become one of the more predominant forms of surveillance" (Zimmer 2011, 428-429). In his pioneering study on cinema, Hugo Münsterberg ([1916] 1970), as Lev Manovich notes, felt that "the essence of film lies in its ability to reproduce or 'objectify' various mental functions on the screen" (2001, 58), and "in the 1920s Eisenstein speculated that film could be used to externalize—and control—thinking" (Manovich 2001, 58). The nefariousness of visibility and duality of the recording apparatus were felt early on and have only intensified with their ubiquity.

Although my project relies heavily on cultural and queer analysis, it is also a project on discipline via representation, and can thus not avoid reengaging some of screen theory's basic tenets. The variety of texts I engage with in my study spans the gambit: some directly address cinema as a form of technological and cultural surveillance (*Pornography: A Thriller*, *Focus/Refocus*) while others will think through the disciplinary capacity of images (*Bijou*, *Taxi Zum Klo*, *Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss*, *Descent*). Others still will not have surveillance or

social engineering on their radar but are inextricable from, and in service of, both, such as the teen coming cycle and the various works of Treasure Island Media. What becomes clear at the turn of and throughout the new millennium is a mistrust of the very means by which identity took shape becomes discernible. The apparatus's assemblage in front of the lens means the apparatus, if dead, is being resurrected; its return warrants contemplation and reconsideration of its intellectual and discursive history.

I do not wish to make facile analogies between film and CCTV, but I do think it is vital we think through the legacy of screen theory in light of recent techno-cultural changes. It is not a coincidence the apparatus's return coincides with the ascent of bareback pornography: surveillance does not guarantee conformity; at times, surveillance can inspire revolt (Rhodes 1998; Haggerty and Ericson 2006). Although digital media, including recording technology, is inextricable from surveillance, digital media has also democratized sexual (McNair 2002) and online public culture (Burgess and Green 2009). As with cinema, digital media is too inherently dual, offering greater degrees of self-expression, visibility, and freedom while at the same time subjecting individuals to more invasive degrees of monitoring and control. Bareback pornography is forged from this conflicting impetus; as a result, it is vital we rethink the disciplinary effects of the apparatus and reengage its intellectual history.

Film Theory and Identification

Early screen theory developed out of what Rodowick refers to as "political modernism" (Harvey, 1982), which according to him "was the defining idea, what Foucault might call the historical *a priori*, of 70s film theory" ([1988] 1994, viii). The core of political modernism was the relationship between form and ideology that often revolved around "the critique of illusionism." Two major discursive problems came out of political modernism: the relation

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between "film form and ideology" and "the relation between forms of spectatorship and film," both of which were contingent upon "the concept of identification" ([1988] 1994, xv). The primary questions which the discourse of identification was concerned with were "which aspects of film form promote identification (ideological practice) and which break identification (theoretical practice) and thus promote critical awareness in the spectator" ([1988] 1994, xv).

In his 1994 introduction, Rodowick claims that "the era of political modernism is still with us in many ways" ([1988] 1994, viii) and that "the questions posed and the problems confronted during that period have not disappeared in the last twenty-five years" ([1988] 1994, viii). Indeed, it was the frenzied and polarizing debates about the effects of cinema and how cinema affects people that were at the root of the formalist/cognitivist revolt, or "turn" (Buckland 2007), in the 90s, spearheaded by David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, Noël Carroll, Murray Smith, and Carl Plantinga.

Speaking of early screen theory, Philip Rosen notes how psycho-semiotics' appeal was politically motivated. He writes:

> It was by no means a historical accident that this approach to cinema became so attractive at a time when the institution of the university was a center of directly political concerns. For if there was a system of norms, then we can inquire about the foundations and determinants of such systems, and about the implications of deviation or (from a different perspective) oppositional practices and systems" (1986, 9).

Identification for several screen theorists equaled subordination. It was in this bustling and volatile environment where the rediscovered Brecht/Lukács debate provided an excellent context for thinking through the perils and necessities of a politics of aesthetics. It was also in this context where feminist film theory, heavily influenced and popularized by Mulvey's polemic

(1975), would also place identity, the tricky issues of power and pleasure, and the correlations between form and identification into the foreground.

Work by Wollen (1972) and Polan (1974), and later Harvey (1982) crystallize interrelated dialogues that took place throughout the 1970s: reality vs. ideology; self-reflexivity vs. realism or "transparency;" and critical distanciation vs. pleasurable spectatorship. If norms could be detected, then a space for resistance could be forged, which often came in the form of documentary, experimental, avant-garde, and other types of personal filmmaking (essay and diary films, home movies). Realism was tied to pleasure, and reflexivity to thought. Pleasure was derived from identification and dulled cognitive capacities: pleasure became something to avoid and mistrust. Resistance to ideology implanted by the apparatus (Baudry, [1974] 1986; [1976] 1986) via pleasurable spectatorship was the goal of screen theory, but as Plantinga points out, "resistance isn't what draws audiences to the [cinematic] experience in the first place" (2009, 14).

Identification is based on a model of sameness, and in the case of screen theory discussions about the dangers of scopophilia and identification cannot avoid the spectre of homosexuality. As Paul Willemen notes, "If scopophilic pleasure relates primarily to the observation of one's sexual like (as Freud suggests), then the two looks distinguished by Mulvey are in fact varieties of one single mechanism: the repression of homosexuality" (1994, 102). Homosexuality was rarely discussed as a factor, remaining instead a repressed or disavowed energy. This is likely in part because a gay identity had only begun to take shape during this period—at least within academia and film culture—but it is also just as likely that, because identification entails mimesis, acknowledging the spectre of homosexuality would have been too threatening. It would have opened up the possibility for *over*-identification, which is precisely

the threat that consumes Hollywood's first hate cycle. Ironically, for a discourse so interested in seeking out norms in order to resist them, screen theory was surprisingly silent about the emerging "deviant" that threatened its normative system.

To say the mirror stage influenced screen theory and theories of cinematic identification would be an understatement. As summarized by Rosen, "Lacanian psychoanalysis is (among other things) an account of how, in and through signification, the individual is 'sutured' into 'secure' meaning at the service of 'stable' identity" (1986, 162). Film theory adopted Lacan's mirror stage to metaphorically explain how the split between subject and object was rectified by identifying with characters onscreen. But homosexuality and the figure of the homosexual are *destabilizing* forces and entities (Shaviro 1995; White 1999), and early queer representation presented a unique challenge to screen theory.

Homosexuality not only unravels neat patterns of identification, but also directly challenges claims that pleasure dulled cognition and political upheaval. The spectacle of flesh, from Rainer Werner Fassbinder (*Fox and his Friends* [1975], *Querelle* [1982]) and Derek Jarman (*Sebastiane* [1976], *Caravaggio* [1986]) to Rosa von Praunheim (*It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives* [1971], *Army of Lovers or Revolt of the Perverts* [1979]), Barbara Hammer (*Multiple Orgasm* [1976], *Women I Love* [1979]), Ulrike Ottinger (*Madame X: An Absolute Ruler* [1978], *Freak Orlando* [1981]), and Frank Ripploh (*Taxi Zum Klo* [1981]), not only drew in audiences, but also established pleasure as a form of political reflexivity itself.[10] Voyeurism and prurience were how queers resisted, remaining, to varying degrees, entrenched features of queer filmmaking.

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[10] Although the films mentioned above are firmly rooted in European art house traditions and in some ways defy the concept of identity, they helped to established queer representation on the

Although the ghost of screen theory continues to haunt discussions of identification, we have since moved beyond identification as something that pertains strictly to a Lacanian intellectual economy and voyeurism as an all-encompassing theory of identification (Zimmer 2015). I echo Plantinga's observation that "we can preserve the concepts 'pleasure,' 'desire,' and 'fantasy' by displacing them from their technical moorings, as developed in screen theory"—I too "advocate for a nontechnical use of these words, and to discuss and defend their use as common terms in folk psychology" (2009, 8). This is particularly important because as Plantinga notes, psychoanalysis "may offer an explanation of affective response, but it not only fails to account for the means by which different social groups respond differently, it lacks a theoretical mechanism to understand human difference, with the exception of gender difference" (2009, 12). I refer to Plantinga not to advocate a purely cognitive or affective model, but to highlight the deficiency of psychoanalysis and a theoretical model based solely on screen theory, especially when discussing queer representation and identification.

The stringent conditions outlined by screen theorists (dark room, rear projection, etc.) are not required for people to feel connected to characters onscreen. Whether in a theatre, at home, or while riding the bus, we continue to develop intimate relations with images and the characters they bring to life (Klinger 2005). Seeing oneself on screen was the driving force of queer representation (Russo [1981] 1987), and is an impulse that continues to propel minority viewing practices to this day (White 1999; Farmer 2000; Waugh 2006; Hallas 2010). Rather than traverse well-worn paths about identification and spectatorship (Mayne 1993; Shaviro 1995; Evans and Gamman 1995; Campbell 2005; Aaron 2007; McCormack 2008; Davis 2013), I will instead look

silver screen and acted as visual focal points that aided the organization of gay identity, culture, and politics (Waugh 1993).

to a recent contribution about film and affect by Lisa Cartwright (2008) and do this for two reasons: 1) because Cartwright turns to affect to rethink some the follies and think through some of the sensitivities that enshroud screen theory in order to advocate the positive affective power of empathy; and 2) because I argue that during and after the AIDS epidemic empathy in queer film surpasses pleasure, becoming the emotional equalizer and conduit through which the process of normalization takes shape.

Empathy and (Gay) Identification

According to Cartwright, "*The concept of filmic identification may be reworked by shifting the discussion from identification to a related term: empathy*" (2008, 23; emphasis in text). Although the desire to see and experience oneself through characters on screen remain important features of queer representation, gay-themed movies are less frequented by queer subjects than mainstream ones and are often not as beloved as Hollywood films that have been appropriated, such as *Clueless* (1995), *Showgirls* (1995), and *Perfect Pitch* (2012). There are several reasons for this apparent schism, many of which can be attributed to economic restraints, but one of the main factors identified for this general lack of enthusiasm is the banality of queer representation that has resulted from assimilation politics (Bronski 2000)—what can be called "strategic empathy."

Empathy, Cartwright contends, is the key to correcting film theory's errors, and "*projection and the concept of projective identification can be important aspects of empathetic identification*" (2008, 24, emphasis in text). Projection is a key connective concept that not only metaphorically relates the cinematic apparatus to identification, but inadvertently also engages the spectre of homosexuality via phantom doubling. Paraphrasing Laplanche and Pontalis (1973, 349-353), Cartwright notes how "projection always appears as a defense, and as an attribution to

another person or thing of qualities repudiated in the self" (2008, 25). In conjunction with Green (1986), she describes projection as "an externalization of *a danger* believed to exist in something judged undesirable, or something excessively desired" (2008, 25). Green "emphasizes the importance of the role of mediation and appearance (representation) in this interanimated relationship between subjects in projective identification" because "projection, inextricably linked to perception…entails a double inside-outside split" (Cartwright 2008, 27). The double for Green, according to Cartwright, "is the first object with which the subject changes place. The projection required to constitute the double and become the other allows the eye to tear itself from the screen" (2008, 28). Empathy, as with identification, takes place through figurative doubling.

Cinematic identification, in the strictest sense, suggests that our ability to connect with characters is predetermined—we can only feel things for similar characters and not others. Gay and lesbian cinephilia, among several other cinephilic practices, however, suggests otherwise (White 1999; Farmer 2000; Hallas 2003). Identification doesn't only arise between subjects and mirror copies of themselves, but a commitment to sameness has heavily influenced gay identity politics and representation and continues to do so to this day. Overlapping commitments to sameness highlight the problem, value, and currency of identification in queer cultural politics both on and offscreen.

Heterosexual viewers can, obviously, identify with gay characters, but to identify with a gay character is to also feel what that gay character feels. To identify would be to admit that part of you, in some shape or form, lies in the person onscreen and vice versa. These feelings can be threatening to some spectators, and is perhaps why heterosexual audiences (still) tend to avoid queer film and use identification as an alibi—*this movie has nothing to do with me; I can't*

identify with the characters or with what's going on. The desire to placate this discomfort was the rationale behind assimilated representation: make the images less threatening by making them more similar to what the majority looks, sounds, and acts like, and enjoys. If one can change the way people see and relate to images of queer people, then one can change the way people relate to and *feel* about queer people.

Empathy was a powerful emotional resource AIDS video activists and filmmakers used to facilitate identification across various identities (Juhasz 1995; Aaron 2004), but empathy was also a crucial assimilation strategy. AIDS melodramas, for example, served a specific emotional function: to humanize the threatening diseased homosexual. The coming out film, though, was designed to project an image of non-threatening (read: non-diseased) sameness that would not only assuage the majority's anxieties, but also (re)train the minority. Rather than defiant difference both on and offscreen, a less threatening sameness would bridge affiliation through empathy onscreen in the hopes of achieving the same offscreen.

Speaking of empathy's power, Cartwright writes, "I may even acknowledge that I cannot know what you feel from my own experience, even as I 'feel for you'" (Cartwright, 2008, 24). This is precisely the sentiment that steered gay representation and cultural politics away from art house decadence after Bryant and toward queer plurality during and after the AIDS epidemic. The hope was to not only win over a hostile or indifferent majority by procuring their sympathy through easier-to-digest representations, but to also discipline the subjects they spoke on behalf of at the same time. Strategic empathy, as I will demonstrate, became a tool for social engineering.

Queer and Explicit Representation

Visibility, Identity, Stereotypes

Homophile organizations like the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis had openly

challenged homophobia and demanded rights prior to Stonewall (D'Emillio, [1983] 1998), but it

wasn't until after Stonewall these demands and activities snowballed into a collective movement.

Mattachine presented homosexuals to the public, but Gay Liberation presented gay identities.

Mattachine emphasized sameness and similarities between homo and heterosexuals,

downplaying identity. Gay Liberation emphasized difference, using difference as a catalyst for

identity and visual strategies (Meyer, 2006) for carrying out its defiant goals. Underground

cinema had been a refuge for many gay and queer individuals who wanted to create and

experience alternatives to Hollywood's limited scope (Suárez, 1996; Tinkcom, 2002). Although

underground film helped to develop a community (Staiger, 2000) and paved the way for out and

"above ground" gay representation, it wasn't until after Stonewall that an identity and

community had begun to appear on screen.

Gay Liberation had initially been a loose association of radicals in major urban centres.

Some worked together to spearhead political initiatives, while others felt being publicly visible

and sexually different was a form of activism in and of itself. As Youmans observes, "until 1977,

gay rights had not been a particularly heated issue. Between 1972 and 1976, twenty-nine US

cities and counties had quietly enacted laws and policies protecting gay men and lesbians from

discrimination" (2011, 30). But 1977 "was a historical turning point when gay and lesbian

politics were dramatically transformed by the rise of the Christian Right and a series of local

gay-rights struggles that became national controversies;" specifically, "Anita Bryant's 'Save Our

Children' campaign to overturn an antidiscrimination ordinance in Dade County (Miami),

Florida, and California State Senator John Briggs' Proposition 6 to outlaw gay teachers in public schools" (Youmans 2011, 26).

One of the benefits of this newfound publicity was that it mobilized gay and lesbians, prompting many "to participate in activism for the first time," and "spurred others into a political reawakening after a mid-1970s slumber;" it had even absorbed "others into a liberal political agenda after they had spent years criticizing and practicing alternatives to liberalism" (Youmans, 2011, 26-27). By the late 1970s "it became possible to talk about a unified 'gay and lesbian movement' for the first time," writes Youmans, "with a set, agreed-upon program of gay rights" (2011, 27). But commitment to gay rights became a doubled-edge sword that would slowly divide and drive this nascent collective apart (Youmans, 2009).

Vito Russo's opus *The Celluloid Closet* ([1981]/1987)[11] mapped out a genealogy of LGBT representation in popular American/Hollywood cinema, and concluded rather optimistically about the rise of self-authored and produced films being released with greater frequency. Russo's project outlines a history of negative gay representation, detailing how homosexuals were often presented as people who suffered from pathological disorders and murderous desires or paraded around as minstrels to elicit laughter or as sad people to inspire pity. Russo's polemic is symptomatic of gay activism in the 70s, stressing the need for self-representation in response to a history of misrepresentation. It was outsider ethnography that needed to be countered with self-authored works that showcased the reality of gay lived experience, and documentaries and other nonfiction works provided individuals the formal and financial flexibility needed to articulate an emerging sensibility and identity (Dyer, [1990] 2003).

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[11] Russo's book was a compilation of various lectures given in small venues and college campuses during the 70s.

There was a tacit consensus early on about the need for self-authored representations that captured and legitimated the struggles of gays and lesbians (Dyer [1993] 2002, 3). Writing in the midst of the early part of the AIDS-epidemic's onset, Dyer writes, "Cinema has probably been more significant as a central definer of sexualities than any other cultural institution in our century, including television, where representation of sexuality has been severely restricted" ([1983/1993] 2002, 29). Throughout the 90s, however, television would eclipse cinema. Gay characters on popular television shows such as *Rosanne* (1988-1997) and *Friends* (1994-2004) and shows with gay leads, such as *Ellen* (1997-1998), *Will and Grace* (1998-2006), and *Queer as Folk* (UK 1999) began to pop up in a variety of places, appealing to both gay and straight-identified audiences.

By appealing to a broad audience, though, mainstreamed representation also distorted the experiences and realities of the subjects they represented. According to Suzanna Danuta Walters (2001), gay visibility does not equal more rights, safety, or equality and even "creates new forms of homophobia (for example, the good marriage loving, sexless gay vs. the bad, liberationist, promiscuous gay) and lends itself to a false and dangerous substitution of cultural visibility for inclusive citizenship." The general public is "readily embracing *images* of gay life but [is] still all too reluctant to embrace the *realities* of gay identities and practices and all their messy and challenging confusion. We may be *seen*, now," writes Walters, "but I'm not sure if we are *known*" (2001, 10). Over the course of the 90s a surprising disjuncture between vision and knowledge transpired.

Lauren Berlant (1997) argues that the polarizing culture wars of the 80s and 90s forged the "intimate public sphere," a public sphere where sex became a passport to privatized citizenship. "Intimate things," Berlant writes, "flash in people's faces: pornography, abortion,

sexuality, and reproduction; marriage, personal morality, and family values…are [now] deemed vital to defining how citizens should act" (1997, 1). Sex took centre stage in the newly minted intimate public sphere, becoming the gateway to the human soul (Foucault [1976] 1990). Sex became how we judged the innate value and nature of a human being, transforming "a nation made for adult citizens…[into] one imagined for fetuses and children" (1997, 1). Nonproductive expenditure (Champagne 1995), such as homosexuality and pornography, was deemed wasteful and unhealthy. Healthy sex was productive sex and productive sex was reproductive sex. It is within this increasingly constricted socio-political climate that the turn toward health and reproduction and movement away from sickness and death were adopted as visual and political strategies by gay rights activists and media producers. The interest in (teen) coming out narratives and focus on the queer family (Pidduck 2003) discursively channelled the conservative biopolitical thrust of the intimate public sphere. In order to triumph over AIDS, homosexuality had to be made healthy, normal, and productive.

Richard Dyer ([1979/1993] 2002) observes that "the word 'stereotype' is today almost always a term of abuse…yet when Walter Lippmann coined the term, he did not intend it to have a wholly and necessarily pejorative connotation" (11). "The role of stereotypes" Dyer contends, "is to make visible the invisible" (16). But stereotypes did not disappear after Stonewall. Visibility did not erase stereotyping; rather, it changed its meaning, value, and function as a signaling system and a mode of identification. Stereotypes, according to Dyer, attempt to "maintain sharp boundary definitions [and]…insist on boundaries exactly at those points where in reality there are none" (16). A stereotype announces a feature of a prescribed identity with which one may self-identify *or* be automatically associated, despite rejecting that identity and/or identifying characteristic. As the AIDS epidemic neared closure, resisting stereotypes became,

and remains, *de rigueur* in mainstream liberal gay discourse: the focus on family, youths, and love weren't propagating a conservative turn in queer politics but resisting the "stereotype" that all gay men had AIDS and were promiscuous.

Stereotyping became a form of surveillance in the 90s, insofar as liberal gay-rights activists became the self-appointed deciders of what and was not a stereotype. Liberal gay rights activists determined what was acceptable and worthy of public exhibition. People and behaviour deemed stereotypical were pushed into the shadows or suppressed. Visibility was granted only to those who conformed to the ideal, but those deemed threatening or unworthy of visibility did not entirely disappear.

Queer Theory's Uncanniness

Queer theory was forged out of political battles and intellectual circles in the mid-1980s. Sedgwick (1985, 1990) and Butler (1990, 1993) are queer theory's scholarly pillars, as are works by Weeks (1985), Rubin (1984), and Adrienne Rich (1980)—the term itself, though, was coined by de Lauretis (1991) in a special issue for *difference*. Throughout the 90s, a wave of special issues, anthologies, books, and articles was published that revolved around formulating strategies to dismantle "heteronormativity" (Warner 1993) and target "identity itself" (Gamson 1997, 56). Gay identity was nurtured under the banner of multicultural tolerance and promoted as a category like race and ethnicity in need of legal rights and protection (Juhasz 1995). But promoting the tolerance of difference necessitated greater degrees of assimilation (Halperin, 1995; Bronski, 1998), slowly erasing queerness from the equation, instilling instead the empty liberal signifier of "inclusivity"—LGBT*Q*. The development, popularity, and decline of queer theory has been well documented and reflected upon, and so I do not wish to retraverse well-walked paths (Duggan 2003; Yep, Lovaas, and Elia 2003; Halperin 2003; Sullivan 2003). It is

queer theory's persistence in the face of its uneven visibility I wish to further explore instead (Halley and Parker 2010; Castiglia and Reed 2011; Penney 2013).

Cinema became a crucial battlefield where the war over identity was fought; in recent years television has surpassed cinema as the primary popular queer medium. It is not surprising that throughout the 90s a seemingly equal amount of interest was paid to cinematic representation (Fejes and Petrich 1993; Juhasz 1995; Hanson 1999; White 1999; Farmer 2000) and queerness. New Queer Cinema had rejuvenated artistic and intellectual discourse at a time when AIDS made it seem as though rejuvenation was impossible. Alongside New Queer Cinema and in the post-epidemic era, gay and lesbian film and queer cinema (often grouped together under the banner "queer cinema") emerged as its own scholarly subfield (Bad Object Choices 1991; Gever, Parmar, and Greyson 1993; Holmlund and Fuchs 1997; Hanson 1999; Aaron 2004; Benshoff and Griffin 2004, 2006; Rich 2013a) and has also spawned several national and regional investigations (Kuzniar 2000; Grossman 2001; Cestaro 2004; Foster 2004; Yosef 2004; Waugh 2006; Griffiths, 2006, 2008; Rees-Roberts 2008; Perriam 2013) as well as its own book series (*Queer Film Classics*, series edited by Thomas Waugh and Matthew Hays [2009—]).

Circumventing mainstream and mass representation, James Joseph Dean observes two strands of homosexual representation: the gay standpoint film and queer cinema. "Gay standpoint films" he contends, "are distinguished by their narrative focus on a gay and lesbian subculture, whereas queer cinema generally depicts representations of a character's sexuality as decentered" (2007, 365). The emphasis on "decentred" here is crucial because one of the guiding principles of queer scholarship is the dismantling of identity and decentring of a coherent "gay self." Queerness is about fluidity, about gender and sexual variance divorced from any sense of a unified self. Queerness is against "stereotyping," but not the stereotypes of yore, but rather the

stereotypes of normativity and assimilation termed "homonormativity" (Duggan, 2003)—the appropriation of heteronormativity by gays and lesbians—and "homonationalism" (Puar, 2007)—the embrace of conservative models of citizenship. What I call "heteromimesis."

The schism between gay and queer cinema manifests itself most prominently in the teen coming out cycle's triumph over New Queer Cinema. The success of coming out narratives aided the proliferation of crowd-pleasing flicks throughout the twenty-first century that seemed to almost require the erasure of HIV/AIDS. Representation and discussion of HIV/AIDS practically disappeared in the new millennium's first decade. Save for a few intellectual works that acknowledge the lack of its discussion and representation (Hilderbrand 2006; Juhasz 2006, 2012; Waugh 2006, 2013; Bersani, 2011; Harvey 2013; Patton 2014), porn studies has become the primary arena within which queer conversations about HIV and AIDS are now given full attention.

The debate over the value and deficiencies of both queer theory and gay identity continue to this day (Green, 2007, 2008, 2010), with one of the most forceful attacks on gay identity politics coming from Middle Eastern studies scholar Joseph A. Massad (2007). He contends that both discursive practices constitute forms of Western imperialism and argues that the West "produces homosexuals, as well as gays and lesbians, where they do not exist and represses same-sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated into its sexual epistemology" (2007, 163). Identity and binaries, albeit it in more rhizomatic form, however, continue to proliferate despite queerness's desire to dissolve them (Bersani 1995; Boellstorff 2008).

Mainstream(ed) gay culture's embrace of neoconservative politics (marriage, monogamy, family, children, citizenship) led queer theory to find meaning and value in negative feelings: shame (Sedgewick 2003), depression (Cvetkovich 2003, 2012), pain (Ahmed 2004), loss (Love

2009), failure (Halberstam 2011), and the cruelty of optimism (Berlant 2011). It is, however, Edelman's (2004) apocalyptic manifesto that has guided queer theory over the last decade. (Unofficially) Taking his cue from Berlant (1997) and aimed at assimilationist politics, Edelman argues the future belongs to the child and not the homosexual, igniting contentious debate about the redemptive power and deadening force of the future (Muñoz 2009; de Lauretis 2011; Hanson 2011; Rosenberg and Villarejo 2011; Young 2013a) and the recuperative potential of the past (Freeman 2010; Castiglia and Reed 2011). It is within an intellectual period marked by ambivalent feelings of both optimism and defeatism (Duggan and Muñoz 2009) and an investment in time (Halberstam 2009; Dinshaw et al. 2007) that an interest in ghosts and spectres develops.

Queer work on the gothic and the uncanny (Freccero, 2006; Haggerty, 2006; Jenzen, 2007; Hughes and Smith, 2009; Rigby 2009; Palmer, 2012) began to appear with greater frequency when queer theory embraced its antisocial undercurrent (Edelman 2004; Halberstam 2008).[12] But queer theory also turned to the gothic and uncanny at a time when representation and discussion of HIV/AIDS had disappeared and subsided but the practice and discourse over barebacking had begun to flourish on and offscreen. Queerness is a spectral presence that predates the discovery of the homosexual as a species (Foucault [1976] 1990), whose persistence continues to haunt the science of identity to this day (Freccero 2006). The invention of heterosexuality (Katz [1995] 2007) instilled homosexuality as the ghostly other that haunted and threatened to consume its heterosexual counterpart (Fuss 1991; Hanson 1999). In the homonormative era queerness has become the spectral double that haunts its normative same-sex

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[12] Although the 2003 publication of Nicholas Royel's *The Uncanny*, the first monograph devoted to the subject of the uncanny (Masschelein 2011), is also likely to have spurred interest too.

counterpart. "Queer spectrality—ghostly *returns* suffused with affective materiality that work through the ways trauma, mourning, and event are registered on the level of subjectivity and history" allows us "to generate alternative temporal models that might be said to be queer," writes Freccero (2011, 22). It would seem the revival of a practice long hoped dead has resurrected the politics its visual and carnal flourishing helped to birth.

In the latter half of the twentieth century what was initially an obscure piece of Freud's encyclopedic writings saw it transform into a canonical theory in its own right (Masschelein 2011). In a paper published in 1919, Freud outlined his concept of the uncanny, describing it as "the feeling of unease that arises when something familiar suddenly becomes strange and unfamiliar" (Masschelein 2011, 1). In German, however, the uncanny is imbued with spatial qualities—*unheimlich*, meaning "not home." The home, the physical personification of privacy and interiority is a space of safety, security, and familiarity, and Freud uses the privacy and intimacy of the home to metaphorically describe the sense of dread that comes when one's sense of self is threatened (Dolar 1991). Although detailed in bits and pieces prior to its 1919 publication (Masschelein 2011), the uncanny's influence can be traced back to eighteenth and nineteenth-century gothic literature (Dolar 1991). The literary incarnation of the double comes about the same time when industry and science had begun to render the world strange. "There is *a specific dimension of the uncanny that emerges with modernity*," writes Mladen Dolar (1991, 7; emphasis in text).

The double is uncanny. Although not the same thing, the figure of, and work on, the double heavily influenced the Freudian uncanny (Dolar 1991), so much so it is popularly presumed a Freudian invention that encompasses the former (Masschelein 2011). In its literary form,

the subject is confronted with his double [who]…produces two seemingly contradictory

effects: he arranges things so that they turn out badly for the subject, he turns up at the

most inappropriate moments, he dooms him to failure; and he realizes the subject's

hidden or repressed desires so that he does things he would never dare to do or that his

conscience wouldn't let him do. In the end, the relation gets so unbearable that the

subject, in a final showdown, kills his double, unaware that his only substance and his

very being were concentrated in his double. So in killing him he kills himself (Dolar

1991, 11).

 "As a rule," observes Dolan, "all these stories finish badly: the moment one encounters one's

double, one is headed for disaster; there seems to be no way out" (1991, 11). Dolan's overview

of the doppelganger motif in gothic literature is also an uncanny description of the way

barebacking and "the barebacker" have been recently framed in queer politics. At the end of the

explicit film *Focus/Refocus*, a film I will discuss in greater detail in my final chapter, for

example, Joe kills his serial killer boyfriend, who is coded as a barebacker and is a metaphor for

AIDS, in a final showdown in an abandoned porn theatre.

"Freud clearly marks the uncanny as a specific type of anxiety," remarks Anneleen

Masschelein (1991, 42). The double is the thing we project our repressions onto (Cartwright

2008). Homophobia is often treated as an inability to come to terms with one's own sexuality

and not necessarily the other's—the homosexual is a threatening representation of one's sexual

repression, inspiring horror and dread. Doubling is inextricable from discourses of

homosexuality and configurations of gay identity, due in no small part to Freud who identified

homosexuality as a repressed desire and the homosexual a narcissist—someone too in love with

the *image* of themselves. And it is difficult not to see this psychologically and culturally rooted

pattern of identification and anxiety being replicated in current queer discourse, expanding the very dimensions of both the uncanny and double themselves. Queerness is uncanny, but so too are queer theory and representation—the physical and metaphysical incarnation of the barebacker and the ghostly HIV-positive subject are their uncanny materializations (Harvey 2013).

<u>Pornography and Porn Studies</u>

Up until the last decade or so, the overwhelming majority of works on pornography that weren't avowedly anti-porn were either historical investigations of pornography in the modern era (Kendricks, 1987; Hunt, 1993) or focused on heterosexual representation anchored in the debates of the porn wars (Williams [1989] 1999; Kipnis, 1999, McNair 1996, 2002; Segal 2004). The ubiquity and social acceptance of internet pornography has opened a space in which to engage porn outside the limited empowerment-debasement binary—although not without an anti-porn response packaged and sold under the pseudo-science of "addiction" (Leahy 2008; Struthers 2009; Collins and Adleman 2011). Pornography has not only proliferated in the digital era, but is also a driving force of digital tech innovation (Barss, 2011). Pornography's "onscenity" (Williams 2004), its easy access and spreadability (Jenkins, Ford and Green 2013), and adoption as a form of self-expression, inter-personal communication, and mode of communal networking (Hasinoff 2012; Arroyo 2015; Tziallas 2015d) have reignited anxieties about outside sexual forces penetrating sanctified private spheres. The language of porn addiction has simply attempted to add "scientific legitimacy" to simplistic conservative rhetoric about the insidious powers and dangerous effects of (sexualized) media.

While the porn addiction industry desperately attempts to remain relevant, scholars from various disciplinary and cultural backgrounds have paid serious attention to how people engage

with porn and how pornography intersects with technology and culture without the need for pretence or fear of betrayal (McNair 2002, 2013; Williams 2004; Attwood 2005, 2010; Waugh 2006; Jacobs 2007; Paasonen, Nikunen, and Saarenmaa 2007; Jacobs, Janssen, and Pasquinelli 2008; van Doorn 2010; Paasonen 2010, 2011, 2014; McKee 2009; 2012; 2014; Bozelka 2014; Corneau and Meulen 2014; Stadel 2014). Paradoxically, it was only when pornography and public sex were domesticated that a multifaceted discussion of pornography could take place in the public arena, despite anxieties about its encroachments.

Strands of research continue to question the ontology of pornography and its overlaps with art (Dennis 2009), cinema—particularly art house cinema (Lewis, 2009; Williams 2008; 2014) and the torture porn cycle of the mid to late 2000s (Lockwood 2009; Tziallas 2010a; Jones 2013)—and obscenity (Mey 2007), with urgent research from the United Kingdom responding to recent laws banning "extreme porn" (Mowlabocus and Jones 2009; Murray 2009; Petley 2009; Attwood and Smith 2010; Attwood 2011). For the purposes of my study, I do not attempt to define pornography or explore its ontological contours; instead, I treat pornography as part of a moving image continuum. To segregate porn from cinema (or art) when studying queer representation is to not only capture half of the picture, but also enact an arbitrary binary that does not reflect how queer people engage with and are influenced by representation. Porn not only acts as a social organizer (Champagne 1997; Campino 2005; Arroyo 2015) but has become the conduit through which global gay culture now flows (Tziallas 2015c).

Despite pornography's proliferation and social tolerance, the spectre of the porn wars continues to haunt the study of pornography. The rise of bareback porn and the slow conversion of the commercial gay porn industry that once uniformly mandated condom use has given new life to anxieties about the effects of pornography (Lee 2014, Vörös 2014, Corneau and van der

Meulen 2014), despite little evidence that pornography influences viewers in predetermined ways (McNair 2013, 2014; Rosser et al. 2012, 2013; Nelson et al. 2014). Pornography affects people in a myriad of ways (Paasonen, 2011), and although questions about the effects of porn on heterosexual men and women are in abundance, research on the effects of porn on gay men (and especially women) have been few and far between (Kendall, 1995; Morrison, 2004; Galos 2013; Bishop 2015).

Queer research tends to stress the empowering potential of pornography and sexual representation (Burger 1995; Rhyne 2007; Dean 2009; Ryberg 2012), but it is not only barebacking that has consumed the arena of gay pornography. "Gay-for-pay," which generally refers to heterosexual-identified men who perform in gay porn has become a lucrative selling point and genre in its own right.[13] I would also argue that fictional scenarios where a heterosexual persona is adopted by an individual and agrees to engage in same-sex sexual

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[13] The gay-for-pay phenomenon has many facets and encompasses straight-identified men who perform for donations on *cam4* for male viewers; play rough and fuck-at-will in "fraternity houses" fully rigged with web (read: surveillance) cameras (*Fraternity X)*; and are tricked into having or decide to have sex with another man (*Bait Bus*, *Unglory Hole*, *Broke Straight Guys*). It also includes men who are paid to get blown by or top (penetrate) an eager submissive bottom (*Military Classifieds*, *New York Straight Men*), who is often visibly and audibly more effeminate, that tends to please their object of desire to the sound of straight porn playing in the background (*Beefcake Hunter*) as well as gay-for-pay performers in fictional "straight" scenarios (*Suite 703*'s "But I'm a Married Man" series [especially Girth Brooks who has a strong following] and studios that tease viewers with their performers' undetermined identity (*Sean Cody*, *Cody Cummings*, *Corbin Fisher, Bi Latin Men*).

activity onscreen for money constitutes gay-for-pay. Popular fetishization of heterosexual identity in gay porn, although leaving a space open to rethink the gay-straight binary (Bozelka 2014; Stadel 2014), also tends to reinforce an identity system that remains commensurate with queer oppression. The prevalence of gay-for-porn has stretched the meaning of "gay porn" into uncharted territory. Privileging masculinity and gay-for-pay are not new phenomena (Burger 1995; Waugh 1996; Escoffier 2003; Bozelka 2014; Stadel 2014), but gay male pornography in the twenty-first century seems increasingly less gay with each passing year. Even barebacking and the bareback "power bottom" are aligned with notions of masculinity (Haig 2006; Dowsett et al. 2008; Dean 2009), further erasing femininity from a position that was once exclusively linked with all things feminine (Kemp 2013).

For better or worse, pornography continues to play a vital role in the identity construction of queer individuals (Rothmann 2013). Porn affects people and its effects manifest themselves in variety of ways, but porn is also part of feedback system that responds to demands and social changes. For the purposes of this study I take as fact that pornography does affect people, although I do not accept totalizing theories that seeing "X" makes someone want to do, or actually do, "Y." Instead, I treat pornography like cinema and engage the tricky terrain of "effects" as something that is neither wholly positive, nor wholly negative, but rather complex and not entirely quantifiable or fully knowable. I thus treat porn as a discourse where fantasy and reality converge and even collide in dynamic ways, whose effects are better understood by examining their social, legal, and economic contexts, rather than estimating how they uniformly impact individual subjects.

Sex is inextricable from identity, and one of my project's political and intellectual goals is to demonstrate the inseparability of explicit representation to discussions of gay identity and

visibility. Although pornography and gay sexuality are nonproductive (Bataille [1934] 1985; Champagne 1995) in the biological sense, gay sex becomes productive through pornography, metaphorically conceiving and birthing identity via the sexual activity it captures. Despite pornography's historical and continued importance (Dyer 1985, [1994] 2004, Waugh 1985; 1996; Escoffier 2009), queer theory has remained surprisingly silent on the subject. Even anthologies dedicated to "sex" (Halley and Parker 2011) and monographs on AIDS (Castiglia and Reed) [14] leave pornography off their radar—even Bersani's (2011) contribution to Halley and Parker's anthology on the subject of barebacking makes a small passing references to porn, opting instead to focus on literary depictions. The impact of pornography on social and self-identity and its potential use value or challenge to queer theory are effaced from a dialogue whose theoretical methodology and social goals are rooted in the destruction of normality through discursive and actual sex. Queer theory tends to talk a lot about sex, but very little about its representation. I hope my introduction and literature review have made it clear that queer discourse can no longer be properly engaged without at least a consideration of pornography, and I hope that my study provides future scholars with a framework for prioritizing explicit media alongside fictional representation and theoretical musings.

The regulation of sex—how we see it, if we see it at all, and how and where we have it and see it—and the figure of the double are this project's double helix, the discursive threads that suture together my theoretical analysis and close readings. The cycle of sex, its *appearance, regulation, punishment, disappearance,* and *reappearance*, captures the way sex influences cinematic representation and cultural politics—so much I could title each chapter by the above-

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[14] Castiglia and Reed make reference to barebacking and Dean's work…in a footnote (2011, 220-221).

noted corresponding stages. Repetition is a way to work through anxiety and trauma and yields to both the double and the uncanny (Dolar 1991). Barebacking is not the same pre-AIDS condomless sex (Dean 2009, 2011; Scott 2015); it is a response to the trauma of AIDS and subsequent sanitizing of gay culture (Castiglia and Reed 2011). Barebacking is not new. Barebacking is repeated behaviour rooted in the politics and sociology of the past, whose return marks it as uncanny and the barebacker a figurative threatening double.

Queer scholars have reclaimed and traced the roots of queer thinking back to the gothic genre, finding value in sexuality that evades and frustrates the scientific gaze—a schizophrenic obsession with repression and excess and preponderance of threatening doubles (Halberstam 1995; Freccero 2006, 2011; Haggerty 2006; Rigby 2009; Palmer 2012). But research on the inherently gothic and uncanny nature of surveillance in the electronic age is scarce, as is work on the overlaps between data and images doubles and their intersection with sexual cultural politics. The importance of Stacey's (2010) interdisciplinary contribution cannot be understated. My study is deeply indebted to hers and seeks to expand on her research by adopting her metaphoric use of the gene as a conceptual framework. The image, or "televisual," double I advocate as a figurative disciplining agent is one whose informational makeup becomes uncannily real in the twenty-first century—the unknown status of the barebacker and unclear status of the HIV-positive subject bring metaphysical and physical genetics to a point of near collapse. The fusion of image and body renders both figures eerily spectral—everywhere but nowhere. Their ability to transgress typical regimes of control through the very same mechanisms that once controlled them has elicited reactions typical of when we encounter the uncanny: horror, anxiety, and dread.

For my purposes I use the gothic and the uncanny as theoretical frameworks and literary devices to bridge gaps between various interrelated intellectual discourses and to analyse visual content that is at times manifestly gothic (*Boys in the Band, Boys in the Sand, Bijou*), imbued with gothic undertones (the first and second Hollywood hate cycle, New Queer Cinema), punctured by gothic moments and aesthetics (the teen coming cycle), and discursively gothic and visually uncanny (*Focus/Refocus*, *Pornography: A Thriller*). I begin at Stonewall because the rhetoric, fears, and visual forms that define current queer discourse bear uncanny resemblance to the ones that manifested themselves when the spectre of homosexuality solidified into carnal form. I hope that by beginning at Stonewall and carefully tracking the evolution of gay identity through its various visual and discursive incarnations my project fills in important gaps between the disciplines I engage and provides scholars with a productive way to discuss the significant overlaps that, curiously, remain off each respective field's radar. It is with this in mind I turn to my second chapter on the gothic and uncanny and investigate gay identity when it first began to take form.

Chapter 2) The Gothic and Stonewall: (Auto)Ethnography and the Emergence of Identity

Authorship, (Auto)Ethnography, and Performativity

<u>Authorship</u>

Gay and lesbian cinema is inextricable from the politics of authorship. "It does make a difference who makes a film, [and] who the authors are," writes Richard Dyer (1991, 185). But as Dyer acknowledges, clinging to romantic auteurist ideals and believing in fixed ahistorical subjects fail to capture the complexities of gay and lesbian filmmaking. Identities are plural, in flux, and impure, and cinematic authorship is collaborative, multiple, and performative. Gay and lesbian film reflects the reality within which gay men and lesbians author themselves on a daily basis in relation to an abstract identity that is already partially authored. There is thus a tendency to perceive these enunciations, whether one intends to or not, as speaking about, and on behalf of, all gays and lesbians. A tension arises between individual self-expression and the circumscription of an identity that is rooted in the problem of not just authorship, but also stereotypes. "Lesbian/gay cinema had to take on board the fact that lesbian/gay cultures and identities are themselves impure, made against but nonetheless with available and dominant imagery" (Dyer 1991, 199). The desire to articulate a world view free from heterosexual intervention drove early queer discourse and representation.

Thomas Waugh maintains that "ever since Stonewall…documentary film has been a primary means by which lesbians and gay men have carried out their liberation struggle" ([1984] 2011a, 194). Using twenty-four films as an emerging moving-image heritage, Waugh explores the ethical dimensions of gay and lesbian documentary and the various pitfalls filmmakers had to negotiate as they attempted to capture individual experiences as collective expressions. Waugh's

article crystallizes the heightened sense of urgency over authorship that ran through intellectual and communal dialogues and speaks to the general mistrust and frustration that structured gay/straight relations at the time. For example, Waugh contends that "the ethics of balance" is a misnomer as it, in fact, creates disequilibrium by automatically placing gays and lesbians at the "extreme end" of one axis, necessitating their comparison to, and having to defend themselves against, the other extreme, which ultimately stifles genuine conversation ([1984]2011a, 195). But at the same time, Waugh points out that "even lesbian and gay critics raising questions of image ethics tend to do so in terms of how we are represented by straight image makers, that is, *their* ethical accountability to *us*, rather than in terms of the ethics of our own self-representation" ([1984]2011a, 195; author's emphasis). At stake is not only representation and combating false representations, but also the ethics and accountability of self-representation.

The rise of identity politics and concerns over authorship are symptoms of the sweeping social reforms that characterize the transition from the modern to the postmodern era (DeKoven 2004). This tumultuous period saw new clusters of people emerge in opposition to "science as a discourse that carries cultural and institutional authority" (Seidman, 1993, 108). Postwar Western society became increasingly suspicious of authority and progress guided by scientific rationality and empiricism (Miller 1999; O'Donnell 2000), helping to prop up a burgeoning gay community that countered a history of "expertise" that invented the homosexual and wrote their history on their behalf. Visible defiance and shifting the political from the social over to the personal created a radical break with pre-Stonewall homosexual-rights initiatives (D'Emilio [1983] 1998) that submitted to authority. For sexual minorities, science was a form of authorship, a "normative and social force" that drew "moral boundaries" (Seidman, 1993, 109)—objectivity and empiricism were to be subverted with an emphasis on the subjective.

Collaboration between filmmakers, subjects, and the community as a whole (Waugh [1984] 2011a) was one of the strategies Liberation documentarians adopted to resist replicating authoritative discourse. To author the queer self is to establish a shared narrative, and having filmmakers let "their subjects control their images rather than control them for them" ([1984] 2011a, 206) helped to emphasize a collective sensibility grounded in shared personal experience. Collaboration gave documentary images a greater sense of authenticity and validity, but an unavoidable conflict arises when individuals from a minority make themselves public: their personal confessions and narratives ineluctably speak on behalf of the whole, inversely replicating the authority structures they often seek to undermine.

"The story of his life," Foucault contends, can also become a "technique for correcting individual lives" ([1977] 1995, 252). The modern archive transformed the modern subject, whose most prominent manifestation can found in the metamorphosis of the "offender" into the "delinquent." The offender made a bad choice; the delinquent is a bad person. In the modern era biographical knowledge became a technique for correcting individuals: it made people comparable. It was one's life story that identified the delinquent and made the delinquent identifiable. Having intimate and intricate details about a person on record made them definable. "To be looked at, observed, described in detail, followed from day to day by an uninterrupted writing was a privilege," observes Foucault. But in the modern era, "the disciplinary methods reversed the relation…it was no longer a monument for a future memory, but a document for possible use" (191, emphasis mine).

For gays and lesbians, authorship is as much of a paradox as observation. "However valid and real the injunction against washing dirty linen in public may be," suggests Waugh, *we have much to gain by washing it in private*" ([1984] 2011a, 203; emphasis mine). Once public, one is

vulnerable to manipulation: publicity and publicness are doubled-edged swords. Gay Liberation advocated and celebrated visibility, but once gays and lesbians became too visible it not only provoked a backlash, but also made gays and lesbians something new to be observed and further studied and understood. Although resisting the regime of science, the strategies adopted after Stonewall ended up reinforcing the very system early Gay Liberation sought to resist via the very same methods.

(Auto)Ethnography

Ethnography is a common and popular method for exploring, studying, and understanding the culture of other people. Ethnography involves someone (or many people) from outside a particular social context entering another's in order to observe and document their behaviour, rituals, and customs and provide an assessment of their culture. Ethnography at the turn of the nineteenth century, "or classic ethnography," involved white Westerners travelling significant distances to exotic foreign locales to document "primitive cultures" and people who were visibly different. Within these newly discovered bodies and the relations between them was data to be mined, extracted, and extrapolated to create a portrait—an image. Strict boundaries between subjects and objects allowed researchers to claim the observations as empirical evidence. As Chris Holmund observes, "ethnographic 'truth' was held to reside in 'raw data' collected in an apparently 'authorless' fashion" (1997, 129). "Raw" entailed real, and real entailed objective.

Although observations were often recorded by hand and then transcribed into studies and books, both Catherine Russell (1999) and Fatimah Tobing Rony (1996) have demonstrated the important evidentiary role that film played in ethnographic explorations. The cinematic apparatus

was used as a way to live out the modernist dream of seeing the world without the intervention of human hand. As Holmund observes, "ethnographers working in film advocated a 'plain' film style composed of long takes, sync sound, whole acts, whole bodies, no scripts, and little editing" (1997, 129). But as Russell (1999) has compellingly elucidated, ethnographic film, in all its attempts at objectivity, is experimental, dynamic, and open to re-vision. Along similar lines, Rony has argued that ethnography and ethnographic material can also be rich resources for minority voices "engaged in developing new modes of self-representation" (1996, 6).

Coinciding with the postmodern turn "was a shift in emphasis from participant observation to the observation of participation" (Tedlock 1991, 75). According to Barbara Tedlock, a new "type of ethnographic experience called both 'ethno-sociology' and 'auto-ethnography'" (1991, 79) emerged in the 70s that emphasized the ethnographer's subjective experiences were inseparable from their methods. Instead of attempting to maintain the border between observer and native and their implicit power dynamics, observing and accounting for one's participation became a way to develop new forms of knowledge. This form of "participatory ethnography" not only mirrored changes in documentary film practices—the ascent of what Bill Nichols (1991) calls the "interactive" and "self-reflexive" documentary modes and their challenge to "observational" traditions—but also the turn toward indigenous authorship and one's right, if not need, to author oneself that characterize the "personal is the political" impulse of the 70s.

Although presumably better suited to first-person and/or nonfiction discourse and representation, ethnography can encompass fictional portrayals and commercial works as well. Russell's account of ethnographic film recognizes the way narrative penetrates reality and realism, while Rony reframes ethnographic film as a symbolic "third eye" that racialized subjects

can use to better understand what W.E.B. Dubois termed their "double consciousness:" the experience of seeing oneself through the eyes of others whereby one comes to understand oneself as already split, distanced from oneself. For Rony, fiction film is a form of ethnography. Referring to Dubois's metaphor of a double consciousness as "seeing 'darkly through a veil'," Rony argues that "the movie screen is another veil," (1996, 4). Knowledge and self-knowledge need not be limited to nonfiction; they can be derived from fiction films as well.

Rey Chow (1995) has put forth the most formidable case for fiction film being a powerful form of cultural observation and discipline. Chow contends that "a new ethnography is possible only when we turn our attention to the subjective origins of ethnography as is it practiced by those who were previously ethnographized and who have, in the postcolonial age, taken up the active task of ethnographizing their own cultures" (1995, 180). For Chow, people who learn to observe and understand themselves through the other's knowledge apparatus can reclaim and appropriate the apparatus and those methods in order to rewrite themselves. Ethnography is not about fleeting observation but about inventing identities and solidifying systems of sociality through documentation and archival records. It is precisely the control over the material conditions of identity through mediated observation that Gay Liberation activists and filmmakers sought to claim for themselves. Although never "colonized" in the traditional sense, gay and lesbians were spiritually aligned with the emancipatory thrust of postcolonialism.

Ethnography pertained primarily to observing racial others in other geographical spaces, but it was anxiety engendered by homosexuality's *invisibility* within the ethnographer's native environment that propelled the ethnography of queer others. Ethnography was an attempt to make the queer other identifiable; self-ethnography and autobiography were strategically

appropriated to subvert ethnographic authority. Ethnography is about knowing the other while autobiography is about knowing the self, but as Catherine Russell demonstrates,

> Autobiography becomes ethnographic at the point where the film-or videomaker understands his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical processes. Identity is no longer a transcendental or essential self that is revealed, but a 'staging of subjectivity'- a representation of the self as a performance… Autoethnography is a vehicle and a strategy for challenging imposed forms of identity and exploring the discursive possibilities of inauthentic subjectivities (1999, 276).

Queer authorship *is* autoethnography, and although Russell refers to first-person filmmaking, the complex overlaps between the queer individual and collective imbricate queer fiction film and autoethnography. Queer filmmaking is as much about connecting with others through a process of sharing and learning as it is about self-expression. There is an undeniable didactic impulse embedded within queer autoethnography that is inextricable from discursive identity formations. As those who identify as gay or queer can attest, the gay or queer self cannot be divorced from larger social formations or historical processes. But since the "staging of subjectivity" eschews a transcendental subject in favour of one that is performed, a tension between the authentic and inauthentic becomes an unavoidable element of gay identity, remaining a continual point of contention subsumed by discourses of "stereotyping."

Performance/Performativity

Performance and performativity describe two different but related and overlapping theories and methods of self-presentation. Performativity generally entails speech acts that construct an identity through communication (Austin [1962] 1975; Searle 1969), but is also

associated with Butler's (1990) subversive theory of gender performativity—enacting gender differences through the endless repetition of codes and signs. Performance, conversely, is often associated with Erving Goffman (1959; 1963) who used the metaphor of the theatre to describe everyday social interaction. Goffman theorized human interaction as a system of mask exchanges whereby people adopt different personas to either satisfy private goals or submit to certain contextual social norms. For Butler, the inverse is true: performance brings about identity—"performativity is predominantly a process of invoking the subject, not a performance by a subject (Brickell, 2003, 166).

Gender performativity as outline by Butler is not a performance in the sense that one memorizes and consciously performs a script; instead, it is a discursive system of display that enacts and naturalizes identity through repetition. For Butler (1991), there is no inner identity that comes into being through performance: identity is formed and regulated through discursive norms. While for Goffman there is a manipulable but unified self, for Butler there is no core self, only discourse actualized through the performed notion of selfhood. Succinctly put, performance refers to "doing" while performativity entails "bringing regulatory notions into being" (Brickell, 2003, 168).

In her intuitive piece for *GLQ*'s (Gay and Lesbian Quarterly) debut issue, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1993) lays the foundation for queer theory's eventual embrace (lapse into?) negativity. Taking issue with the "premature domestication" of Butler's, then fresh, formulation of gender performativity (15), Sedgwick turns to the affect of shame to expand what she sees as a politically and socially retracted use of performativity. Writing at a time when queer theory was gaining immense traction—largely because of Butler's (1990, 1991, 1993) work on performativity and gay identity's solidification into what some felt was an overbearing tool for

social control—Sedgwick, in opposition to practices such as "gay pride," found political currency in feelings of shame. "Shame interests me politically," she writes, because shame "generates and legitimates the place of identity—the *question* of identity—at the origin of the impulse to the performative, but does so without giving that identity-space the standing of an essence" (1993, 14). Engaging the pitfalls and slippages between speech act theory (the use of language to communicate a specific intent and the inferred meanings intended listeners derive) and performativity, Kosofsky approaches shame as a shared structure of feeling that expands the potentials of performativity as well as identity: collective transformation through *queer performativity* and not just gender performativity.

In the case of gay subjectivity, Waugh observes that "slippages between the two principal relevant dictionary senses of the word 'performance'—'the execution of an action' and 'a public presentation or exhibition'—can be as confusing as they are stimulating" ([1997] 2011, 225), especially in the case of representation. The adoption of defiant dress, traits, and practices in public after Stonewall constituted a conscious performance of otherness—the strategy, after all, was to be visibly different. For many, though, these performances articulated an authentic inner feeling and sense of self that had been suppressed by heavily enforced social norms—they weren't performing; they were bringing themselves into being through performance. But gay visibility strategies have also elicited reactions for employing artifice as purposeful abrasion—"*Stop rubbing 'it' in our faces*!" For a hostile majority, these non-conforming displays were nothing more than empty provocations; for an inchoate collective, they began to draw political and social divisions. Today, tensions between performance and performative play out through debates over stereotypes and stereotyping, which are colloquially funneled into accusations or self-bolstering accounts of "acting"—*gay-acting* vs. *straight-acting* (Stalling 2013).

Post-Stonewall documentaries "eschewed the standard documentary realism of the day," writes Waugh, which he identifies as what Nichols (1991) calls "interactive realism." According to Waugh, post-Stonewall documentaries "did *not* rely on the real thing" but instead opted for "'performance strategies…that were both an answer to, and an explanation of, the invisibility that we felt" ([1997] 2011, 225). It is the reliance on visibility and confession in service of identity that places performance and performativity in uncomfortable proximity and charges that tension with political possibility. In the case of something like post-Stonewall documentary, the staging of identity via publicly "coming out," affirms that there is a real person who exists in space and time and renders certain utterances and displays, namely confession and visible difference, as natural ways of coming into being. In doing so, though, it also leaves the question of an authentic identity susceptible to modification and manipulation. Sedgwick (1993) identifies strong affinities between stigma and shame, and in the post-epidemic and bareback era, it is the volatile overlaps between stigma, shame, and stereotypes that delimit the queer political and visual terrain.

The Queer Uncanny

In her groundbreaking study on male homosociality, Sedgwick (1985) identifies a spectral but repudiated homosexual energy governing relations between male characters in several prominent sixteenth to nineteenth-century fictions. Although none of the characters are identified as homosexual, Sedgwick argues that same-sex desire permeates their relations. Sedgwick's study introduced not only "queer reading" as a literary methodology, but also the idea that same-sex desire structures relations between people of both the same and opposite sex. In her 1990 monograph, Sedgwick expands on her work on homosociality, arguing that "an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete,

but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definitions" (1990, 1). Homosexuality, according to Sedgwick, is a ghostly threat that structures *all* socio-sexual relations, with her work setting the stage for not only queer theory, but also the more recent turn to the gothic and uncanny in queer thought.

The invention of hetero and homosexuality (Katz [1995] 2007) enacted a border requiring constant (self-)surveillance (Butler 1993), whose maintenance sustains the whole of modern Western society through normative judgements about sex and the punishment and suppression of anti-normative sex (Rubin 1984). The repression of same-sex desire instantiated the closet as the norm, keeping homosexual feelings locked away in the dark outside public view. But "'closetedness' itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence" (1990, 3), observes Sedgwick—what one doesn't say speaks just as loudly as what one does. Sedgwick's work (1985; 1990; 1993) prioritized the invisibility and permeability of desire, finding power in desire's ability to unsettle categories, connect bodies, and transgress binaries. Unsurprisingly, some of Sedgwick's most formidable claims about homophobia and homosociality come from her insights on gothic literature.

In her study of lesbian representability in classical Hollywood cinema, Patricia White (1999) examines how the introduction of the Motion Picture Production Code in the early 1930s encoded decoding strategies. For White, the production code enacted a competing dual desire: "the longing to conform" and the "fantasy of autonomy and difference" (1999, xii). The production code "instituted a regime of connotation" and "taught viewers how to read in *particular* ways" (1999, xviii). The lesbian, according to White, became a "ghost in the machine" (1999, xxiii). White observes that "like the concept of the uncanny in Freud's analysis—when we somehow feel we recognize what's unfamiliar—uninvited meanings reside

within the ambivalent relationship of cinematic femininity and lesbian desire," arguing that "despite the efforts of industry censors, in the visual language of cinema, lesbianism makes a dreamlike, uncanny appearance" (1999, xxiv). Same-sex desire can be communicated and understood through a variety of performative strategies.

White, like Sedgwick, pays considerable attention to the gothic, to ghost stories and haunted houses to flesh out the uncanniness of queer (in)visibility. "The ghost, or somewhat more abstractly, the haunting," White observes, "seems to be particularly suited to exploit such questions of visibility" (1999, 63). Hollywood often used the gothic and horror as alibis to evoke queerness and occasionally frame it as (a benign, yet consuming) horror itself. "Horror," White contends, "can be seen to have an affinity with homosexuality…for horror puts in question the reliability of perception"—the dread of epistemological uncertainty is "bound up with the representation of homosexuality" (1999, 63). For White, the (en)coded screen becomes a literal mirror, reflecting the process of identification taking place in the theatre. Discussing *Rebecca* (1940), *The Uninvited* (1944), and *The Haunting* (1963), White suggests that lesbian audiences not only identify the relationship between the female protagonists and the dead women that haunt them as "lesbian," but also parallels lesbian audiences' identification with the "ghostly" lesbian protagonist on screen. The uncanniness of same-sex desire can elude direct enunciation while still making itself identifiable enough for those who also understand themselves as ghostly.

"A certain preoccupation with the figure of the homosexual as specter and phantom" (1991, 3) develops throughout the twentieth century, observes Diana Fuss. "The 'ghosting' of homosexuality coincides with its 'birth,' for the historical moment of the first appearance of the homosexual as a 'species' rather than a 'temporary aberration' also marks the moment of the homosexual's disappearance—into the closet" (Fuss 1991, 4). The invention of the closet

instituted duality as the queer norm, which is often why life in the closet is described as living a "double life" (Jenzen 2007). The homosexual became the heterosexual's "phantom Other" (Fuss 1991, 4). Silencing and suppressing the sexual other rendered homosexuality a spectral force for which one needed to always be on guard. Paranoia, a central feature of gothic literature, became synonymous with homosexuality, thanks in large part to the work of Freud (Sedgwick 1985).

"Gothic has, in a sense, always been 'queer'" (2009, 1), proclaim William Hughes and Andrew Smith, while George Haggerty (2006) observes that the gothic's love of perverse sexuality opens it up to queer reading, challenging an established order of heteronormative patriarchal sexology. Along similar lines, Nicholas Royle states, "The uncanny is queer. And the queer is uncanny" (2003, 43). "Ideas of 'uncertainty' and 'ambivalence,'" Paulina Palmer contends, "connect the uncanny with 'queer'" (2012, 8), and in line with Mair Rigby (2009) argues that "motifs associated with the uncanny also infiltrate queer theory," which "include *doubling*, a compulsion to repeat and different forms of mimicry and performance" (2012, 8). Queerness, the uncanny, and the gothic imbricate each other conceptually and discursively. It is no coincidence the gothic novel, the uncanny, and threats of sexual excess and perversity coincide with the assemblage of *scientia sexualis* (Foucault [1976] 1990)*,* the industrial revolution, and sweeping social reform brought about political revolutions, namely the French Revolution (Dolar 1991; Halberstam 1995; Royle 2003; Haggerty 2006; Palmer 2012; Botting 2014). It is also not coincidental that the homosexual appears discursively and visually onscreen through a gothic lens at a moment when social order, sex, and technology were undergoing rapid and widespread change.

For Royle, the uncanny is also "a crisis of the natural" (Jenzen 2007, 2), and for Olu Jenzen, "the queer uncanny is foremost conceptualized through its confrontation of a

heteronormative category of the real" (2007, 2). The uncanny destabilizes epistemology and norms that together form natural order, and the appearance of the homosexual in more solid form threatened to undo a system predicated on natural ordering through (re)productive sex (Stacey 2010). "The uncanniness of the queer figure," argues Jenzen, "functions as a reminder of the 'negative', non-procreative or 'meaningless' aspects of sexuality haunting the normalising heterosexual narrative" (2007, 9).

According to Jenzen, "The cultural and epistemological placing of the queer 'on the edge of,' 'at the back of', 'in opposition to', and even 'underneath' heterosexuality resembles the relation of the *unheimlich* to the *Heimlich*" (2007, 3). Jenzen's spatial formulation stresses the embodied experience of queerness and the threat of proximity. Building on D.A. Miller's (1988) concept of same-sex desire as an open secret, Jenzen observes that both the uncanny and queerness are rooted in the domestic. For Jenzen queerness "destabilizes the notion of the known and the knowable, undermining the position of the home as a stable and 'safe' cultural space and its symbolic function within a heteronormative economy" (2007, 6). In the post-Liberation era, conversations about protecting the family and children symptomatically disclose the internal threat the homosexual poses. Allusions to all things domestic in need of protection reveal the dependency between privacy, capitalism, and productive sex (Halberstam 1995; Bronski 1998) as well as the threat homosexuality (and later queerness) poses to the cohesive identity on which normativity rests.

The closet is a gothic and uncanny space that naturalizes doubling as the queer norm: "you cannot exist outside the closet unless you produce a double that is what you are not," observes Jenzen (2007, 13). "The adjective 'closeted'" Jenzen reminds us, after all "means secrecy and the uncanny relates more specifically to secrecy and the structure of the open secret

in that it symbolizes what is known and unknown at the same time" (2007, 12). The visible homosexual inspires fear and dread because "the uncanny effect is not the fear of something externally strange or unknown," but that which "is strongly anchored in the familiar" (Jenzen 2007, 6). Because, "in Freud's words, 'the "double" has become a thing of terror' because to acknowledge it constitutes a confrontation with the limits of identity and of being…'whatever reminds us of [the] inner "compulsion to repeat" is perceived as uncanny' and furthermore links the notion of repetition to the image of the double," writes Jenzen (2007, 7). Doubling is not only an inherently queer phenomenon, but also one that is inextricable from queerness.

My brief forays into queer (auto)ethnography and the queer uncanny were meant to highlight discursive and conceptual overlaps and frictions that structure queer representation and cultural political discourse after Stonewall. On a subcultural level, the tensions and paradoxical dynamics between authorship and visibility evolve and become more complex as backlashes against gay rights and visibility gain traction, particularly during the AIDS epidemic. On a much broader scale, the technological and social changes that characterize postmodernity will continue to undermine and modify typical Oedipal accounts of procreation and identity that will coalesce around the homosexual as the figurative embodiment of "a disease of the self" (Stacey 2010, 28): the homosexual will transform into a figurative double who threatens to absorb all things healthy and normal into their hellish world of sameness.

The "hell of the same" Baudrillard identifies (1993, 122; cited in Stacey 2010, 26) as a regressive return toward the primitive, before two opposites needed to merge to produce life, only expands as the homosexual becomes more and more visible. As Jenzen reminds us, "The copy of a copy a puts the category of the original into crisis" (2007, 7). Anxieties about heteronormative order and privilege via the undoing of male-female procreation conflate

anxieties over technology and homosexuality, whereby the two become conceptually aligned with each other. "The aspect of the uncanny that Freud draws our attention to in his discussion of the automata is powerful also in contemporary culture as it points towards our ever-current anxieties about what constitutes the human and the non-human" (2007, 8), writes Jenzen. The clone marries technology and homosexuality and becomes the threatening double that supersedes the natural: the clone is a copy that puts the original into crisis, and by extension, the real.

I will explore the anxieties over mimesis and identification in greater depth and length in the following chapter on the killer queer doppelgänger. For now, I wish to look closer at how the discourse I laid out above is represented and engaged visually onscreen. Visual technologies quantify and qualify people and visibility (Sekula 1986; Tagg 1988, 2009; Seltzer 1992; Crary 1992). But before Gay Liberation was eclipsed by a rights-based movement, we can see the formation of identity in remedial form onscreen in both fiction and explicit film. Representation in and around Stonewall found comfort in the gothic, whose tropes (the uncanny, haunting, doubles, and returns) capture the dynamics of gay identity as they began to materialize visually onscreen and discursively offscreen.

The Neo-Gothic and Pre- and Post-Stonewall Representation:

Case Study: The Boys in the Band (1970)

As several authors have noted, classical Hollywood cinema was rife with homosexual allusions and nuance (Burns 1999; Cohan 1999; Miller 1991, 1999; White 1999; Farmer 2000). Although the traces of types were manifestly present, it wasn't until William Friedkin's 1970 adaptation of Mart Crowley's hit off-Broadway play *The Boys in the Band* (1968) (henceforth *Boys*) that the general public was invited to gaze at the homosexual cum gay man in their natural habitat for the first time. Itself a response to a surge of "immorality" onscreen that peaked in the

early 1930s (Doherty [1999] 2013; Vieira 1999), the Production Code censored sexual

representation and repressed a plurality of sexualities. While the UK film *Victim* (1961) and

Hollywood's *Advise and Consent* (1962) offered viewers some of the first sustained peeks into

the life of the homosexual, a life filled with blackmail and secrecy, it was *Boys* that offered the

first sustained examination of daily gay life—on the cusp of Gay Liberation.

The film takes place over a single evening and is set almost entirely in the private

residence of Michael, an alcoholic gay man struggling with his Catholic faith who is hosting a

birthday party for his friend Harold. The opening sequence is the film's overture, setting the

narrative's oscillating tone and emotional structure. It begins with a long take, starting with a

medium close-up shot of a red towel embroidered with a golden crown and the words

"PRINCESS HAL." The camera pans and moves left showcasing a bathroom countertop littered

with an array of products (medical and cosmetic). The shot then tilts upward as it moves forward

and stops on the bathroom mirror, angled to reveal a man lying in a bathtub covered in soapsuds

scratching the ball of his foot. The opening long take chooses to introduce us to the protagonist

through a mirror and places considerable weight on loaded terms (princess) and iconographies

(cosmetics, bathing), rather than show us the person in the bath or even a mirror reflection,

denying us personal identification.

| *Boys'* Opening Shot | Identity through commodity | Identification denied |

The opening scene's formal construction reflects the negotiations gay men make with

respect to their self-identity—as though always looking at themselves through a mirror,

understanding themselves through impersonal objects and signs that circulate mostly outside of their niche social paradigm. The film then cuts to a musical montage of some of the future party guests ending their day and preparing for the evening ahead—a brief scene of confrontation at a gay bar, a shot of a distraught-looking man alone in a hotel room, and desperate call to Michael from his friend Donald.

The documentary *Making the Boys* (2011) chronicles the theatrical development and adaptation of *Boys* into film and their reception by the community and press. The documentary is largely comprised of historical footage and interviews with those involved in the theatrical production and cinematic adaptation—playwright Mark Crowley, a few of the surviving actors (many have passed away from AIDS-related illnesses), the film's director William Friedkin, and various gay writers, actors, and community figures. The play was a huge success, but the film's release just after Stonewall was not as well received. The adaptation was perceived as anachronistic and dated. Several interviewees felt the narrative belonged to another era and was incommensurate with a public move toward being loud and proud and away from shame and secrecy. Indeed, significant portions of the documentary are dedicated to analyzing the cultural reasons behind the narrative's initial rejection by large segments of the gay public but generally positive reception by straight critics. Edward Albee, the playwright most known for penning *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), bluntly states that he opposed *Boys*' theatrical production because he felt it caused "serious damage to a burgeoning gay respectability movement among human beings in New York City." "I went to see *The Boys in the Band* several times," Albee recalls, "and more and more I saw an audience there of straights who were so happy to be able to see people they didn't have to respect" (1:00:38).

In their retrospective monograph on queer cinema, Benshoff and Griffin (2006) acknowledge *Boys'* uncomfortable placement in the queer film canon— "chastised for its negative stereotypes as well as hailed as a gay classic" (140). The film was hailed as a classic for putting gay identity out there without restraint, but chastised for not representing "liberated" subjects who were positive role models. The character of the self-hating gay man who lusts after his hunky straight friend he wishes were gay (Michael) and the flaming snake-tongued bitch employed in the arts (Harold) are two enduring personalities who were as problematic then as they are now: depending on who you ask, these characters are either archetypes or stereotypes. This is probably why so much disgust is directed toward characters such as these—as if no gay man struggles with his sexuality or lusts after straight men, or as if queeny wit has been erased from gay men's vocabulary. Derided for their self-loathing and cold calculating nastiness, these characters likewise articulate enduring sentiments and cultural specificities—they continue to exist as reminders of the normative system gays and lesbians self-assembled. Whether positive or negative, *Boys* planted the seed for ongoing political battles over representation.

Making the Boys highlights how gay representation and self-perception were, and in many ways still are, filtered through a majoritarian lens. Via its interviewees, the film speaks to the psychological revolution the Stonewall riots ushered in: what was initially celebrated (*Boys*) was, within a few years, dismissed, and even a source of shame. *Boys'* prolapsed temporality uniquely positions it within a genealogy of queer representation because it highlights how the tensions between "past" and "present" within a few years evolves into a conversation that revolves around evaluative judgements about what is "good" or "bad" for the community at large. The film captures the enduring paradox that comes with being on display for an officially hostile other, and the social, political, and perceptual splits that follows. *Boys* indexes the sudden

political and social transformation of desire into an identity that increasingly became something to be performed for the other's gaze and in need of constant monitoring. And yet, if *Boys* is an archival document of who gay men were and how they felt prior to Stonewall, calling the film regressive and labelling the representations as negative become easy ways to brush off some the traits that develop within gay culture and are as self-created as they are imposed.

Because *Boys* was the first film to exclusively feature openly gay characters and deal with some of the internal conflicts and external problems that come with self-identifying as gay, *Boys* is akin to not only early ethnography but also zoology—as if a new species had just been discovered, captured, and put on display. As Catherine Russell writes, "The zoological gaze is an apparatus that is also a cultural practice in which the Other (species) is brought close and yet kept apart, at a safe distance" (1999, 123): the homosexual may have been discovered as a species at the end of the nineteebth century, but the gay (wo)man was discovered in 1969. Referring back to Albee's observation about heterosexual audiences, although heterosexuals may have paid money to appreciate the writing and performances, it would be incorrect to assume that they didn't go to see what gays are like in private when not being watched. Watching *Boys* feels like one is observing the homosexual in his natural habitat—contained in their private domicile where they are safely kept to be studied and observed at a distance.

Depending on who is being observed, cinematic representation can take on zoological qualities, as though the frame were a cage and the lens less a peephole than a magnifying glass. Watching narrative fiction film is generally understood as a form of voyeurism, and *Boys*' setting in a private home would support this correlation; however, as gay men living a semi-out life in the latter half of the 60s, these characters represent people who understand themselves as subjects who are always observed. The peephole analogy of voyeurism doesn't quite capture the

type of observation taking place: we're not really spying on the characters when they effectively know that "we" are there watching them. Even when dealing with fictional characters, when those characters understand themselves as interpellated subjects of the gaze, the fourth wall that hides the audience is too translucent to qualify as invisible. These gay men knew they were on display.

The semitransparent fourth wall also diminishes the feigned distance between subject and object, problematizing the zoological gaze's tacit promise to maintain a safe gap. The scrutinizing and censuring gaze to which the characters subject themselves incorporates our supposedly detached and non-affective one, complicating neat patterns of identification. If our gaze is implicated, if our gaze affects the diegesis, then we're not really watching from a safe distance: we affect the characters and they affect us too. In many ways, the question of distance and identification encapsulates the problem of authorship. The film was directed by a heterosexual, although done so rather faithfully, and although made for a general audience (read: straight audience), it was adapted for screen by Matt Crowley (the gay playwright) himself and featured a mixture of straight, gay, and sexually undefined actors: the divisions between ethnography and autoethnography aren't always so clear cut. Unlike later queer works where the divide would be promoted and more carefully monitored, *Boys'* release predates a solidified gay identity.

Boys remains a controversial film because it still manages to bring to the surface the unresolved issue of publicly disseminating queer knowledge and the ethics of making the intricacies of gay life and identity transparent. If *Boys* is for a gay audience, is it possible to portray characters as individuals rather than representative figures meant to speak on behalf of an entire unnamed mass? If not, then to what degree does it portray its characters as men who

happen to be gay and are having a bad night, and to what degree does it seemingly put them, and by extension all gay men, under a microscope to be examined? Vito Russo ([1981]1987) argues that "every attempt at portraying gays or the gay world was termed definitive" and that mainstream trade publications at the time such as "*Time* hailed *The Boys in the Band* as a 'landslide of truths'" (170). Fictional representations of gay men and "the gay world" were, and still are, perceived as evidentiary truths, especially by those from the outside looking in. The queer diegesis is almost always an uncanny microcosm of queer life that we experience at distance—half fictional and half factual.

There is a sense that films like *Boys* are tantamount to privacy violations, as though a series of surveillance cameras were secretly set up in a random gay man's apartment to observe how homosexuals behave outside of the public's eye—a kind of reality television show before reality television existed. Even though *Boys* is based on a play by a gay playwright, the film becomes the equivalent of forced exposure; as though the film were a secret personal recording or home movie that was projected onto a big screen without one's consent—akin to "outing" someone who is closeted. When looking at a history of post-Stonewall representation and self-representation, consent becomes an underlying, if not directly articulated, concern that conceptually aligns representation with surveillance, likewise highlighting why the need for authorship was at the forefront of Liberation discourse.

According to Paulina Palmer, "the disconcerting sense that the queer individual sometimes has of living in two interlinked but disparate worlds, the heteronormative and the less immediately visible one of the lesbian and gay subculture, lends itself particularly well to uncanny treatment" (2012, 13). What we observe in *Boys* is the effects when these two worlds collide. According to Ryan Powell, "In *Boys*, the overall focus is on how the film brings gothic

and camp conventions into relation with one another to articulate inside/outside 'closet'

dynamics within a highly ambivalent and transitional gay discourse, one that complicates

dichotomies of pre-/post-Stonewall and negative/positive representation" (2011, 136). For

Powell, *Boys'* gothic conventions and aesthetics—half-invited guests; the return of the repressed;

deep shadows and stark lighting contrast; stylized framing—articulate the in-betweenness of

same-sex desire on the cusp of the identity revolution. He argues that

> the film's positioning of light and dark, positive and negative, heaviness and ease, index
>
> not only some the ways in which it is formally invested in rhetorical frameworks of
>
> coming out and/or being closeted, but more importantly manages to capture some of the
>
> complicated ways in which coming out, at this particular moment, existed in a complex
>
> relationship between its conventional meaning within queer/homosexual social networks
>
> and the new meanings assigned to it within gay liberation discourse (2011, 186).

The discursive shift brought about by Stonewall plays out figuratively through the heterosexual

other invading the private and secluded queer space. Although queerness is often "the monster

who threatens the heteronormative coherence of the narrative in films" (Hanson, 1999, 14), about

a third of the way through *Boys*, the pattern is reversed.

Prior to Alan's arrival, the atmosphere at Michael's is convivial and the guests are

cheerful and gregarious. When Michael's straight friend arrives, his presence has an immediate

and noticeable effect, changing the entire tone and direction of the evening. Everyone, especially

Michael, tenses up. Alan's presence puts everyone on edge, weighs down morale, and makes

everyone noticeably uncomfortable, temporarily forcing the party guests partially back into the

closet. Rather than the homosexual, the heterosexual is the unwanted guest who threatens the

sanctity and privacy of the home. What was once a private space has now been rendered public—the characters are under surveillance.

| Prior to Alan's arrival | After Alan's Arrival |

The atmosphere is burdened by Alan's company and is reflected in the film's aesthetic shift. Powell argues that "the film's organization of male interaction around dichotomies of pre/post liberation experience" is "first indicated in the swift change brought about upon Alan's arrival"—"the film's use of high-angles and tracking shots marks his entry with foreboding and foreclosure; the framing quite literally containing the groups of men the nearer he gets" (2011, 188). After Alan's arrival, the men alter their behaviour. Performativity becomes a literal performance: the characters become characters performing for the other's gaze.

Alan serves many conceptual and narrative functions but most importantly he foregrounds the uncanniness of same-sex sexuality, which plays out most vividly through the emotional conflict between him and Michael. Powell notes how the "delivery of secrets is conventionally carried out in the gothic through a 'disturbing return of past upon present'" (Powell 2011, 192; citing Botting 1996, 171). In *Boys,* Alan is positioned as both a figure and facilitator of the return of the repressed: he is a person from Michael's past who brings back unresolved feelings but also heightens the ongoing conflicts Michael continues to experience with his sexuality in the present. Michael doesn't so much want Alan or Alan to want him. What Michael really wants is to be like Alan—straight. Alan is the incarnation of Michael's desire to

be straight. Alan is Michael's double, a figurative bundle of emotions that has returned from the past and from the repressed in corporeal form. Alan is both a figure of desire and dread—a reminder of what Michael wants but can never be.

After being introduced to all the party guests, Alan and Michael head upstairs for a private conversation. The stark and dramatic contrasts between the deep shadows and soft lighting seem to foreshadow Alan's "coming out," but the scene ends without Alan revealing what Michael so desperately wants to hear. Similarly to Michael, Alan is clearly struggling with an internal conflict and doesn't seem all that comfortable with himself—something Emory, the most theatrical and effeminate of the guests, brings out in both of them. As the two share an intimate moment, the film cuts back and forth between medium close-up shots that underscore their closeness and medium long shots that situate them in the coziness of the bedroom. As the two dance around the obvious, the mirror on Michael's wall underscore's their duplicity and symbolically connects the two. They are each other's mirror double and each is trying to lay down their guard and be honest with their counterpart. This rare moment of isolation and confidentiality is the first moment where the narrative's gothic overtones manifest themselves aesthetically in such an evident manner.

A private conversation in Michael's bedroom   Shadows underscore Alan's internal conflict

Alan and Michael connected via the mirror

Alan's gaze is not contained by the cinematic frame: it is discursively connected to that of the audience. "Alan's character [is] the surrogate for a straight audience" (2011, 183), Powell contends, and his surveillance of this private gay space narrows the distance between representation and reality—his gaze is as real as it is figurative. Alan's gaze regulates and controls the behaviour of the characters, visualizing the performativity of silence enacted by the closet. When Alan is present, most of the men adopt more subdued personas, while others, such as Emory, adopt more defiant ones. Just before Harold arrives, all the men find themselves gathered in Michael's living room. As Alan prepares to take his leave, Emory's anger toward this unwanted other culminates, and he becomes confrontational—Emory just can't help but get in a few final jabs. Alan becomes violent after Emory questions his sexuality, punching Emory in the face while calling him a "faggot." After the scuffle is broken up, Harold arrives and Alan heads upstairs to vomit and collect himself. Surveillance can inspire revolt.

The party continues with relative ease until a thunderstorm forces the men inside, containing them in all-too-close dark quarters. As the guests quickly make their way from the rooftop terrace inside, Michael turns on a several pairs of miniature spotlights located at the corners of the living room, literally and figuratively setting the stage for the upcoming emotional spectacle. To pass the time Michael suggests they play a game. Each person dials a former lover and poses a series of intimate questions. One receives a corresponding number of points based on

the number of questions that are answered. Michael's once bright and vibrant living room has been transformed into a burdened gothic space: isolated and enclosed by the harsh weather, dark, brooding, and encumbered with volatile emotions. The stage is now perfectly set for the repressed's return.

Michael's living room has now been transformed into a stage

The chiaroscuro lighting not only renders Michael's living room odd and eerily outside of time, but also a psychological carceral enclosure that recalls Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel* (1962)—the men want to leave, but they can't. They are trapped in Michael's twisted game of emotional Russian roulette, almost possessed by a force beyond their control. Michael's living room becomes a metaphoric synopticon that almost seems to force the men to divulge their buried past under harsh floodlights. The lights at the corners of the room are prominently featured throughout this extended sequence, as though they themselves are characters, and cast an oppressive blanket of light that carries clinical overtones. Frequent low-angle shots of the men with the floodlights staring down at them from up above reinforce an atmosphere of judgment and examination: they are under each other's surveillance.

The extended final scene is an allegory for coming out. We watch these men take turns calling former lovers and self-inflict pain and trauma, reliving the moment when they discovered their difference. In front of everyone's judging eyes they reveal their inner pain, and although surrounded by friends they are vulnerable and completely alone. The scene's religious undertones are hard to miss, but the confessions that resurrect the ghosts from the past lead to

alienation rather than redemption. After Alan calls his wife, crushing Michael's hope that Alan will come out, and after his guests leave, Michael falls to the floor crying. Confession hasn't liberated him—he is still trapped.

The return of the repressed: (forced) confession without redemption

The home is the emblematic symbol of the Freudian uncanny (*heimlich/unheimlich*) and is often used metonymically to represent the private sphere and privacy. In queer discourse the home is a highly ambivalent space—at times associated with the closet, at times a space of domestic and familial alienation, and at times a refuge and sanctuary. The queer home is uncanny—it is a haunted home. It is precisely these feelings of alienation, ambivalence, and frustration that the extended final telephone game sequence unravels. The scene translates inner torment to discourse, subjecting it to judgement and scrutiny. The final sequence visualizes the violence of the closet's silence, but also the discursive changes taking place on the streets.

Boys' final scene, in many ways, becomes a metaphorical cinematic *primal scene*: returning to the traumatic moment of conception from which we can never seem to escape.

Considering its emotional brutality, it is understandable that the guilt-ridden, overly melodramatic conclusion would be received negatively by liberation activists and critics in the post-Stonewall era. The final scene challenges one of the nascent movement's most precious ideals: confession and visibility as unequivocally freeing. If twenty-first century gay-rights politics' guiding mantra is "it gets better," *Boys* suggest that it may not, or at least not for everyone. There is a reflexive acknowledgment about the unavoidable difficulties that come, and will come, with "airing our dirty laundry" out in public. The film itself almost presciently foretells the polarizing responses it continues to elicit.

If the characters in *Boys* understood themselves as subjects always being watched, even from within the privacy of the home, it is because they were always already being watched; not by Alan, but by Michael. If the film anticipates its own negative reaction, then through Michael's character it also foreshadows the discourse of self-surveillance that will overtake the political and visual terrain. In *Boys* we can see the formation of a cohesive identity developing, but we can also see the strains between performance and performativity that come with articulating identity and will anchor future queer critique.

Gothic Hard Core

Prior to theatrical hard core, stag film screenings, beefcake videos and magazines, and underground cinema (Waugh 1996, [2001] 2004; Tinkcom 2002; Escoffier 2009) provided gay men with a sexual outlet. As the production code lost steam and was eventually abandoned and replaced by the rating system, films featuring explicit sex found their way to the silver screen. *Deep Throat* (1972) is popularly perceived as being the first major theatrically released pornographic film in America when, in fact, it was preceded by Wakefield Poole's *The Boys in the Sand*, which was released the year before in 1971. But, "like *Deep Throat*, *Boys in the Sand*

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was not the first (gay) hard core feature film to show in a public theater," Linda Williams reminds us; it was, however, "the first work of graphic moving-image pornography to reap giant returns on a very small investment" (2008, 144). According to Escoffier, "San Francisco was the first city where hard core features were played extensively. It had happened almost overnight—by 1969 the city already had twenty-five theatres offering hard core movies" (2009, 57).

Newfound freedoms ushered in a surge of creativity: the late 60s and 70s are often referred to as Hollywood's "Renaissance" or "New Hollywood" (Biskind 1998; King 2002; Harris 2008, 2009). Although Hollywood (and international) filmmakers pushed and broke down several boundaries, in order to avoid the morally and economically burdened "X" rating (Lewis 2009), few films dared to showcase scenes of explicit sex. Instead, sexually explicit representation was "contained" within the realm of pornography.

Although pornographic filmmakers had themselves opted for narrative structures with explicit sexual interludes, by 1974 narrative became the easiest alibi to pass sex off as something with redeeming social value. As Escoffier writes:

> Throughout the early seventies the legal status of pornography was in flux. In 1970, the federal Commission on Obscenity and pornography had recommended decriminalizing porn for adults. In 1973, the Supreme Court made its landmark decision in *Miller v. California*, where it declared that was obscene if it was 'utterly' without redeeming social worth *and* if it lacked 'serious' literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. In the wake of *Miller v. California*, plot offered the adult industry a basis for legally defending sexually explicit film productions because plot or a 'documentary' format allowed filmmakers to claim that their films…had some redeeming social and 'serious' artistic or scientific value (2009, 79).

The "porn chic" era was defined in part by the usage of, and appeal to, narrative. Cinematic pornography remained proximate to cinema to legitimate itself, but far away enough so to distinguish it as something unique. With the ascent of video and VHS technology, the usage and function of narrative, along with the entirety of pornography and the porn industry, underwent significant revision.

Besides a few critiques, mostly by legal scholar Christopher N. Kendall about implied gender conformity and inequality (Kendall 1993, 2001, 2004, 2005) and a 1985 article by Waugh for *Jump Cut* that straddles the fence, gay male as well as lesbian and queer pornography (Ryberg 2012) have generally been seen as positive forces. Gay/queer porn is often seen as a concentrically located safe spaces wherein the spectacle of gay/lesbian/queer sex validates and celebrates same-sex desire and exposes the hypocrisy of heterosexuality/ normativity (Burger 1995)—so much so that recent porn scholars have accused gays and queers of skewing the discussion of pornography too far to the positive and affirming side (Hester 2014). Aside from important critiques about the representation of race and nationality (Fung, 1991; Ortiz 1994; Radel 2001; Nguyen 2004; Mahawatte 2004; Cervulle 2008; Cervulle and Rees-Roberts 2009; Healey 2010; Subero 2010a, 2010b, 2012; Britt 2014; Tziallas 2015), seeing sex for gay men and women was and remains a "redeeming social value" and important source of personal and social validation. To accurately retrace the genealogy of gay identity's figurative "DNA" without an inclusion of pornography thus amounts to an impossible task.

Representations of explicit sex in the 70s not only validated while archiving the aboveground culture that was physically growing and expanding across several major cities, but their public exhibition also doubled as sites of social integration (Champagne 1997, Cante and Restivo 2004; Campino 2005). With the rise of home video technology, ascent of the gay male

studio system, and arrival of the AIDS epidemic, pornography intervened in the gay male social psychology to an even greater degree (Mercer 2006). The 80s saw AIDS activists pressure studios to uniformly adopt condoms, and the Castro clone (burly, plaid shirt, tight jeans, machismo attitude), at the behest of Falcon Studios' head Chuck Holmes, was slowly replaced with the clean cut boy next door (white, athletic, blonde) as the new prototype, or gay ideal (Mercer 2003). Holmes practically re-engineered gay sociality and fantasy through pornography (Escoffier 2009). As important is Holmes's involvement in the Human Rights Campaign, the largest LGBT lobby in the United States. Holmes became part of an emerging gay elite who used their money to fund (Democratic) political campaigns and push a rights-based agenda. Holmes' vision of gay identity was pushed through the images as well as the politics he financed. [15]

Although narrative provided pornography an alibi, many early hard core filmmakers didn't see their work as something distinctly "other" from cinema or themselves as "pornographers;" instead, they saw themselves as skilled filmmakers taking advantage of a newly liberated political and social (and legal) environment and sensibility (Escoffier 2009). Narrative was used as a critical tool to visualize the disavowed homoerotic undertones that permeate homosocial environments and to legitimize and nurture a growing visible collective. Narrative's primary purpose in pornography is to situate sexual activity within a particular fantasy that is often rooted in the quotidian. Narrative gives desire a specific texture, but narrative also facilitates a complex process of identification.

In what follows I look at two works by pioneering gay porn filmmaker Wakefield Poole and compare and contrast two very different representations of gay life around the Stonewall era:

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[15] See Mike Stabile's *Seed Money: The Chuck Holmes Story* (2015) for an in-depth look at Falcon Studio and Holmes' influence.

the pastoral and the urban. Richard Dyer observes that "the narrative structure of gay porn is analogous to aspects of the social construction of both male sexuality in general and gay male sexual practice in particular" (1985). Like *Boys in the Band*, *Boys in the Sand* and *Bijou* (1972) appropriate the gothic to express and mirror an emerging inchoate identity and the uncanny relations between the explicit screen and reality. Pornography, perhaps even more so than mainstream cinema, played and continues to play a vital role in shaping gay identity and sociality because of early and continued efforts by porn filmmakers to represent gay life through the lens of desire on screen—regardless of, and at times directly in response to, reigning politics.

Case Study: *Boys in the Sand* (1971)

Set on Fire Island, Poole's *The Boys in the Sand* [henceforth *Sand*] is a magical realist documentary of gay summer life in New York City—part travelogue document and part gothic fantasy. The film opens with Peter Fisk making his way down a shadow-filled boardwalk swathed in foliage to a deserted beach. When he arrives, he lays down a blanket, disrobes, and sits idly, staring into the open waters ahead. The film briefly fades to black and then back to Fisk on the beach a few times, signalling that some time has passed…or that the diegesis has transitioned to an altered state of reality. The film cuts to a long shot taken from Fisk's point of view of the water where, out of nowhere, a nude Casey Donovan appears at a distance and begins to run toward the shore.

From the very beginning, the film projects an image and feeling of utopia, of freedom and sexual abundance available to gay men on isolated Fire Island, which is just a short ferry ride away from New York City. Although a physically real space, at the time Fire Island was both a refuge and unreal space that seemed to exist in some sort of parallel universe outside of time and

normative order. The utopia of Fire Island, though, was not without drawbacks and problems: its culture was predominately white with strong preferences for certain body types, and mostly available to those with the economic privilege to visit and stay.

Fire Island is less a utopia than what Foucault termed a heterotopia, an "other space" ([1967] 1986): not only an escape from the urban ghetto, but a (practically) real-life fantasy space where gay men can go to temporarily live as though they were in an actual pornographic film. *Sand*'s magical realism captures the feeling of Fire Island in the late 60s as an "erotopia" (Williams 2008, 146), fusing together representation and reality. Oddly enough, rather than taking away from the film's documentary quality, *Sand*'s fantastical elements buttress the unique social reality of Fire Island: the abundance of sex, the contingency of "community," and a culture of promiscuity that borders on anonymity where people literally appear out of nowhere, merge together for brief periods of time, and then disappear. The standard technique of on-location shooting here interpellated gay audiences via the use of real gay space.

When Donovan arrives at the shore, Fisk begins to fellate him. Cutting to a close-up of Donovan's torso, we see Fisk's hand enter from offscreen bottom and move up his flat, slightly hairy torso. A few shots taken from behind and to the side of Fisk fellating Donovan adds "an aura of mystery, rather than one of clinical clarity" (Williams 2008, 146) and leads to the two leaving the beach and making their way to the more secluded shrubbery a few metres away. Enveloped by trees and soft shadows in this semi-private space, the two men tenderly embrace and have sex on the blanket Fisk brought along from the beach. Protected by the privacy of nature, the men leisurely perform oral on each other and have anal sex in several positions, concluding with external ejaculation, bringing the encounter and "narrative" to a close (Williams [1989] 1999). "Lighting is crucial" in *Sand*, Williams contends (2008, 146).

The shadows that cover the men's bodies play not only with the feeling of temperature (hot sun, cool shade) but also vision, obscuring sites of penetration, denying maximum visibility. The first scene defies typical, and now rigid, pornographic syntax, yet at the same time begins to lay its foundation. It begins with kissing and oral stimulation and is followed by anal penetration (Donovan penetrating Fisk). It ends with Donovan ejaculating into Fisk's mouth ("feeding him") and all over his face, rubbing it into his skin afterward, and concludes with Donovan orally finishing off Fisk. While the oral scenes showcase greater equality, the anal scene adheres to a top/bottom binary. While the oral and anal scenes play with a variety of shot lengths and distances, the anal scene in particular eschews the type of ultra-close "meat shots" (Williams [1989] 1999) that will come to characterize pornography in the future. The serene and tender interactions are beautifully captured, but it is the way the scene ends that is most intriguing.
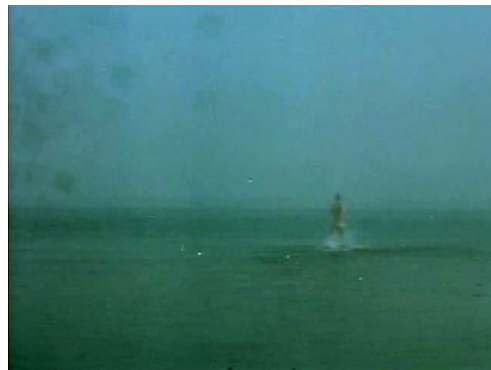

The eroticism of a tender touch

Visible, but not too visible

The intimacy of sharing fluid

Fisk: from real to ghost

There are two points to be made. Firstly, as Fisk brings himself to orgasm, the film rapidly, almost hypnotically, cuts back and forth to previous scenes—Fisk walking to, and sitting at, the beach; Donovan making his way to the shore; sexual activity between Fisk and Donovan that had just transpired. This brief montage scene captures not only the importance of memory as a "personal sexual repository," as a source of fantasy and arousal, but also the role pornography plays, and will play, as social "popular memory" (Burger 1995, 2)—as a repository that merges with personal and collective (sexual) memories becoming a shared experienced and source of arousal. Secondly, after Fisk ejaculates (on top of Donovan) and they seal their affection with a (sticky) kiss, Fisk removes his cock ring and places it around Donovan's wrist. The gifting of this cock ring can be read in several ways, but considering Fisk leaves the secluded enclave and heads toward the water and runs off and disappears into the horizon leaving Donovan at the shore, Fisk's cock ring is a symbolic band (wedding band?) that binds them together. Fisk evaporates into thin air, leaving Donovan to carry on the narrative, setting Fisk up as Donovan's double—as in all doppelgänger narratives, only one can remain.

Sand is both a hard core gothic film and a gothic hard core film. The ghostly appearance and disappearance of a beautiful double, a secluded space saturated with the energy of previous passions that seem to haunt it, and the cloak of tree silhouettes collectively invoke the gothic. Repetition is a key feature of the gothic (and the uncanny) and the opening sequence is somewhat repeated later on when Donovan drops a tablet into a swimming pool and another man, Danny Di Cioccio, appears out nowhere. He swims over to Donovan where, similarly to before, the two have sex on the water's (pool's) edge under a canopy of tree shadows.

The gothic in *Sand* doesn't just capture the in-betweenness of gay identity, but also the feeling of heterotopia endemic to this transitional period. Speaking of queer film (in Canada),

Waugh (2006) contends that "the notion of 'other place' is, I think, most relevant to the history and practice of a cinema that address the experience and desire of 'other people'," arguing that "non-metropolitan spaces have indeed functioned in a crucial way as heterotopias" (98). Challenging a gay film canon that trumpets the urban space as a zone of freedom far away from the conservative backwardness of the rural, Waugh conceives of the pastoral as an open, flexible, less regulated, and thus more liberated, space for play.

Heterotopias are manifestly gothic: physical and mental spaces that are neither utopia, nor dystopia, but something else—liminal, interstitial, multiple. As Botting points out, "The main features of Gothic fiction, in neoclassical terms, are heterotopias" (2012, 19), going on to note that the "Gothic remains ambivalent and heterotopic, reflecting the doubleness of the relationship between present and past" (2012, 22). Both the gothic and heterotopia are ambivalent and pregnant with diverging potentials. In the case of *Sand,* the gothic indexes the metamorphosis of gay subjectivity during a transitional era undergoing rapid change. *Sand* is an uncanny film, and the film's parallel episodes and *ronde* structure formally redouble its uncanniness. Its gothic aesthetics and conventions bring to surface the uncanniness of post-Stonewall gay culture—familiar, unfamiliar, and all-too-familiar; where past and present give rise to a feeling of two similar people co-existing at the same time.[16]

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[16] Published posthumously in 1986, Foucault's publication on "other spaces" (heterotopias) is based on a lecture he gave in 1967 and is itself a transitional piece. The idea of a heterotopia is partly biographical, capturing not only Foucault's move toward post-structuralism and his growing interest in space, visibility, and the formation of subjectivity that culminate with the publication of *Discipline and Punish* in 1975, but I would also argue his subjective transformation into a "gay man." Also see Miller 1999.

Sand is where heterotopia intersects with what Steven Marcus termed "pornotopia." Although Marcus's study focused on mid nineteenth-century English heterosexual literary pornography, his argument that pornography is a type of utopia, a "non" space where "everyone is always ready for anything" ([1964] 1977, 273), captures the essence of both pornography and post-Stonewall gay culture. *Sand*, Fire Island, and gay culture in and around Stonewall are heterotopias and pornotopias: heteropornotopias—other spaces, both mental and physical, that exist concentrically on a different plane and in a different dimension wherein reality and fantasy meld with one another.

The representation and experience of heteroponotopia, however, does not occur within a vacuum. For one thing, the hypersexual promiscuity of Gay Liberation also helped to unknowingly infect and spread HIV/AIDS before it manifested into a full-blown plague. In addition, the utopia of Fire Island was limited to a rather small number of like-minded and looking people. The film's concluding sexual episode speaks most prominently to this point. An extended masturbatory fantasy, the sequence features Donovan imagining all the things he would do with the hunky black repairman (Tommy Moore) working on the power lines outside his window. After failing to seduce the repairman, Donovan is left with nothing but his imagination and his rather large black dildo. The sequence features numerous frantic swish shots that purposely blur the line between fantasy and reality, showing Moore there in physical form one second and an empty space the next.

There…   and not there

Although breaking the taboo of interracial couplings early on, its eroticism is rendered

safe by framing the activity as pure fantasy. This, of course, does not take away from the scene's

eroticism and its ability to be enjoyed as a sensual visual spectacle. But it does contain its

transgressive potentials at the border by relocating the couple to the realm of fantasy—setting it

both "elsewhere," in another place, and "else-when," in another time. To Poole's credit, the

scene is surprisingly progressive in its depiction of interracial sex. Moore and Donovan penetrate

and fellate each other, eschewing hierarchical binaries, both racial and penetrative. Moore's

cyclical appearance and disappearance visualize one of the most prominent features of both the

gothic and the uncanny: repetition. But although his ghost-like presence gives him power over

Donovan, practically possessing him, compelling him to do things to himself in order to bring

them closer, it also renders him nothing more than a figment of Donovan's (the privileged white

man's) imagination. That is, until the very end when the repairman shows up at Donovan's

door…

The fantasy of taking black cock   The reality of having black cock?

Despite the overtones of fantasy, *Sand*'s documentary qualities and realism shouldn't be downplayed. Large intervals between the sex sequences are filled with shots of Donovan enjoying the scenery and the space, and of Poole giving Donovan the star treatment—close-up shots of his face and long shots that languorously cling to his nude body. In a voiceover commentary provided by Poole to *Sand*'s remastered copy, he consistently refers to *Sand* as a "home movie," emphasizing the lack of a budget, the communal nature of the production (24:40), and the mixture of professional and amateur performers. The beautiful scenery, a warm colour palette, and professional cinematography give *Sand* a home movie feel with higher production values—a phenomenon that returns in twenty-first century with the blurring of amateur and commercial pornography. Watching the film one gets a sense of what Fire Island was like back in the latter half of 60s and early 70s: a serene getaway where sex was freely available…for those who could afford it and who lived in the area.

Donovan isn't the only one given the star treatment. The film places considerable emphasis on Fire Island—it's practically a star in its own right. Pool describes the film as a travelogue, stating that he used it as a way to showcase and educate gay men about a space and culture that many had only heard about but never seen or experienced for themselves (22:20). The biographical overtones and "home movie" erotic travelogue feel not only set the stage for future gay tourism/travelogue porn—*Men of "X;" Escape to "X"* (Waitt and Markwell 2006; Tziallas 2015a)—but also align *Sand* with an emerging corpus of documentary and autobiographic/ethnographic film that attempt to capture the experience and feeling of an emerging gay subjectivity and culture. It is the emphasis on education, learning, documenting, and disseminating information, images, and, most importantly, feelings of gay life that make

Sand such a landmark film. *Sand* set the discursive and visual tone for explicit gay representation in the 70s and beyond.

Case Study: *Bijou* (1972)

The tension between desire and identity and the productive role that film played in helping to facilitate the move from a pre- to the post-Stonewall consciousness are best articulated in another of Poole's film released a year after *Sand*: *Bijou*. A different type of gothic filmmaking, *Bijou* mixes dark isolated spaces, heavily stylized and subjective lighting and cinematography, and deep self-exploration into a surrealist erotic spectacle. In his manifesto *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture* (1997), Daniel Harris makes an important observation about gay pornographic films after Stonewall. He writes:

> In the years immediately following Stonewall, the neogothic strain that taints many gay films appealed to homosexuals' internalized guilt, their belief in their own moral turpitude, a stereotype that pornographers exploited by arousing their viewers with subliminal images of decadence and degeneracy. Haunting dreamscapes in which darkness served as a psychical analogue of the depravity of gay sex struck a deep chord with a subculture that's always been marginalised as a promiscuous underground, a hellish world of furtive cruisers, condemned to anonymous sex, who flitted in and out of parks and rest rooms in pursuit of unmentionable passion.

> In fact the entire history of gay self-acceptance since Stonewall can be discerned from the changes that have occurred in the lighting of gay films, from the spectral setting of the 1970s to the brilliant clinical lighting of present days, which take place in spaces free of guilt, of the erotics of sin. Contemporary pornography is anchored in the here and now, in

real bedrooms and real cars, rather than in the indeterminate fantasy realms whose

flickering light and dramatic chiaroscuro provide an almost allegorical representation of

the stealthy conditions under which homosexuals were forced to meet and cruise (117-

118).

Although I appreciate Harris's observations, I don't completely agree with his heavy-handed

criticism. The gothic may partially articulate feelings of shame, but what it mostly communicates

is a feeling of something other coming into being—through the self of the image, or, through the

image of the self. The gothic doesn't disappear after the immediate post-Stonewall era; in fact,

the gothic would continuously be alluded to and deployed for years to come in both pornography

and cinema to underscore moments where identity is coming undone.

Harris is correct in his observation that contemporary gay male pornography leans toward

clinical bright lighting, which seems to put identity, the body, and sex under the microscope for

examination—mostly thanks to video and later digital technology. But the move from "gothic"

(dark, brooding, spectral, haunting) to "surveillance" (bright, antiseptic, maximum visibility) is

not, as we shall see, as clear-cut as Harris's observations about lighting suggest. Focusing

specifically on *Bijou* for the moment, what we see is a gothic journey through the self via the

screen. *Bijou* goes further that *Boys* and *Sand* in directly implicating film as an increasingly

integral component of both self and social identity—it is a neo-gothic portrait of the emerging

power and seductive allure of seeing oneself represented on the big screen.

Bijou begins by following around three unrelated characters: a man driving a car, a

woman walking down the street, and a non-descript male construction worker presumably

making his way home. Starting with a series of shaky hand-held shots of men working on a

construction site, the three separate storylines converge when the driver hits the woman and the

construction worker grabs her purse and walks away. At home, the construction worker examines the purse's contents and among other things finds an invitation to someplace called *"Bijou."* The following ten minutes are spent watching this "straight"-signified man (several posters of nude women are hung around his apartment) preparing for the evening—showering, masturbating, getting dressed. From there he heads to a nondescript building in an industrial part of the city and heads to the second floor.

Upon entering this dimly lit and almost claustrophobic space, he is greeted by a female ticket taker and what appear to be sounds from a carnival. He hands the woman the pass and enters a pitch-black room. He lights his lighter, but sees nothing. Seconds later a sign illuminates telling him to "Remove Shoes." A spotlight also appears and shines down on a single chair. He sits, takes off his shoes, and walks toward the sign. He enters another room enclosed by mirrors and where smoke billowing from places unknown hovers over and covers the floor. Another sign appears: "Remove Clothes." He complies, and after undressing begins to explore his nude body in the cascade of mirrors that envelop him—examining his multiple nude selves that all stare right back at him.

He enters another room with a single mirror. The lights dim to near dark as he caresses his chest. When he goes to touch his reflection, the lights suddenly turn back on. His mirror image distorts; the mirror is actually a door. Similar to the moment when Narcissus drowned in his own image when he went to touch himself (Turkle 1984), the protagonist too falls into his own image. He enters the looking glass into a space covered in shimmering sequins that reflect the few spotlights and guide him towards another world that seems to beckon him.

Our protagonist slowly disrobes and examines his multiple image selves.

Bijou is a symbolic "journey through the self" (Russell 1999), an exploration of an emerging subjectivity at the crossroads of desire and identity. This "straight" male construction worker is going on a journey of psychological self-discovery, floating along the fault line where the unconscious meets the ego. As the protagonist makes his way through a bedazzled hallway, the film's mise-en-scène abruptly changes from bizarre funhouse to one of artsy abstraction. Shot at a distance, we see the protagonist, lit in blue tint, walking on a walkway above a gigantic sculpture lit in fuchsia-red of a face with a penis *coming out* of (not going into) a mouth. As he makes his way through this life-size erotic-sculpture museum—large female mannequin hands, spongy vaginal spheres, testicle-like balls—he comes upon a long-haired man, facedown, with his legs invitingly ajar in yet another room void of any other objects except a single spotlight. The awaiting object who freely offers himself up is coded as feminine—it isn't until the protagonist begins to penetrate him that we see his testicles. It is at this point that we realize his journey through himself is a journey over to the other side of the sexual spectrum. While positive and optimistic, opening up a space for "bisexuality" and androgyny, what is visualized in *Bijou* is the reformatting of desire into identity—the move from straight with hints of same-sex desire to gay.

A stroll through the museum of sexual oddities   Androgynous invitation

A bright light appears above and in front of the protagonist after a brief post-coital rest, and is accompanied by the sound of a projector. He turns around as a movie projector begins to exhibit a film on the opposite wall. The projected image is of a man entering from offscreen left and heading towards a camera resting on a large tripod. As he looks through the camera lens, the man onscreen disappears and re-enters again, only this time without his shirt. When he looks through the camera, he again disappears and re-enters fully nude. The two nude men gaze at each other. Who is the image? Who is observing whom? This moment recalls the previous image of the protagonist examining at himself in the mirror, and aligns the screen and mirror, suggesting the protagonist is going to further lose himself in the mise-en-abyme of the projected image.

There is something almost sinister about this moment though—a feeling of violation and penetration emphasized by a zoom into a close-up that isolates the recording apparatus, which seems to stare directly at the protagonist through the screen. "I see you see me," the projected image ominously says. "I see you because you too are being watched"—you are under surveillance. "I see you because in me you see yourself"—I am your double. What transpires within and between the spectator and the screen bleeds back into reality.
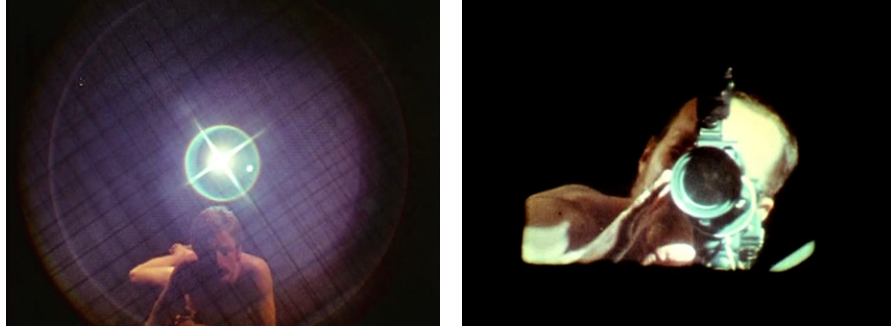
I see you seeing me see you

The theme of surveillance is furthered by an extended montage sequence that visualizes a feeling of disciplinarity through images while seemingly also disciplining the protagonist in the process. The image of the filmmaker reduces in size and moves to the top left-hand quadrant of the frame. Several shots of Greek and Roman sculptures, as well as one of a crucified Jesus, followed by images of beach-going white folks from the 50s, and then several shots of nude women and men (and one of a cheetah) appear in rapid succession and at different times in the remaining three quadrants. The eye of the camera never disappears; instead, the cinematographer caresses the machine and strokes the lens as the other images hypnotically flash all around him— reminiscent of the infamous visual torture in Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). With this brief montage, Poole attempts to capture a visual history of desire that has entered a period of renewal and transformation. The desire for male and female bodies forms a singular circuit. Although the montage may eschew any notion of a coherent identity, it is followed by a subsequent all-male collage and then all-male twenty-five-minute orgy…
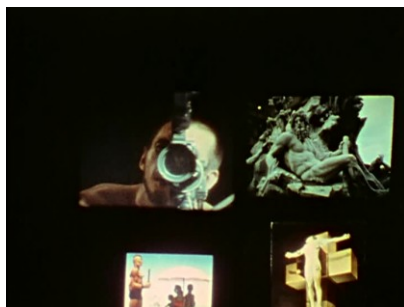
The body on display   Desiring women   Desiring men

The diegetic camera zooms in on the cinematographer's lens and then fades out and then back in on a close-up of a man's groin and belt buckle. While the previous montage featured brief glimpses of still photographs, the following montage is of several concurrent moving images of men slowly disrobing and exploring their bodies. This extended all-male montage delves a bit deeper into the emerging gay male psyche. Careful attention is paid to their dress—jeans, collared shirts, belts—and different parts of their body—eyes, moustaches, hands, feet, arms, chest. The montage parallels the protagonist's earlier disrobing and nude self-exploration and mirrors what was likely taking place in the theatre at the time of its screening (Dyer 1985; Cante and Restivo 2004; Campino 2005).

This erotic collage is not only surreal pornography, but also a projection of the protagonist's interiority. The collage aligns and implicates our gaze as it reflects the identificatory and mimetic dynamics at play between viewer and explicit screen. The men slowly undress and touch themselves. Each man is shot from a variety of distances, sometimes in close-up, sometimes at a distance. The lighting with which these montages are filmed complements that of *Bijou*'s diegesis—shadowy, warm, playfully obfuscating. After the men undress, they begin to touch themselves and stroke their erections. As the men pleasure themselves, the images switch to close-ups of different body parts—hands, mouths, eyes, arms, chest, and tongue. The men are not only on display for our pleasure, but are also being dissected and examined, foreshadowing the way pornography will fragment, fetishize, and quantify different parts of the body and aspects of sexual desire.

Fragmenting and examining the male body

As we watch these various body parts present themselves for our gaze, an image of a woman appears—at first just a close-up of her eyes and then her entire body. The body parts begin to demonstrate arousal—twitching, licking, stretching—and eventually synchronize and synthesize into a sexual symphony of self-stimulation and ejaculation. The woman gazes seductively at the protagonist (and us), slowly disrobing as the images around her transition from suggestive to explicit, ending with all the men ejaculating one after the other. The appearance of this woman is purposefully distracting or perhaps even jarring for some. Her attempt to (literally) be the centre of attention in the face of what feels like a flood of all-male flesh sends an ambivalent message. Is it guilt Poole is articulating? Does the protagonist feel shame? Is it a quiet goodbye to a previous self? The montage is unclear, but it is followed by a rather lengthy group sex scene with all the men from the montage. Do the men corporealize or is the protagonist absorbed into the screen? Again, it's vague, but prior to fading into the all-male orgy, the image of the woman is replaced with that of a man's eye—possibly the protagonist's.

Transitioning over to the other side?

Bijou ends with the protagonist arriving at his all-male destination. The final sequence is of an extended group flesh-fest that feels more like a performance art piece than an orgy. As in *Sand*, pornographic syntax has yet to be standardized, and so the action has an authentic feel to it, complemented by the soft fleshy coloured lighting and promiscuous cinematography. Rather than on a mission to check things off a list—suck, fuck, come—Poole takes his time, happy to observe the spectacle as it seems to naturally unfold. Sexually, what stands out most about *Bijou* is the number of "solo" scenes—of men pleasuring themselves and stimulating each other manually. The emphasis is on touching and transmitting pleasure through touch and tactile sensation—lots of licking, kissing, and caressing. Although the all-male orgy may be the protagonist's final destination, no one is in a rush to leave or finish. Sex, like self-discovery, is not about the conclusion, but the journey.

The protagonist takes his place at the centre of the actions, allowing the men to do with him what they desire. The men take turns with him and sit at the sidelines observing when not

participating, touching themselves and those around them. This communal, rather than aggressive, witnessing will reappear decades later in Treasure Island Media's bareback videos, but in this instance reflects the organizing role of moving image pornography in the early 70s—when men would gather in dark secluded space to stroke themselves and others as they watched men around them and on screen do likewise.

John Champagne has asked those who write about gay pornography to "stop reading films!" (1997). Taking issue with porn studies' tacit housing in film studies, Champagne contends that although textual reading offers some insight into the social psychology of gay male culture, it ignores how gay men used pornographic distribution (video stores/booths) and exhibition (theatres) centres as meeting spaces to engage in sex. Although I agree with Champagne's initial intellectual intention (to prioritize context over text), and although Champagne's call has galvanized scholars and compelled them to think about the function of pornographic space and its social dimensions (Waugh [1999] 2004; Campino 2005; Arroyo 2015; Tziallas 2015), ignoring the text also ignores the reasons that text spoke to its target consumer at that particular point in time. Although pornography can bring bodies together in different ways, the interlocutor that brought these bodies together must also be understood. In other words, Champagne was only half right. Using the gay male classic *A Night at the Adonis* (1977) as an exemplar, the gay male porn scholar duo Cante and Restivo argue that

> the film itself seems designed to encourage us, one or two generations later, to imagine
> *Night at the Adonis* as actually having played at the Adonis theatre in 1977. This is
> an imagining in which the events on the screen and the events in the movie theatre
> would, in a rather odd realization of André Bazin's 'myth of total cinema,' coincide not

just with each other but also with the very representation of that coincidence within *Night*

at the Adonis (2004, 154).

We see this same type of suturing transpiring in *Bijou*, albeit through a more artistic and stylized

lens: a social psychology increasingly affected and mediated by representation.

Indeed, the film seems like a more explicit complement to the experimental art house

Pink Narcissus (1971) completed the previous year, but with greater attention paid to the

mediating role of film technology and the screen. In *Bijou*, the screen isn't just a mirror, but a

filter whose residue remains, accumulates, and fundamentally changes the viewing subject. The

protagonist doesn't just watch or participate, but rather watches himself participate. He dives

deeper and deeper into the screen, and in doing so dives deeper and deeper into himself. He

eventually finds his way out, gets dressed, and leaves, mirroring *Sands' ronde* structure. And

though he may look the same, after his trip to the Bijou, he is entirely different—suggested by

the final freeze frame image of him smiling into the camera. The protagonist's symbolic journey

through himself is one that begins at his pupil but ends at his metaphysical asshole.

Flesh coloured lighting enhances the feeling of tactility   Our protagonist leaves happy
and satisfied

Conclusion

In this chapter I explored the dynamics of publicly screening an emerging identity prior

to its solidification in the latter half of the 70s. I focused on the discursive overlaps between

authorship, identity, and the gothic and their onscreen visual engagement in the immediate post-

Stonewall era to highlight ideological and representation tensions that structure post-Liberation queer discourse. The uncanny manifests shifting boundaries; it "becomes an effect of a disturbed present, a present affected by massive upheaval and transformation" (Botting 2008, 7). And what we see represented on screen in the post-Stonewall era are the various negotiations that will shape queer identity politics and image culture over the following few decades: visibility vs. invisibility; ethnography vs. self-authorship/autoethnography; identity vs. desire; performance vs. performative.

More importantly, however, is the feeling of doubleness that manifests in a variegated ways onscreen. The strains brought about by newfound visibility and the will to be public and known made doubling an intrinsic feature of queer representation, and remains so to this day. The gothic legacy of same-sex desire and recent embrace of discursive surveillance (visibility, identity, confession) manifest gay identity as an inextricably doubled phenomenon. While in this chapter I explored the dimensions of doubling as they materialized onscreen through various forms of gothic representation—identity clashes between gay and straight characters; ghostly sex documentaries; surreal journeys of self-exploration—in the next chapter, I hone in on the physical manifestation of doppelgängers and examine how anxieties about mimesis and identification with the newly visible homosexual are reflected onscreen through discourses and representations of surveillance.

Chapter 3) 1980: Hollywood's First Hate Cycle: Four Case Studies

Mimesis, Surveillance, Identification

<u>Heteromimicry</u>

Stacey (2010) compares the clone to Homi Bhabha's (1984; [1994] 2005) notion of colonial mimicry, framing it as a form of what she calls "biomimicry." Like the colonized subject, the clone too is almost the same as its master referent, but not quite. The colonized subject is expected to mimic the colonizer, but also be different enough so as to not threaten the superiority of the colonizer: the same can be said for not only the clone, but also the gay subject. The clone disturbs self-other relations because the clone confounds "the distinction between original and copy upon which notions of imitation have depended" (2010, 102). "Both the image and the body are simultaneously at stake in biomimicry" (2010, 108) observes Stacey, and because the clone is simultaneously self and image, it gives "a troubling fleshly presence to the desire for the self-same, facing the dominant subject with his own idealizations and with his own limits" (2010, 107): the clone "transforms the original by facing it with its own desires and presenting it with an image of its own (diminished) embodiment" (2010, 104). It is precisely anxiety over transformation via mimesis and identification that manifests in the post-Bryant era both on and offscreen and gives rise to what I call "heteromimicry:" a mimetic strategy adopted by gay-identified individuals whereby cultural, sexual, and performative differences are downplayed and similarities played up.

Because the clone is as much an image as it is a physical entity, it is enmeshed with the performative and inextricably resonates with queer sensibility. Stacey observes that "the clone today belongs to an imaginary landscape of mimetic figures embedded within intersecting cultures of domination and regulation, in a world where *some subjects have been required to*

mimic themselves endlessly for the benefit of others, or rather to mimic the version of themselves desired by others" (2010, 102; emphasis mine). Because "the figure of the clone brings together duplication and duplicity in our very modes of embodiment," writes Stacey, "questions of passing lie at the heart" of cloning (2010, 110). The clone is not only "the ultimate doppelgänger" (2010, 99), but also an inextricably queer figure that is practically a discursive metonym for queerness: the clone is the incarnation of the ghostly energies that have governed socio-sexual relations in the West from the modern era onward, as Sedgwick outlined in her 1985 and 1990 opuses.

Andrew Niccol's *Gattaca* (1997) is in many ways an allegory for both the erotics of homosociality as well as the thrust of heteromimicry. Set sometime in the not-too-distant future, Vincent (Ethan Hawke) undertakes a daily regimen to hide his genetic defects and pass for a genetically perfect one. He uses the DNA of Jerome (Jude Law) to bypass screenings and pass for a genetically perfected individual. In her analysis of the film, Stacey brilliantly fleshes out the homoerotic energies that permeate a film about two men jointly producing "offspring" that combines one man's image (Vincent) and another's DNA (Jerome). The homosocial bond between the men is haunted by an unspoken eroticism, but the film also crystallizes the overall thrust and goals of normative gay-rights activism after Bryant's cultural and political embargo against queer people: mimesis in service of passing as a genetically perfect rather than defective subject. As with Vincent who puts in a concerted effort everyday to mimic and be like those deemed superior, so too did gay activists tacitly advocate doing likewise.

Speaking of Butler's (1990) sweeping project to recast "lesbian and gay sexualities as poor imitations of a heterosexual original" (2010, 110-111), Stacey observes that at the root of Butler's theory of performativity is a desire to subvert the "traditional teleology of originals and

copies." "With all its connotations of gay male subculture," observes Stacey, "the figure of the clone brings the imitative imperatives of gender and sexuality together with scientific desires to copy nature. Just as heterosexuality for Butler is already a failed copy of itself, so the clone represents a doubling that reflects back on the body's claims to authenticity and originality" (2010, 110-111). Indeed, throughout the 1970s, for example, the manifestation of the "Castro clone" aimed to subvert default correlations between homosexuality and femininity (Levine 1988; Cole 2000). Gay men appropriated and manicured masculine traits to "critique" and mock their exclusive heterosexual status, visualizing idealized prototypes that both pre-date Stonewall but also coincide with circulating images of hyper-masculinity, namely by those of Tom of Finland (Waugh 1996, [2002] 2005; Mercer 2003; Falkon and Waugh 2006)—it should be noted, however, that by adopting hyper-masculine personas and idealizing masculine looks and traits, gay male subculture simultaneously transformed femininity into an anachronistic pre-Stonewall "stereotype."

More importantly, however, is Stacey's observation that "more than just a visual doubling that destabilizes the original-copy dualism, the figure of the clone also gives the most visible form to the biological body as *genetic code*" (2010, 211). The queer and clone tease out the "informationalization of the body as genetic code" (2010, 11), while at the same time redoubling them as threats to natural selection and procreation. But if the queer/clone reveals the body as an informatic entity to be mined for data, then it too has a genetic heritage, one that is inextricable from (its) representation. Heteromimicry takes the assimilating drive behind liberal rights-based activism further by identifying mediation as an inextricable interpellating machine. Heteromimicry alludes to the metaphysical genes that interpellate but also propagate gay desire and identity, and what manifest itself after Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign is a deeply

rooted anxiety over the threat of mimesis and its potential impact on natural order and the futurity (Edelman 2004).

Cinematic Mimicry

1980 is a watershed year for queer representation; or should I say queer*ed* representation. In the exact same year, Hollywood released three films featuring a psychotic queer antagonist: one gay male (*Cruising*), one lesbian (*Windows*), and one transgender (*Dressed to Kill*). Hollywood had discovered new subjects and spaces to colonize. What we see onscreen, though, are neither naïve excursions to the realm of the newly discovered, nor narratives of mastery and domination; instead, we are treated to subjective visions of the heterosexual "colonizer's" anxieties over reverse colonization and over-identification. What I call Hollywood's first hate cycle brings to a boil all of the discursive and political tensions I outlined in the previous chapter over authorship, ethnography, identity, and (in)visibility. The hate cycle is a microcosm for the threats that queer visibility pose to heteronormativity, which materialize through the spectating process itself: viewing practices in the theatre become a microcosm for those taking place outside the theatre.

Cinema has been described as both a mimetic and uncanny medium (Jayamanne 2001; Cubitt 2004; Campbell 2005; Mulvey 2006; Stewart 2007; Stacey 2010), whose power is largely derived from its ability to generate emotional responses and visceral sensations (Williams 1991, 2008; Cartwright 2008; Plantinga 2009). But cinema is also a medium rooted in scientific inquiry and methodology (Cartwright 1995; Landecker 2007; Stacey 2010; Tziallas 2014). Linda Williams ([1989]/1999) argues that "the very invention of cinema develops, to a certain extent, from the desire to place the clocked and measured bodies produced by the first machines into narratives that naturalize their movements" (36). And as Jonathan Crary (1992) contends, "The

break with classical models of vision in the early nineteenth century was more than simply a shift in the appearance of images…[it] was inseparable from a massive reorganization of knowledge and social practice that modified in myriad ways the productive, cognitive, and desiring capacities of the human subject" (3). Film may be an uncanny medium, but its invention was an extension of modern reasoning that valorized order, systematicity, and repetition: it trumpeted objectivity and visual evidence as truth.

According to visual theorist Lisa Cartwright (1995), "The cinematic apparatus can be considered as a cultural technology for the discipline and management of the human body," and argues "that the long history of bodily analysis and surveillance in medicine and science is critically tied to the history of the development of the cinema as a popular cultural institution and a technological apparatus" (1995, 3). The fusion of science and cinematic vision has considerable implications for queer individuals. As Cartwright observes, "The body once rendered innately deviant is now open to 'corrective' physiological regulation and transformation" (1995, 36). "One can no longer speak of bodies or objects of knowledge" Cartwright claims, "without acknowledging the in-built technologies through which their health and life are regulated and disciplined" (1995, 28).

Early film motion studies were a midpoint between photography and cinema, functioning as crucial intertexts "between popular and professional representations of the body as the site of human life and subjectivity" (Cartwright 1995, 4). "Surveillant looking and physiological analysis, then," according to Cartwright, "are not just techniques of science. They are broadly practiced techniques of everyday public culture" (1995, 5). "By inserting the body into an apparatus for its physiological analysis," Cartwright contends that Étienne-Jules Marey "rendered the natural body an entity that must both incorporate and be incorporated within a self-

regulating and self-generating apparatus in order to function to its full capacity as a technology of Western culture" (1995, 37). Unsurprisingly, the invention of cinema coincides with the ascent of sexology.

Cinema's intimate history with discourses and practices of surveillance has once again become a point of interest for film scholars. Screen theory developed out of concerns over cinema's ability to discipline subjects, maintain gender binaries, and stratify class-based ideology (Mulvey 1975; Harvey 1982; Rosen 1986). But as celluloid gave way to analog and digital video, new viewing practices, distribution networks, and independent productions problematized theories and practices that sustained screen theory, invigorating new research interests and theoretical paradigms (Clover 1991; Silverman 1992; Sobchack; Friedberg 1993; Bordwell and Carroll 1996; Plantinga and Smith 1999; Manovich 2000; Klinger 2005). Disciplinarity via screens gave away to theories of empowerment and agency, but the rise of surveillance cinema has revived the spectre of screen and apparatus theory. Scholars such Garrett Stewart (2015) have returned to questions of textual suture through representations of surveillance, while Catherine Zimmer (2011; 2015) suggests that surveillance brings to the fore the underlying disciplinary dynamics inherent to the medium itself.

"We are part of the body-machine complex," writes Stewart. "Every motion, contact, or communication may well, at any given moment, be ghosted by its computerized trace." Surveillance is a doubling process, but cinema too "arose in silence from the Romantic century of the literary doppelgänger," observes Stewart. "There is a genealogical irony in this automatized doubling of the world," according to Stewart, that becomes palatable only now that cinema has "yielded place to a digital phantom double of the human body's routine motions in 24/7 silent black-and-white record" (2015 xii-xiii)—by which he means CCTV. Cinema and

surveillance are discursively and theoretically connected through the gothic, and similarly with arguments I myself have made (2014), Stewart aligns surveillance cinema with metaphysical practices of self-surveillance. "In prosecuting its own omniscience," he writes, "cinema has grown too close for comfort to the machinations it would eschew" (2015, 255). Stewart "returns to theory" (2015, xxi) because through digitization cinema itself has "reverted to origins with a vengeance" (2015, 254). Cinema has returned to its scientific origins, but through techniques and technologies that render it an uncanny version of what it always was.

Film is inextricable from surveillance and discourses of doubling, anticipating and naturalizing the sense of experiencing oneself and reality as doubled (Tziallas 2014). Speaking of film, Stacey observers that "there is no other medium that so closely anticipates the symbolic significance of the imitation of life that genetic engineering and cloning now represent," for cloning externalizes "the phantasmatic self-other figurations which structure our inner lives and which animate the fears and desires upon which the cinema has worked its magic." For Stacey, as with Stewart, "the cinema continues as a system of duplication that depends upon multiple modes of doubling" (2010, 260) that "extends into an uncanny sense of what we might call misembodiment: the feeling that the body encountered is not what it seems, or not what it should be" (2010, 264). It is precisely this sense of "misembodiment" that governs gay-straight relations and injects them with feelings of paranoia, compelling social and performative policing (Butler 1993). The hate cycle's murderous queer double comes to embody misembodiment and the complex circuitries of identification that manifest themselves through encountering the figurative image double on screen and physical image double on the street.

Vivian Sobchack (1992) has theorized film as a body and film viewing as implicitly doubled. It is not that film is human, but it is rather a "viewing subject" that "manifests a

competence of perceptive and expressive performance *equivalent* in structure and function to that same competence performed by filmmaker and spectator" (1992, 22). Thus in many ways the metaphorical and metaphysical self-surveillance cinema conducts within the emerging genre of surveillance cinema is also an autoethnographic journey. More importantly, though, thinking of film as a viewing subject that looks back at us (Dixon 1995) allows us to better grasp the contagious relations (Szelter 1998) between screens and bodies and the reasons behind the destructive queer doubles' sudden appearance. The hate cycle crystallizes and visualizes feelings of insurrection and insecurity that governed relations between newly minted sexual others and their idealized referent in the post-Bryant era. The queer double onscreen visualizes and represents the psycho-social conflicts that play out between queer and straight bodies offscreen. The encounters recorded on screen symbolically and reflexively encapsulate those occurring between the projected film body and those in the audience—straight viewers coming into contact with the queer body of the screen.

Steven Paul Miller (1999) has argued that in America one could detect "a movement from external to internal surveillance throughout the seventies" (1999, 1). According to Miller, "The seventies was the decade when Americans brought self-surveillance to a high level;" it was "a culture and counter-culture fearful of one another's external surveillance" (1999, 1). Miller connects the growth of the surveillance society to not only external threats but also to threats from within the nation as well. Miller writes minimally about how post-Stonewall gay culture and identity were embedded within a matrix of cultural surveillance, but touches on the subject briefly, writing:

> If surveillance is a key theme of the seventies, gays and lesbians may well often feel like spies or outlaws. It is therefore not surprising that Foucault—a gay man, not

incidentally—openly explores the theme of surveillance in the early seventies with

Discipline and Punish, before he directly tackles the subject of sexuality in his late

seventies *A History of Sexuality: Introduction* (1999, 205).

It was within this growing culture of paranoia and mistrust that the homosexual became the

perfect scapegoat for conservatives to displace their social and economic frustrations and fears

onto and (mis)use to push their agendas. As pioneering gay historian John D'Emilio writes:

> [The] elevation of the nuclear family to preeminence in the sphere of personal life is not
>
> accidental. Every society needs structures for reproduction and childrearing, but the
>
> possibilities are not limited to the nuclear family…. Ideologically, capitalism drives
>
> people into heterosexual families…[but] materially, capitalism weakens the bonds that
>
> once kept families together so that their members experience a growing instability in the
>
> place they have come to expect happiness and security. Thus, while capitalism has
>
> knocked the material foundation away from family life, lesbians, gay men, and
>
> heterosexual feminists have become scapegoats for the social instability of the system
>
> ([1983]1993, 473).

The figure of the homosexual was configured as a catch-all bogey(wo)man, a template with

which to supplant anxieties about growing political, social, and economic instability, but whose

unverifiable status simultaneously helped to propel paranoia and justify surveillance.

It is no surprise that during this period often referred to as "New Hollywood," filmmakers

capitalized on conspiracy and paranoia, birthing a subgenre considered one of the cornerstones of

both surveillance cinema and the thriller: the conspiracy thriller (Williams 2005). David Greven

observes that "Hitchcock's films were central to the aesthetic and cultural poetics of the New

Hollywood Cinema of the 1970s" with the period's fixation on American masculinity

undergirding a "preoccupation with homosexuality" (2013, 10-11). Greven argues that "intertextuality [is] fundamental to an understanding of New Hollywood film" and claims that "the triumvirate of male sexual anxieties—voyeurism, pornography, and homosexuality—at the centre of several significant Hitchcock films became newly relevant in 1970s filmmaking" (2013, 11). A generation of young filmmakers educated in film found in Hitchcock the elements they felt best represented the instability that defined their generation's social experiences and sense of self.

Director Brian de Palma is as infamous for his appropriation of Hitchcock as his mixture of graphic sexual display and obsession with observation, and nowhere is the doubling of the self better captured than in his earlier works. De Palma is not only the father of the erotic and psycho-sexual thriller, a subgenre that titillates by punishing sexual variance and nonconformity, but I would argue is also Hollywood's queerest heterosexual male director—David Cronenberg comes in at a close second place. Although *Cruising* is "arguably the erotic thriller's clearest starting point" (Williams 2005, 80), I begin instead with *Dressed to Kill* because of the emphasis De Palma places on surveillance and the doubling/splitting of identity.

All three films I examine revolve around obsessive surveillance, uncontrollable queer doubles, and the threat of mimesis. The hate cycle communicates a paradoxical desire for more surveillance but also *self*-surveillance, and through the figure of the queer double visualizes the innate and intricate relations between film, surveillance, and doubling. Although the hate cycle operates according to the typical conservative logic of punishing sexual transgression, the films I examine also testify to the failure of surveillance to effectively discipline and suppress revolt. Not only were these films protested by gay and lesbian activists during their production and

exhibition, fueling calls for self-authored independent work, but they were also unable to contain the threat of contagion that comes with encountering other bodies.

The hate cycle captures the fraught relations between queer subjects and their heterosexual counterparts at a particularly volatile point and time and brings to the surface deeply rooted anxieties about same-sex desire. Although I do not mean to downplay the very real consequences of portraying queer people as pathological murders, I advocate reading these films as heterosexual self-explorations that confront the paradoxes queer subjects pose to modern organizations of social and self-identity in the postmodern era. By re-reading these films through a recuperative queer lens, I seek to find value in negative representation that, for better or worse, continues to haunt and influence the terrain of queer representation and cultural politics to this day—something I will further explore in the following chapter when I discuss the problematic influences and legacy of New Queer Cinema. For better or worse, the hate cycle is part of our metaphysical queer DNA.

Case Study: Dressed to Kill (1980) and Evil Alter Egos

Although De Palma has dabbled in a variety of genres—drama (*Bonfire of the Vanities* [1990]; *Redacted* [2007]), science fiction (*Mission to Mars* [2000]), and the gangster film (*Scarface* [1983])—his thrillers and psychosexual thrillers are what define him as a contemporary auteur. De Palma's thrillers are structured by a frenzied paranoia and mistrust of not only others and selves but also of vision and technology. De Palma's work is heavily influence by Hitchcock's, and in his assessment and critique of De Palma's early films, Robin Wood observes that

> as with Hitchcock, the attitude to voyeurism is complex, the desire to watch from a
> position of secrecy and immunity being both indulged and chastised. Both directors

extend this principle to cinematic practice itself, with the spectator as the ultimate voyeur.

Rear Window has been widely interpreted as an allegory about cinema; De Palma makes the connection between voyeurism and the visual media explicit ([1986] 2003, 126).

De Palma's work often revolves around the complexities of observation and tension between voyeurism and surveillance. More than any other mainstream Hollywood director, De Palma has dedicated himself to grappling with the intricacies of screen identification and the threats of queer resonance, whose conceptual overlaps manifest themselves most prominently through the recurring motif of the double. Unable to discuss all of his applicable films—*Sisters* (1973), *Home Movies* (1980), *Blow Out* (1981), *Body Double* (1984), *Raising Cain* (1992), *Snake Eyes* (1998), *Femme Fatale* (2002), *Passion* (2012)—I focus on *Dressed to Kill* (1980) in order to flesh out the innate queerness of De Palma's work and that of the hate cycle's, as well as to highlight the intersections between surveillance, doubling, queerness that undergird and are visualized in the hate cycle.

Dressed to Kill follows a young boy named Peter and prostitute named Liz as they hunt down the perpetrator who killed Peter's mother, Kate Miller, a promiscuous upper class housewife murdered in the elevator of her latest pickup's apartment building. The film is heavily indebted to *Psycho* (1960) and begins with a shower scene that pays homage to the infamous one that has made *Psycho* a mainstay of popular film culture. The camera opens to a dimly lit bedroom and carefully moves toward a brightly lit bathroom. Sounds of running water and a soft romantic soundtrack anticipate a scene of lovemaking or moment of tender romance. When the camera enters the bathroom, we instead see a man on the left looking into a mirror shaving with a straight razor, and a woman (Kate Miller) further back and slightly to his right staring at him while she showers. We then cut to a POV shot from her perspective and a series of close-ups of

her rubbing soap on her breasts, stomach, and genital area. Cutting back and forth between close-ups of her rubbing herself and looking at, presumably, her husband, the opening sequence ends with a man coming up from behind Kate, wrapping his arms around her mouth, and stroking her vagina, concluding with Kate prying his hand off her mouth and screaming. From the opening sequence we cut to Kate and her husband having sex in bed and him heading off to shower immediately after he orgasms—the camera lingers on her dissatisfied face.

Narratively, the juxtaposition of the first and second sexual encounter tells us Kate is not sexually satisfied in her current relationship. The opening sequence's overly romantic aesthetics (lighting so soft the images are almost blurry) frame it as a fantasy sequence: Kate is fantasizing about a more thrilling sexual encounter while making listless love with her selfish husband. As an overture, though, the opening sequence references Hitchcock as a way to foreshadow the narrative's investment in voyeurism, (over-)identification, and death. Although the opening sequence references *Psycho*'s shower scene, De Palma replaces violence with images of sexual ravaging that connote violence. He delays the infamous series of violent slashings as well as his female protagonist's death until about a third of the way through, synching up her death with Marion's (Leigh) in *Psycho*. In doing so, De Palma differentiates his film from Hitchcock's, but sets it up as a mirrored replica—the same, but also different. *Dressed to Kill* is not only about doubles, but is itself *Psycho*'s metaphoric double. By starting *Dressed to Kill* with a voyeuristic peek into Marion's internal thought process rather than a real space such as the opening zoom into Marion's hotel room, De Palma differentiates his intervention by prioritizing the internal structure of identity and desire as his main objective.

It is important we remember that *Psycho* begins with a panoramic shot of Phoenix taken atop a centrally located tower and then penetrates the interiority of the semi-private space (hotel

room) where Marion has (presumably) just finished having sex with her male lover. Although this scene is often discussed as the epitome of cinematic voyeurism and crucial moment for the publicization of private sex (Young 2013), we should not discount its overlaps with then emerging and now solidified practices of urban surveillance. By starting the film not only inside the private sphere, a standard cinematic technique that connotes and is commensurate with surveillance (Zimmer 2015), but also inside the mind of its female protagonist, De Palma correlates the underlying theme of surveillance in *Psycho*'s opening sequence to the examination of his female protagonist's sexuality and identity via his cinematic gaze.

The thriller is often driven by the quest for the killer's identity (Phillips 2006), and by mirroring *Psycho*'s narrative structure, De Palma also prioritizes themes of queer doubling and over-identification in relation to identity formation. Similarly to how midway through *Psycho* the plot shifts to discovering Marion's murderer's identity, after Kate is murdered by an unidentified blonde in black leather, the narrative switches to discovering her murder's identity as well. But in an interesting twist, Kate's son, along with Liz, takes over the narrative and becomes the protagonist, referencing but subverting Norman Bates' (Anthony Perkins) psychotic over-identification with his mother. It is instead Dr. Elliot who becomes Norman Bates' metaphoric double, whose unresolvable Oedipus complex manifests an evil transgender alter ego (Bobbi) that kills women who sexually excite the good doctor (Phillips 2006). In *Dressed to Kill*, De Palma plays with genre convention via one of the genre's earliest influences as a way to question the nature of identity and identification in an era practically defined by the disintegration of identity as such.

Although primarily a film about catching a killer, the first third is comprised of observing Kate talk about and trying to fix her unsatisfying sex life. We watch her attend a therapy session

with Dr. Elliot, solicit him for sex, and then head to a museum where she cruises a mysterious art lover and heads back to his place for an evening of passion. When Kate attempts to leave her lover's apartment in the middle of the night, however, she is attacked with a straight razor in the elevator by a tall blonde woman (Bobbi) wearing black sunglasses. Slashed multiple times, Kate collapses. Before she dies, the elevator door briefly opens when it reaches the lobby, allowing Liz, who is waiting to head upstairs with a client, to catch a glimpse of the killer in a convex mirror in the elevators' corner. As Liz reaches for Kate's outstretched hand, a glimmer of reflected light from the straight razor guides Liz's gaze upward. The mirror, located in the elevator's top right-hand corner, is shot in close-up and reflects the crime scene, with De Palma reflexively invoking the image of the mirror to heighten the scene's focus on identification.

This carefully constructed and highly stylized moment feels as though we are watching rudimentary surveillance footage, as though we are witnessing the murder captured on CCTV. The distorted surveillance image serves multiple functions, as does the triangulation of multiple physical and metaphoric gazes that converge on the convex mirror. The first close-up reflects the entire space, but the second close-up, following a close-up of Liz's eyes, hones in on the killer's face. Shot in slow motion with the graininess of worn-out video to a hypnotic and swirling soundtrack, the close-up shot of the killer reads like a mug shot. The allusion to early CCTV connotes and denotes capture, but Bobbi has only been seen and not identified. She has been caught in the act, but not caught, thereby refocusing the narrative onto the search for Bobbi's identity. Liz manages to take possession of the murder weapon the killer drops when they realize they've been caught, but is herself mistaken for the killer by a screaming onlooker in the process.

Surveillance angle shot of Bobbi slashing Kate

Liz catching a glimpse of Bobbi in the mirror

Shot from Kate's POV in close-up

Grainy "surveillance image" of Bobbi

In this particular instance, De Palma uses the mirror to symbolize the movie screen and reflexively comment on the process of identification. While shifting the narrative to the search for Bobbi's identity, De Palma likewise transfers the psychological burden Kate posed to Bobbi over to Liz, turning Liz into Bobbi's new target. Their collective shared gaze though the mirror not only passes Kate's "identity" to Liz, but also realigns our identification and allegiance in the process. Bobbi kills Kate while both we and Liz watch the scene of violence unfold off a (")reflective(") surface and like her we are unable to intervene. We are positioned similarly to, and come to identify with, Liz. In shifting our identification over to Liz, De Palma also places a symbolic target on the viewer. The murder scene doubles as a metaphor for the anxieties over identification embodied by the threatening queer double, capturing a paranoid feeling endemic in the Post-Bryant era that queers were targeting and insidiously going after all things firmly in the realm of heterosexuality—children, family, and visibility.

Greven argues that "De Palma films look at themselves looking at the cinematic medium while also directing their gaze upon the audience" (2013, 209), while John Phillips argues that

mirrors in *Dressed to Kill* articulate a "sense of a shifting and unfocused line between the real and the imaginary" (Phillips 2006, 101). Indeed, the murder scene is as much an allegory for cinematic identification as it is a visualization of Lacan's mirror stage: identification is fractured by and the double is born through the mirror and death of the maternal figure. But while the mirror continues to function as a symbol for fragmented and screen identity, the narrative switches after Kate's death and begins to revolve around the quest to *resolve* identity. After Kate's death, the diegetic lens is charged with surveillant properties. *Dressed to Kill* is not just about destabilized identity, but about the duality and paradox of cinematic visuality: splitting but also attempting to secure identity.

  Dressed to Kill is surveillance cinema told through a doppelgänger narrative, correlating surveillance, and by extension cinema, with doubling. "*Dressed to Kill* plays intricately throughout on doubles and on ambiguities of sexual identity" ([1986] 2003, 130), observes Robin Wood, and although not deploying the same kind of technological surveillance we see in more contemporary texts (CCTV, multiple computer screens, computer databases, GPS, satellites, drones, etc.), the film represents a pivotal mid-point between the detective film's surveillant narration, which dates back as far as Fritz Lang's *M* (1931), and films that revolve around various incarnations of what Stewart (2015) terms the "technopticon." The most explicit reference to cinema and surveillance's convergence takes place about halfway through the film when Peter conducts reconnaissance on Dr. Elliot. Eavesdropping at the police station after his mother's murder has been reported, Peter discovers that the killer left a voicemail on Dr. Elliot's answering machine confessing to the murder. Peter convinces Liz into conducting their own investigation, and the two team up to catch his mother's killer.

Peter decides to monitor the exterior of Dr. Elliot's office, hoping to catch the killer on their way out of a session. Lacking the high-tech surveillance/recording technology we enjoy today, Peter decides to manufacture his own makeshift surveillance device that will take pictures at predetermined intervals. Peter spends the first day timing the interval between the time it takes for a patient to exit the office and the time it takes to walk out of the phantom frame of the camera he plans to plant in front of the office. During this reconnaissance test, De Palma turns to his signature rack deep focus cinematography to split the screen, underscoring both the recording apparatus's duality as well as the desire to piece together fragmented identity through surveillance. Shot from Peter's point of view, the stopwatch and his hand are placed in the foreground of the frame's right side while keeping the door to Dr. Elliot's office in focus on the left. Peter becomes an agent of surveillance, aligning his gaze with that of diegetic camera and future one he will setup the following day.

As Peter surveills the exterior of Dr. Elliot's office, we come to identify with the surveillance apparatus through his gaze. The cinematic apparatus takes on explicit surveillant properties with the stopwatch dually acting as the image's timecode. Each shot is filmed with a timed long take and each shot is taken from the exact same position that intuitively signifies CCTV: static location, indexing of time, maximizing the observation of space. After an entire day of watching and recording, he discovers that the quickest departure took 8.55 seconds. By setting up the camera to take a picture every four seconds, he guarantees capturing an image of the killer at some point between the time an exiting patient opens the door and leaves the camera's frame.

Peter timing patients' exits. De Palma's signature "split screen" cinematography underscores recording technology's duality
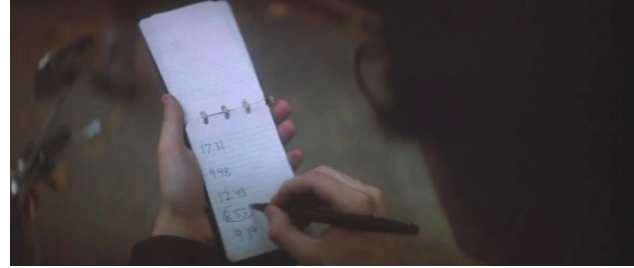
Peter pre-"time coding" future images

One of the defining ontological features of surveillance cinema is the shift to time-code narration (Levin 2002; Stewart 2015; Zimmer 2015), embodying and visualizing the formal discursive changes brought about by digital technology and the loss physical indexicality (Manovich 2001; Rosen 2001; Doane 2002; Rodowick 2007). "By the 1990s," according to Thomas Levin, "cinematic narration could be said, in many cases, to have effectively become synonymous with surveillant enunciation as such" (2002, 582). The indexing of time becomes a way to compensate for the loss celluloid's aura, but according to Catherine Zimmer also allows us to explore how the "functions of surveillance and the structures of cinematic narrative are informing each other to the degree that we might begin to understand not merely that surveillance and popular entertainment intersect, but how they might be seen to be mutually structuring" (2011, 434-435). The shift occurs on a formal rather than thematic level whereby surveillance becomes "the very condition or *structure of narration itself*" (Levin 2002, 538). What we see in *Dressed to Kill* is the early formation of this shift, where form and theme converge and eventually reconstitute cinematic vision.

In the following scene we see the schematics Peter has drawn up to determine the camera's triangulation (distance, location, angle) as well as him tinkering with the time-lapse camera he has built. The next day Peter returns to Dr. Elliot's office, parks his bike where he stood the day before, and angles it to maximize its field of vision. Attached to the back part of

the bike is a black box that contains the time-lapse camera. Peter adjusts the lens' zoom and focus to match his calculations. The camera setup scene ends with another racked deep focus shot that splits the screen in two. We see the black box with a small hole that bears a striking resemblance to a *camera obscura* taking up the right half of the frame and on the other side Peter walking away. Peter stops momentarily to look back and then continues to make his way down the street, correlating his gaze with that of the surveillance recording device. The split screen effect in this instance also reflexively acknowledges our split "screen" identification—with Peter and Liz.
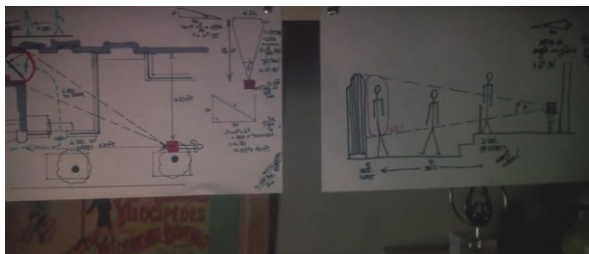
Peter's schematics

Peter setting up the shot
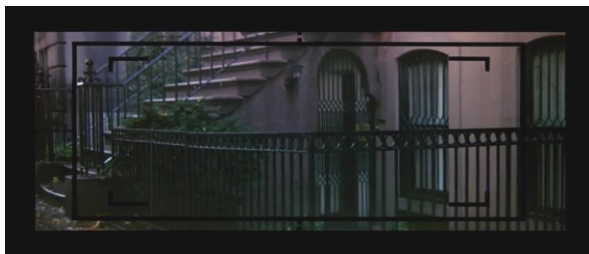
Dr. Elliot's office from the camera's POV

Split screen shot of Peter walking away

From there, the film dissolves to its most complex and important sequence, which explicitly ties together recording and surveillance to the splitting and doubling of identity. The film transitions to yet another split screen shot of a blonde woman in black holding binoculars. We see her gazing upward at Dr. Elliot, who paces in his office listening to a voicemail left by Bobbi. The transition edit De Palma uses graphically matches Peter's makeshift surveillance camera's ocular opening to the mysterious woman's binoculars, aligning the two practices. Narratively, the scene suggests the woman on the right is Bobbi and that we are watching her do

what she is confessing to Dr. Elliot. The split screen suggests temporal disjuncture; that we are watching two different timelines. As Bobbi verbalizes her plan to cut Liz's "spying eyes out," we watch this enigmatic figure, who is actually an officer, spy on Liz. The theme of voyeurism and act of surveillance formally converge with a POV shot framed with binocular mattes.

Dr. Elliot pacing screen left. Undercover officer keeping an eye on Liz screen right

Screen right: shot of Liz from officer's POV

Bobbi's reference to blindness is meant to reinforce our belief that she is currently spying on Liz, but her allusion to blindness also alludes to the uncanny and her own uncanniness. As Phillips notes, "In 'The Uncanny,' Freud links fear of blindness, or of any assault on the eyes, with both the uncanny and castration-anxiety" (2006, 93). Bobbi is an uncanny figure in part because Dr. Elliot is literally suffering from castration anxiety. Bobbi wants Dr. Elliot to finalize his transition by undergoing gender reassignment surgery. Only by Dr. Elliot "cutting" off his penis can Bobbi be free to come into being. The figure of the double, though, is also the point where surveillance and the uncanny converge, with the subtle reference to the uncanny also positioning the officer as Bobbi's doppelgänger (Wood [1986] 2003). Although the officer is sent to "keep an eye" on Liz, rather than ensuring Liz's safety, police surveillance only makes Liz less secure. Liz, as it turns out, is being used as bait to lure the killer from out the shadows.

From there we enter Liz's apartment. As we watch Liz set up a client meeting and purchase stock over the phone on the right side of the screen, the film cuts back and forth between close-ups of the tape recorder and Dr. Elliot on the left. De Palma maintains the split screen format throughout this extended sequence, carefully choreographing diegetic sounds and

speech from each scene to direct attention from one side to the other, suturing the spaces together while maintaining their coherence and autonomy. Dr. Elliot soon turns off the tape recorder and turns on the television to an episode of the *Phil Donahue Show* that just happens to be about an MTF (male to female) trans-person. Narratively, this sequence hints at Dr. Elliot's trans-identification. The televisual trans-figure is an externalized manifestation of Dr. Elliot's interiority: in the projected image, Dr. Elliot sees himself and subconsciously lives out the fantasy of confessing his trans-identity. Conceptually, the scene reaffirms the disciplinary undercurrent of mass media visibility and (foreshadows) the equivocal nature and paradoxical function of talk show TV in the formation of gay identity (Gamson 1998). Further still, De Palma carefully deploys the screen within a screen effect to also reflexively posit Dr. Elliot himself as a televisual double—an image we observe and with which we too can potentially identify.

The film then cuts to a highly loaded, multi-split shot that warrants detailed deconstruction: on the left, the TV and TV holder take up half of the screen space (or a quarter of the full screen) while a mirror image of Dr. Elliot fills the other half(/quarter); on the right and lower right-hand portion (about 1/3 of the total screen space), Liz sits at her vanity table with a 3-section mirror reflecting her image filling up the mid section of the shot (about 1/3 as well), and her TV that too plays the Nancy Hart interview positioned just above the mirror taking up the shot's top portion. The mirror plays a prominent role organizing the scene's numerous frames and multiple patterns of available identification. The TV itself is coded as a mirror and Liz's split mirror embodies the three genders identified on screen: male, female, and trans.

De Palma seems to be making a concerted effort to eschew not only a stable identity but also stable gender identity. Throughout this dense busy sequence De Palma maintains a doubling formal strategy, connecting characters and events through the use of split screen as well as

through television screens and mirrors. At the same time, the use of split screen and of multiple screens within a screen speaks prominently to a desire for identificatory coherence and the destabilizing power images. "Specular images may be delusory, threatening a sense of secure and stable selfhood" (2006, 101) observes Phillips, and by triangulating the mirror, the television, diegetic screen, De Palma suggests that so too can televisual and cinematic ones.

Dr. Elliot watching the Phil Donohue Show on the left and a close-up of Liz's TV on the right   Fractured identity

As Peter and Liz go over Peter's surveillance footage near the end of the film, the two deduce that Bobbi was Dr. Elliot's final appointment. All they have to do is get access to Dr. Elliot's appointment book to find out the culprit's name. From Liz's apartment we cut to a high-angle shot taken from behind Liz of her sitting in a chair across from Dr. Elliot in his office. Liz hopes to seduce and distract Dr. Elliot while she takes a peek at his agenda. But the plan backfires when her sexual advances, like Kate's, agitate Dr. Elliot, awakening feelings he cannot suppress or properly process. The climactic final scene externalizes Dr. Elliot's internal psychic and sexual conflicts, and for his transformation De Palma turns to the gothic to heighten suspense and drama. Rain, thunder, flashes of light from the lighting, and dark shadows that consume the space engender a brooding atmosphere for the return of the repressed. The first time Liz encountered Bobbi, De Palma relied on the mirror to connect them and underscore a moment of mediated psychic transference. This time, however, De Palma invokes the gothic to underscore a moment of psychic undoing and physical confrontation with the evil double.

Liz attempting to seduce Dr. Elliot   Bobbi returning from her repression

Liz takes off her coat revealing that she isn't wearing clothes but lingerie and then makes her way into Dr. Elliot's office to "powder her nose" in private. The camera remains with Dr. Elliot and the film cuts to a shot of a small mirror on his desk where we see a reflection of him smiling as he looks toward his office off to the side. Dr. Elliot begins to untie his bowtie, signalling his transformation. As Liz searches Dr. Elliot's office, Peter watches the scene unfold from the outside with binoculars. Peter is now her protector, but he is unable to see clearly due to the heavy rain. Momentary flashes of lightning allow Peter to catch brief glimpses of an ominous blonde figure at the window although it is also unclear as to whether the image is a reflection or someone on the other side of the glass. Liz returns to an empty pitch-black room. Confused by this sudden change in atmosphere, she heads toward the window where Peter loudly bangs. As she approaches the window, we see Bobbi from behind Liz holding up a straight razor. As Bobbi swings downward, her police doppelgänger shoots through the window, hitting and knocking Bobbi down. The scene ends with a close-up of Dr. Elliot lying on the floor crying. The double has been taken down by their double.

After the climactic revelation, we transition to the police station where we are treated to analytic commentary by Bobbi/Dr. Elliot's psychologist—a somewhat flimsy alibi that both references *Psycho*'s ending and attempts to provide expertise "knowledge" about trans-identity to (supposedly, and hopefully) counter the film's pathological connotations and representation. We discover that Bobbi was in the final stages of transitioning, but that Dr. Elliot refused to

allow the sex-reassignment surgery to go through. Dr. Elliot's character, although identified as a "transsexual," is, in fact, two different people in one body who apparently aren't even aware each other's existence. Dr. Elliot suffers from multiple personality disorder, and the removal of his penis was supposed to put his stubborn male ego to rest and allow Bobbi to take over. Instead, Bobbi took revenge on Dr. Elliot for continually denying and suppressing her existence by killing women that aroused him. The phallic razor blade Bobbi uses is a representation of the symbolic violence enacted by Dr. Elliot's erection as well as a perverted, if not hateful, emblem for the desired castrating surgical scalpel (Phillips 2006).

Whatever potential is available for a liberal "recuperative analysis," however, is snuffed out by a dramatic and rather terrifying final view of Dr. Elliot locked away in a nineteenth-century looking asylum (the famous Bellevue in New York City). From the disciplinary space of the police station we move to a brief brunch scene where Liz further explains the psychology of transsexuals—more learning and knowledge—and then to the insane asylum where Dr. Elliot is being held. In strong contrast to the brightly lit brunch scene, the psychiatric hospital returns to the gothic. Complementing both the interior architecture and the atmosphere, cool blue hues saturate the space, punctured by the occasional spotlight that allows for minimal visibility. Patients in bright white attire, some of who have their arms secured with restraints, aimlessly walk around or stand off to the side alone. With a long take tracking shot we follow a nurse with squeaky shoes from behind as she makes her way to a large open room where several patients sleep.

The nurse makes her way over to Dr. Elliot and as she leans over he awakens and chokes her to death. Set in what appears to be a reverse panopticon (synopticon) he strips her of her clothing. A few low-angle shots reveal an open roof and multiple circular levels lit with bright

spotlights filled to the brim with patients frenziedly staring down at the unfolding scene. De Palma once again makes conscientious use of deep focus cinematography to collapse spatial distance, metaphorically collapsing the space of the insane asylum and Dr. Elliot's subjectivity. Switching to a bird's eye view, the camera slowly pulls back while a crescendo of Hitchcockian violins play. Carefully choreographed framing splits the screen between the twilight-lit scene of violation below and the navy blue and black darkness of the above levels. The nightmarish carceral psychiatric enclosure doubles as a symbol for Dr. Elliot's interiority.

Low-angle shot of above levels   Bird's eye view of asylum

The trauma of coming into contact with queerness, however, cannot be contained by any physical barrier. From the insane asylum we cut to the exterior of a non-descript house in the evening. Shot from an unknown POV, we hear shoes squeak as the unknown figure makes their way around the house's exterior and breaks one of its windows. The beginning of this concluding sequence will become a standard convention of the slasher subgenre whose Hitchcockian roots, particularly *Psycho* (Williams 2005), are acknowledged by the return to the film's opening shower scene.

The unknown perpetrator makes their way through the house and stops outside the bathroom. We cut to Liz in the shower. She hears the shoes squeak and with the water still running carefully makes her way to the medicine cabinet. As Liz opens the cabinet's door to grab the straight razor inside, we see Bobbi's image reflected in the mirror. Before Liz can grab the razor, Bobbi cuts her throat. De Palms shoots Liz's horrified face from multiple angles and

degrees of distance whose editing once again recalls *Psycho*'s infamous shower scene. We then cut to Liz waking up in bed screaming and grabbing her throat. Peter runs in seconds later to calm her. Although it was only a dream, the horror of coming into contact with a transsexual has damaged Liz for life: Dr. Elliot has buried himself deep inside her head.

Bobbi's reflection in the mirror

Liz waking up from her nightmare. Notice how she now occupies Bobbi's previous position on the left-hand side.

The film's *ronde* structure aligns its visual discourse with the uncanny, and Liz's physical mimesis of the violence from her nightmare in reality underscores "the fuzziness of the border between reality and nightmare, between the conscious and unconscious" (Phillips 2006, 100). Much can be said about the film's misogyny, transphobia, and psychoanalytic treatment of transsexuality, but it is vital we also understand the film as a reflection on the construction of identity itself at point in time demarcated by a general "crisis of identity" increasingly under the influence of media and representation. Liz's miming of the violence she experience in the bathroom not only connects her to Kate, but is also reflective of the way images resonate after we awake from the cinematic dreamscape—"for spectatorship," as Judith Mayne reminds us, "is not just the relationship that occurs between the viewer and the screen, but also and especially how that relationship lives on once the spectator leaves the theater" (1993, 2-3).

According to Robin Wood, "The true subject of horror films" is "the fear of the release of repressed sexuality" ([1986] 2003, 133). Although not a horror film per se, *Dressed to Kill* is very much part of the slasher subgenre that was gaining in popularity in the late 70s and early

80s. I argue that although *Dressed to Kill* is a misguided portrayal of trans/queer sexuality, it is also a symbolic exploration of identity at a moment when multiple identities had emerged from their repression with the explicit intention of destabilizing the norm and the privileges afforded to those therein.

Case Study: Windows (1980) and Lesbian Doppelgängers

The simultaneous exhibition of *Cruising* (to be discussed below) and *Dressed to Kill* solidified into a bona fide cycle with the release of *Windows*, a film about a deranged lesbian who traumatizes and stalks her soft-spoken stuttering straight neighbour. *Windows* was protested alongside *Cruising* (and *Dressed to Kill*) with the mantra "Stop *Cruising*! Smash *Windows*!" capturing the frustrations of an increasingly disenfranchised liberal collective (Charbonneau and Winer 1981; Waugh 1985). The discourse surrounding the hate cycle underscores the urgent need for self-authored identities and representations felt post-Bryant; and yet like *Dressed to Kill*, the film is surprisingly reflexive, constantly pointing back at recording technology and observation as sites of identificatory conflict. *Windows'* central theme is not hate but love ("Somebody loves Emily…too much," according to the DVD cover), and it is through the theme and psychic structuring of narcissism *Windows* encounters a heightened moment around the correlations between visibility and identity.

The double has often been characterized as a narcissistic phenomenon (loving oneself too much) or paranoid reaction, with Freud attributing paranoia to one's inability to accept one's latent homosexual desires. As Rogers writes, "In narcissism, the self-love is literal. The only difference between this kind of love and the erotic love of another is in the object. Narcissism paradoxically involves a relationship, a relationship of self to self in which one's self is regarded as though it were another person" (1970, 18). With the homosexual, the two streams converge:

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"Thus even the paranoid's characteristic sense of being watched or spoken to is considered by Freud to be a delusion of observation which results in a narcissistic gratification for the ego ideal. Another form of narcissistic gratification is that obtained by the homosexual in seeking out objects more like him" (1970, 19).

The origins of the doppelgänger's manifestation in literature according to Andrew Webber are "invariably bound up with sexuality." The double's incarnation underscores "the highly problematic other of subjective desire and identity" (1996, 12) that disrupts, while embodying the underlying faults of, "the binary construction of heterosexuality" (1996, 17). For Webber, "the Doppelgänger returns to haunt subjectivity" (1996, 1), embodying "the stake which epistemology and sexuality have in each other," revealing the "*doublebind* between cognitive and carnal knowledge" (1996, 3). "Knowledge and sexuality" for Webber "are the two predominant forms of…power-play between ego and *alter ego*" (1996, 4) with the doppelgänger embodying the "sort of performative routines of imitation and citation which have been the object of such gender theorists as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler" (1996, 18). Webber contends that "by playing out gender and sexuality in more-or-less compulsive, heightened, and often crossed and troubled ways, the double as *performance artist* is often also a drag artiste, outplaying the subject at his[/her] own impersonation" (1996, 18, emphasis mine). The figure of the double is thus positioned interstitially between performing and the performativity of identity, questioning the nature of identity while at the same time affirming itself as the manifestation of one's "true" identity.

The double is an inherently queer figure that supersedes the normalized identity of its original referent and embodies the instability of self-identity. The double is what the disciplined normalized self secretly longs to be, and its incarnation in the hate cycle speaks prominently to

fears of self-dissolution and the return of feelings and desires buried deeply within. Robert Rogers observes that "disassociation and autoscopy in clinical practice always reflect psychosexual conflict" (1970, 15), and quoting Stanley M. Coleman, adds that "a conflict between libidinal and other aims is a fundamental factor for the postulation of doubles" (1934, 254-73, in Rogers 1970, 15).

More than anything, though, the double is a *visual* phenomenon. "The *Doppelgänger* is above all a figure of visual compulsion," observes Webber, adding that "in the visual field the autoscopic, or self-seeing, subject beholds its other self as another, as visual object (1996, 3). Noting the influence the double will have on twentieth century thought, Webber argues that "the performances of the *Doppelgänger* will be seen as so many rehearsals of a double role on various reconstructions of the Lacanian mirror stage" (1996, 3), introducing "voyeurism and innuendo into the subject's pursuit of a *visual and discursive* sense of self" (1996, 4). With Lacan, the autoscopic impulse in Freud's work materializes into a theory of doubling in its own right, planting the visual as a pillar of contemporary identity formation. In doing so, however, Lacan as well as Freud implant homosexuality and queerness as threats that can only be disavowed or managed and never fully repressed or avoided.

| Window's title sequence | Emily during her attack |

Windows begins with an opening shot of a dark tunnel lined with multi-coloured neon lights that lead toward a bright opening. Separated into individual colours, they are arranged in

the same order of a rainbow, alluding perhaps to the rainbow flag that had become a symbol of political resistance after the assassination of Harvey Milk in November 1978. Emily, the heterosexual protagonist, enters the tunnel with a male partner, whom she is in the process of divorcing. They make their way from the brightly lit exterior toward the camera, symbolizing her descent into darkness and confinement—into the netherworld of homosexuality. From there, we see Emily make her way to her local grocer and then home. When she enters her dark apartment, she is attacked by a stranger. Holding a knife to her throat, the male assailant tells her that she'll die if she yells. Rather than rip her clothes off, he coerces Emily to perform what appears to be dialogue or a script. He puts a knife (a symbolic phallus) in her mouth, asking her to "say ah," telling her to make it sound like she's "having a ball." This uncomfortable drawn-out scene is tape recorded and before anything physical happens the film dissolves to a shot of Andrea, Emily's lesbian neighbour, jogging over the Brooklyn Bridge at dawn.

After her brutal attack Emily no longer feels safe and decides to move to a new apartment in Manhattan. When she enters her apartment for the first time, she makes her way over to the window, places her open hands on the glass pane, and stares out into Brooklyn. What can be read as a moment of Emily feeling her newfound sense of freedom can also be read as a moment that literally reflects her imprisonment. Gazing at the Brooklyn skyline, the film superimposes a reverse shot of Emily from the outside. The shot slowly dissolves as it tracks back briefly superimposing Emily's reflected image and then dissolves into a long shot of the Manhattan skyline. The image of the Manhattan skyline falsely suggests anonymity, foreshadowing Andrea's vantage point from the other side of the East River.

Emily feeling her newfound freedom

Reverse shot suggests she is unknowingly imprisoned

The image of Emily's hands pressed against the window carries dual connotations—awe and entrapment. The window that allows Emily to see out into Brooklyn is also what allows Andrea to see into her private residence—the brief superimposed image of herself underscoring her compromised privacy and split identity. The window is a half-mirror that allows Andrea to see her object of desire and herself in her object of desire, interpellating Emily, positioning her as Andrea's other half. With the help of her large phallic telescope, the window also allows Andrea to keep Emily under surveillance while satisfying her own voyeurism: a not so subtle reference to *Rear Window* (1954)—yet another Hitchcock film. But while Jeff's voyeurism cum surveillance in *Rear Window* saves the day, Andrea's surveillance cum voyeurism is what Emily needs to be saved from. Jeff's gaze is innocuous and protective, intervening at the very end only to save his love object; Andrea's pathological obsession with watching is in and of itself dangerous. The more Emily tries to detach herself from Andrea and stake out her autonomy, the more Andrea intervenes and stakes her out; the more Emily eludes her grasp, the more Andrea tightens her grip.

In her brief synopsis of art cinema and murderous lesbians, Anneke Smelik observes that "Lacan took a great deal of interest in the crime of the sisters Papin and based part of his later reflections on the mirror phase on this case, a concept which had a great influence on film theory" (2004, 73). The sisters were accused of killing their employers, and according to Smelik,

"Lacan was fascinated by women who had committed a crime, especially by what he saw as the paranoid female criminal. According to him, the paranoid structure means that the female criminal sees her mirror image reflected in her victim." Lacan felt that female criminals suffered from "'the danger of too much closeness',," which "can have disastrous consequences and explode in aggression when the subjects are forced to allow the outside world into the relation or when they are forced to separate. Lacan attributes an 'erotomaniac' component to this kind of paranoia, consisting of repressed homosexuality." Based on these subjects, Lacan concluded "that only the male subject can approximate the correct distance. Without the intervention of a third term, the male other, the two women are frightening *Doppelgänger*, copies of one single self. In Lacanian psychoanalysis the mirror phase is the psychic phenomenon in which that 'correct distance' is established for the subject" (2004, 73). Without the sexed other there can be only the double and in *Windows* the male detective (Luffrono) assigned to Emily's case becomes the symbolic "corrective distance" that chides Andrea's gaze and keeps her at a distance. He becomes the threatening other who thwarts Andrea's attempt at reunification.

The telescope with which Andrea observes Emily is also the optical opening to Emily's courting. The surveillance apparatus that allows Andrea to observe her object of desire forces her to simultaneously bear witness to her own failure and impotence. Unable to control and take possession of her love interest, Andrea can only simmer in her own powerlessness and rejection. She watches from a distance the scene of budding romantic heterosexual love that requires her absence to play out in front of her eyes through an optical apparatus as though she were watching a typical Hollywood movie. Indeed, at one point while Andrea watches Emily and detective Luffrono scan a newspaper (for movie listings presumably) through her telescope, an image from *Now Voyager* (1942) is briefly superimposed over the image of the couple. *Now Voyager* is a

famous crypto-lesbian Hollywood classic (White 1999) whose appropriation here and at this exact moment mocks Andrea but also undermines the heterosexual courting. We cut to Andrea and the detective sitting on the floor watching the film on a miniature television just as Bette Davis's spinster character utters her famous lines of heterosexual refusal—"Oh Jerry, don't let's ask for the moon. We have the stars." Although *Now Voyager* is officially heterosexual, in this context its lesbian subtext is used to connect Andrea to Emily. The telescope is thus dually connoted as both a (failed) phallic substitute for Andrea's non-existent physical penis and a metaphor for the cinematic apparatus whose symbolic screen is that of the window. Emily and Luffrono watch a romantic tale together on the television screen while Andrea is forced to do the same.

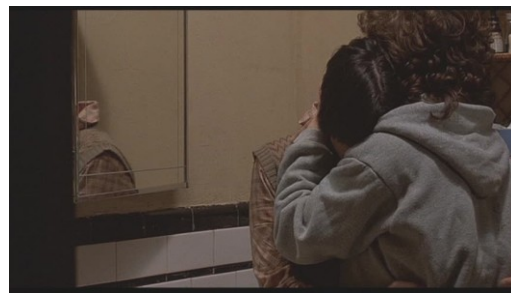| Watching a love story unfold… | While watching a love story unfold |

In an unsettling but reflexive previous scene, Emily returns to her apartment to gather a few belongings. Andrea "casually" stops by to inquire about her unavailability, and Emily informs her that she's moved. As the two chat, Emily hears a knocking at her door. Keeping the door chain in place, she slowly opens it and is startled when a hand reaches through and tries to grab her. Still rattled from her previous attack, Emily falls into the adjacent bathroom. Andrea rushes to the door and begins to crush the unidentified arm, saving Emily. After the door has been successfully shut and the assailant has, presumably, left, Andrea tends to Emily. Holding her closely, Andre tells Emily that everything will be alright. Shot inside the doorway in medium

close-up, we see Emily's back pressed up against the corner with her image reflected in the medicine cabinet's mirror. Andrea enters and with her back towards the camera, she grabs Emily's face and tries to calm her down. In the mirror, we see her hands going for Emily's face in a manner that feels menacing rather than comforting, a subjective feeling created by carefully skewed optics. As Emily gives in and leans in toward Andrea, her face and head disappear from the mirror. Only a sliver of her shoulder and her shirt collar without a head remain visible. This carefully choreographed malicious psychological warfare is meant to further traumatize Emily and leave her feeling even more vulnerable and susceptible to Andrea's heroism, but it also marks an instance of perverted emotional and physical intimacy.

Andrea's hands: consoling yet menacing   Emily: "safe" yet decapitated

The use of the mirror in this context carries important connotations and tells a slightly different story than the one playing out on screen. According to Olu Jenzen (2013), in "early twentieth-century art, lesbian eroticism was often portrayed through the image of the double and in particular commonly depicted as a mirror reflection," and observes that "abundant use of mirror shots" in cinema are "an intertextual reference to a longstanding tradition within popular culture and art to use the mirror trope as shorthand for lesbian eroticism" (2013, 352). Speaking of Lacan, Smelik reminds us that "the identity of the self is in fact an identification with the other who is incorporated within the illusion of autonomy." The "distance between self and other is as fictional and imaginary as one's own identity" and requires vigilant monitoring. The "loss of the boundary between self and other," Smelik points out, "will swallow up the subject" (2004, 74). It

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is precisely this self-implosion we see Andrea undergo at the climactic end when her final attempt to break down the border between her and Emily fails.

As the film approaches its climax, Andrea kills her therapist who tries to have her committed and makes a last ditch effort to get Emily to love her. After seeing Emily hug detective Luffrono through her telescope one evening, Andrea is no longer able to simply observe from a distance. She calls Emily, interrupting her moment of intimacy. When Emily picks up the phone, Andrea remains silent, hoping the heavy breathing will intimidate her. When detective Luffrono gets on the phone, Andrea, in a deep voice says, "You son of a bitch, don't touch her." He hangs up and tells Emily it was "no one." The closer Emily gets to the detective, the more desperate and unstable Andrea becomes. Both surveillance and voyeurism tend to be seen as two interrelated forms of looking, but while voyeurism entails pleasurable observation, surveillance entails intervention. If Andrea's gaze was both voyeurism (spying on Emily while she strokes her big thick telescope) and surveillance (monitoring her behaviour), by the end, the pleasurable component of her spying is replaced with the need to intervene and correct the situation she observes from afar.

Desperate to get Emily alone, Andrea kills Emily's cat. When Emily finds her cat dead in her freezer, Andrea (conveniently) calls Emily and offers to console her at her new loft that too just happens to be off the East River. Shaken, Emily makes her way over and enters Andrea's dark loft—her entrance reminiscent of her return home prior to her attack. When Emily discovers Andrea's telescope, Andrea informs Emily that she doesn't look all the time, just every so often to make sure she's all right—like a friendly Big Sister. Andrea confesses that she's glad Emily knows because she doesn't "want it to be a secret." Surveillance in this instance is a metaphor for Andrea's homosexuality. Andrea has simultaneously come out of two closets.

Andrea stroking her long thick telescope   Andrea taking control and "coming out"

Earlier on we saw Andrea sitting in her car by the East River lighting a cigarette and playing the taped recording of Emily's assault. Identifying with Emily's attacker allows Andrea to "be with" Emily. Participating by proxy via the recording apparatus, the scene ends with Andrea tilting her head upward and exhaling in ecstasy to the sound of Emily complying with her assailant's orders. The cigarette connotes sexual satisfaction and masturbation with the entire scene conforming to anti-porn feminism's claim that all forms of sexual recording are implicitly demeaning and forms of rape. The audio recording is both criminal evidence and pornography, implicitly equating the two, and positions Andrea as a substitute "male" aggressor, aligning lesbianism with aggressive predatory masculinity. The tape recording is no longer enough, though. Andrea wants the real thing.

As in *Dressed to Kill*, the ending parallels the opening scene. Andrea begins by forcing Emily to make false claims of love. Andrea takes a knife to Emily's throat after finding out the rapist she hired "hurt" Emily. Andrea demands Emily lift up her sweater and show her what he saw. Keeping the knife to her throat, Andrea tells Emily to say "ah." Andrea wants to re-enact Emily's violation and take the physical place of the rapist. The more Andrea tries to force Emily return to and relive her trauma and violation, the more erratic Andrea becomes. Andrea wants to feel Emily, but she also feels for her, too. Repossessing her object of desire means the border between Andrea and Emily dissolves. Andrea becomes a victim of her own perversity and

insanity and has what appears to be a simultaneous nervous breakdown and orgasm. What feels like an emotional crescendo to a struggle or scene of violence is cut short by Emily's simple slap. The unstable lesbian is instantly subdued by nothing more than a symbolic final rejection delivered through minimal physical contact. The next morning Andrea is locked away, leaving Emily and the detective free to be together.

Re-enacting the scene of violation

With the phallus-seeking lesbian incarcerated, the heterosexual couple can now be together

As with *Dressed to Kill*, it is easy to dismiss the film as a simple exercise in homophobia. But *Windows* is a thriller that delivers on its promise to present viewers with a twisted antagonist who torments their prey and is also surprisingly reflexive in the way it implicates observation and recording technology (read: cinema) as pathological entities themselves. The hate cycle helped to popularize the thriller that flourished throughout the 80s and 90s (Williams 2005). As an early example, it is understandable that *Windows* would have been received so negatively, but in comparison to the genre as a whole, both Andrea and the script are not all that different from similarly themed films with heterosexual antagonists. Again, this is not to suggest that the film is a shining example of queer filmmaking, especially since no queer input was given, but rather to demonstrate that the hate cycle's obsession with doubling and surveillance influenced a variety of subsequent representation.

It is not accidental that several New Queer Cinema films poached themes, conventions and iconography from the thriller, especially the trope of the psychotic queer killer (Smelik 2004,

Rich 2013b). Nor is it accidental that what I call Hollywood's second hate cycle was comprised almost entirely of thrillers or that mainstream film post-New Queer Cinema often turned to the thriller to titillate audiences with images of sexual transgression (*Bound* [1996], *The Talented Mr. Ripley* [1999]). These developments will be discussed in further depth in the next chapter. With *Windows*, I simply wanted to demonstrate how the seed of future discourse was planted by a film(/cycle) that was universally denounced by the very people who would later champion its not-all-that-different queer re-visioning.

Case Study: Cruising (1980) and the Dangers of Over-Identification

       Cruising tells the story of Gary Burns (Al Pacino), a New York detective sent to infiltrate gay male culture's seedy underbelly in order to catch a serial killer murdering gay men in the leather community. Burns is recruited because he fits the profile of the victims. Similarly to Liz in *Dressed to Kill*, the police hope they can use Burns as bait to lure the killer out from the shadows. Burns's success relies on his performance coming off as authentic. As Burns delves deeper and deeper into the culture he studies, he learns to mimic its denizens so effectively that by the end he is unable to distinguish himself from his self-created alter ego—the line between mimesis and transformation disintegrates. Burns's self-doubling is reinforced by his symbiotic relationship with the serial killer he seeks to expose: the killer becomes Burns's physical and psychological double (Wood [1986] 2002). As Burns immerses himself into the world of gay leather sex, he is forced to see through not only the eyes of those he observes, but also through the eyes of those he hunts. Like Burns, the killer looks just like the men in the community. In fact, all the men represented look pretty much exactly alike.

Burns making his way through an endless stream of clones

By the late 70s the Castro "clone" had organically developed into an idealized identity (Levine 1988). The sameness of same-sex desire was condensed into an easily replicable persona: blue jeans, white t-shirt or tank top, and facial hair. Like Burns and the killer, we too watch and study the clones. As Burns conducts his ethnography, we too learn about the homosexual and their ways—now as much as then considering the erasure of gay male leather culture from the terrain of queer representation. But the film's ambiguous ending suggests that at some point Burns's ethnography turned to autoethnography. Burns over-identified with his test subjects. Burns got in too deep. At some point his alter ego took over. Like Andrea and Dr. Elliot, the closer Burns gets to capturing his object of desire, the more he comes undone. Maybe he was the queer killer all along?

Greven observes that "something strange began to happen in the early 1980s: art ceased to be art and became *representation*, and representation became directly related to identity, on both individual and group levels" (2013, 184). Post-Bryant, gay identities had congealed into something formidable that needed to be defended against a growing reactionary politics. *Cruising* as well as *Dressed to Kill* and *Windows* were considered by some a core part, and symptom of, this conservative swelling. Of Hollywood's newfound interest in the life and psychology of the homosexual, Simon Watney (1982) reminds us that

the concept of "sexuality," which organises us all into distinct if highly generalised categories, according to our sexual pleasures, is only a little older than the cinema. Film emerged in a period of immense moral panic concerning the apparent discovery of a new and intrinsically degenerate species of being in our midst—the homosexual—a previously undetected and therefore all the more insidious threat to "morality" and "public order." It was also intensively developed as a competitive capitalist industry around the ideology of "family entertainment," and the commercial need for "mass" audiences. From its origins, as Michael Chanan [(1980)] has pointed out, film was also understood by the State and moral puritans as an instrument for instruction, and a potentially dangerous "corrupting" influence. For this reason it has always been subject to intense "moral" scrutiny, especially from those who equate morality with sex. *A profound anxiety about homosexuality is thus deeply inscribed within the entire history of motion pictures, an anxiety which compounds a fear of moral "contagion"* with the loss of profits (117-118; emphasis mine).

For Watney, cinema is an agent of, and inextricable from, the surveillance of sexuality. But what Watney also articulates is that cinema ineluctably animates the spectre of homosexuality, too.

Taking his cue from Dyer, Watney describes how "recent discussion of homosexuality and cinema have been organized around the concept of stereotyping" (1982, 108). Quoting Dyer's belief that "'what we should be attacking in stereotypes is the attempt of heterosexual society to define us for ourselves" (1977, 31; cited in 1982, 108), Watney contends that Dyer's "work correctly prioritises a concern with the practical consequences of the dominant patterns used to signify sexual 'deviants' in relation to the cultural acquisition of lesbian and gay identities. It stresses the distinction between sexual behaviour and social identity" (1982 108).

For Watney stereotypes matter because "a stereotype is rarely simply a misrepresentation; it is almost invariably a site of ideological contestation….To identify a stereotype is to signal one's rejection of a particular image, usually of oneself. It is to refuse an identification to which one has been interpellated" (1982, 108). Stereotyping intersects identity and challenges self-authorship, and for Watney, "*Cruising* effectively closes down any consideration of the continual struggle on the part of lesbians and gays to define our own social relations and sexual pleasures" (1982, 6-7). There was something about *Cruising* that compelled action that culminated in physical disruption: *Cruising* was the first film whose production *and* release were protested by gay and lesbian activists.

Similarly to *Boys*, *Cruising* was received and perceived as an invasion of privacy. While *Boys* recreated a private residence to enter and represent, *Cruising* was filmed on location. Shot in and around Greenwich Village, protestors used noise and deflected light to shut down production. It wasn't enough for Hollywood to represent gays, Hollywood had to physically go into their space, take it over, and document it: *Cruising* was literally forced ethnography. Frustrations were high, and as Watney notes, "one demonstrator enquired of the city officials what would happen if a producer tried to re-make *The Birth of a Nation* in Harlem, using black extras" (1982, 112). It is understandable that activists would find such a film so insulting, especially since the production quite literally penetrated and violated the sanctity of the gay village. Although officially a public space, the gay village was felt and perceived as a private space located concentrically within a larger public arena. As David Halperin notes, gay ghettos "produced queer communities freed from the surveillance of straight folks" (2012, 434). In the case of *Cruising,* not only did officially unfriendly outsiders force their way into that tacitly demarcated safe space, but went in there with the express intent of making that space transparent

and public—and for some, with the express intent of purposefully misrepresenting those people protected by a thin sheath of invisibility. By physically entering the spaces it represents and using people from within that community, *Cruising* blurs the line between fictional and (f)actual: fantasy and ethnography converge.

Assessing the response to the film, Alexander Wilson (1984) suggests that one of the positives that came about from *Cruising*'s release was the "number of contradictions already present in American gay politics" (100). Activists felt *Cruising* sent a message to Americans that all gay men are like those portrayed in the film and could lead to violence against gay men— "Gay People Will Die Because Of This Film," read several pamphlets (Burston, 1999, 90). But the protests also highlight a crucial political disjuncture that manifests itself most prominently when debating representation: protestors claimed the film misrepresents gay culture and identity while Friedkin and film extras continually testified to the film's accuracy (Wilson 1984). For some, gay rights activists were afraid not of the film's inaccuracy but of it being *too* accurate (Wilson 1984; Burston 1999).

Wilson notes that "it was widely felt among the extras interviewed that the demonstrators didn't want the leather world to be seen by straight people" (1984, 105). Those in the leather community accused activists of dividing the gay community and shaming leather sexuality. Because leather sex transgresses liberal notions of sexual equality, the leather community felt that gay rights activists wanted to keep its representation out of the spotlight because it would damage the unified image they were trying to put forth. For activists, however, Friedkin, an outsider, was airing out the community's "dirty laundry" in public. If what people saw was too accurate, people would assume that all those grouped under the banner of "gay" were represented in some shape or form on screen. What some protesters protested was the accuracy

in the depiction of a subculture that would be misconstrued for the whole: they were protesting *their* sexual other whose image they felt did not accurately represent them.

At issue is the degree to which the film uses realism as an alibi to sell a fictional portrayal while claiming a certain documentary-like accuracy. As Wilson notes, "In his frequent defenses of the film, Friedkin has argued that its depiction of the gay leather scene is 'realistic,'" (1984, 100). The appeal to realism bolsters *Cruising*'s underlying ethnography: because it is detailed and precise, it is real. Of course any representation, fictional or factual, is subject to aesthetic and formal manicuring.

Our introduction to the gay world begins with a police cruiser driving down a non-descript street at night. Our first look into this world is from the point of view of the heterosexual authority figure and not that of a denizen. Shot from the cruiser's point of view, the camera films a bustling gay nightlife in one long take while ominous music overlays these brooding, almost haunting images imbued with gothic overtones: a series of lone males in black or concealed by dark shadows slowly walking nowhere in particular; blue and metallic tints envelop the cityscape; city lights and moonlight reflect off the pavement, infusing these twilight scenes with a feeling of isolation. Friedkin may very well be showcasing something factual (men in denim and leather walking to and from various points of interest) but the sequence is not without aesthetic treatment.
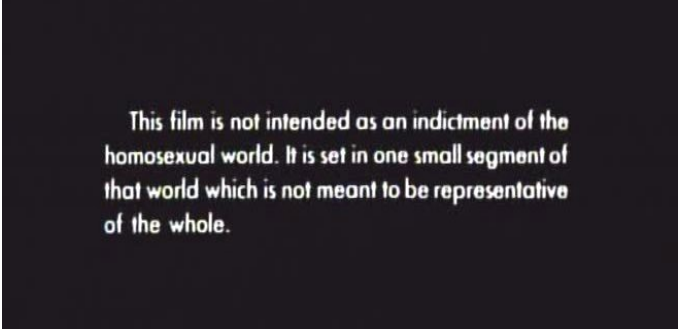

Police officers patrolling the dark crowded streets

From the various bars and clubs to the evening cruising culture of Manhattan's many parks, these real spaces were filmed in such a way as to bring out some notion of an inner essence. As Greven notes, "*Cruising* constantly undermines the sense of realism it also strikingly seeks to produce…the dark blue tones give a ghostly yet vivid intensity to the actors and set" (Greven 2013, 188). A tension forms between documentary realness and a gothic style that undergirds the entire narrative and formal structure, blurring the line between objective and subjective. The initial shot/reverse shot pattern between the mobile takes of the pedestrians and the two officers in the cruiser sets up a false binary between "us" and "them." Our introduction to the gay underworld suggests that a clear division between observer and observed will be maintained when the film is, in fact, dedicated to breaking down that binary.

Damon Young argues that "far from simply demonizing homosexuals as killers, it now seems that ten years before queer theory, *Cruising* anticipates all three major strands: the theory of gender performativity; the analysis of the panicked and unstable divide between male homosociality and homosexuality; and the so-called 'antisocial thesis" (2013a, 120). For Young, *Cruising* was negatively received and remains problematic in certain circles in part because of how it universalizes same-sex desire and denies a stable internal gay identity promoted by liberal rights-based activism. "The film is not about homosexuals as a discrete, minority group," he writes. On the contrary, it is about "the instability of the line between heterosexual and homosexual male identity (2013a, 110). The leather doppelgängers Friedkin puts onscreen—or "onscene," to use Young's use of Williams's (2004) term—deny ethnographic knowledge of some internal truth, undermining masculinity and the fixity of heterosexuality through parodic mimesis taken to the extreme. "Sexual identity," observes Young, is "far from expressive of an

inner truth;" instead, it is "based on imitation, which is to say it is both *social* and *performative*"

(2013a, 120).

Cruising remains such a fascinating film because of how it denies clear identification and

continuously undercuts its claims to both authenticity and fiction. The film begins with an added

intertitle meant to appease protestors that reads:

But it is impossible not to see the film as a microcosm of the "homosexual world" when our only

real identification is with a heterosexual (?) authority figure who guides us through the nether

regions of an exotic clandestine community; even more so considering the poverty of

representation, let alone positive or affirmative representation, to come out of Hollywood (at the

time). As Guy Davidson argues, "The straight protagonist functions as a proxy for the potential

straight viewer…[with] the protagonist's unfamiliarity with the arcane world of the gay ghetto

licen[cing] an 'ethnographic' mode of representation" (2005, 25). Friedkin's ethnographic gaze

penetrates deeper than his previous voyeuristic peak into the sordid private affairs of a group of

dysfunctional gay friends. Post-Bryant, the homosexual lost his/her exotic appeal, becoming a

threatening figure whose psychology and sexual appetites needed to be better understood. Using

the alibi of "catching a criminal," Friedkin is given licence to penetrate deep into the social

psychology of the gay male ghetto. While the alibi of authority maintains distance early on, the

allure of this liberated yet oddly overly regulated underworld chips away at our heterosexual protagonist's professional barrier—and possibly at those observing in the audience.

Cruising continues Friedkin's penchant for gothic stylization, underscoring the duality of out gay life as something naturally regulated by time: dusk till dawn belongs to the homosexual, dawn till dusk the "heterosexual." Webber points out that doppelgänger literature records "the fugitive, secret stories of men leading double lives" observing that in the gothic classic *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), the "arid bachelor Jekyll, in a homosocial world populated almost exclusively by other arid bachelors, is implicated in heterosexual or homosexual fantasies through the night life of his double" (1996, 17). It is at night when the perverse double often manifests itself and takes over. During the day, Burns is a straight cop (except when talking to his gay neighbour). At night, he is a leather queen on the hunt for a good time. But while in typical doppelgänger narratives one ego operates without the other's consent or knowledge, Burns has to put in an effort to manufacture and temporarily become his alter ego. What we actually bear witness to isn't his attempt to catch a killer, but his self-directed transformation. And yet at some point Burns loses control over himself. Somewhere along the way something or someone else begins to direct him.

There is an undeniable didactic quality to *Cruising*. At times, the film can come off like an instructional video on "how to be gay" (which also happens to be the title of David Halperin's [2012] latest book on gay male culture) with interludes of murder that just happen to be spliced in. We watch Burns learn how to be gay, how to navigate the norms and rituals of his new environment like so many men before him who made their pilgrimage to the gay Mecca that is New York City. Frequent attention is given to the intricacies of the subculture such as the meaning of the coloured hanky system, cruising zones, and subcultural conventions. And yet, as

Young (2013a) observes, the film denies us genuine ethnographic knowledge and in many ways fails to tell us anything about gay identity itself. Burns's ethnographic journey is a journey through himself, but one that ultimately reveals that there is no innate or solidified sexual self. The attentions to detail are what give the film its "gritty realism" but it is that very same realism that also gives the film an uncomfortable uncanny quality.

Because the viewer watches not so much a crime investigation, but an identified straight man learning how to be gay, the presumed straight audience member also receives a lesson in how to be gay. Although the lessons offer a glimpse into the coded practices of a small sexual community, they likewise construct identity as something inherently performative precisely because of the film's ethnographic impulse. By the end it is clear that Burns has been affected by his surroundings, transformed even. And it is precisely this threat of transformation via encountering the spectacle of all-male sexuality that makes the film such an important and transformative text itself. The film changed the field of representation (Young 2013a). But more importantly the rhetoric around "contagion" represented in the film almost half acknowledges that part of the thrill of watching *Cruising* for straight audiences is the threat "going native," of being affected and possibly transformed, like Burns.

When undertaking ethnographic research one often immerses oneself in one's new environment, but doing so also raises the threat of over-identifying with one's subjects—of losing oneself in the other, or, "going native" (Taussig 1993). Burns moves into a Greenwich Village apartment and is told to cut off all contact, relinquish his gun and identification, and keep his identity secret—heterosexuality is now the dirty secret that must be kept hidden. By quarantining himself he is forced to learn the ins and outs of his new cultural setting. Donning a leather jacket and an inquiring set of eyes, he wanders the streets and bar hops, trying to orient

himself to his new environment. Walking by a shop with coloured handkerchiefs hanging out front, Burns inquires within about their significance. He is told that each colour represents a certain desired behaviour or fetish (blowjob, anal, urine). Whether one likes to give or receive depends on which pocket the handkerchief is located: left, give; right, receive. Burns has learned his first lesson.

Burns learning about the colour-coded hanky system

After he leaves the store, the film cuts to Burns (later in the evening?) staring into a bathroom mirror applying makeup to accentuate his eyebrows. The voice of his superior echoes in voiceover—"how would you like to disappear?" This is the first moment we see Burns examining and altering himself in the mirror. But this is also Burns's first major foray into his newly developing persona, suggesting Burns may have taken the assignment for other than professional reasons. Applying makeup grafts a new identity onto his face and allows him to "disappear" into this constructed image. But maybe he's appearing and not disappearing. After freshening up, Burns heads to the Wolf's Den. He sits at the sidelines and observes how the men interact—typical behaviour of someone who is unfamiliar with the environment in which they find themselves, reinforced by a series of shot/reverse shots of men walking by and staring directly at him, as if they can smell "fresh meat." Burns is solicited by a tall topless man, but rejects his offer, stating, "I like to watch." The man curtly responds by telling him that he if he

likes to watch he should take that hanky out of his pocket and calls him an "asshole" as he walks away. Burns has learned his second lesson.

Burns looking and being looked at

For the first half of the film, we see moments where Burns is affected by his surroundings, but it is not until about halfway through that we see him temporarily lose himself for the first time. After a particularly gruesome murder scene at a gay porn video arcade, Burns makes his way back to yet another bar where the sight of explicit and extreme sexual play seems to affect him in ways for which he could not prepare. Burns enters the bar wearing a pair of blue jeans and a black tank top (that parallel the dress of those in the porno arcade) and walks over to the bar. From a distance, he sees a moustachioed man in a white tank top standing over someone wearing leather chaps (a small amount of visible flesh ensures we don't mistake them for pants) lying on his back in a chain swing with his legs spread wide open. We cut to a close-up of Burns and then to a close-up of the man in white applying a generous amount of lubrication to his fist and lower forearm and then moving his arm toward the swing. We quickly cut to a medium shot of the (topless) man in the swing reacting with gratification as his body absorbs and works with the motions of his play partner's fist. We then cut to a medium long shot from behind the swing apparatus of the man in white fisting his partner and then back to a close-up of Burns's face. This

is the first time we see Burns bearing witness to any display of explicit gay sex.[17] This is Burns's primal scene; the moment of conception as well as his undoing.

Burns bearing witness to the primal scene

Pioneering leather sex anthropologist Geoff Mains observes that "fisting, like most all of leather, is an exploration of human limits" ([1984] 2002, 131), provocatively arguing that fisting is "the nearest thing to giving birth" ([1984] 2002, 133)—in fisting "we re-live the agony of our birth in the quest for ecstasy" (Mains [1984] 2002, 140). Fisting is a (and quite possibly the most) physically extreme sex act, which pushes physical and mental limits, whose stretching of the rectum and mixture of intense pleasure and pain is akin to a birthing experience—the gaping rectum temporarily no different from a vaginal opening. For Mains, "Passage into the Gay world involves the acceptance of one's nature. Passage into the leatherworld involves confrontation with the elements of taboo, power, and instinct as well as sexuality" ([1984] 2002, 30). In *Cruising* we see the reverse: Burns moving through the latter to make his way through the former. Mains also argues that leather sexuality is a celebration of sexuality as a *primal* instinct that resists "civilization"—leather is a symbolic and literal "second skin" ([1984] 2002). Donning leather gear allows Burns to create and adopt an alter ego through which he can explore

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[17] Young, however, suggests that a carefully inserted ellipsis after Burns walks off with a stranger sporting a red hanky in his left pocket (that identifies him as a fister) he encounters in Central Park leads "us to wonder if the fisting scene that Burns later witnesses in the leather bar is really his first encounter with that practice" (2013a, 122). The implication, however, is vague.

his surroundings. But after witnessing a sex act that pushes masculinity to its limits and over into the terrain of the feminine, his second skin seems to meld into his flesh, becoming his primary skin.

Although I agree with Young (2013a) that overall *Cruising* challenges the organization of sexuality into discreet identities, the film also places heavy emphasis on transformation and sexual awakening. I'm not suggesting that Burns is a repressed homosexual whose identity slowly rises to the surface, but rather that his desire for the same sex and the culture organized around all-male desire manifests itself and begins to take over as he is incrementally exposed to gay sexuality's more intimate and intricate depths. "The primal scene proper is by definition a witnessing of sex from a time before the understanding of sex is possible" that explains "the enigma of the origin of the self," writes Williams (2008, 225-226). I argue Burns's inquisitive but quietly stunned witnessing of the unfolding fisting scene doubles as his primal scene.

Although Young argues that "*Cruising* may in fact possess some of the qualities that characterize a primal scene," partly because both *Cruising* and the primal scene are traumatic moments that arrive "*without any framework for receiving it*" (2013a 110), Young glosses over the primal scene represented within the film itself—Burns, after all, unknowingly stumbles into the activity without any warning. As Williams notes, the primal scene is characterized by the "first witnessing of a sex act initially understood by the inexperienced child as pain *and only later as pleasure* (2008, 237; emphasis mine). Burns is noticeably more comfortable with his surroundings and self after seeing the young man absorb an entire fist into his rectum, and after bearing witness to this painful sex act, Burns heads to the dance floor where out of nowhere he becomes consumed by rapturous pleasure.

Burns is brought hand-in-hand out to the dance floor after witnessing the scene of fisting. While dancing with his new friend, Burns inhales some chemicals from a cloth ("poppers"). As the drug takes effect, Burns starts to really loosen up. He begins to dance more aggressively and lively. His movements become more pointed and severe. As he dances, the film's editing becomes frantic, cutting to the various onlookers at the sidelines, shots of the man loving his time in the sling, sweaty topless men holding each other and kissing, and close-ups of lights flashing behind an American flag light fixture that infuse the scene with a hypnotic rhythm and intensity. This frenzied dreamlike moment visualizes Burns's interiority, of Burns transforming and letting new feelings consume him. Before cutting to the leather bar's exterior, we see Burns with a full smile on his face, dancing as hard and as passionately as everyone else around him. He has assimilated. He is now one of them.

Burns transitioning

The combined themes of surveillance, doubling, and the threat of transference are crystallized in *Cruising*'s infamous concluding sequence where Burns blankly stares at himself in his bathroom mirror. After identifying and arresting the (supposed) killer, and after discovering that his neighbour whom he befriended has been killed, Burns returns to his apartment and previous life. Burns's girlfriend enters his apartment and finds him shaving in the bathroom. As she makes herself at home, the film cuts between her and Burns looking at himself in the mirror as he shaves. Pacing while waiting for Burns to finish, she sees a pair of reflective

aviator sunglasses and a leather police cap with a big shiny silver insignia on the brim…the exact

same accessories the killer at the porno arcade wore. She puts them and the accompanying

leather jacket on. The film then cuts to our final shot of Burns wiping away excess shaving

cream off his face. Could Burns have been the killer all along? Our final image of Burns is of

him staring at himself in the mirror and then off to the side, directly into the viewer's eyes. His

final gaze breaks the forth wall, confrontationally interpellating the spectating subject.

Performance or conversion?

If the fisting sequence symbolizes a kind of re-birthing, and if Burns is the stand-in for

the presumed heterosexual viewer, then it leaves open the possibility of the audience being

seduced as well. As in *Dressed to Kill*, the narrative is structured by a reflexivity that points back

at the audience via the characters' confrontation with consuming and destructive queerness

onscreen. Davidson questions "the significance of narratives in which simulating gayness

becomes—more or less—indistinguishable from being gay" (2005, 24), and suggests that "the

paranoid gaze that Burns returns to the camera in the final scene may elicit an equally paranoid,

self-surveilling gaze from the viewer: Burns's look at the camera suggests that the disorder of

identification he is undergoing may extend outside the world of the film" (2005, 52).

Following Mark Seltzer (1998), Davidson argues that there are "'contagious relations'"

between mimetic technologies and embodied identities" (2005, 24), and that "the contagious

relations between representations and actions that we observe in the film might be understood as

metonymizing or complementing its account of identity" (2005, 49). The film's open ending leaves "the possibility of a blurring between a homosexuality and a heterosexuality that were in other respects understood as discreet" (2005, 54). For Davidson, we cannot ignore the affective powers of film and suggests that in the same way that Burns, in his quest to know the homosexual, moves from simulation to mimesis and then on to assimilation and possible transformation, the audience too can potentially be transformed by the viewing process—like the young man who died after watching gay sex on screen at the porno theatre.

About halfway through the film, a young man with dark features makes his way to an adult bookstore that doubles as a porno arcade and cruising zone (Champagne 1997). In the back room he gives a hard glance to a man in leather wearing sunglasses and smoking a cigarette and follows him into a private viewing booth. The young man inserts a quarter. The film begins to play, and the two men touch hands. The young man gets up and kneels in front of the one in leather. Reminiscent of the first murder scene where a young man was tied up and stabbed multiple times in the back, as the porn movie plays, the man in leather pulls out a knife and stabs the young man to death—an act of violence that not only signifies anal sex, but also aligns the sex act with death and a sense of foreboding (Young 2013a). With each stabbing motion, the film cuts back to the screen—death via spectatorship.

Knife as phallus   Seeing pain or seeing pleasure?   The rectum as grave

Much as has been said about the association between anal sex, violence, and death in *Cruising* (Wood (1983) 2003; Miller 2007; Greven 2013; Young 2013). Juxtaposing violent penetration in the screening room with images of gay male sexuality onscreen can easily be read as homophobic, but should also be read symbolically, especially since it immediately precedes the fisting/dancing sequence—the death of a previous self followed by the birth of a new one. The ambiguous final image of Burns staring at himself in the mirror leaves the entire film narrative open to interpretation. We see in the final image what we want to see. Burns's introspective journey is also our own introspective journey: our interpretation of the final haunting image says more about us than the narrative or Burns.

Although the film has been criticized for its incoherence (Wood [1983] 2003], Young (2013) suggests the film's disorganized narrative is meant to mirror Burns's unclear identity and unstable interiority: *Cruising*'s textual form mirrors Burns's inchoate subjectivity. As in *Dressed to Kill* and *Windows*, the mirror in *Cruising* serves a narrative as well as dual symbolic purpose: to signify the unraveling and incoherence of identity and act as a metaphor for the cinematic viewing experience. In *Cruising* in particular we see the mirror crystallizing Foucault's notion of heterotopia as indeterminate and liminal. It is not surprising, then, that Foucault spoke of the mirror as primarily a heterotopia.

> The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of *shadow* that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. (Foucault [1967]/1986, 24; emphasis mine).

Foucault's privileging of the mirror is undoubtedly inspired by Lacan, who himself emphasized that "the role of the mirror apparatus in the appearance of *doubles*, in which physical realities manifest themselves that are, moreover, heterogeneous" ([1949/1966] 2006, 77). Of particular importance is how Foucault himself, prior to screen theory, aligned the cinema with the mirror, conceiving of it as a heterotopia—"a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space…capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" ([1967] 1986, 25). I suggest we think of not only *Cruising* but also the hate cycle, which placed such heavy emphasis on mirrors, as inverted heterotopias: mirror reflections that represent the undoing of the self as dystopia from the view point of those whose identity was coming undone.

Steven Shaviro contends that "mimesis and contagion tend to efface fixed identities" and "blur boundaries between inside and outside" (1993, 53): "the image is not a symptom of lack, but an *uncanny*, excessive residue of being that subsists when all *should* be lacking" (1993, 17). The film's open ending renders Burns's home and identity uncanny—no longer secure and familiar but unfamiliar and unstable. Smelik reminds us that "the uncanny is related to repression: it reveals what should be hidden but comes to the surface. Whether the uncanny expresses itself through a thing, person, event or situation, it arouses dread and horror" (2007, para 2). What we see in *Cruising* is the coming to surface of something, but what that something is remains unclear. Shaviro contends that "the public sphere of heterosexual 'normality' can enforce its standards, and perpetuate itself, only insofar as it is doubled by a inner world of fear, isolation, secrecy, and guilt" (1993, 75). However we interpret Burns's transformation—

homosexual identity or desire—it is clear that the film articulates a sense of something that was repressed returning, and that whatever that something is should be feared.

Cruising was heavily criticized for, and accused of, trafficking in the conservative "contagion" or "vampire" theorem that predominated popular perceptions of homosexuality at the time (Russo [1981] 1987; Wood [1986] 2002; Watney 1982; Burston 1999; Greven 2013). The contagion theorem posited gayness as something that could be "caught," like a virus, and purposely transmitted to heterosexuals to infect and thus trap them in the homosexual's dark perverted world. As critics would later discuss, the film almost presciently taps into a structure of feeling that will manifest itself with the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic. Quoting Foster Hirsch (1999), Linda Ruth Williams writes how he "reads all this sexy death…as a counter-erotic message about unsafe sex…attributing the success of the erotic thriller to the AIDS crisis: 'erotic thrillers of the 1980s and 1990s are metaphors for the danger of sex in the time of AIDS'" (188, as cited in Williams 2005, 30). *Cruising* may have the logic of infection and contagion embedded within, but it's unclear as to whether it's homophobic or sex phobic in general. Although tapping into a structure of feeling that precipitates an epidemic, the death onscreen is also highly symbolic and metaphoric as well as alluring. There's something *still* unsettling and unsettled about the *Cruising* that keeps bringing critics, scholars, and viewers back—the queer primal screen, our queer primal scene.

Interior. Leather Bar (2013): Uncanny Reconstructions

By way of conclusion, I'd like to briefly look at the James Franco-Travis Mathews debacle *Interior. Leather Bar* (2013), a short film that "recreates" the 40 minutes of (explicit) footage Friedkin was supposedly forced to cut out from *Cruising* to secure an "R" rating. The lost 40 minutes of hard core footage has become "pornlore" (Burger 1995), and crypto-bisexual

tease Franco and queer art-house porn filmmaker Mathews team up to re-imagine a journey

through this long lost hard core archive. *Interior* has less, if anything, to do with *Cruising*, and

more to do with Franco's ego; and yet, that is also what makes *Interior* an important textual and

discursive addition to *Cruising*. In some respects the film is a boring disappointment that leaves

one feeling cheated by the promise of seeing a remade "director's cut" of what *Cruising* should

have been. And yet by exploring the mythology of this lost footage through the restaging of

Cruising's original production, *Interior* manages to capture the cultural anxieties that forced

Friedkin to cut 40 minutes in the first place—anxieties which the film suggests endure to this

day.

Davidson notes how *Cruising* has "been recuperated in recent years for cultdom, mainly

by a younger gay audience, for which the film's allegedly lurid depiction of Manhattan's gay

S/M underworld is a compelling and historically valuable envisioning of the libidinal intensities

of the 1970s New York leather scene that is scarcely available elsewhere on celluloid (apart,

perhaps, from the special case of contemporaneous pornography)" (2005, 25). Indeed in many

ways, *Cruising* is an archive of a culture never adequately recorded by moving images or

displayed onscreen outside of pornography and a handful of films by Rosa von Praunheim—a

testament to, and reminder of, the complacent and tepid nature of current queer cinema (Rich

[1998; 1999] 2013).

What heterosexual male movie star today would allow themselves to be shown tied up

and naked with their bare bum on display in an S/M scene gone wrong, like Pacino in *Cruising*?

Shia LaBeouf and Willam Dafoe in *Nymphomaniac* (2013) perhaps? What gay movie, let alone

Hollywood production, would show someone being fisted or someone cruising for sex and being

killed in an adult bookshop? Only Todd Verow (*Frisk* [1995], *Deleted Scenes* [2010]) and Bruce

LaBruce (*No Skin Off My Ass* [1991], *Hustler White* [1996], *Skin Gang* [1999], *The Raspberry Reich* [2004], *L.A Zombie* [2010]) have dedicated themselves to keeping the spectacle of gay sex and all its messiness, including its problematic associations with violence, "onscene." But both tend to receive little, if any, acknowledgement in mainstream press and only minimal attention in queer media in part because they purposely reject liberal political correctness. At times, when either director does receive attention, the attention is negative. Discussing *Frisk*'s initial festival run in the mid-90s, Rich notes that "gay men nearly rioted when the film was featured at a tribute to Strand distributor and *Frisk*'s producer Marcus Hu...[for having] the nerve to explore fantasies of murder in the context of anonymous sexual encounters" ([1999] 2013, 35). The conservative and anxious socio-political climate in which *Cruising* was produced and released may not be as obvious today, but that doesn't mean it's disappeared—if anything, it has insidiously intensified.

Interior is a mock-documentary, a fictional "behind the scenes" look at the recreation of *Cruising* during its production but begins oddly enough with Franco detailing Michael Warner's thesis in *The Trouble with Normal* (2000). After a few intertitles, which as in *Cruising* attempt to contextualize the proceeding representations (while also mocking its inspirational source), Franco and Matthews engage in brief conversation about queer resistance and the threat of assimilation to radical politics. The reconstruction is thus itself framed as discursive exploration of past politics through their current manifestation. It is an uncanny journey through the archive of the past to the queer cinematic primal scene—the moment that put queerness onscreen and onscene and instilled a discursive and political wedge.

Rather than show us all the gay sex that was (supposedly) cut, *Interior* instead chooses to explore the politics of exhibiting gay sex by displaying the insecurities and psychological complexes of its conflicted actors—particularly Val Lauren, the lead actor playing Al Pacino's

Burns. Although we don't get 40 minutes of hard core action—the implied fisting scene in *Cruising* was more shocking and visceral than anything in *Leather Bar*, including two explicit three second blowjobs—what we do get is a look at complacent homophobia in an era of liberal equality's supposed triumph. The film is a distorted mirror of the past that directs its politics at its queer audience. On the surface *Interior* chronicles the discomfort and homophobia of both *Cruising*'s straight audience and production crew in the late 70s from the point of view of the present day. On a deeper level, it is about how the implied homophobia in the text and of those who protested the film has been internalized as a core feature of contemporary assimilated gay identity and culture. *Interior* is not the return of the repressed, but a return to the moment of repression.

Val Lauren is Burns's double. Similarly to Burns, Lauren functions as an ethnographer through which the viewer can return to a primordial instant to re-experience a crucial moment of self-repression. Unlike in *Cruising*, however, Lauren is the symbolic guide through which a queer, and (presumably) not heterosexual, audience re-experiences this archival journey to the past. Lauren is the queer viewer's ethnographic avatar. By maintaining the identificatory structure of the original text, the queer viewer is positioned similarly to those who sat in the audience back in 1980. Rather than outright condemning either the film or protestors, Matthews instead approaches the anxieties that surround and are embedded in the film through Lauren's struggle to become Burns. The film-within-a-film approach not only plays with the murky divisions between actuality and artistic artifice that saturate *Cruising*, but also gives us re-imagined access to the process Pacino himself likely went through to prepare for his role. It is only after watching *Interior* we realize that *Cruising* reflexively visualizes the method acting process, whereby an actor literally becomes the character they study.

Interior's deconstructive approach allows us to see the construction of identity and examine the complex negotiations that come with forming a self-identity within a broader collective one—even, or perhaps especially, if that construction is entirely performative rather than innate. The film revolves around not just identity, but identity through, and identification with, images. *Interior* envisions the anxieties felt back then by a heterosexual (male) majority but actualized here and now in an era where gay and straight are (supposedly) in greater proximity (Dean 2014). Despite decades of rights gains and social progress, what we ultimately bear witness to in *Interior* are several straight actors discussing their heterosexuality with subtle bravado and insecurity participating in the production of a queer film—a discursive visualization that bears uncanny resemblance to both the behind-the-scenes production of, and onscreen representations in, gay-for-pay porn. Rather than sexual or identificatory dissolution, *Interior* purposely upholds both as discreet and definable, positioning them concentrically within broader structures of heteronormativity—a testament perhaps to queer theory's failure to unravel identity.

But as with *Cruising, Interior* is ambiguous and ambivalent, leaving open enough space for possible transgression. Throughout the film we are treated to several shots of Lauren (and Franco) looking onward almost in shock at the unfolding scenes of queerness and explicit sex. The film itself becomes a prolonged primal scene for its hetero-identified participants. Unlike Burns who displayed intrigue rather than hesitation, the gay onscenity in *Interior* seems to suffocate Lauren. Several close-ups of Lauren struggling with almost child-like naiveté to make sense of the frenzied spectacle unfolding in front of his eyes are a recurring visual motif. It is those moments where the pressure to identify, to chose a side and stick to it, are the most striking and affective. It is not surprising our final image of Lauren as Burns is a superimposition of him

reliving the moment of Burns's ecstatic conversion. Maybe he too over-identified with the image.
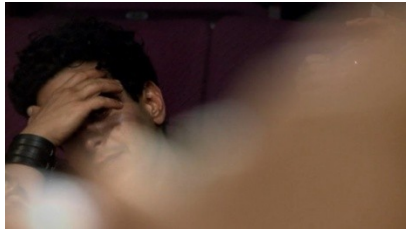
| Lauren "back stage" watching a sex scene be filmed | Lauren as Burns watching extras as "bar patrons" engage sexually | Lauren reenacting Burns's transition. A superimposition effect symbolically collapses past/present and self/other |

Case Study: Taxi Zum Klo (1980) and the Sousveillance of Explicit Sex

Sousveillance is a theory and practice of looking back by those under surveillance at those conducting surveillance with the same technologies used to keep them under surveillance (Mann, Nolan, and Wellman 2003). Sousveillance essentially means wearing portable recording equipment to document one's quotidian experiences. By essentially turning oneself into a surveillance apparatus, one can leverage their body in service of resistance. Sousveillance can take on many forms (Ganascia 2010)—including protesting against homophobic movies. Steven Mann (2004) differentiates between "hierarchical sousveillance" (filming a shopkeeper or police officer) and "personal sousveillance," such as recording one's daily activities (1). In the case of queer representation, the personal is inextricable from a social hierarchy that places gays and queers closer to the bottom of the pyramid: personal sousveillance is hierarchical sousveillance. As such, it is my contention that in the same way that representations of gay and lesbians by the majority constitute ethnography and surveillance, self-representation, at least in the post-Bryant era, constitute sousveillance—a defiant look back through the self.

Although sousveillance would appear to be better suited to documentary practices or amateur agitprop films, such as those that will define AIDS media activism, queer-authored

fiction film, regardless of its intended or unintended politics, was, and in some ways still is, a defiant look back. If Hollywood's first hate cycle placed, or at least attempted to place, the homosexual under surveillance, then the development of a queer-authored cinema that took off in the latter half of 70s—with films such as the Canadian *Outrageous!* (1977), the British *Nighthawks* (1978), and West German *Fox and His Friends* [*Faustrecht der Freiheit*] (1975), to name a few—were very much a defiant look back at those above by those below. One of the most important and transgressive films released at the tail end of Gay Liberation was *Taxi Zum Klo* (henceforth *Taxi*). The film is an autobiographical journey that documents gay culture at a particular moment of critical disjuncture, whose sexual explicitness adds an experimental flair that transgresses typical fictional conventions.

Speaking of Su Friedrich's autobiographical experimental works, Chris Holmund observes that "*First Comes Love* (1991) is more *about* heterosexuals than about lesbians. Nevertheless, it is also a documentary *by* and *for* lesbians" (1997, 135). Although not exactly the same, *Taxi*'s defiant explicitness and autoethnographic impulse makes it a film about homosexuals as much as heterosexuals, too. *Taxi* is a narrative fiction inextricable from the director's biography and the socio-political hierarchies of top-down observation. It is a gay-authored film for a gay audience that looks back at heterosexuals and normativity through unabashed self-exploration. Its endurance and continued popularity (the film is available on Netflix) speaks to both its importance as a historical document as well as Frank Ripploh's skilful filmmaking.

Unable to discuss the variety of works made during the latter half of the 70s and first half of the 80s, such as those by Barbara Hammer, Rosa von Praunheim, Arthur J. Bressan, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, I shall instead focus on the West German film *Taxi* for two reasons:

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1) because the film captures the intracultural tensions brought about by the turn toward liberal-normative politics; and 2) because the film is a necessary corrective to both the hate cycle and the official liberal corrective offered by Hollywood, *Making Love* (1982). *Making Love* was Hollywood's penance for *Cruising* and attempt to tackle the taboo subject of the closet and the reality of coming out while married to someone of the opposite sex (Russo [1981] 1987). Although offering viewers a recalibrated look at something many gay individuals were going through, its submission to liberal gay activism presented a similarly distorted portrait of gay life in the post-Bryant era. *Taxi* offers a more authentic corrective that was nevertheless to be quickly subsumed by the equally oppressive surveillance of positive representation.

Set in West Berlin in the late 1970s, this semi-autobiographical film visualizes the cultural political underpinnings of the doubled self living a double life: a carefully choreographed dance between public and private, interior and exterior, and fucking and working. A festival hit when it was released, *Taxi* was praised for its honest portrayal of daily life without comprising its graphic eroticism (Waugh [1981] 2000), offering a more realistic alternative to Hollywood and optimistic hope for the future of self-authored representation (Watney 1982). Although one of the few narrative films in queer cinematic history to portray typical post-Stonewall life, *Taxi* is almost self-conscious of its anachronism—a "swan song of the Stonewall era" (Waugh [1981] 2000, 122), lamenting a slowly eroding culture before it even really began.

The importance of the film festivals here cannot be underestimated. Film festivals helped to circulate images from various nations and different social circumstances, aiding in the construction of a "global gay consciousness"—which really meant Anglo North America, the UK, Western Europe, and Scandinavia (Gever 1991; Gamson 1996; Straayer and Waugh 2006; Zielinski 2008; Loist and Zielinski 2012; Rich 2013). Although it would seem counterintuitive to

discuss a low-budget personal West German film in relation to a big-budget Hollywood majority Anglo corpus, the film was frequently discussed alongside other popular representation when it was released and held up as a shining beacon of radical filmmaking in an increasingly hostile visual terrain (Waugh ([1981] 2000; Watney 1982). I thus treat the film as part of a collective post-Stonewall gay consciousness whose national and cultural specificities—although factors that should not be ignored—are not different enough to warrant its exclusion from my discussion. In the same way that *Cruising* represents a cultural paradigm shift already underway, *Taxi* mirrors how this transition was being renegotiated subculturally.

Filmmaker Frank Ripploh plays Frank, a young gay teacher and "insatiable toilet queen" (Waugh [1981] 2000, 122) trying to manage his lustful desires, career as an educator, and new relationship. In the beginning of the film we are invited by Frank to tag along and observe his adventures, and although a fictional narrative, the film's grainy texture makes it feel as though it were a documentary, if not home movie (Watney 1982; Waugh 1984a). On-location filming, routine dialogue, minimal extra-diegetic scoring, non-theatrical and flattened acting, and, of course, explicit sex make *Taxi* feel more like a diary film and less like a fictional portrayal. We listen to Frank's internal monologues, watch him struggle to balance his private and public life, fall in love, fuck, piss on lovers, and be rectally examined. The film's explicitness only further sutures Ripploh the director, Frank his onscreen avatar, and the audience together, giving spectators intimate access to his life, mind, and asshole.

Identity as collage   The viewer's introduction to Frank

Beginning with a close-up mobile long take, we see various images and objects pinned to a wall. As in *Boys in the Band*, we are introduced to our protagonist via an assemblage of signs—although our first actual image of Frank is of his naked behind. Buttons proclaiming "no more heteros" and "gays for socialism" (identifying the Anglo-inflected nature of Gay Liberation politics [the buttons, one would think, would be in German]), pictures of Frank, images taken from magazines, a business card for male escorts, and a few erotic portraits including a Tom of Finland drawing of extreme enemas capture late 70s gay culture's kaleidoscopic construction. The collage represents gay culture as itself a collage, an amalgam of various overlapping politics, sensibilities, and drives, and gay identity as something informed by broader collective phenomena and not just desire for the same sex.

Julianne Pidduck indicates "voice-over narration [as a] characteristic of autoethnography" (2009, 445), and throughout *Taxi*, viewers are treated to periodic voiceovers of Frank's internal monologue. This gives us intimate access to not only Frank's internal thought process, but also the filmmaker's: we are invited to observe the filmmaker explore himself through his self-constructed image double. Ripploh plays with his dual identity as author and character to connect his personal experiences with those of the audience, eschewing the burden of positive representation while confronting a history of heterosexual ethnography. Catherine Russell writes that

> to think of queer filmmaking as ethnographic is to recognize the problem of
> representation as one of self-representation, in which the self is socially as well as
> sexually configured…. The marginality of gay culture is perceived ethnographically, but
> from the inside, and thus provides a model of indigenous ethnography. The look at the

Other is necessarily inverted as 'the other's look' to become part of the film's aesthetic and epistemology (1999, 148).

Although Russell speaks of first-person experimental film, *Taxi*'s autobiographical impulse aligns it with the autoethnography she explores in her study, which has more in common with the goals of sousveillance than would appear. Sousveillance entails making others visible, but as with autoethnography to surveil the other from the self's position is to invariably surveil the self in the process. Queer cinema is a defiant look back at the other but through the self and back at the self. It is self-observation and knowledge formation that confronts the other's gaze, but to expose oneself is to also leave oneself vulnerable. To document and author the queer self, however, is to also leave it vulnerable and open to correction. Sousveillance is inextricable from the regime of surveillance: while convincing oneself that one is looking back in defiance, one may be simply filling in the blind spots.

In an oddly placed scene about half way through, *Taxi* reflexively acknowledges the queer self and collective as filtered through a normalizing gaze, of which cinema has historically been a primary instrument. Frank's transgender friend Wally stops by for a visit one evening. After a bit of small talk and once coffee and snacks have been served, Frank's tutoring appointment arrives. Frank and his student head off into the kitchen, and Bernd, Frank's boyfriend whom he met at a movie theatre earlier on, sets up a film projector and screen in the living room. Bernd decides to show Wally *Christian and his Stamp-Collector Friend*, a short "educational" film frequently shown at Frank's school, which is an actual film made and shown in schools in West Germany. The black and white film warns against trusting homosexuals, portraying gay men as child predators. The film was made to educate young heterosexual men about the ways of the male homosexual predator: how to identify them, what not to do when you

come into contact with one of them, and how to protect yourself from them. Wally and Bernd stand in for the average queer subject who for decades has had to watch their identity and subjectivity maliciously misrepresented on screen. Integrating actual fictional film footage that was taken as documentary fact and used for educational purposes allows Ripploh to comment on how film had helped to generate and circulate a skewed identity. The spliced footage reflexively reminds viewers of the spotty history gays have had with being authored and documented by others.

After the film cuts to *Christian* for the first time, we find out from Bernd that Frank has an expensive hobby: filmmaking. It is at that moment where the film adds an additional reflexive layer, suggesting that the film *we* are watching, *Taxi*, may be the film Frank, the character, has been funding with his tutoring lessons, further blurring the lines between actuality, autobiography, and fiction. Throughout the sequence Ripploh cuts between Wally and Bernd sitting on the couch next to the projector in the living room, Frank and his student sitting next to each other in a booth at the kitchen table, and a close-up of the projected film, discursively suturing these three spaces together. Similarly to the hate cycle, *Taxi* is reflexive about itself as an object being observed but goes further than what Hollywood conventions allow, inverting and subverting the cycle's underlying political, social, and identificatory interpellations. Ripploh acknowledges the duality of both cinema and visibility, positioning film as a crucial site of contention and source of counter-cultural resistance: in the same way that Bernd and Wally watch a "real" film to "learn" about the homosexual, we too watch a film to learn about the homosexual; film can misrepresent, but film can be used to correct those misrepresentations.

Ripploh carefully edits the sequence to parallel the action in the two diegeses and to conflate the viewing practices taking place on and offscreen. While Wally and Bernd watch a

paranoid tale of pedophilia play out onscreen, we watch a subversive mirrored one unfold in the next room, splitting while aligning our viewing experiences. Christian is invited over to his teacher's home to look at his stamp collection during a bike ride one afternoon. The film then cuts to Wally in close-up expressing her disagreement to Bernd—"You can't do that with such a child. Now look at that." "These are the enlightened films of today," Bernd cynically and sarcastically responds. The moment Christian arrives at Herr Burkhard's home, the film again cuts to a close-up of Wally expressing moral disagreement. "Do you think that's right? I don't think that's right," she says. Wally is not disappointed by the mischaracterizations, but rather the teacher's actions.

From there we cut back to Herr Burkhard closing the curtains and then to Frank with his student, telling him to put away his toys and placing his hand on his student's hand as a sign of camaraderie. We then cut back to Herr Burkhard showing Christian his stamps. Taken from a low-angle shot and from Christian's eye level, which underscores their unequal power relations, we see Herr Burkhard looking down rather menacingly at Christian, offering to give him the stamps. Before we find out Herr Burkhard's conditions, we cut back to Frank's student offering Frank a toy in exchange for a lighter workload. Ripploh reverses the power dynamics, countering typical narratives of the child as automatic victim who is taken advantage of by the aged homosexual. Cutting back to *Christian*, the camera zooms in on Herr Burkhard's face as he tells his young student, "When it's for you, it's not problem, Christian," as if continuing the conversation taking place in Frank's kitchen. Herr Burkhard is framed as Frank's double, but rather than mirror the two dieteses, Ripploh contrasts them to mock the educational film.

Herr Burkhard   Wally and Bernd   Frank and his student

Juxtaposing two different representations of student-teacher interaction allows Ripploh to ridicule the hysterical belief that pedophiles choose teaching as a profession to put them in arm's reach of their objects of desire (an unfounded claim that provided the basis for Bryant's campaign and senator Briggs's initiative) as well as the implicit perversity of the educational film itself. Cutting back to Wally and Bernd, Wally remarks, "That's what they're like. You can see it by the hair," gesticulating with her hand the obvious comb over that physically marks Herr Burkhard as a pedophile. Even though as a queer trans-woman she is implicitly implicated by the actions on screen, Wally does not identify with the person on screen, seeing him as something other. When Herr Burkhard rubs Christian's shoulder and offers his stamp collection in exchange for Christian being "a little bit nice" to him, we cut to Wally rubbing her leg against Bernd's. Bernd twists slightly to the side and exclaims, "My God, you have to mimic everything!" This moment underscores the mimetic capacity of film and its precarious duality: the same movie that warns against certain behaviour can also teach certain behaviour.

From there we cut back to Herr Burkhard rubbing his hand on Christian's upper back, neck, and head and then back to Frank's student asking to "play horsey" and jumping on Frank's lap. We cut back to Herr Burkhard rubbing Christian's mid- and lower back, informing him that "men can also be tender to one another," and then guiding Christian over to his couch. After a quick shot of Frank removing his student from his lap, we cut to Wally commenting that "when we adults do that, it's something different. It's free will. It's a free choice, one might say."

Ripploh mocks this appeal to adult autonomy—it is Frank's student that initiated the physical contact and who is in control, and it is Frank's autonomy and privacy that is being undermined. We then cut to see Herr Burkhard rub his hand on Christian's leg and then over the young child's groin in close-up. The film then cuts back to Wally with a look of surprise on her face and then back to a close-up shot of Herr Burkhard grabbing Christian's hand. He rubs Christian's hand on his own thigh while unzipping his pants with his free hand and then puts Christian's hand down his pants. Christian pulls away and runs home. Traumatized, the educational film ends with him in the safety of his mother's arms. Although intended to showcase the horrors of homosexuality, we are nonetheless shown a series images of an adult and child engaging in sexual activity: educational film indeed.

| Herr Burkhard rubbing Christian's crotch | Herr Burkard holding Christian's hand while unzipping his own pants | Christian traumatized but back in the safety of his mother's arms |

On several occasions, Ripploh edits in early erotic film snippits to provide subjective commentary on the events in the diegesis—like a visual voiceover. After preparing for his day and heading to work, Frank leaves his classroom, enters a public bathroom, and goes directly to a private stall. The stall has a small circular hole on its left metal divider. Frank peeks through the hole and sees another man wearing a jockstrap. The man rubs his bulge and presents his exposed behind, massaging and spreading it, exposing his asshole. In between the stranger displaying his front and back—the film is as asshole-centric as it is penile-philic—a black and white shot of a nude woman is briefly spliced into the film. This subject edit aligns our observation via Frank
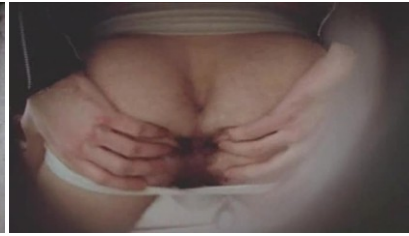
with a history of cinematic voyeurism (one mostly of women on display), redoubled formally by a cinematic keyhole effect achieved with an iris mask.

Frank taking a peek   Subjective commentary   Anonymous self-display

The man leaves, and while Frank grades his students' assignments, another one enters the stall next to his and pokes his penis through the shared hole. In almost perfunctory fashion, Frank licks his hand and begins to rub the erection. We then cut to Frank bowling with his coworkers where in the middle of a drunken toast some vintage stag footage is again spliced in. This extra-diegetic cue provides a perfect segue into the following scene where Frank heads to a bathhouse and where we watch him get a nude full-body massage. The film reflexively intervenes in a history of sexual representation that has overwhelmingly been in service of a heterosexual, mostly male, gaze. But Ripploh doesn't just put his queer body on display solely for rebellious erotic purposes, but to also acknowledge the body as a living breathing entity that is as wondrous as it is functional: it poops, aches, gets sick, and needs pleasuring.

In a scene prior to his tutoring session, Frank is followed home by a stranger in leather chaps who cruises him at an automated bank machine. Intrigued, Frank invites the stranger upstairs for a brief sexual romp. The two undress and begin to explore each other's bodies. In medium close and close-up we watch the two men remove each other's clothing and enjoy every part of each other's body: feet, mouth, nipples, penis, and anus. As with Frank's massage, this too is a full-body experience. The men take their time, enjoying every thrust and tongue

movement. Ripploh invites us into the privacy of his bedroom to see not just what gay men do, but also who they are.

This moment is particularly striking from a present point of view because it reminds us of the comfortable proximity between pornography and queer self-representation before gay liberalism put up a wall between them. The representation of explicit sex in *Taxi* is not all that different than in *Sand* and *Bijou*. All three films place emphasis on medium and medium close-up shots, rather than close-ups and extreme close-ups, and both films offer a variety of camera angles and shot lengths that neither linger too long, nor cut away too quickly. Unlike in *Sand* and *Bijou*, though, our voyeurism does not go unpunished, which is perhaps the only significant difference between *Taxi* and porn. Unbeknownst to the two, Bernd has returned home from his afternoon out.


Masochistic voyeurism

Bernd hears suspicious noises, and quietly makes his way over to the bedroom. He looks inside through a hole in one of the door's glass panels and sees Frank with his anonymous partner. Throughout the explicit scene we cut back to Bernd as he stands there and watches his lover in the throes of passion. We cannot help but partially identify with Bernd—no doubt intended to inflict us with a bit of guilt for our own peeking. Although we may feel for Bernd, our gaze is not aligned with his. We are put in closer proximity to the action, seeing penises disappear into mouths and anuses, confirming this activity is real and not simulated. Bernd on the other hand remains the typical voyeur, gazing at the scene from distance. His vantage point denies him the same kind of intimacy and verifiability. Ripploh consciously chooses not to

represent the spectacle of sex as wholly positive, undercutting its sensuousness with the longing gaze of his hurt lover. *Taxi* rejects the typical binary between the utopia of sex in pornography and the punishment of sex in narrative fiction such as what we saw in the hate cycle, offering us a far more complex understanding of sex.

In the following scene, we see Bernd and Frank having lunch outdoors. Bernd informs Frank that stoning was how infidelity was punished, lamenting that "times are changing." Frank tells him he has no interest in being normal, telling Bernd to join in instead of watching next time. In this couple we see the cultural political division underway in the late 70s between normative and non-conforming queer subjects. Bernd laments the culture of promiscuity gay men have cultivated. He wants something more typically straight. But Bernd's statement about times changing can be dually read as either a judgment of a culture of promiscuity taking over normality as well as a warning of that culture's decline. Frank reflects upon his conversation with Bernd in the next scene. As he drives around a rained-out Berlin thinking to himself in voiceover, he admits to struggling with his desire to be faithful to Bernd and his lustful cravings. Frank also admits that he's "afraid of becoming some old fag who hangs out around urinals," further underscoring the developing tension between Liberation promiscuity and an emerging normative social paradigm.

Earlier, concerned that he may have caught something from the last guy he slept with, Frank heads to a doctor to have himself examined. Frank strikes up a conversation with a female prostitute in the waiting room who regales him with nightmarish tales of unwashed uncircumcised penises and pig's blood fetishists. From the waiting room we cut to a close-up of Frank's legs in stirrups. Cupping and lifting his testicles to give him a clearer view of Frank's sphincter, the doctor informs Frank that he has anal warts—Frank has caught an infection that

can be spread through anal sex. From a medium close-up shot of the doctor dipping his finger into a jar of lubricant, we cut to a medium close-up shot of Frank taking a deep breath as the doctor begins to probe him—reminiscent of the fisting scene in *Cruising sans* elliptical editing. Showing the examination is necessary for Ripploh. Unable to properly assess what's going inside his rectum, the doctor turns to technology, a metallic rectal probe to give him a better, more accurate look.
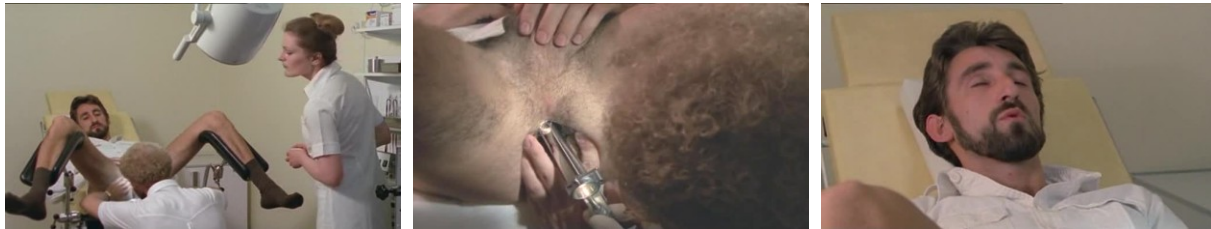
Frank being examined

For Williams, moving image pornography is organized around the quest for men to know woman by probing her body for her "secrets" kept hidden inside. Because male sex organs are mostly external and female sex organs are mostly internal, pornography is an attempt to know and make external the pleasures buried deep inside the female body ([1989] 1999). Here we see Frank in a typically feminine scenario and position. On his back, legs spread open, his fragile vulnerable opening (anus) disarmed and exposed is penetrated first by the doctor's finger and then by his prosthetic phallic silver rod—a reversal of the previous sex scene where Frank penetrated his anonymous partner. At that moment Frank's anus collapses the division between knowledge and pleasure, and is also punished for its insatiability—eerily foreshadowing the degree to which medical surveillance would soon run the lives of gay men and subsume gay male sex and sexuality.

Sex is everywhere in *Taxi*, but when juxtaposed with its ambiguous ending, it comes close to condemning the frenzy it relies on. John Burger argues that "the appropriation by gay

men of pornographic media was a big step toward legitimating and making visible their sexual practices" (1995, 3-4). *Taxi* unabashedly uses sex to connect its images of the everyday to a broader socio-sexual history and memory. Its strength comes from Ripploh's ability to present fictional representation as though it were edited-together amateur footage of an average gay man's daily life and nothing more. After meeting Bernd for the first time at his work at the movie theatre, we cut to them bathing together in a sudsy bathtub. We watch the two kiss while they soap each other up and explore each other's body through playful touch. We then see them in bed together. Frank sucks on Bernd's toes and performs anilingus on in him. Sex in this instance is used to underscore the couple's instant chemistry and to communicate their intimate feelings for one another. The appeal to the everyday via explicit sex makes *Taxi* a unique film, important historical document, and prime example of sousveillant queer filmmaking. But the film is also keenly self-aware of the alternative negative implications that can come with filming and watching filmed sex.

Near the end of the film, as Frank's health declines (he gets diagnosed with Hepatitis), he turns to kinkier sexual activity that in this context seems to underscore his undoing. Cutting between an evening of coffee and conversation about home decor with his co-worker and an anonymous sexual liaison, we watch Frank have his bottom whipped, snort cocaine, and pee in his flagellator's mouth. The juxtaposition of these two polar opposite social engagements captures Frank's ongoing double life (good normal teacher versus philandering drug-using sex pervert), commenting on the broader socio-political struggle between the desire to assimilate and the desire to be different. While mocking the vacuity of bourgeois normality, however, Ripploh seems to also mock Frank's (and his own [and our?]) sexual decadence as equally vapid.

Extremity: resistance to, or compliance with, bourgeois consumerist alienation?

After staying out all night and getting into a fight with Bernd at the Queen's Ball (a large-scale queer party), the two go their separate ways, and after a small detour Frank heads to work to teach his class. Wearing a pink veil around his head that partially covers his face and in a tacky promiscuous harem-style dress, Frank makes his way through the playground and pool of fascinated children toward his class. Arriving in full drag and without sleep, he decides to help his class liberate themselves by letting them do whatever they want. Naturally chaos ensues, and the children destroy the classroom. After the children have gone, Frank heads to the bathroom to remove his makeup. We cut to a close-up of Frank looking in the mirror as he wipes away his eye makeup. Similarly to *Cruising*, *Taxi* ends with its protagonist staring into a mirror. Like Burns, Frank looks deeply into his eyes after a series of events that have left his sense of self in a state of disarray. In *Cruising* we saw Burns apply makeup, donning a new persona and shaving at the end—the male equivalent of removing makeup. In *Taxi* we just see Frank slowly fall apart.

Frank peeling away his layers. Who is the real Frank…Ripploh?

Watching someone put on and take off makeup is an intimate act. It is someone allowing you to observe their self-transformation, exemplified by Dorian Corey's metamorphosis throughout *Paris is Burning* (1991). But the removal of makeup can also signify the shedding of

identity like at the end of Michel Tremblay's *Hosanna* (1973), and in certain contexts death, such as when the Marquise de Mertueil (Glenn Close) removes her makeup at the end of *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988). Frank sheds his figurative layers, but it is unclear whether there is an actual Frank there. Without frills and promiscuity, who is "Frank"? For that matter, who is Ripploh? His journey through himself has revealed a dead end—if you stop performing, will a core self be there? *Taxi*'s irreverent and anarchic ending (as Frank prepares the classroom for self-destruction, Ripploh intercuts shots of Bernd at a goat farm) carries a melancholic undercurrent. It is at this final moment that the film's documentary qualities take on uncanny properties. The film looks at itself through itself as something that has already passed—not real, but ghostly.

Taxi offers viewers a corrective look at gay life at the same point in time the hate cycle dominated popular representation, but its corrective is less an alternative and more of an inverted reflection. In all four films, characters (protagonists and antagonists) attempt to rectify psychic disassociation through various means—death (*Dressed to Kill*), love (*Windows*), and sex (*Cruising*)—that invariably reflect the impact Gay Liberation as well as the feminist movement had on self-identity and social coherence. The same goes for *Taxi*. Until the very end there is no questioning of identity in *Taxi*. Frank is a gay man. The opening montage presents identity as a collage, but something that is nonetheless cohesive. As the narrative unfolds, Frank's sense of self unravels, inversely paralleling Burns's journey. The heavily loaded final mirror image reflects the growing tensions between a rising liberal assimilationist movement and those who wish to maintain a lifestyle more closely aligned with the principles of Gay Liberation, which will morph into what will soon be called "queer." Frank's ghostly reflection not only very subtly

reflects all the violence and death present in the hate cycle, but along with the hate cycle also

foretells the impending effects of AIDS on identity: death and the splitting of a coherent self.

Conclusion

The hate cycle is not queer autoethnography, but it is heterosexual autoethnography via

queered ethnography. And yet, there is something almost innately queer about all the four films.

The hate cycle represents and provokes a pivotal shift in the terrain of queer cultural political

discourse. The films brought to the surface not only the deeply rooted anxieties of a heterosexual

majority, but also some of the desires, frustrations, and even realities that percolated beneath and

permeated gay subculture. Besides the extras in *Cruising*, the hate cycle had no queer creative

input; and yet, the films *feel* queer. I am not suggesting the hate cycle allows queers to see

themselves in the same way *Taxi* can. What I am saying is that they fundamentally altered the

visual and cultural political terrain not just because they provoked a wide spread backlash, but

also because they set the stage for queer theory and (new) queer cinema. Their perversity and

abrasiveness leave them open to poaching and re-appropriation

The hate cycle's negative representations crystallize what will become queer theory's

negative or "anti-social" impulse. The queer killer visualizes and embodies the destructive

overtones of, if not Bersani's (1995), then at least Edelman's manifesto (2004). The protests'

repressive qualities instilled positive representation as *de facto* law, pushing politically incorrect

impulses to find another outlet—like bareback porn. Edelman discusses how the allegiance

liberal gays formed with the normal majority made them complicit with the erasure of all things

transgressive and innate to gay/queer culture. The liberal-normative turn repressed the very

things that were coming to surface in the hate cycle and even *Taxi*, setting the stage for its

eventual return in a realm outside its censuring and censorial gaze—until Measure B that is.

There's a reason why 70s screen theorists paid so much attention to the mirror stage and conceived of the film screen as a mirror; there is a reason scenes where characters look at themselves in a mirror resonate. Characters often look in the mirror to either don or remove an identity (makeup) or to examine themselves after or just before a moment of identificatory unraveling—rarely do films have characters looking in mirrors for a significant amount of time that don't conform to the above. There is something striking and captivating about filming someone looking in a mirror; there is something about observing activity that almost literally reflects the act of watching a film, what people are doing at that very moment, that privileges the realm of the mirror: we watch characters look not just at, but for, themselves on a reflective surface, similar to what we do when watching a movie. The mirror and cinematic screen are heterotopias where the real and fantasy converge. The mirror and film screen bring surveillance and the uncanny into almost unstable proximity: flattened three-dimensional spaces where we try to verify and lose ourselves at the same time.

All four films I analyzed in this chapter use the mirror at key narrative junctures not only to stress moments where the character's identity was in the process of coming undone, but also to also discursively reflect this intimate moment as a broader psycho-social phenomenon back to its audience. Again, whether we like it or not, the hate cycle is an inextricable component of our metaphysical queer DNA. Protests to the hate cycle reaffirmed the need for self-authored works, but they also instituted a militarized form of self-censorship that paradoxically undercuts the initial purpose of self-authorship. The hate cycle helped to usher in liberal normativity, which would have an equally devastating effect on gay/queer culture—something we see and feel in rudimentary form in *Taxi*. But the hate cycle also presciently visualized the cultural splitting and political and emotional schizophrenia that would reach unimaginable and epic proportions in just

a few years when something known as the "gay cancer" would figuratively and literally transpose the hate cycle's diegesis into physical reality. The discourse and varied representation of surveillance in both the hate cycle and *Taxi* capture not just the uncanniness and doubleness of gay identity, but also the recording apparatuses' slow evolution to into something more disciplinary and less liberatory.

Chapter 4) No Future: AIDS and (New) Queer Cinema

Introduction

The previous two chapters were dedicated to capturing the evolution of what began as an inchoate burst of political and sexual energy that slowly coalesced around a set of ideals and policies into something discreet and identifiable, although not absolute. In this chapter, I pay specific attention the discourse and effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on representation, identity, and cultural politics. The hate cycle and *Taxi Zum Klo* tapped into a structure of feeling that almost foretell the impending political backlash and avalanche of sexually related deaths that would develop out of the AIDS epidemic: the undoing of, yet simultaneous desire to verify and secure, identity had as much to do with *Taxi* and the hate cycle's cultural present as they did the future.

In the new millennium, a number of works on archives, affect, and futurity nourish an intellectual environment that engage the past. Ann Cvetkovich (2003) suggests the past can be used to reinvigorate the present and better guide the future, while for Lee Edelman (2004) the past should be deployed to destroy the future. Elizabeth Freeman (2010) advocates rummaging through the archives of the past in order to resuscitate it and rescue the present from its neoconservative uniformity. And Castiglia and Reed (2011) contend that AIDS not only sullied the sexual revolution, but has also been used as a mechanism to control the radical potentials of same-sex desire and discipline new generations of gay men and queers to adopt and desire heteronormative sexual and social practices. For Castiglia and Reed the ghost of AIDS continues to suffocate the present and stifle the potential to re-imagine or work toward a more productive future.

AIDS gave birth to a whole new political arena and social reality, but the residual effects of AIDS is now less about the way AIDS is discussed or represented but the way it is *not* discussed and *not* represented. What was once "onscene" has become "obscene"—at least in mainstream discourse. HIV/AIDS and people with HIV/AIDS in the West have not only been suppressed but also repressed in the contemporary popular imagination in order to maintain a distance between AIDS and same-sex identity. Castiglia and Reed (2011) call this process *unremembering*. Unremembering is not amnesia, but a continual monitoring of the present that keeps the past at the present's threshold, maintaining it like a ghost. Contemporary queer discourse is haunted by the spectre of AIDS (Fink, et al. 2013; Harvey 2013), and is why recent queer scholarship has also paid considerable attention to the issue of temporality (Dinshaw et al. 2007). AIDS instilled a radical break in time for queer people. AIDS erected a wall between past and future.

In response to blanket political and social homophobia and government inaction, AIDS activists turned to media to fight institutional oppression and spread information. This period saw the development of queer theory and a new gay and lesbian cinema coined "New Queer Cinema" (henceforth NQC) by B. Ruby Rich ([1992] 2013). Filmmakers began to reject "identity" that proliferated onscreen in films such as in *Making Love* (1982), *Personal Best* (1982) *Lianna* (1983), *Desert Hearts* (1985), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), and *Torch Song Trilogy* (1988), as did scholars and activists. NQC, queer theory, and AIDS activism embraced and emphasized fluidity and contingency, in many ways internalizing the indiscriminate diffusion of the virus. But although AIDS transgressed boundaries, AIDS also paradoxically concretized identity. AIDS not only became attached to the homosexual, but also their exclusive concern and the defining feature of their innate perversity (Watney [1987] 1989). By attaching AIDS to the homosexual,

AIDS became something that pertained *only* to the homosexual. Doing so placated the threat of AIDS by displacing the threat onto the homosexual. Thus by identifying the homosexual one could, supposedly, also contain the threat AIDS posed to the healthy social body—read: heterosexual body. AIDS, at the time, solidified the binary between gay and straight.

Queer media turned to affect to bridge emotional relationships across a diverse spectrum of people, eschewing identification in favour of empathy. Mainstream representations such as *A Longtime Companion* (1989) and *Philadelphia* (1993) did the same but in the service of continuing its commitment to solidifying identify. As the epidemic continued to claim lives and affected communities became exhausted, as mass and mainstream media eventually intervened and effectively co-opted AIDS discourse and gay identity, a turn toward the normal and youth as emblems of new beginnings appeared and slowly took over the queer screen. The coming out cycle and specifically teen coming out film poached empathy in service of solidifying identity, limiting dispersive and discursive potentials. The AIDS epidemic not only enacted queer time (Halberstam 2005; Dean 2011), but also positioned normativity as the only cure to both HIV/AIDS and the fear and hatred it elicited—crystallized in the (teen) coming out cycle, which I explore in greater depth in the following chapter.

Regardless of queer theory, cinema, and activism's intent or best efforts, their success was also their undoing, ultimately helping to instil identity in part by relying on visual methods to disperse their politics of resistance. In this chapter, I trace and examine the frictions and overlaps between queerness and normativity through the development of queer theory, the discourse and representation of safer sex in gay male pornography, and rise of New Queer Cinema, concluding with a look NQC's mainstream doppelgänger: the second hate cycle.

The overall goal is to demonstrate how the AIDS epidemic brought to the surface cinema's ingrained scientific impulse and infused the queer camera's lens. The most obvious manifestation of this underlying transformation is represented by the condom's appearance and standardized use in gay male pornography and rhetoric around safer-sex practices. Safer-sex discourse intersected liberal identity politics, positioning the condom as socio-sexual surveillance's emblem. The condom helped to unify identity (gay men have to always wear condoms, heteros don't) and became the material with which the barrier between past and future was built.

AIDS, Identity, Queerness

Summarized by Michele Aaron, NQC was "no longer burdened by the approval-seeking sackcloth of positive imagery, or the relative obscurity of marginal production, films could be both radical and popular, stylish and economically viable" (2004, 3). Aaron identifies five interconnected thematics that define NQC as a movement: they give voice to marginalized sub-communities within the broad umbrella category of "gay and lesbian," such as, prostitutes, people of colour, and drag queens/transsexuals; they "eschew positive imagery;" they "defy the sanctity of the past;" they "defy cinematic convention in terms of form, content and meaning;" and "in many ways [they] defy death." (2004, 3-5). But for José Arroyo, NQC is also "alternatively minimalist and excessive" (1993, 80) and shaped by a dystopic undercurrent. NQC grappled with the apocalyptic feeling that permeated the epidemic era and was felt more strongly in part because it followed Gay Liberation's wave of utopia. A collision takes place across the collective queer screen between past, present, and future and between identity and non-identity.

"AIDS is why there is New Queer Cinema" writes Arroyo, "and it is what New Queer Cinema is about" (1993, 92). Aaron maintains that "NQC cannot be removed from the context of

the AIDS epidemic" (2004, 6), and for Arroyo, AIDS is NQC's "political unconscious." Coined by B. Ruby Rich in 1992, NQC defined a current of transgressive energy permeating gay and lesbian cinematic representation in the late 80s and early 90s. NQC visualized the politics of queerness before queer theory had developed into a set of discreet ideas, putting to screen and into practice the fluidity and permeability that bound these ideas together into a theory. But NQC also simultaneously manifested the theoretical and socio-political overlaps between AIDS activism and queer theory.

Summarizing Douglas Crimp's (1993) belief that "ACT UP members [are] the archetypal queers for they were characterized by 'identification *across* identities': a straight woman fought for a gay male friend's treatment, a white lesbian pursued health access for black HIV-infected mothers," Aaron contends that "this is what made AIDS activism necessarily queer." But for Aaron, identification across identities this also a defining feature of NQC and source of its political power: "'identification across identities' is, fundamentally, what happens in cinema, as the spectator aligns him or herself with someone else on-screen" (2004, 6-7). Along similar lines, Alexandra Juhasz argues that AIDS (video) media is activism in service of forming a "community around a new identity forced into existence by the fact of AIDS." For Juhasz, AIDS activist media is "an invitation to join a politicized community of diverse people who are unified, temporarily and for strategic purposes, to speak back to AIDS, to speak back to a government and society that has mishandled this crisis, and to speak out to each other" (1995, 3). AIDS media activism was sousveillance (Greyson 1993): a look back at those above by those below.

Responses to the AIDS epidemic were multiple and varied, tackling homophobic (and classist) rhetoric, government inaction, and the spectacle of AIDS in media used to justify hate and political inertia. AIDS activism as well as NQC channelled the sousveillance impulse that

characterized the hate cycle's protests and *Taxi Zum Klo*. But AIDS video activism literally embodied the principles and practice of sousveillance, recording and distributing images of protest and state repression to resist surveillance (Greyson 1993; Juhasz 1995). Important strands of queer theory as well as NQC developed out of discussions and representations of AIDS and the epidemic. What was briefly termed the "gay plague" ironically helped to birth, or at a very minimum nurture, queer theory. And queer theory, in turn, symptomatically manifested the various cross-identifications that resulted from AIDS's indiscriminateness. Succinctly put: queer theory developed during and in response to the AIDS epidemic; AIDS is inextricable from visibility; queer visibility is inextricable from AIDS; and queerness channels AIDS through visibility and discourse. AIDS, queerness, and representation are imbricated with each other.

For Juhasz, one of the most important values of AIDS activist media was the challenge it presented to theories of screen identification and its second wave feminist roots. "Video facilitates this kind of identifying with others in the face of crisis" argues Juhasz. "Not the overriding or totalizing psychoanalytic 'identification' which provides the foundation for feminist film theory and its critique of realist representation," but rather the "conscious process of recognition across difference which occurs in real life and in representation…" (Juhasz 1995, 234). AIDS media was about cross-identification and the potential to break down traditional barriers. AIDS media was about empathy and feeling for *other* people as a way to fight back against ignorant and hateful mischaracterizations, misrepresentations, and misinformation. AIDS affected and connected people from various backgrounds and places, and queer theory appropriated the logic of AIDS—the way it made bodies and identities permeable—becoming its own social and political theory.

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The AIDS epidemic had a profound effect of on gay identity and as well as self-identity more generally. Juhasz, herself a white (three quarters Jewish) heterosexual woman turned lesbian (bisexual?) throughout the course of the monograph's transition from dissertation to book, candidly writes: "My sense of my identity has been altered by AIDS and video;" "I am fated to have an identity molded, in part, by video and by AIDS;" "my identity continually shifts because AIDS affects me;" "AIDS…alters my sense of myself (1995, 230). For Juhasz "video can change some aspects of one's sense of self….[T]hrough the viewing of video representation I learn, struggle, and join with others… touched and perhaps changed by the images of education, documentation, frustration, and celebration" (1995, 231). AIDS is not just a virus; AIDS is also an identity and a process of re-signification. AIDS fractures and reassembles identity, breaking it down while testifying to its endurance.

For Juhasz and Arroyo, it is identity that is at stake in queer representation and AIDS media. Though Arroyo, both generally and in his article, is talking about (narrative fiction) cinema and Juhasz about activist video—experimental, documentary, or otherwise—their respective works speak to the continuities AIDS facilitated across several platforms and discursive spectrums—political, social, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and class. As Juhasz writes, "The coincidental and not so coincidental lining up of the new video technologies (the camcorder, satellite, VCR, and relatively low-cost computer editing) with the AIDS crisis and with theories of postmodern identity politics and multiculturalism is the founding condition upon which the alternative AIDS media is built" (1995, 2).

Several scholars have addressed how video's materiality can yield different cultural artifacts as well as social, political, legal, and artistic opportunities and problems (Ellis [1982] 1992; Cubitt 1991; Hilderbrand 2009); yet, film's imprint and influence remain (Bolter and

Grusin 1999; Russell 1999; Manovich 2001). Speaking of a prominent NQC film by noted queer filmmaker Derek Jarman, Arroyo observes how "because of [*Edward II*'s] television funding, the film is shot on an intimate scale: the film's framing predominantly ranges from close-up to medium long shot," noting that "the camera barely moves" because of limited space and budget (1993, 80). Funding, media, and style are interdependent. Rich ([1992] 2013) herself does not differentiate between fiction and nonfiction, celluloid and video, or AIDS media and queer media. She includes experimental fictions and documentaries such as Todd Haynes's *Poison* (1991), Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied*, more traditional documentaries such as the lauded *Paris is Burning* (1990), and a variety of video and celluloid works by Sadie Benning, Su Friedrich, and John Greyson under the banner of NQC. Queer cinema and AIDS activist videos overlap aesthetically, financially, conceptually and culturally. Thus instead of treating fiction film and documentary/experimental works differently, or video and film as two separate ideological entities, I address them as part of a continuum. My emphasizing Rich's inclusivity should not suggest I do not problematize the NQC canon—I do. It is instead to stress the common discourse and dialogue they collectively engage for similar purposes but from different vantage points.

Although Juhasz claims AIDS forged an identity, and AIDS and queer theory overlap significantly, queer theory is, paradoxically, in service of deconstructing identity. Castiglia and Reed note that "the history of AIDS in the United States and the history of queer theory in the academy overlap almost exactly. Beginning with the publication of Eve Kosfsky Sedgwick's *Between Men* in 1985, the academic purchase of queer theory grew in tandem with the mounting horror caused by the spread of AIDS" (2011, 145). Queer theory eschews the notion of a core self that centripetally organizes performance (Halperin 1995). But queer theory didn't just grow

organically out of a structure of feeling; it was also a militant response to what many saw as the failure and complacency of assimilation identity politics.

In his seminal and controversial piece "Is the Rectum a Grave?" Leo Bersani plants the seed for what will become the "antisocial impulse" of queer theory. In his article, Bersani counters two of gay liberalism's strongly held beliefs: 1) that wanting to have sex with someone of the same sex means there is some social component that unites homosexuals politically; and 2) that homosexuals need to, should be, or should try to be part of "society." Society is a concept organized around heterosexual relations and procreation. Because the sex gay men have is neither bound by, or in service of, procreation, nor contingent upon social formation itself, the idea of society as a whole should be rejected by queer people. Although queer theory develops in tandem with, and out of, the AIDS epidemic and activist discourse, Simon Watney (2000) observes that in the post-epidemic era (after 1996) anthologies on queer theory downplay, if not ignore, AIDS. Even more problematic, though, is the way "queer theory reproduced the competitive individualism of the Thatcher-Reagan period 'it ostensibly opposed'" (Castiglia and Reed 2011, 162).

Queer theory offered an alternative to a tacit disciplinary system, but queer theory has also been harshly criticized and has not been universally embraced. Summarized by Paulina Palmer, queer theory has been criticized for its "lack of specificity, excessive utopianism and resultant political ineffectiveness of 'queer';" "its narrowly American connotations and limited metropolitan associations;" "elitist connotations;" as well as for "shifting grass-roots activist movements…to an academic discourse that shows signs of losing its political vigour." Although there is some discrepancy, Palmer observes that queer theory has also been criticized for its "'overwhelming maleness'," despite its proponents claiming it to be gender-neutral, and for

failing "to acknowledge the contribution that the lesbian feminist movement has made both to the struggle for sexual liberation and the formation of queer politics itself" (2012, 9).

Although officially eschewing identity and the conservative underpinnings of liberal identity politics, queer theory ultimately bolstered both, and has even been condemned by prominent AIDS activist and playwright Larry Kramer (2009) for erasing gay experiences and replacing them with gay issues that are detached from real lives. The triumph of theory over sociology has been the subject of several articles by Adam Isaiah Green (2002; 2007; 2008; 2010), who argues that queer theory does more damage by trying to theoretically destroy the concept of normal and foreground the abstract at the expense of the real. "Queer" is a hostile and militant identity and category in and of itself for Green that attempts to efface and disavow its own dogmatism.

Green argues that identities do not need to be understood as entirely negative, but can be empowering, allowing gay men and women to chart a self-determined path and to connect with each other in meaningful, productive, and nurturing ways (2010). Queer theory emerged in opposition to "gay and lesbian studies," and even though both discourses take their organizing cue from Foucault, Foucault's work is read and used in radically different ways. Summarized by Green, "Whereas scholars of Lesbian and Gay Studies believed they were liberating the lesbian and gay subject/history from its homophobic erasure, queer theorists saw in this 'liberation' a reiteration of the term of social control, and consolidation of their regulatory powers" (2007, 28): "queer theory inherits but disavows Foucauldian analysis of the modern sexual subject—on the one hand, embracing the history of sexuality in *The History of Sexuality* and on the other, working sharply against the grain of its thesis" (2007, 29). Queer theory remains stuck in a

double bind—rejecting while simultaneously relying on surveillance vis-à-vis Foucault, identity, and visibility.

Harry M. Benshoff (2004) notes that queer theory was not adopted by every post-secondary curriculum, and Bersani himself rhetorically ponders, "To what extent does queer theory do more than add new categories, and occasionally new discursive styles, to classical leftist analysis?" (1995, 72). As Tom Boelstorff reminds us, binaries persist in spite of attempts to deconstruct them "by adding a third term or conflating the two into one": "binarisms are reinterpreted and transformed, but rarely do they disappear" (2008, 19). Queer theory presented a sustained challenge to the strictures of identity, and despite queer theory's shortcomings, its contribution to the field of sexuality studies cannot be understated. My brief overview was in no way a full-fledged revaluation or assessment (see Sullivan 2003); instead, I focused on the way queer theory is imbricated with HIV/AIDS discourse in relation to questions of identity and identification in order to highlight their inextricable but problematic, if not paradoxical, overlaps.

AIDS Activism, Media Activism, Porn Activism

The recent retrospective documentary *How to Survive a Plague* (2012) sheds light on the paradoxical effect AIDS had on gay men and gay communities. The film features videos shot during the epidemic years and interviews with key figures in the present reflecting on the past, ending with the eventual release of HAART, the "AIDS cocktail," in 1996. It chronicles the struggles of AIDS and gay activists who stood up to government inaction and a hostile media environment that made AIDS a deserved punishment for homosexuality and sought to equate homosexuality with the disease itself (Gever [1987] 1989; Watney [1987] 1989). Although an important film and snapshot of a tumultuous period, the film problematically reifies and reaffirms the "end of AIDS" in the mid-90s: its narrative conclusion is organically dictated by

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the release of HAART. Perhaps more important than simply chronicling the response to the epidemic is the film's organization around the duality of recording technology: technologies that forcibly made homosexuals visible and paraded them around as diseased spectacles also allowed information to be disseminated subculturally, gave voices to the unheard, created a countercultural popular memory and archives, and was used as a sousveillant weapon. The AIDS epidemic heightened the duality implicit in media, recoding technology, and visibility.

Simon Watney observes how the spectacle of AIDS reassembled what Foucault called the "spectacle of the scaffold" ([1975] 1995): the public display of punishment as a form of mass disciplining. "The principal target of this sadistically punitive gaze is the body of 'the homosexual'," observes Watney, adding that "the 'homosexual body,' which is also that of the 'AIDS victim,' must be publicly seen to be humiliated…" ([1987] 1989, 80). The power of images to manufacture and organize "types" (Sekula 1986) converged the surveillant underpinnings of media spectacle (Zimmer 2015) and ethnography. The endless flow of images of sickness and death that filtered through print and moving image media effectively subverted Gay Liberation's goal of freedom through visibility, turning images of gay men against gay men. Continuing the strategies employed by the conservative right in the latter part of the 1970s, the potential embedded within photography to render criminal what it captures while claiming to document reality (Tagg 1988, 2009) was in full effect during the epidemic years: each close-up of an emaciated face or suspected homosexual was as much a mug shot as it was a medical document and public warning (Finn 2009). AIDS became something gay men deserved and brought upon themselves as punishment for their promiscuity. Through visual discourse, AIDS came to signify homosexuality and vice versa.

Mainstream media pandered to a heterosexual audience in a state of panic (Martha Gever [1987] 1989). News of "heterosexual" men being infected with AIDS only intensified homophobia and the threatening spectre of homosexuality. As Roger Hallas (2009) writes of Hollywood legend Rock Hudson's disclosure,

> his illness was haunted by a doubling effect as he came to embody the dangers to the normal body posed by the contagion of homosexuality, rendering it an abnormal and sick 'anti-body.' The long discursive history of homosexuality as itself a contagion, continually haunting and threatening the healthy social body, resurfaced with a vengeance… (83).

In opposition to a temporary blip of images of gay pride, images of those with AIDS paraded the guilty around as a way to literally discipline and punish gay men at a distance, and to justify more invasive and pervasive degrees of surveillance. Instead of addressing those subjects being publicly dissected, news media addressed AIDS as a threat to straight audiences. But the usurpation of visibility by a hostile majority was not left unchecked; it was quickly matched by a determined minority who refused to be the moral majority's scapegoat and victim.

A rousing speech by Larry Kramer at the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center in New York City led to the formation of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) in 1987. Kramer was a co-founding member of GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis), an organization set up in 1982 to deal with an alarming number reports of gay men contracting Kaposi's sarcoma (a form of cancer and possible symptom of untreated AIDS). Kramer resigned from GMHC in 1983, finding the organization politically complacent. ACT UP, conversely, was designed to be politically militant, to make up for GMHC's lack and shortcomings. AIDS activists, specifically those involved in ACT UP, redeployed visibility and leveraged the didactic potential of video,

using it as a first line of both defence and offence—they spread information about safer sex to communities in need, helped to build a network of communication, counteracted uniformly sensationalized images, and circulated recordings of direct protest and institutional oppression. As Roger Hallas (2009) observes, "AIDS video activists involved in ACT UP were among the first to exploit the consumer technology of the VHS camcorder for political purposes" (242). What was initially intended for private family uses and relegated to the confines of the home (Zimmerman 1995) became a prosthetic for an organization that stood as the antithesis to the very people and ideals targeted by the technology.

Speaking of his role in Testing the Limits, a group closely aligned with ACT UP, Gregg Bordowitz ([1987] 1989) describes himself and his peers as "activists who view our documentary work as organizing work" (185), adding that "within ACT UP, I insisted that my work as a documentarian be recognized as itself a form of activism" (186). AIDS solidified the need to "call into question the established structures of the media" and "create new ways to make and distribute media" (184). From Bordowitz's perspective, "The AIDS epidemic has engendered a community of people who cannot afford *not* to recognize themselves as a community and to act as one," and "like other radical movements, creates itself as it attempts to represent itself." In antithesis to queer theory's core principles, representation helped to solidify a community *and* identity. Bordowitz himself tacitly conceded this effect when he confesses, "I realized that I had come out as a member of two disenfranchised groups. I am a member of the gay community and a member of the AIDS community" (195). Seemingly united on the surface, gay identity and the gay community were, in fact, split by AIDS into two separate entities, whose distinction resulted from various forms of representation and visual strategies.

Queer Canadian filmmaker and AIDS activist John Greyson has made the paradox of visual representation an ingrained feature of his written and moving image *oeuvre*. In an eloquent short piece adapted for his co-authored anthology, Greyson (1993) contemplates the border between surveillance and sousveillance. A lackluster "kiss-in" at Toronto's Eaton Centre in 1990 meant "to promote lesbian and gay visibility" (383) resulted in his arrest and the confiscation of his camcorder. Surprisingly, what Greyson remembers most vividly was the nefarious language the security guard responsible for his arrest used to describe his recording device: "dangerous weapon" (1993, 384). For the security guard, the authority figure in charge of surveilling and securing the privately owned public space of the shopping centre, the counter-surveillance Greyson was conducting challenged his surveillance and threatened the natural order of dominant power-structures.

A few years prior to his arrest, Greyson intuitively tackled very similar issues in his provocative experimental film *Urinal* (1988). The film examined the strategies of entrapment that were popular in Toronto and the use of video surveillance in smaller cities, towns, and rural areas to capture gay men cruising for sex. But in attempting to artistically express the way surveillance recordings manufacture deviants where there were none before, Greyson was forced to confront the implicit paradox of representation. Acknowledging that "the aesthetics of surveillance imagery are now securely enshrined within popular culture," Greyson reflexively asks, "How could I resist the seductive spectacle of the video surveillance image?" Greyson is keenly aware of the dangers of capitulating to that which one seeks to counter. Of his decision to omit surveillance footage of toilet sex from the film, Greyson writes, "I hoped the *absence* of the grainy surveillance sex image would speak much louder than its presence. Thus, in the film this 'surveillance of desire' is documented, analyzed, examined and interrogated by the characters

and subjects, but never visualized" (1993, 389). The hope was that by leaving the visual surveillance of sex offscreen and subject it instead to discourse he would interrogate, rather than fetishize, the suggested spectacle.

Although images of surveillant sex were left off Greyson's screen, they insidiously manifested themselves through the visual discourse of safer sex. In his short film *The ADS Epidemic* (1987), for example, Greyson addresses the "Acquired Dread of Sex" (ADS). The video is a safer-sex short "music video" about condom use that attempts to salvage gay sex (read: anal sex) from a reductive medical discourse. The three-part short film uses *Death in Venice* as a point of departure and follows Aschenbach, a mustachioed gentleman in a white suit as he follows around Tadzio, his youthful object of desire, as Tazio learns about condoms and falls in love. Inserted in the middle of this narrative is a short educational musical montage that tells us that we can get ADS from "watching TV," "in sex-ed class," "from the Catholic masses," "stupid jokes," "ignorant folks," "doctors and cops," and the "Toronto Sun" (a tabloid newspaper). While Aschenbach dies from an ADS attack brought on by fear and hatred, Tadzio's newfound love of condoms allows him to make love and find love.

The educational interlude not only visualizes the short film's overall didactic impulse, but also discursively crystallizes the increasing use of moving images to (re)educate gay men and continuously rebuild the gay community in the midst of the AIDS epidemic. Greyson's short video was just one of several works that attempted to promote safer sex as a viable way for gay men to continue to have all the hot fun they wanted while significantly reducing the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. But discussions about sex and the value of condoms weren't enough. By the late 80s AIDS activists turned their attention to, and intervened in, representations of explicit sex.

Organizations such as GMHC and Safe Company (a Boston-based arm of the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts) began producing sexually explicit safer-sex videos, hoping to re-discipline desire and sexual activity through representation. As activist-scholar Cindy Patton writes of her work with Safe Company, the group wanted to use "cultural artifacts to revitalize a besieged community in order to *change sexual norms and behaviors* and reduce the risks of a new disease syndrome" (1991, 36, emphasis mine). Writing about his experiences making safer sex porn, Wieland Speck writes, "I wanted as much as possible to make a video that would seduce them [gay men] into making condoms a natural part of sex" (1993, 349-350). The goal was to replace the representation of sex without condoms with eroticized and instructional representations that gay men could mimic in the hopes of eroticizing and normalizing condom use.

Filmmaking collectives, however, struggled to create documents that gay men would want to mimic. How does one present safer sex as natural, or as "the new natural," and the condom as something that easily fits into the circuitry of gay male sexuality without it short-circuiting? Speck contends that "porn films are actually documentaries" (1993, 351). But how does one make a visual document erotic? Further still, how does one make a visual document that disavows and elides its own functionality and status as a document? How does one furtively "sell" safer sex while appearing no different than typical porn? There was already enough difficulty deciding "what constituted the representation of safe sex" (Patton 1991, 36). But there was also the tricky issue of differentiating these works from commercial pornography while being equally erotic as the texts they sought to emulate. "How do you signify safe sex?" asks Cindy Patton (1991, 32), and where does one draw the line between educational video and pornography?

Like porn, safer sex is "a cultural construction that joins science, fantasy, group histories and identities, and health logics" (Patton 1991, 36). Safer sex is not "natural," and representing safer sex meant altering pornography's aesthetics, formal styles, and scripts in the service of altering sexual fantasy *and* activity. Patton acknowledges that "the specific requirements of safer sex representation are probably at artistic odds with pornographic conventions," but reminds us that "the primary goal of safer sex advocacy in a video is information, not eroticization." Although disrupting its realist effect, in order to be effective educational tools, "the viewer should be able to clearly see the condom on the dick when the actors are fucking" (1991, 37). Because "'learning' requires real-time, accurate presentation of condom use," writes Patton, "gay male porn videos must show proper application, use, and removal of a condom in logical order…" (1991, 37). In order to succeed, safer-sex videos had to double as porn and instructional tools.

Although contemporary safer-sex gay male porn often employs elliptical editing that leaves the condom's application and removal offscreen, rather than undermine safer-sex protocols, its magical appearance and disappearance actually reinforces the ritual as a naturalized practice: there is no need to show the application because its application is automatic and unquestioned. Videos will often cut from performers performing oral sex to the moment of insertion, eliding the condom's application along with other preparatory measures. The same often goes for the condom's removal, but in reverse: the video will cut from penetration to performers manually or orally bringing themselves to climax.

Elliptical editing, however, is not always employed, but if do we bear witness the application ritual, it is more often than not the condom's removal we see. On occasion the condom's application along with the lubrication process will be shown. It is, however, the

lightning quick removal of the condom a split second before ejaculation, followed by the penetrator ejaculating onto the receiving partner's back, stomach, or face, that has become somewhat of a visual motif. Unlike its application, which can disrupt the narrative flow of sex, the condom's visualized removal actually naturalizes its use by symbolically suturing it into sex's narrativized conclusion via external ejaculation (Williams [1989] 1999). The point I'm trying to make here is that whether the ritual is fully or partially realized or entirely omitted, the condom's visible presence in and of itself contains the didactic narrative of the ritual.

At the time, though, convincing gay men to use condoms for every sexual encounter was an uphill battle.[18] Gay men had become accustomed to having sex on the go. Instituting mandatory condom use meant completely revising how gay men thought about, approached, and had sex. Patton warns against harassing viewers, maintaining safer-sex videos should showcase how fun, or at least how minimal of an interruption, condom use can be. "Nuances" Patton contends," will promote the confidence men need in order to practice safer sex and not feel limited by condom use" (1991, 38). But more than that, safer-sex videos "wanted to affirm not only that safe sex can be hot sex, but also that working toward community-wide adherence to safe sex can be an act of resistance to the destructive political, social, and psychological effects of the HIV epidemic," writes Patton (1991, 33). The desire was to transform safer sex into an act of political resistance and form of personal and communal empowerment, but the collective goal of safer-sex videos invariably rubbed up against the inherent neoliberal thrust of Gay Liberation promiscuity that was also discursively represented in *and* embodied by pornography.

Safer-sex's message was at odds with a system of representation that was disinterested in overt political messages and with an audience already conditioned to seeing and having sex in

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[18] See *Seed Money: The Chuck Holmes Story* (2015).

certain ways (Patton 1990; 2014). Speaking of community safer-sex videos' (in)effectiveness and his own contribution *Steam Clean* (1990), Toronto filmmaker Richard Fung observes that the videos, although filling in a representational need, failed to adequately emulate the porn videos gay men were used to, diminishing their eroticism and thus affective and effective potential. Writing about his jointly produced safe sex video for GMHC and the AIDS committee of Toronto, Fung contends that the focus on interracial couplings mandated by the GHMC's desire to create "culturally sensitive tapes addressing the needs of a number of communities regarding safer sex" (1993, 357) set them too far apart from commercial porn. The "already overdetermined" (1993, 359) nature of mixed-race couplings in effect stymied the video's erotic energies. In order for safer-sex videos to have an effect, they needed to better emulate the sources in which they were trying to intervene.

In order to better understand the underwhelmed response to the collection of safer-sex shorts, Fung conducted some short interviews with Asian gay men. He discovered that several viewers articulated a disconnect between the videos' intents and their attempt to poach from pornography. While the GMHC videos "contain sexually explicit material and purport to be porn" writes Fung, "they do not look like the porn the men have seen and do not fulfill their sexual fantasies: because either the men, the narratives, the structure, or the aesthetic are 'not right' according to their tastes" (1993, 364). Indeed one of the reasons why bareback porn, particularly Treasure Island Media (TIM) videos, has managed to succeed where commercial safer-sex pornography has faltered is because they so perfectly mimic the low-budget amateur home videos with which they align themselves (Patton 2014) and are in such high demand. But another reason for bareback pornography's recent triumph over safer-sex is the fusion of liberal ideology via the phantom ideal of community.

Safer-sex videos were one the most innovative forms of sousveillance to come out of AIDS media activism, directly intervening into, and combining, fantasy and preventive healthcare. Although filling in necessary social and representational gaps, Fung concedes that the GMHC shorts were tantamount to "safe-sex propaganda" (1993, 356). Thomas Waugh counters Sara Diamond's Foucauldian reading of Fung's *Steam Clean*, faulting her for conflating the video camera with a "surveillance camera" (1996, 203; as cited in 1998, 136), arguing that the film "looks like old-fashioned activist documentary of the Erik Barnouw kind" to him (1998, 174). But considering the video's overall goal was to essentially discipline and remold both the behaviour and the desire of prospective viewing subjects through the carefully choreographed presentation of "culturally sensitive" sex, the video apparatus may not be harsh top-down surveillance, but it is softer bottom-up sousveillance. The surveillance of gay sex in *Steam Clean* of which Diamond speaks and Waugh seeks to correct overlooks the disciplinary goal of the images themselves: although safer-sex videos may have failed, their broader discursive goal was reached. As Jeffrey Escoffier notes, "Since 1990, the gay porn industry has adopted condoms as the standard practice in the production of all new videos (2009, 341). Although initially resisted by porn producers,[19] uniform condom use became the eventual normal.

The adoption of condoms as an industrial norm by the commercial gay porn industry cannot be divorced from discourses of security, self-preservation, protection, and even the mistrust of others: it is precisely this impulse and undercurrent that bareback porn tacitly rejects and which studios such as TIM poach for their subversive representations. Safer-sex porn is the

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[19] Owner of Falcon Studios Chuck Holmes switched adopted condom use only after being put under immense pressure by his employees and a looming threat of mass protest by ACT UP. See *Seed Money: The Chuck Holmes Story* (2015).

convergence of sexual and political affect, transforming "nonproductive expenditure" (Champagne 1995, referring to Bataille [1934] 1985) into something productive. TIM appropriates that logic in service of building a counter community organized around the exact opposite: risk rather than safety (Dean 2009; Paasonen and Morris 2014). Although presented under the guise of maintaining a culture of promiscuity, safer-sex activism, especially its visual incarnation, ultimately achieved the inverse. Condoms in porn helped to enact a new norm that prioritized life and the reproduction of identity—they helped to control a dispersed population and series of anonymous bodies through explicit images. The normalization of condom use through porn not only "birthed" and suppressed barebacking, setting up its eventual return, but also cinches how the sousveillance of today can very easily become the surveillance of tomorrow.

(New) Queer Cinema, Surveillance, Privacy

AIDS helped to inaugurate the move toward privacy, toward the private sphere and private consumption. Greyson observes that "as the state conceded more and more of what it deemed *private* space back to the homo, it simultaneously accelerated its surveillance of those *public* places where men seek anonymous sex—parks and public bathrooms" (1993, 385). As gay men increasingly turned to video pornography for their sexual release, and as the AIDS epidemic took its toll, public spaces where gay men could gather such as porn theatres, bathhouses, and bars slowly began to close (Burger 1995). The Reagan-Thatcher-Mulroney brand of conservatism altered not only the Anglo world's ideological landscape, but also its physical landscape. The loss of public spaces continually pushed gay sex and sociality into the private sphere that along with the AIDS crisis drastically altered terrain of gay culture and very notion of community (Berlant and Warren 1998; Halperin 2012).

It is within this political climate the moral majority politicized "the family" and turned it into an identity itself (Bersani [1987] 1989), one which stood in opposition to homosexuality and non-nuclear families (Bull and Gallagher 1996). The family became a proxy for privacy, and the home a visual metaphor used to position the homosexual as dual threat: internally by the potential closeted homosexual and externally by images of the homosexual forcing their way into the home. Homosexuality became "a threat *within* the home, in the form of deviant members who must be expelled, or as deviant images invading the 'innocent' space of domesticity via TV or video" (Watney [1987] 1989, 75): AIDS effectively dissolved image into body and vice versa.

Privacy is a nineteenth-century invention whose evolution continues to preclude homosexuality and deny homosexuals an official stake in the public and social sphere (Watney [1987] 1989; Bronski 1998). Paradoxically, though, homosexuality was also located outside of the private sphere, in the realm of the public—not in the home, but in the back alleys. In the midst of the neoliberal revolution, the homosexual made an excellent scapegoat for conservative politicians who wanted to present the public sphere as an infection itself. "The prosecution of the 'public' by the 'private'," writes Watney, was "ideally personified in the fantasy of the 'homosexual body,' whose sexual object-choice is displaced into the calibrated signs of AIDS" (Watney [1987] 1989, 82). AIDS thus also came to signify the "disease of the public" and was used by reactionary politicians "to erase the distinction between 'the public' and 'the private,' and to establish in their place a monolithic and legally binding category—'the family'," which according to Watney would come to be "understood as the central term through which the world and the self [were] henceforth to be rendered intelligible" ([1987] 1989, 86).

The home came to symbolize the regime of heterosexuality and thus normality, whose security was threatened by the monstrous homosexual's two-pronged insurrection. The home

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became a site in need of constant surveillance and (meta)physical space in need of protection from the homosexual who threatened to defamiliarize and destabilize its stability and familiarity—who threatened to render it uncanny. The home became the prized possession of anti-gay politicians and activists, but as the epidemic raged on, the home also became a site of contestation. Gay and lesbian activism focused increasing attention on the home, kinship, and family, reflected early on in films such as *An Early Frost* (1985). As gay and lesbian activism promoted assimilationist politics and policies, privatized consumption itself became a form of political activism (Gluckman and Reed 1997), inadvertently aligning queer emancipation with implicitly homophobic neoliberal privatization. It is within this anomalous political economy that the (queer) family begins to slowly supplant AIDS and takes centre stage (Bernstein and Reimann 2001), displacing initial left-wing liberalism with a more complacent neoliberal (and neo)conservative one.

NQC visualizes this strange evolution, encountering the queer political economy (Cornwall 1997) at a point of rapid transformation, articulating ambivalent desires to belong to the family and be normal but at the same time be free from them both. In *Paris is Burning*, for example, Harlem's vibrant ball culture is juxtaposed to Venus Extravaganza's desire for domesticity and normality (Butler 1993). In addition, several less-than-privileged young black performers discuss their modeling aspirations and identification with mainstream consumer culture, and the film even ends with two young queers of colour articulating feelings of homelessness, finding home and kinship on the streets rather than their familial home.

In *Poison* (1991), Todd Haynes edits together three separate storylines (partly inspired by the work of Jean Genet), each of which is told through a different set of conventions: one storyline features a seven-year-old boy who shoots his father and "flies away" (tabloid

television); another plot follows a scientist who transforms himself into a murderous leper (sci-fi horror); while the final narrative revolves around a prisoner who falls in love with a fellow prisoner and ends with a scene of sexual humiliation—a spit bukkake that covers the protagonist in dripping white liquid, which symbolizes semen. Each of *Poison*'s narrative threads engages an aspect of contemporary queer politics: the politicization of the family; the horror and scientization of AIDS and gay male sexuality; and the legacy of perverse queer desire. But it is Haynes' decision to end the film with a POV shot of the young child flying away from the family home, however, that captures the ambivalence inherent in NQC (Aaron 2004). The final image speaks prominently to both the strictures of heteronormativity as well as a desire to belong, especially when juxtaposed to the preceding scenes of symbolic AIDS related deaths: after drowning in figurative semen (spit bukkake), the prisoner dies while trying to escape, and the scientist, confronting his monstrosity and inevitable death, commits suicide off a tall building.

NQC is inextricable from AIDS, and in specifically AIDS-related media we encounter similar thematic concerns and feelings of ambivalence but articulated through different formal strategies that invariably refer back to, and are inextricable from, the effects of AIDS on identity. According to Roger Hallas, AIDS media "resisted the confessional imperative" that characterize post-Stonewall documentaries (2009, 19). AIDS media attempted to capture the split subjectivity felt by people with AIDS (Bordowitz [1987] 1989) by employing techniques such as "self-reflexive performance, hand-held cinematography, doubled autobiographical subjects, musical spectacle, found footage, and sound design" (Hallas 2009, 19, emphasis mine). Rather than submit to the incitement of discourse, AIDS media as well as several NQC films sought to resist the medical gaze imposed on queer subjects and people with AIDS by blocking the flow of direct

confession. Far from securing identity, what we bear witness to is the fragmentation and splitting of the self that results from both medical and visual surveillance.

Comparing and contrasting Tom Joslin and Peter Friedman's *Silverlake Life: The View from Here* (1993) and Gregg Bordowitz's *Fast Trip, Long Drop* (1993), Roger Hallas argues that "the doubling of the autobiographical subject" is strategically used "to construct different forms of testimonial address" (2009, 114). In *Fast Trip, Long Drop* Bordowitz combines autoethnography, media footage, and documented activist activities into a hybrid experimental film that reflects and reflects upon his dual identity as both a gay man and HIV-positive subject. In *Silverlake Life* Tom Joslin and his partner Mark Massi, a gay couple in the terminal stages of their losing battle against AIDS, film their accelerated declining health, culminating with the death of Joslin.

Hallas contends that both movies employ autobiographical doubling as a way to "keep their acts of bearing witness from turning into either the affirmation of a transcendental human consciousness or the commodified confessional discourse that saturates media" (2010, 116). In *Silverlake Life* Joslin and Massi share the filming process (the film was edited by their common friend Friedman), becoming both objects and subjects, while Bordowitz uses his alter ego Alter Allesman to destabilize a unified sense of self, refusing to "clearly demarcate the boundaries between Gregg Bordowitz and 'Alter Allesman'" (2010, 116). Hallas argues that "Bordowitz wished to do damage to the concept of autobiography in its conventional sense" (2010, 138), but the act of recording himself, Bordowitz ineluctably interpellates himself as an autoethnographic subject.

For William Bogard, "the 'real' body as a focus of the normalizing gaze is surreptitiously doubled by the body as information, codes, [and] probabilities" (1996, 63). It is precisely this

new subjectivity guided by an amorphous medical databank that comes to define the experience of the HIV-positive subject, which several, if not all, AIDS media works struggled to understand. AIDS placed the homosexual under the microscope and brought a new homosexual species to the foreground, concretizing a new identity out of the immaterial genetics of the AIDS virus. AIDS became "proof" of the homosexual's genetic difference, simultaneously reinscribing that difference as proof of difference as such: AIDS gave the homosexual species a symbolic genetic heritage that was at the same time very real. AIDS solidified gay identity by tying a particular system of desire to a specific body, but AIDS also fractured identity, giving birth to a new one that is contiguous to but is also imbricated with its original source. If homosexuality was an alter ego before, if homosexuality was an alternative drive or consciousness buried within, AIDS congealed homosexuality into a doubled body.

AIDS split the gay body into two: HIV-positive and HIV-negative. Over the course of the epidemic, the negative body became an object in need of protection while the positive one needed to be identified, segregated, and carefully monitored. The negative body was to be "clean" and become productive, mimicking and containing within it the ideals of the heterosexual body; the positive body was left to carry the burden of homosexuality's diseased and depraved connotations. AIDS instituted subcultural "social-sorting" (Lyon 2003, 2007), automatically slotting those with AIDS and HIV into a singular category and placing them beneath their negative counterparts. Mainstream activism, while purporting to place AIDS onscene, simultaneously sought to make it and people with HIV/AIDS obscene. The drive to decouple the homosexual from AIDS was eventually subsumed by the rhetoric and chastising of "stereotypes."

In what follows, I briefly look at *Silverlake Life* (henceforth *Silverlake*), focusing specifically on the problem of exhibiting the queer private space and subject publicly, and then turn a closer eye on John Greyson's *Zero Patience* (1993) (henceforth *Zero*). *Silverlake* compiles home-movie footage into an intimate look at the devastating reality of slowly dying from AIDS. *Zero* approaches AIDS and the epidemic from a completely antithetical vantage point. A biographical musical, *Zero* subverts typical epidemiological accounts of the AIDS virus's introduction to North America by French-Canadian flight attendant Gaëtan Dugas by discursively reimagining the heritage of AIDS partly through his eyes. In *Silverlake* we follow Joslin and Massi to their doctor and physical therapy appointments, watch them perform mundane activities such as apply makeup, cook, and struggle to eat, and deal with the procedural side of death, such as funeral arrangements and managing material belongings left behind. In *Zero*, Greyson subverts *Silverlake*'s realist aesthetics and autobiographic impulse, turning instead to stylish musical spectacle and a narrative tinged with gothic overtones.

Although Rich never included either film as part of NQC (the films were released after she published her original piece for *The Village Voice*) and even though she never once mentions *Silverlake* and mentions *Zero* only once in passing in her recently published "*Director's Cut*" anthology on NQC (2013), *Zero* is generally grouped in with NQC (Benshoff and Griffin 2006) while *Silverlake*'s position is a bit more precarious. As I've mentioned several times before, AIDS permeated NQC, and Monica B. Pearl has gone as far as to argue that

> much of AIDS representation follows the course of the virus itself—or what the virus is
> perceived to be doing, according to scientific narratives and metaphors. A retrovirus…
> insidiously convinces the body that its very being is the foreign substance, and so the
> body fights itself. HIV, as a retrovirus, is a postmodern virus. It makes the body *unable to*

differentiate between itself and what is external, or foreign, to itself…The lack of

coherent narrative, or genre recognition, or familiarly fulfilled cinematic expectations in

New Queer Cinema is partly a representational, or 'artistic', reaction to the nature of

retroviral behaviour, In other words, representation mimics the 'narrative' of the virus"

(2004, 24; emphasis mine).

From Todd Hayne's *Poison* (1991) and Gregg Araki's *The Living End* (1992) to Derek Jarman's

Edward II and Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), AIDS is everywhere; yet in Rich's

original article, its "director's cut" version, and her new anthology, AIDS is surprisingly

minimally present. *Silverlake* as well as *Zero* belong under the banner of NQC, in part because

both films mimic retroviral behaviour by focusing so intently on the scientization of visibility

and the diffusion of identity. I thus focus on *Silverlake* and *Zero* to not only highlight the various

relations between queerness, doubling, and surveillance inherent in NQC, AIDS, and their

inextricable overlaps, but to also problematize Rich's canon.

Silverlake Life: A View From Here (1993)

According to Michael Bronski, "The evolution and construction of 'privacy' has been, to

a large extent, an attempt to regulate and contain sexual activity and pleasure" (1998, 158).

Bronksi observes that pre-Stonewall homophile organizations' "main political thrust was to

argue for 'privacy'" but contends that "by focusing so intently on the 'right to privacy,' the

homophile groups constructed a false idea of safety" because "'privacy' demanded that there

would be no homosexual visibility at all. The safety found in 'privacy' was therefore predicated

and dependent upon homosexual invisibility" (1998, 162). Being public and engaging within the

public sphere were companions to visibility politics and breaking out of the private sphere

metaphorically embodied by the closet. To be public was to be free, but as Bronski notes, "Being

visible is very different from being 'public'" (1998, 183). To be public means to be "an integral part of the life of the state" but "in the United States gay people are more visible today than ever before, but they are not allowed to be public. They are denied full rights of citizenship, such as the right to marry and to join the military" (183). "Until gay sexuality is removed from the realm of 'privacy'," Bronski contends, "gay people will never be full citizens" (1998, 184). Ironically, it is only now that gay people are "full citizens" the surveillance of publicity in the form of normativity (Duggan 2003; Puar 2007) and the value of privacy can be reviewed in hindsight.

The precarious and ever-mobile location of sex in the intimate public sphere (Berlant 1997) left homosexuals and people with AIDS vulnerable and caught in between two oppositional political thrusts. AIDS not only broke down the border between public and private, heightening the need to secure both, but also placed gay men under the microscope while displacing gay sexuality, pushing it to the margins. "Nothing has made gay men more visible than AIDS," argues Bersani (1995, 19), but AIDS also simultaneously made gay sex an onscenity as well as an obscenity. Over the course of the epidemic, gay sex became ghostly: everywhere and yet nowhere. The "frenzy of the visible," a desire to put gay male sexuality onscene and make it public, was met with what I would call the "frenzy of the invisible:" a desire to pull and push gay male sexuality back into the shadows and make it private. Although antithetical in many ways, *Silverlake* and *Zero* collectively crystallize the schizophrenia of visibility that enveloped the epidemic era. Both films engage a new visual reality characterized by surveillance and transparency, and yet both films also generate ghosts and feelings of being haunted by invisibility and invisible things at the same time.

On their own, *Silverlake* and *Zero* crystallize the ongoing pull and push between the gothic and surveillance. Put into dialogue, they demonstrate how AIDS amplified and deepened

their tensions and arranged their frictions into a pervasive structure of feeling that continues to govern queer experience and cultural political discourse to this day. *Silverlake* and *Zero* represent but in many ways also embody the discord between the will to be public and a desire to be private endemic in the epidemic era. Insofar as both films subject their HIV-positive subjects to levels of surveillance unseen in queer film before, we also see the beginnings of intracultural self-surveillance taking root. This is especially the case in *Silverlake* where their personal camcorder at times becomes indistinguishable from the medical surveillance apparatuses that practically litter the screen.
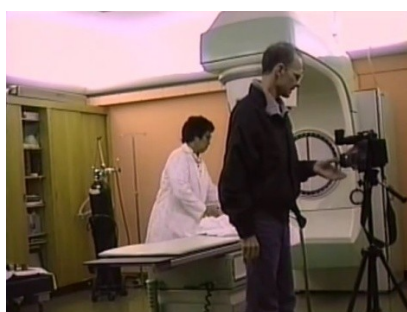
| Joslin packing up his camcorder after filming his MRI | Massi having his Kaposi Sarcoma lesions examined | Massi inspecting a lesion on Joslin's upper eyelid |

AIDS solidified and brought to surface inextricable relations between the gothic and surveillance that predated the advent of AIDS. In both films the recording apparatus becomes commensurate with surveillance, but rather than secure identity, they manifest the uncanny and doubles: subjects are doubled and ghostly and the recording apparatus split between surveillance and sousveillance. Greyson stresses visual technologies and disciplinary institutions in the construction of AIDS discourse and the erasure of gay desire, reviving the ghost of Dugas to challenge the scientization of gay desire. In inverse fashion, Massi and Joslin use personal recording technology to not only concede their bodies as split objects (private citizens and public health entities), but to also record their metamorphosis into ghosts. In a particularly reflexive scene Massi uses the camcorder to document Joslin's damaged eyes. The inherent metaphor of

blindness not only speaks to the uncanniness of the images, but also metaphorically captures their transition from visible entities into invisible ones while, paradoxically, under ceaseless surveillance.

In *Silverlake* the camcorder doesn't mediate the couple's interactions but practically takes over, breaking down differences between self and image and by extension private and public. "The camera" write Janet Jakobsen and Beverly Seckinger, "becomes, increasingly, the medium through which the partners communicate with each other" (1997, 151). And throughout the film, we see Massi and Joslin increasingly see and confront themselves as images—as ghosts absorbed into the machine.

Joslin setting up the camera and then looking at the footage on a portable playback screen

Massi and Joslin filming themselves while in bed watching themselves filming themselves in bed

Silverlake reflexively acknowledges gay identity as always and already subsumed by images, an experience and state of being interpellated by representation. In *Silverlake* we don't see any gay sex, but the ghost of gay sex is everywhere, inadvertently capturing the decentring of sex from a sexual identity. In the post-AIDS era, sex, the thing that brought about AIDS, had to be relegated

to the real of the private so that homosexual could be public. Rather than sex, we see a different from of intimacy presented on screen: death. And yet the couple live on as ghosts in the form of images to this day: the past, their past, continues to haunt the present.

But *Silverlake* is itself haunted by the past, by memories and feelings of hope and optimism about the future. Throughout the film, Freidman splices in footage from Joslin's previous home-movie documentary *Black Star: Autobiography of a Close Friend* (1977). Friedman's decision to revive the ghost of Gay Liberation strategically juxtaposes an era where gay sex is mired in feelings of dystopia and imprisonment to one when gay sex was the epitome of freedom and utopia. The most important emotional and formal choice Friedman makes comes at the very end of *Silverlake*, ending the film with spliced in footage from *Black Star*'s ending— of Massi and Joslin sharing a kiss when they were young and healthy. The final shot poignantly speaks to how AIDS not only usurped their biography, but all gay men's biography. AIDS rewrote, or re-formatted, gay identity, instilling haunting as the new norm.

Joslin and Massi embracing at the end *Silverlake* and *Black Star*

Silverlake's final image is cathartic and hopeful, but also contains the image of the couple as something private. Writing in the immediate post-epidemic era, Jakobsen and Seckinger contend that the blurring of the private and the public can reinforce "a homophobic conception that 'gay equals AIDS'—that is, that gay sex is simply a route to infection of both the individual and the social body…dangerously bolstering the idea that the 'general' public can contain AIDS

by containing gays" (1997, 152-153). They warn that "the dangers in *Silverlake*'s assertive violation of the boundaries of the private…is that an American public trained to depend on the display of private emotion within the contained boundaries of talk shows and news shows will infer that these images are of individual, but not public, interest" (1997, 153). Indeed, by splicing in home-movie footage from the Liberation era, the final image capitulates to an ingrained desire for narrative closure and a happy ending, relegating public action to private emotional catharsis. But the images open also up a space for empathetic identification with the horrific captures—they position the haunted queer home as a shared "structure" of feeling.

By suturing past and present, *Silverlake* manages to leave a space open for the past's return and intervention into the present—even if the spliced in footage from a previously released film may go unnoticed by some viewers. In many ways *Silverlake*'s final image crystallizes Castiglia and Reed's (2011) unremembering and Freeman's (2010) notion of "temporal lag," positioning the past as the antidote and useful archive with which to change the present. At the same time, though, it solidifies the wall between past and present, pointing back to an era of unbridled male intimacy as the source of devastation and something to be kept in the past as a memory.

Silverlake is a highly ambivalent and problematic film that still manages to have an impact and elicit strong emotional reactions twenty years after its initial public screening. It is almost impossible not to react horrifically to these images of agonizing decay. But does *Silverlake* inform people and provoke action, or does it simply maintain the spectacle of the scaffold's assemblage? Hallas argues that *Silverlake*'s "highly self-reflexive strategies qualify the camera's redemptive function," while conceding "that this witnessing machine is similarly imbricated in the disciplinary structure of surveillance" (2009, 125). The film captures the

paradox of visibility and display of identity rooted in Liberation rhetoric and strategy at a point and time of their implosion. Even from our present perspective *Silverlake* remains perpetually caught in a series of inbetweens: public/private, surveillance/sousveillance; past/present. The film's uncanniness is as much a product of its overwhelmed discursive ambivalence as of its prolapsed temporality and preservation of ghosts.

Zero Patience (1993)

In *Zero*, Greyson revisits the chronological account of the AIDS epidemic put forward by Randy Shilts in his 1987 bestseller *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* through the lens of the musical genre. Shilts dubbed Québécois flight attendant Gaëtan Dugas "patient zero," transforming his body into the epidemic's mythological "ground zero" as well as "a one-dimensional scoundrel from a gothic novel" (Hallas 2009, 160). Greyson's theatrical style and ongoing attempts to queer national identity (Canadian, Québécois, South African) have been the subject of several scholarly inquiries (Gittings 2001; Waugh 2006; Pearson and Knabe 2011; Longfellow, MacKenzie, and Waugh 2013). For my purposes, I will focus on Greyson's conflicted relationship with surveillance and spectacle and his ambivalence toward the recording apparatus.

Using a story within a story device, Greyson reflexively interpellates himself through the character of Sir Richard Francis Burton to explore his own ambivalent relationship to the recording apparatus. *Zero* chronicles a fictional Burton's attempts to open up an exhibit on AIDS in the "Hall of Contagion" at the Natural History Museum in Toronto (a fictional stand-in for the Royal Ontario Museum) and put together a documentary about AIDS—research endeavours he twists to fit his political agenda. Burton's disruption reawakens the past and resurrects the ghost of Dugas—a symbolic figure "haunting the cultural imagination" (Hallas 2009, 160).

Throughout the film we watch Dugas slowly chip away at Burton's faith in objectivity and empiricism, diligently trying to get Burton to see the subjective qualities and experiences of AIDS—to see AIDS not as a medical phenomenon that can be dealt with or understood objectively, but as a cultural phenomenon that defies empiricism.

Hallas contends that Greyson's appropriation of the musical challenges direct address and creates a space for the complexity of testimony to take place outside of normative modes of confessional practices, using the song's affective qualities to create an impact. "Songs create a permeable space," Hallas argues, and summarizing Koestenbaum's (1993) work on opera, suggests that "the listener may in fact experience the song as a moment of corporeal mimesis" (2009, 157)—an affective strategy Greyson uses to align identification with the HIV-positive subjects he represents. But Hallas notes that Greyson also pays considerable attention to nineteenth-century technologies and institutions that facilitated disciplinary mechanisms that evolved in and transformed the twentieth century, particularly film. What plays out onscreen is a whimsical, although no less biting, rendition of the ongoing dialectic between surveillance and the gothic that manifest themselves through the juxtaposition of Dugas, the translucent ghost, and Burton, the figure of science and objectivity.

Greyson underscores the contemporary queer's compromised privacy in era of AIDS by setting Burton's home and significant portions of the film in the Natural History Museum. Hallas contends that "the most significant visual apparatus in *Zero* is the film's museum setting…for the film treats the museum as a modern apparatus of disciplinary power that forms part of the discursive genealogy of the spectacle of AIDS" (2009, 168). Film, similar to the museum, is a series of contained vignettes that when put together tell a story. Greyson references the museum's layout to re-inscribe a zoological ethnographic gaze, aligning the recording apparatus

with the space's disciplinarity. It is not insignificant that the formal layout of the musical, a genre that mixes discreet spectacles and realist conventions, mirrors that of the museum's architecture. In a crucial early scene Burton uses a slide projector as part of a presentation that Hallas argues "invokes the nineteenth-century practice of the illustrated lecture, which…constituted one of the precursors to the documentary film, itself a representational form key to the spectacle of AIDS" (2009, 164). As Hallas observes, "The illustrated lecture contributed to the development of modern structures of surveillance and spectacle" (2009, 164). The slideshow is given as part of a proposal to add AIDS as the Hall of Contagion's centrepiece, conceptually suturing together cinema, spectacle, and scientific inquiry.

Burton also lives in a separate apartment within the museum. Living within the museum allows Burton to easily glide between private home and public arena, but also blurs the distinction between private and public. The museum is a public arena whose modern western incarnation was designed in part to showcase the pillaged culture of others, and similar to cinema, is a space where one observes and learns about others from a "safe" distance. Locating the private home within a space commensurate with colonialism and ethnography is a reflexive comment on the queer subject's interpellation in modern regimes of power-knowledge and spectacular display. Greyson's emphasis on compromised privacy reflects on post-Stonewall visibility and self-consciously recalls the invasive ethnography we see in *The Boys in the Band* as well as in the hate cycle. But as with both, there is no real such thing as "safe distance," and Greyson uses Burton's semi-private home to represent the unclear division between home and not home, or private and public space, likewise symbolizing Burton's vulnerability and insecurity. Similarly to Burns's interest in gay leather subculture, maybe Burton's interest in AIDS isn't entirely intellectual.

Greyson further underscores the museum's allegorical importance and conceptual overlaps with scientific visibility by setting therein two important musical numbers. One number makes heavy use of the diorama, "a precursor to cinema" (Hallas 2009, 164), a tableau that contains and informs. The other number, sung by "Miss HIV," is set within the magnified ocular confines of the microscope. Hallas remarks that the microscope is yet "another modern visual technology deeply implicated in the scientific objectification of the body" (2009, 165), whose surveillance is reified by the use of the overhead shot—"a privileged device in film," which Greyson suggests we regard "as the visualization of scientific discourses of 'objectivity' that posit an enunciative position outside and *above* the object of study" (Hallas, 2009, 167). The maintained overhead shot in the microscope musical sequence reflectively engages the overlaps between surveillance, cinema, and identity as well as the paradox of resistance through visual discourse—Miss HIV may very well be looking up at, and speaking defiantly back to, those who observe her from above, but is nonetheless trapped under the microscope.

| Slideshow | Diorama | Microscope | Defiant gaze |

Nowhere is Greyson's ambivalence about surveillance better captured than when he incorporates the video apparatus into the narrative. In a crucial early scene, Burton goes strolling through the hallways of a bathhouse (another semi-private space) with his camcorder. Recalling the opening of Fung's *Steam Clean,* of which Greyson himself was a filmed participant, the scene's establishing POV shot taken from Burton's camcorder merges the filmic and personal recording device. Burton uses the documentary apparatus to "distance" himself from his

surroundings, and in ghost-like fashion makes his way around to various private rooms where men await visitors and questions patrons about their sexual history while describing his observations out loud for the microphone. For Burton his gazing is ethnographic and educational and not voyeuristic, but as Thomas Waugh reminds us, "The microscope is also a peepshow" (1996, 367). Hiding behind the alibi of scientific inquiry, Burton has licence to run his eyes over the men's bodies—objectifying them only for research purposes, of course.

Once the spa patrons make it clear that this invasion of their privacy is not appreciated, Burton scurries off and stumbles upon the sauna's shower, where he is treated to a cheeky musical number that culminates with his own de-toweling—from microscope to peep show. The three nude sauna patrons distract Burton by showing him exactly what he wants to see, and then rip off his towel revealing his hidden weapon: his camcorder. Greyson symbolically aligns the recording apparatus with phallic normative power, and uses this scene to playfully comment on an ongoing history of ethnography, of outsiders looking in. It is at this moment where we also realize that Greyson's purposeful blurring of the public/private divide also encapsulates his engagement with the complex overlaps between surveillance and sousveillance. As Burton continues on his quest for the "truth" of AIDS, his intimate, if conflicted, relationship with Zero suggests that he may not be an outsider after all—ethnography, unconscious autoethnography, or self-surveillance?

| Greyson (left) in Fung's *Steam Clean* | POV of Burton making his way through the bath's halls | Burton's source of power exposed |

Although we are introduced to Zero for the first time during the film's first musical number, his ghostly re-appearance in the diegesis is set in the bathhouse. Caught "suspended somewhere between existential limbo and the primordial void"—reads the intertitle—Zero tumbles in from offscreen left and gives an impressive gymnastic performance. Starting with a rhythmic floor routine using a disco ball on a walkway in between two empty pools, he concludes his impressive performance by diving into the pool. The film cuts to black. We hear Zero briefly narrating his confusion and then cut to a centred high-angle shot of him bursting through the surface of a hot tub where three (presumably) naked men soak. Looking around slightly shocked as he takes his new surroundings in, Zero tries to communicate with the men only to realize they can't see or hear him—he is a ghost.

The bathhouse is the architectural incarnation of gay desire whose maze-like layout captures the allure of the labyrinth-like game of cruising outside of a confined demarcated space (Ricco 2002). But the bathhouse is also the symbolic birthplace of AIDS—a perverse maternity wing—reinforced by Zero's birth in a symbolic womb: the hot tub, a natural birth outside the medical apparatus. Even though bathhouses were one of the primary and earliest locations where safer-sex information and condoms were distributed (Bérubé [1984] 2003; Patton 1990; Silversides 2003; Gaspar 2011), they were shut down under the guise of protecting public health and used as a way to restrict and pathologize gay male sexuality (Rofes 1998). Greyson's decision to set Zero's birthing in the bathhouse ironically plays with the perception that these concealed enclosures were the epidemic's "ground zero." As a symbol of AIDS, Zero's return as a ghost speaks to how the virus haunts gay sexual culture while also giving corporeal form to the way AIDS reconfigured the gothic qualities of homosexuality.

Zero in the primordial void pre-birth   Zero reborn

AIDS is as ethereal as it is solid, and it is only when Zero meets Burton that he begins to materialize physically: it is only when disease meets science that it is given a body and identity. Closer to the end of the film when Zero and Burton observe Miss HIV's musical monologue, water shoots up into Zero's eyes after she completes her number. With the documentary video camera already rolling and displaying what it records on a nearby television, Zero realizes he is finally able to see himself. Burton proclaims, "You're visible!" Zero responds with surprise, "I am alive." Zero begins to quickly give his corrective testimonial to the camera: "I'm innocent. I'm not the first, but I'm still the best." Zero, once blind, can now not only see but also be seen. Zero can see himself and Burton can finally see him as a real person and not just a virus in flesh form—even if only for a brief moment. The film quickly cuts to a scene of another character succumbing to blindness and then back to Zero as he fades away. This edit juxtaposes vision's extremities: blindness and empiricism, or, invisibility and surveillance. Lamenting his return to the realm of the invisible, he flatly and sacrilegiously remarks, "My second coming only lasted five minutes"—with Greyson here playfully using sexualized language to underscore Zero's feelings of powerlessness cum impotence; blindness, again, is not only a metaphor for the uncanny, but also castration.

After receiving some corrective education about AIDS and himself, Zero is able to be temporarily seen by the recording apparatus

Character succumbing to blindness

Greyson here explicitly aligns the recording apparatus with scientific observation and medical gazing, but uses the ghostly figure of Zero to undermine the implied empiricism of both intertwined branches of surveillance—within the field of vision there is always a blind spot. But with this scene Greyson also makes an important observation about the power of technology to resurrect the ghost of the past. Invoking the return of spirits can allow one to correct previous errors, such as with Zero's corrective confession, but the return of the repressed can also have unintended destructive consequences—like the return of barebacking, as we shall see. Zero's return is meant to correct a decade of misconstrued epidemiology and ethnography—he is a friendly ghost. But the return of the repressed can also be monstrous and consuming—it can (re)possess you at any moment.

The narrative comes to a climax when Burton's contagion exhibit is shut down by activists the evening after his propaganda video's premiere screening. Reflexively acknowledging his own activist past (and *Zero*'s activism), Greyson concludes the film with a spirited musical number of AIDS activists and Burton destroying the AIDS exhibit in the Hall of Contagion. Prior to the concluding musical number, Burton interrupts his own premiere to set the record straight about Zero, only to be escorted out of the screening by security—an allusion, perhaps, to his own encounter with private security at his "kiss in" at the Toronto Eaton's Centre. This scene of intervention is followed by a small montage of Zero being discussed on the

evening news. A series of images from the covers of various books (some with him covered in lesions) and close-up cum mug fuse together Zero's identity and AIDS.

Burton attempting to correct the false image of Zero the media
has propagated and to which he himself has contributed

Greyson here reminds us of the powerful role images and media play in shaping and skewing knowledge and opinions. Zero's self-identity and biography, a stand-in for gay identity, is replaced with the generic marker of "disease." The images co-opt, twist, and exploit his image, sexuality, and identity in the service of pushing a political agenda. Zero does not exist outside the realm of visibility. Zero exists primarily as an image, and yet despite existing only within the world of images he is rendered practically invisible by his hyper-visibility. The image's ghostliness underscores his own, whereby he, or his myth, similarly to Massi and Joslin, continues to live on long after he has passed. Zero is controlled by his image double, and his image double in turn becomes a mechanism of social control. The same apparatus that made Zero visible and gave him a voice also made him invisible and reduced him to nothing more than a vessel for a deadly virus.
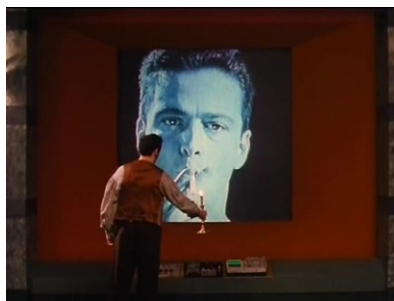
The disciplinary power of the spectacle is crystallized by the circular structure of Burton and Zero's introduction and separation—encountering once again a *ronde* narrative that returns us to the beginning. The first time Burton meets Zero, Zero steps in front of an image of himself projected onto a glass pane Burton is recording with his video camcorder from the other side. Zero's reflected image overlaps briefly with the onscreen image before blocking Burton's

eyesight. It is then that Zero realizes Burton is the only person who can see him. At the end of the film, as the AIDS activists storm and reclaim their stolen images from the Hall of Contagion, and after Burton admits to his error and gives Zero a tender kiss goodbye, Zero tells Burton he "wants to disappear."

Zero heads to the large screen image of him covered in lesions, lifts up his arms and enters the frame, remerging with his image double that is now lesion free. Zero pulls out a cigarette and Burton, holding a candle, heads over and lights Zero's cigarette through the screen—an allusion to Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* (1947). Zero's cigarette activates the water sprinkler system and short-circuits the machinery that has kept his ghost alive, allowing him to finally disappear. Greyson here subverts the iconic image the homosexual being destroyed by his narcissistic absorption into his self-image, whose most (in)famous depiction was put forward by Oscar Wilde in his gothic classic *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Water as a form of cleansing and birthing is a running theme throughout *Zero*, and Greyson ensures that the last image we have is of Zero's image being washed from the screen—invisibility has set him free.

Zero in front of his projected image pointing at Burton   Burton lighting Zero's cigarette through the screen   Protagonist from *Fireworks* having his cigarette lit

Zero is the culmination and synthesis of Greyson's video activism. About halfway through the film, as Burton and Zero's relationship becomes a bit more intimate, we are treated to a musical duet performed by two singing (puppet) assholes. Lying nude in bed, the men turn onto their stomachs allowing their respective sphincters to talk to each other about their love and

fear of cock. Intercut between their musical conversation are black and white video images of

anonymous nude men stretching, dancing, and jiggling—images that recall Greyson's earlier *The*

Making of Monsters (1991). Appropriating an "instructional video" aesthetic, Greyson redeploys

these images of physical fitness and playful phallic homoeroticism both to underscore the men's

homoerotic relationship and to counter Burton's anal-phobia. Although not explicitly about safe-

sex, this short musical number is a more explicit and optimistic revision of *The ADS Epidemic*:

don't dread sex, it's a lot of fun. A few scenes later, homoeroticism becomes explicitly

homosexual when Zero and Burton make love in the Hall of Contagion inside one of the diorama

vignettes. After an evening of carnal joy, we return to the couple in the morning. Images of

several used condoms surround the men—you can still have fun in an epidemic and with HIV-

positive men, just use condoms.

| Burton and Zero's assholes conversing | Spliced in instructional sex footage | Burton and Zero embracing their last attraction | Physical evidence of night's events |

Greyson poaches the utopias of the musical (Dyer [1977] 2002) and sexual interlude

(Williams [1989] 1999) to counteract the negative associations of being HIV-positive, and

although not as obviously didactic as his purposefully abrasive agitprop shorts, there is an

undeniable didacticism that runs through *Zero* (Waugh 2006). As ambivalent as it may be, the

recording apparatus's ability to (re-)educate is what Greyson identifies as the most powerful

antidote to the convergence of surveillance and spectacle that is inextricable from cinema and

media culture. Greyson privileges the spectacle of gay sex as itself a form of education and

resistance. Indeed, unlike in *Silverlake* where gay sex is obscene, in *Zero*, gay sex is very much onscene. And yet coming in at the tail end of NQC and the AIDS epidemic, among several other things, *Zero* captures the transformation of gay sex into something ghostly—like *Taxi Zum Klo*, a swan song, not for an era, but the transformative possibilities of gay sex and its representation.

New Queer Cinema and Hollywood's Second Hate Cycle

Starting with the infamous *Fatal Attraction* in 1987 and continuing with *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Basic Instinct* (1992), and *Single White Female* (1992), Hollywood once again demonstrated a sustained reaction to the various gains made by LGBTQ people, feminists, and pro-sex/porn activists, as well as the AIDS epidemic (Holmlund 1994; Halberstam 1995; Williams 2005; Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Although equally concerned with the breakdown of gender roles and sexuality, the second hate cycle focused its attention far more on threatening murderous women than on men (Smelik 2004; Rich 2013b). As with the previous hate cycle, all of the films are thrillers. The genre's popularity not only affirms the first cycle's success while at the same time binding the genre to its reactionary political origins, but also the inextricable queerness of the genre itself. Hollywood, however, wasn't the only one churning out images of sexually ambiguous murderers and evil doppelgängers. NQC filmmakers too tapped this structure of feeling, whose overlaps with the second hate cycle did not go unnoticed by viewers and critics (Benshoff and Griffin 2006; Rich [1998] 2013; [1999] 2013).

Hollywood's second hate cycle developed a more proximate relationship with queerness, putting to screen some of the most audacious, provocative, and transgressive images to this day, with enough there to still offend the liberal-left and conservative-right (Williams 2005). As with NQC, the second hate cycle concerns itself with identity and identification and too presents a series of counter-normative critiques. But while NQC offered carefully constructed re-visions of

certain queer tropes, the second hate cycle more or less poached them for profit. And yet for all the accusations that could be lobbied against the second hate cycle, what was presented on screen simply mirrored what its queer counterpart was exhibiting on the festival circuit.

Granted, *The Silence of the Lambs* portrayed transgender people as subjects so desperate for internal authenticity and cohesion they would manufacture a second skin made of their desired sex's flesh to overcompensate for this lack (Halberstam 1995). And although *Basic Instinct* played with the tropes of the femme fatale, it ultimately used her duality to portray the bisexual who plays both fields as an untrustworthy double agent (White 2001; Farrimond 2012). But considering films like *The Living End* followed two HIV-positive men on a murder-suicide road trip rampage, killing people as they saw fit in the name of queer resistance, taking issue with a bisexual blonde living out the narrative of her murder mystery novel seems a bit hypocritical. Authorship of course matters, but a discernible desire to maintain control over queerness, of who was and who wasn't and what was and what wasn't queer, could be readily detected in the dialogue surrounding NQC and the second hate cycle. The cross-identification and connectivity AIDS facilitated symptomatically manifested themselves both on and offscreen—although not necessarily in ways various vocal factions of the left (and right) would have liked.

Basic Instinct, like *Cruising*, was protested during its production for its (supposed) homophobic (or bi-phobic) portrayals of queer killers, but Rich notes that while "*Basic Instinct* was picketed by the self-righteous wing of the queer community… mainstream critics were busily impressed by the so-called queer new wave" ([1992] 2013, 16). Although starkly different in some ways—budget, distribution, exhibition, target audience, box office income— Hollywood's second hate cycle and NQC were more proximate than remote. Indeed, Rich notes

how "Tom Kalin struggled to reconcile his support for the queer community's disruptions of *Basic Instinct*'s shoot last spring with his film *Swoon*'s choice of queer murderers as subjects" ([1992] 2013, 17). Unsurprisingly, "*Swoon* sparked immediate controversy," too, when it was released (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 226), further underscoring the implicit surveillance of the left's rallying cry for "positive images," and their usurpation of the queer consciousness. In many ways, *Swoon* is *Basic Instinct* are each other's discursive double.

    Swoon is an artistic deconstruction of "the fact-based story of Leopold and Loeb, two queer men who in the 1920s killed a young boy merely for the thrill of it" (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 226). Both *Rope* (1948) and *Compulsion* (1959) told the same story before, but unlike Hitchcock and Fleischer, Kalin had total creative control over this micro-budget indie film. Although Kalin intended to tell a story about "a homosexual couple who had pathological behaviours" and not one to "pathologize homosexuality," gay and straight critics alike felt "he failed to achieve that goal" (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 226). Indeed Kalin's intentions seem no different from Friedkin's when he made *Cruising*, and likewise his defenses (Rich [1992] 2013).

    The social and political anxieties over queerness and the deleterious effects of AIDS are, however, best captured by the urban thriller *Single White Female*, a film that practically carries on where *Windows* left off. In *Windows*, the lesbian neighbour is a manipulating and delusional observer-participant outside the home; in *Single White Female*, the roommate turned psychopath is in the home. In *Windows*, the lesbian doppelgänger wants to possess her love object; in *Single White Female*, the pseudo-lesbian double wants to actually become her object of desire. In *Windows*, the antagonist is identified as a lesbian, a discreet other; in *Single White Female*, the antagonist's sexuality is ambiguous and her identity ill-defined.

Allie, the protagonist, puts out an ad for a roommate after discovering her fiancé, Sam, has cheated on her with his ex-wife—"SWF seeks female to share apartment in W70s. Non-smoker professional preferred." After a few interviews, she picks Hedra (Hedy), a woman who we come to discover was supposed to be a twin but whose twin was stillborn. As the film goes on, Hedy becomes increasingly more guarded and jealous of Allie. As Allie and Sam try to reconcile their relationship, Hedy tightens her grip on Allie, slowly mimicking her mannerisms and looks.

Hedy after her makeover   Allie

Hedy cuts and dyes her hair to look like Allie and near the end of the film tricks Sam into thinking she is Allie, seducing and then kills him. When Allie finds out, she tries to escape. Hedy stops Allie and tries to kill her and make it look like suicide. Hedy ties Allie up in their apartment and forces Allie to type out a suicide note. She presses Allie's hand on the computer screen to identify her as the author. Taking advantage of a brief moment when Hedy lets her guard down, Allie breaks a glass in Hedy's face. Allie runs to the elevator where, reminiscent of *Dressed to Kill,* we are treated to yet another fight and "murder" scene in an elevator. Believing that she has killed Allie, Hedy drags Allie out of the elevator when it reaches the basement and goes off to find something to help her dispose of the body. When Hedy returns with a wheelbarrow, she discovers the body has gone missing. While searching for Allie in the dimly lit basement, Allie swings down from the pipes up above and stabs Hedy in the back, killing her.

The film ends with Allie packing up Hedy's things and discovering a box of Hedy's private photographs. The final shot is a close-up of a picture where half of Allie's face and half of Hedy's face are taped together to form a single face and singular image. As with Bobbi in *Dressed to Kill*, Hedy will forever be a part of Allie.

Identity switch: Allie dressed as Hedy on the left, Hedy dressed as Allie on the right

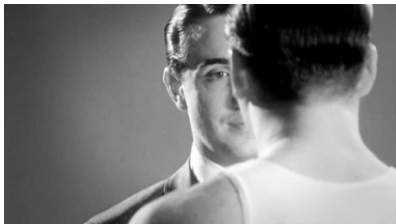Final shot: Allie on the left, Hedy on the right.

Released a bit over a decade after *Windows*, we can see how AIDS simultaneously magnified anxieties over homosexuality and over-identification while at the same time acceding to its non-discriminatory logic: AIDS doesn't discriminate; AIDS can infect anyone. In many ways, Hedy is AIDS. She is a virus that covertly enters the home to destroy it, making it an inhospitable environment for the heterosexual couple to flourish, thwarting procreation and the future family. She is a retrovirus, a destructive force that tries to take over Allie's body and identity and destroy her from within. She is the double of Araki's protagonists in *The Living End* who wreak vengeance on a complacent and complicit majority that has tacitly sentenced them to death. Why, then, is Hedy a symptom of homophobia but Araki's protagonists anti-heroes, or Kalin's re-vision of true-crime killers Leopold and Loeb in *Swoon* radically different?

Swoon also mirrors *Single White Female* in significant ways. Although not officially about doubles, the theme of doubling is prevalent. *Swoon*'s black and white film stock aesthetically inscribes its killer protagonists with a sense of duality; the lovers often wear contrasting colours as a way to demarcate them as each other's counterpart. In addition, during

the duo's trial, an expert testifies that Leopold developed a "great love for the symmetry of the human form," and in key instances, Kalin films the men in such a way as to collapse any sense of distance between them. Narcissism in this instance reflexively plays with doubling as an inherent feature of same-sex desire.

Loepold in white, Loeb in black   Loeb's face covering Leopold's

But *Swoon* doesn't just revolve around doubling; it also revolves around discipline. The last half of the movie is set almost entirely within traditional disciplinary spaces: the court room, the police station, and the prison. Earlier on, we even see Leopold in a therapy session, and after their trial comes to end, we are treated to a brief montage that details the physical characteristics of the homosexual's pathology. The running theme of institutional surveillance is supported by frequent high-angle shots. Kalin relies on these shots to connote and denote surveillance (Tziallas 2010a), highlighting and critically contemplating moments where sex is under surveillance and the severity and burden of institutional power.

Two of several instances where Kalin shoots Loeb and Leopold
in bed with overhead or high angle/level shots

| High-angle shot of courtroom | overhead shot of police interrogation | Illustrated slide on the "science" of sexuality |

The film is as obsessed with discipline and the science of sex as it is with doubling and homosexual narcissism, conceptually correlating the two. "Tom Kalin came to New Queer Cinema via AIDS activist video," Benshoff and Griffin remind us (2006, 226), and it shows. But *Swoon* doesn't just have AIDS activist media written all over it: it has the first and second hate cycle written all over it too.

Conclusion

This chapter was dedicated to delineating the various intellectual, political, and discursive threads that embedded themselves and manifested from within a series of urgent, defiant, and rambunctious films and videos. The seeds of discontent and protest were planted in the pre-epidemic era, but flourished during the AIDS epidemic. Self-representation and self-authorship became politically and socially urgent. Images and accounts of the virus's devastation were desperately needed to respond to an endless stream of *de facto* mug shots, hysterical mischaracterizations, and the circulation of frail and diseased bodies. While AIDS activists chose to document the daily experiences of those suffering from what became a tacit genocide and circulate images of protest against a homophobic mainstream, gay rights activists opted for representations that would showcase the plight of those suffering with AIDS to a mainstream audience as a way to procure sympathy, whose greatest success was the Academy Award-winning *Philadelphia* released in 1993. The political split between assimilationists and (queer)

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radicals taking place on the ground level not only manifested themselves onscreen, but increasingly through the screen.

NQC is inextricable from AIDS and in many ways embodies the fractured politics of this transitional era. Several films revolve entirely round AIDS (*The Living End*, *Silverlake Life*, *Zero Patience*), make explicit reference to AIDS (*Paris is Burning*), are coded as about AIDS (*Poison*), or are discursively and emotional enveloped by AIDS (*My Own Private Idaho*, *Edward II*). Unlike the epidemic, though, "NQC didn't come from nowhere: it came from (almost) everywhere" (Rich 2013c, 3). Several factors led to the development of NQC, but Rich lists "the arrival of AIDS" and the "emergence of 'queer'" as primary influences, sandwiching the arrival of "Reagan, camcorders, and cheap rent" in between the two (Rich 2013d, xvi). "The camcorder enabled the reversal of surveillance," Rich observes, allowing a "new generation emerging from art school" to reimagine cinema with a video eye" and revise "the medium thrillingly from the bottom up" (2013d, xvii). NQC was sousveillance: bottom-up resistance to surveillance. But as Hollywood's second hate cycle attests, sousveillance is not only inextricable from surveillance, but at times difficult to differentiate.

Hollywood's first hate cycle set the stage for NQC, putting to screen queerness before it had a name (Young 2013a) and a narrative formula that would be replicated by some and taken up more fully by NQC's doppelgänger cycle. Both the second hate cycle and NQC rejected positive representation, exuding and exhibiting negativity at a time when being (HIV-)positive was entirely subsumed by negativity. Queer theory's embrace of negativity was itself a reaction to the surveillance of positive representation, which by the late 90s became the weapon with which the normal-majority used to push negativity into the margins—"hustling, drugs, and alienation were not the image of gayness they wanted projected to America" [1999] 2013, 35),

observes Rich. But if NQC and queerness developed out of AIDS, it was the normal-majority

that ironically became a retrovirus, eating away at itself via attacking queer representation and

queerness (Rich [1998] 2013, [1999] 2013).

In the post-epidemic era, liberalism won its war against queer negativity: "contradictions

remained off-screen" (Rich [1998] 2013). Identity was rebirthed and solidified through an

endless series of performative confessions via coming out narratives. Coming out replaced queer

negativity, realigning homosexuality with discourses of productivity: family, procreation, life.

Visions of familial belonging were coupled with the need to protect young queers and secure a

safe space for them to flourish. Productive sex became conceptually aligned with safer sex, and it

is within this socio-political environment that a subculture of barebacking begins to form (Rofes

1998) and a first set of bareback films crop up (Dean 2009)—the retrovirus of normativity

engendered its own retrovirus.

Queerness, however, did not entirely disappear from the screen. Hollywood continued to

use the thriller genre as a way to render queerness safe for a straight audience. Films such as

Body of Evidence (1993), *Bound* (1996), and *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1998) teased audiences

with subtle glimpses of queerness. Rather than genuine transformation or subversion, the

Hollywood thriller was more interested in poaching the energy and style of NQC for profit. For

Rich ([2000] 2013), Spike Jones's *Being John Malkovich* (1999), with its focus on gender

deconstruction, is far more commensurate with the spirit of NQC than *The Talented Mr. Ripley*

and even the lauded and overly wreathed *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), both of which rely too heavily

on the " queer as death" formula. In a footnote, though, Rich backtracks on her original

observation, doubly underscoring the problems that ensue when trying to draw a solid line in

something liquid.

The cultural and aesthetic legacy of NQC cannot be understated (Rich 2013e). As Aaron contends, "there is clear evidence for the cinematic construction of a queer spectatorial experience" post-NQC (2004c, 197), while acknowledging that "only certain forms of queerness…are flirted with, embraced or even championed by the mainstream" (2004c, 198). Following McCormack (2008) and Davis (2013), NQC and queerness have opened a space for experiencing a variety of films queerly, even films made by directors (Cronenberg) who are routinely seen (by the left) as antagonistic (Davis 2013). Films like *Ripley* "might be understood as a by-product of New Queer Cinema's economic success and subsequent influence upon mainstream film practice," writes Benshoff (2004, 172). But the feigned and limited queerness of mainstream representation can also be seen as strategy to contain and render safe the destabilizing potential of queerness.

With Hollywood poaching and disseminating water downed versions of NQC, queer audiences increasingly looked for images that were more realistic and less artsy. By the late 90s, Rich herself grew frustrated with gay and lesbian audiences' demands for less challenging and more conveniently pleasurable fare, going so far as to proclaim that "if we limit ourselves to what we see in the mirror, we're lost" ([1998] 2013, 45). Audience's wanted the metaphoric mirror-screen to literally become a mirror and reflect reality—read: liberal-normative reality. Audiences got precisely what they wished for, and it is to the effects of this wish fulfilment I turn to next.

Chapter 5) Future: Cinematic Rebirths

Learning How to be Gay: Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss (1998)

> The basic question driving much of this literature is: How do media images and meanings create definitions of homosexuality, homosexuals, and the homosexual community, and what are the consequences? Implicit here is the awareness of the role of media in the formation of gay and lesbian identity, both at the individual level and at the level of community...[Because] gays and lesbians as youths or young adults have little or no help in understanding or defining themselves as gay or lesbian….persons who are 'coming out' search both the interpersonal and media environment for clues to understand their feelings and sense of difference. Thus, media images of homosexuality are often important sources of information (Fejes and Petrich, 1993, 396).

On the second to last page of his 500-page excavation of 20th and early 21st century Anglo gay male culture, David Halperin proclaims, "We will be queer forever" (2012, 456). Heterosexuality and heteronormativity will never disappear, but neither will homosexuality and an anti-normative impulse. Appropriately titled *How to be Gay*, in the book Halperin dares to argue that "*gay male desire* cannot be reduced either to *sexual* desire or to gay *identity*" (2012, 69). "Desire into identity," Halperin contends, "will not go" (2012, 69). "And yet" he writes, "*identity* has become the preferred category for thinking about homosexuality. Moreover, it has been promoted at the direct expense of pleasure or feeling or *subjectivity*" (2012, 70).

To be gay is to learn to be gay, whether by understanding oneself as different to one's normative surroundings or by seeking out those whose experiences overlap with one's own. But Halperin believes that the "decades-long ideological struggle to portray homosexuality as a political category, or at most a social category, not an emotional or psychological

particularity…[has] ended up imposing a sanitizing blackout on many distinctive aspects of queer life that might otherwise qualify as its most original" (2012, 71). At issue is the erasure of queer difference in favour of heteromimesis. But without homosexuals, "how would heterosexuals acquire an understanding of the protocols and priorities of the heteronormative world in which they remain immersed?" Halperin wonders (2012, 456). The hell of the same that comes from cloning can have unforeseen consequences (Stacey 2010).

For Halperin, "Gay ghettos gave rise, in short, to new forms of life" (2012, 434). Gay ghettos birthed new gay subjects. Gay culture and identity were a consequence of having a "concentration of large numbers of gay people" who "had to leave the house" if they "wanted to get laid" (Halperin 2012, 434-435). "But," writes Halperin, "it wasn't up to you" to decide with whom you associated: "you had to take the crowds that congregated in gay venues as you found them" (2012, 435). This forced relationality meant that different people had no choice but to get along with, or at least tolerate, each other—something we've lost in our tailor-everything-to-your-personal-liking era (Tziallas 2015b).

Halperin counters popular dialogue that gay culture's decline is a direct result of normalization, arguing instead that it "actually stems from structural causes…in the material base of gay life in the United States, and other metropolitan centres, during the past three decades," identifying gentrification, HIV/AIDS, and the internet as three large-scale causal factors (2012, 433). Gay ghettos resulted from cheap rent in urban centres in the wake of families and the white middle class fleeing to the suburbs. But as rents went up, as AIDS killed off and scared off gay men, and as the virtual melded into the actual, gay villages began to diminish as the various social spaces within—bars, baths, bookstores—slowly shut down. Gay villages haven't disappeared, but they are no longer the gateway through which gay and lesbian youths or

the closeted of any age pass through to learn how to be gay. There are no "old timers" or "veterans" to show new batches of homosexuals the ropes or to begin the process of what Halperin brilliantly terms "psychic decolonization" (2012, 436), and there are no gay others they must tolerate or with which to assimilate. There is but a digital world that allows people to point and click on only the things they want to see, hear, and experience—Grindr; Scruff; Dudesnude; Gay 411; Squirt.org.

There is a long history of queer cross-identification with straight/mass culture (White 1999; Farmer 2000; Hallas 2009), but as Halperin elucidates, "much original gay male culture is grounded not in identification with non-gay figures or with non-gay social and cultural forms, but in gay male identity itself and in the effort to explore it. Gay men still look for representations of themselves and reflection of their existence in cultural productions" (2012, 424). As the chapter's opening quote from Fejes and Petrich illustrates, media is a primary way people, especially young people, learn how to be gay. As queer visibility permeated mainstream media, as private media consumption and digital culture replaced public consumption and analog technologies, media increasingly became a primary point of contact for young people to see and know themselves—including pornography.

Media helps people to identify and in turn prioritizes identity over desire. To illustrate this point, I would like to look at the romantic coming-of-identity film *Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss* (1998) (henceforth *Billy*). I say "coming of identity" and not "of age" because the protagonist is not a teen but a full adult whose journey toward his happy ending (coupledom) takes place through his love of cinema. He learns how to be gay through movies, but the type of gay he learns is not one of radical queerness or non-conformity, but of normativity.

Beginning with a close-up of a Polaroid of Billy, a seemingly awkward and less than fashionable man, waving at the camera, he announces through voiceover, "I am a homosexual." From the very first shot Billy is visually identified via his sexuality. This opening shot is followed by one of several pictures of Polaroid cameras and Billy informing us that he is a photographer. These images are followed by some Polaroid pictures of some Classical Hollywood film posters and Billy confessing that he is a film buff and has a love for female-led melodramas. After establishing the important role movies and images play in his life, the next shot is of some Polaroids of him with his friends. He informs us that he is an overall nice guy, but that despite his career, his love of film, and his interpersonal relationships, he is still primarily "identified as a homosexual"…even though he himself first identified with the category before telling us his name or anything else about himself. A close-up of three Polaroids, each photographing a single letter, placed side by side spelling out "G A Y" follows his announcement. Despite being many other things, he is identified as a homosexual and can't help but also identity as a homosexual. Whether he likes it or not, his sexuality trumps other aspects of his personality.

Billy the G A Y

Billy then gives us a bit of background information. He is from Indiana, where there are lots and lots of straights. He moved to Los Angeles when he was old enough to do so, but even though he moved to a gay mecca, he still feels like an outcast—Billy's a romantic. Billy wants us to know that contrary to popular belief gay men do not get laid all the time and that "some of us,

in fact, long for true love, kids, a house in the country with a white picket fence." This "anti-stereotype" declaration is reinforced with a series of Polaroids of same-sex couples holding each other, and one of a man holding a picture of someone presumed to be his lover. Why does a gay film need to tell this to a, presumably, gay audience? Who is Billy really "informing"? The opening montage sequence comes to an end with Billy telling us that straights "have it all." He, however, has a story that he offers to the homos *and the heteros* in the "hopes of bringing us all a little bit closer to understanding those words 'straight' and 'gay'…if, in fact, they have any meaning at all."

Cinematic mediation can bring us all a little bit closer

The final part of Billy's voiceover monologue begins with the word "STR AI GHT" spelled out in Polaroids with the middle Polaroid replaced with one of Billy holding a film reel in one hand a film canister in another. The left and right Polaroids are then replaced with ones of a gay couple on the left and a straight couple on the right. The middle is then replaced with one of Billy setting up a projector. The left Polaroid is then replaced with the word STRAIGHT and the right one with the word GAY, with each word now replacing their opposite image: film allows us to see, and feel from, the other side. The monologue concludes with Billy informing us that there are no tits in this movie, just a tongue in the ear, some foreplay and, of course, one Hollywood screen kiss—gay sex is left offscreeen. The film transitions into the narrative and a medium close-up shot of a topless Billy taking a photograph, and ends with him falling into bed

with Fernando, the man he was photographing. The scene ends with a transition into a "groovy credit sequence."

Billy is a self-reflexive and charming tale of unrequited love. Like most romantic comedies we watch the protagonist yearn for, and try to acquire, their object of desire en route to their happy ending—or, failing that, the person they were meant to be with all along. Billy's object of desire is the sexually ambiguous hunk Gabriel, a server-model he meets by chance while having lunch one afternoon and later on again at a common acquaintance's party. Billy convinces Gabriel to model for his photography project, a series of recreated Hollywood screen kisses with men playing both male and female parts. Billy becomes infatuated with Gabriel, and throughout the film we watch Billy awkwardly try to seduce Gabriel while also trying to determine his sexual orientation. Although replaying the protypical "falling for the straight boy/gal" narrative, Billy is neither a lunatic (like Andrea in *Windows*), nor some desperate sad gay man (like Michael in *Boys*); rather, he wants to have and to be with that object he has learned to lust after watching Hollywood movies for years: the dashing, masculine, handsome straight man.

Thanks no doubt to the talents of Sean Hayes, the film manages to avoid turning Billy into a caricature or a pathetic figure to feel sorry for; but by the end we do *feel* things for him. After following Gabriel to a photo shoot on Catalina Island (an island just off the coast of Los Angeles), Billy discovers that Gabriel isn't confused about his sexuality but is in a relationship with another male model, a dark-featured and dark-hair clone of Gabriel. Heartbroken, Billy leaves, and the film concludes with the opening of his Hollywood Big Screen Kiss exhibit. At his exhibit he meets someone. We can't help but feel happy for him.

The film self-consciously poaches the tropes and conventions of the Hollywood romantic comedy, but queers the ending while at the same time critiquing one of the enduring pillars of gay male desire: the desire for masculinity and straight, or "straight"-ish men (Waugh 1996). At the same time, somewhat countering Halperin's (2012) observation, the film articulates the limits of queer self-knowledge: gay men can only really ever know themselves and desire through a heteronormative lens. But in the end, rather than gay boy gets "straight" boy, Billy lets go of the oppressive straight-boy fantasy and opts for something real with another gay man. The film manages to capture the ambiguity of gay subjectivity, caught in the centre of a normative system of representation through which queer people somehow also learn to be different.

The ending, though, also curiously visualizes Halperin's belief that "so long as queer kids continue to be born into heterosexual families and into a society that is normatively, and notionally heterosexual…gay subjectivity will always be shaped by the primeval need on the part of gay subjects to queer heteronormative culture" (2012, 457). For Halperin, gay subjectivity is procedural. It is not about "being," but about the process of working toward something on the horizon. To want to queer is to be queer—it's a naturally occurring impulse. By the end of the film Billy has successfully queered the spectacle of heteronormativity and successfully moved through a regressive system that curtailed his flourishing to become a healthy, happy gay man. Billy has successfully completed his journey from a state of infantile desire to a secured identity. The film's ultimate goal, though, is not for us to feel happy for Billy, for us to want to feel that same kind of happiness and contentment for ourselves.

It is telling that in the mid to late 90s gay filmmakers increasingly turned to comedy to tell their stories. Up until then, gayness was no laughing matter; it was dramatic, melodramatic, serious, and dark, but not funny. Gay sexuality and identity were for the most part serious issues

that were examined through a severe and heavy lens. The AIDS epidemic was one reason. As Thomas Waugh remarks, "The melodrama became the first and foremost fictional form of independent filmmakers addressing the health crisis within a popular constituency in the mid-eighties" ([1992] 2000, 222). But queer cinema's art house beginnings that preceded AIDS also examined queer sexuality and rudimentary forms of identity through a rather sombre lens.

By the mid-90s there was an unconscious need to move away from melodrama and the hopeful but tragic films that had permeated the mainstream, such as *Philadelphia* (1993). By the mid-90s, one can detect a noticeable shift in the tone of popular gay and lesbian representation such as in *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* (1994), *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* (1995), and *The Birdcage* (1996)[20]: there was a palpable need to laugh. The comedy and romantic comedy are life-affirming genres tied to discourses of citizenship (Moddelmog 2009), whose popularity also suspiciously coincides with that of the coming out cycle.

The rise of the gay comedy like that of the coming out cycle manifests a growing desire to start anew. There was a need to see gayness as something that wasn't always weighed down by polemics, struggle, suffering, or death. By the mid 90s artists and filmmakers felt the need to approach gay culture and AIDS through a comedic lens, creating space for romantic comedies such as *Jeffrey* (1995), a film about an abstinent HIV-negative gay man in New York City who falls in love with someone who is HIV-positive during the height of the AIDS epidemic. Based on the off-Broadway play by Paul Rudnick (1993), whose moniker, "a comedy about AIDS," originally denied the play an exhibition venue, it tells the story of a gay man petrified by AIDS, struggling to rectify his need for, and fear of, other men's bodies.

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[20] Which was actually a remake of the Franco-Italian *La Cage aux Folles* (1978).

The romantic comedy developed out of a need to approach the present and past from new and different vantage points. But another generic type of film that would soon develop significant overlaps with the comedy and romantic comedy was also rising in popularity: the coming out film. Although sharing a similar sensibility with the gay (romantic) comedy and grounded in the present with an eye on the past, the coming out cycle, particularly the teen coming out film, developed out of a need to look toward the future.

Save the Gay Children

The Cruel Optimism of Reproductive Futurity

If films like *The Living End* embraced "love without a future" at a time when AIDS had thrown the future into question (Young 2013b), the teen coming out film stepped in to give hope to a gay future. Lee Edelman contends that the future belongs to the child, "insofar as the fantasy subtending the image of the Child invariably shapes the logic within which the political itself must be thought" (2004, 2). He calls this paradigmatic stricture "reproductive futurism": "an orientation of narrative, meaning, and indeed politics, toward a not-yet-realized (and never realizable) future, whose figural avatar is the Child" (Young 2013b, 15). The figure of the child, writes Edelman, becomes "an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations" (2004, 2). The child, in essence, becomes a symbolic controlling figure that disciplines social and political relations whereby the present must always subtend to the future crystallized by the figure of the child-to-be.

"Politics, however radical the means by which specific constituencies attempt to produce a more desirable social order," Edelman argues, "remains, at its core, conservative insofar as it

works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child" (2004, 2-3). According to Edelman, then, "the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form" (2004, 4). For Edelman, the child represents a symbolic resistance to death. We externalize our innate futurity (reproductive drive) and extrapolate it to the figure of the child to appease our own anxieties about death. The child, then, becomes *the* symbol for the future and the queer the harbinger of death.

Along similar but different lines, Lauren Berlant describes how "a relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (2011, 1). She argues that "all attachment is optimistic" and that "these kinds of optimistic relation are not inherently cruel" but that "they become cruel only when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially" (2011, 1). For Berlant, "Optimism is cruel when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or people risk striving," becoming doubly cruel when "the very pleasures of being inside a relation have become sustaining regardless of the content of the relation, such that a person or world finds itself bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly comforting" (2011, 2)—such as reproductive futurity.

Berlant maintains that "when we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us…insofar as proximity to the object means proximity to the cluster of things that the object promises" (2011, 23). She goes on to write how "being drawn to return to the scene where the object hovers in its potentialities is the operation of optimism as an affect form. In optimism, the

subject leans toward promises contained within the present moment of the encounter with her[/his] object" (2011, 24). Essentially, cruel optimism is that which we desire and which tacitly promises to improve us, to make us happy and fulfilled, but which simultaneously, and in many ways only, hinders our ability to grow and be fulfilled.

For many, heteronormativity is cruel optimism *par excellence*: it is a future-oriented system whose linear temporal narrative—birth, marriage, children, death—tacitly promises happiness, fulfilment, and emotional prosperity but ultimately hinders the process that would allow those very things it promises to come to fruition. Heteronormativity is reproductive futurity, and reproductive futurity is cruel optimism—a relationship both scholars recently engaged in their published conversation *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Berlant and Edelman 2013).

In *Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss* we see the effects of heteronormativity's cruel optimism at play. Cinema inspires Billy, but cinema has also taught Billy to desire certain ideals and model his desires around heterosexual norms: Billy wants to be just like those images he valorizes. Although Hollywood cinema allows him to flourish creatively by providing him with the inspiration for his exhibit, it also hinders his ability to flourish. Even though the pursuit of a monogamous relationship that he learned to desire through images that do not represent him are the sources of Billy's unhappiness, he continues to cling to them and the hope of finding his prince despite being made less unhappy in the process. *Billy*'s ending crystallizes what Lisa Duggan has termed "homonormativity" (2003): the hegemonic renegotiation of heteronormativity by gays and lesbians. In no way does *Billy* challenge the basic tenets of heteronormativity; instead, it suggests we should embrace but tweak or "queer" them. If you wait long enough and try hard enough, you will find your prince too!

Cruel optimism is a "relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic," writes Berlant. Destructiveness results when "the subjects who have *x* in their lives might not well endure the loss of their objects/scene of desire, even though its presence threatens their well-being, because whatever the *content* of the attachment is, the continuity of its form provides something of the continuity of the subject's sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world." For Berlant, "It is the condition of maintaining an attachment to a significantly problematic object," whose cruelty rests in its ability to convince someone or some groups "that the loss of the promising object/scene will itself defeat the capacity to have any hope about anything" (2011, 24): "where cruel optimism operates, the very vitalizing or animating potency of an object/scene of desire contributes to the attrition of the very thriving that is supposed to be made possible in the work of attachment in the first place" (2011, 24-25).

It is a combined cruel optimism and reproductive futurism that operates in not only the teen coming out cycle, a group of films about gay adolescents who struggle to come out to themselves, their parents, and the world at large, but also the coming out genre as a whole. As a way to discuss the emotional, discursive, and political underpinnings of the coming out subgenre, I will concentrate on teen coming out narratives because they more vividly articulate the desire to be "re-born" that undergirds performative coming out utterances. The teen coming out film not only aligns almost perfectly with Edelman's theory of reproductive futurity, but also highlights the broader push to include family in the queer imaginary underway in the latter half of the 90s (Bernstein and Reimann 2001): the teen coming out film helped to popularize the queer "family film" and centralize the family in queer cinema (Pidduck 2003).

In the teen coming out film, there is no questioning of sexuality or identity: there is only a whole new body that is "born that way" and needs to be secured. Following Bogard's (1996) analysis of the overlaps between fantasy and surveillance and Stacey's work on cloning and cinematic mimesis, I contend that teen coming out films of the mid-90s employ realist aesthetics to envision subtle futurist fantasies meant to discipline those in the present through the "figurative avatars' of youth they represent and to which their narratives subtend. Surveillance, after all, is about monitoring and disciplining the present in service of the future. Surveillance and futurity are inextricable, and teen coming films are futurist disciplinary fantasies, but ones that are, paradoxically, entirely invested in nostalgia. While pointing to a future where homosexuality isn't seen as some deadly threat but instead a benign difference, they merge this future vision of an AIDS-free world with memories of a past that never was. They are hopeful and optimistic visions to work towards.

Coming Out, The Queer Family, and "Queering" The Family

In his harsh critique of 90s coming out films, Michael Bronski (2000) traces the roots of coming out narratives to post-Stonewall documentary film. He notes how "throughout the later 1980s and 1990s, the idea of the 'coming out' film gained in popularity" (2000, 21), but argues their popularity helped to not only normalize but also de-politicize the process. Bronski cites several films that together comprise a "coming out" cycle: *Get Real* (1999), *Bedrooms and Hallways* (1998), *Beautiful Thing* (1995), *High Art* (1998), *Edge of Seventeen* (1998), *Chutney Popcorn* (1999), *Floating* (1997), and *But I'm a Cheerleader* (1999), as well as *The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love* (1995), *Better Than Chocolate* (1999), and *Head On* (1998).

Of crucial importance is the attention Bronski pays to coming out narratives that often, but do not exclusively, feature teens or young adults. While in *Making Love* (1982) the protagonist was a married man well into adulthood, by the mid-90s, coming narratives had begun to focus on much younger characters. By the late 90s and in the 2000s, narratives about people coming out or coming to terms with their sexuality in their 30s or 40s were eclipsed by ones about queer adolescents and young adults. We can still see the impact of this youthful turn to this day, with numerous coming out narratives set almost entirely within the familial home and high school such as in *Were the World Mine* (2008), *Geography Club* (2013), *G.B.F.* (2013)—a continued focus buttressed, no doubt, by recent conversations about bullying in school and Dan Savage's "It Gets Better" campaign[21] (Cho 2012; Savage and Miller 2012), which are themselves not only subsumed by, but also seek to propagate, (neo)liberal normativity and discourses of (reproductive) futurity (Puar 2012; Goltz 2013; Grzanka and Mann 2014; Meyer 2015).

For Edelman, the image of the child is a disciplinary mechanism that binds and drives heteronormativity. The image of the "future child" seeks to not only instil reproductive futurity as the only possible option, but also erase queerness in the process by positioning it as a threat to all things future-oriented. The gay teen in coming out cinema symbolically poaches the logistics of reproductive futurism, realigning assimilationist gay identities with normative reproductive order, becoming the symbolic future of queerness. Adolescence is when young children develop sexually and when those oriented toward the same sex begin to understand themselves as gay subjects. The gay teen is, in many ways, childlike, insofar as a whole new subjectivity begins to take shape during these formative years that seeks to understand itself and its place in the world

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[21] See also http://www.itgetsbetter.org/

as a new subject. It is my contention that the teen in the teen coming out cycle discursively embodies the figural child on which Edelman basis his polemic and crystallizes the reproductive logic of liberal normativity. Via the coming out genre as a whole, repeated performative utterances seek to suplant a new normal as a normal that always and already was.

For Edelman, reproductive futurity is inherently narcissistic but seeks to disavow its narcissism by displacing the consuming threat of sameness onto the queer. The child requires we give up those things that may harm their entrance into the world and its flourishing once they have arrived—negativity, vice, and all desires and activities grouped under the figure of the queer. In doing so, though, we ultimately "save ourselves," for to live life for our future offspring is to ultimately live life ourselves. The figure of the child becomes the *universal symbolic double* through which we are all expected to imagine ourselves. The queer, then, like AIDS itself, becomes a malignant force that destroys life and hinders its flourishing (Stacey 2010).

The teen coming film, however, seeks to subvert this logic: gay too equals life, not death. In the teen coming out film, the teen comes to symbolize the redemption and redemptive qualities of same-sex desire, but comes with the baggage of having to decouple all things queer from queers. "Only by thus renouncing ourselves can queers escape the charge of embracing and promoting a 'culture of death,' observes Edelman (2004, 47). Like Billy, who lives for the future (his prince) but is made unhappy and unsatisfied by his heteronormative longing in the present, the queer teen embodies the delay and displacement inherent in reproductive futurism: delayed gratification and sacrifices in the present for the future.

Bronski suggests that the antigay backlash spearheaded by Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign and the Briggs Initiative in the late 70s may have "pushed gay and lesbian filmmakers into a position of presenting only the least complicated and 'innocent' of stories in

their work," wondering if "the onset of AIDS in the early 80s add[ed] to this retrenchment impulse" (2000, 21). But Halperin offers a slightly alternative and less condemning view of this representational, if not ontological, shift, suggesting that

> the lesbian and gay movement has had reason…to downplay the subjective experience of homosexuality, of what homosexuality *feels like* to us. It has been perfectly right to worry that any attention to our supposed mental or emotional peculiarities would simply reconfirm ancient prejudices about our psychological abnormality, prejudices that have served so often to justify discrimination against lesbians and gay men (2012, 71).

Halperin isn't referring to the feeling of the closet that we see in the teen coming out film, but rather an alternative subjectivity captured in *Bijou*, *Pink Narcissus*, or the experimental works of Su Friedrich, Barbara Hammer, and John Greyson. In the coming out film, we see identity eclipsing subjectivity. The closet naturalizes and universalizes identity, displacing subjectivity in the process: identity hides in the closet until that inner person(a) is brave enough to come out; subjectivity would include the closet itself.

The changing arena of gay politics reconfigured the function and meaning of the closet. Bronski observes that

> by the early to mid-80s, coming out was still political but it was quickly becoming an alternative and increasingly acceptable middle-class rite of passage. Homophobia had not disappeared, but as the Gay Liberation Movement (which promoted wide-scale social change) became the more acceptable (and civil-rights based) gay-rights movement, 'coming out' became less aggressively and determinedly political (2000, 21).

Halperin too, concedes, that "as a result of those lesbian and gay activists, writers, artists, and scholars, the only credible differences (beyond sexual difference) that can be assigned to gay

people nowadays…are purely *social* differences" (2012, 71). What manifests in the teen coming out film is the emotional experience of social difference that results from sexual difference. For Bronski, the coming out film becomes the higher budget and flashier equivalent of the "talking head" documentary, normalizing its normative gay subjects and naturalizing assimilation as the only goal of coming out—*just let me be myself, which is just like you, but slightly different*.

Bronski voices something I and many gay individuals have felt about recent queer film offerings: "the problem, for so many already-out homosexuals, is that the coming out novel or film is no longer fresh, says nothing new, and is often not emotionally, physically, or artistically challenging" (2000, 20). Why, then, do these (uninspiring?) films continue to be made? Bronski also notes that "as a general rule, nearly all coming out films posit a happy ending" (2000, 23). Why does coming out always result in happiness and not rejection, alienation, ostracization, or death? According to Bronski, coming out films represent coming out as a "simple personal statement," a private performative utterance that "has few ramifications within the material world" (2000, 23). Although the coming out genre may not have been productive in the radical sense, it most certainly had an impact, whose ramifications can be seen and felt to this very day.

Edelman observes that "communal relations, collective identities, the very realm of the social itself all seem to hang on compassion's logic" (2004, 68), arguing that the future "can only belong to those who purport to *feel* for the other" (Edelman 2004, 75). I argue that coming out fictions, but in particular teen coming out films, utilize compassion and empathy to suture together identity and futurity: we are meant to feel compassion for the young protagonists they represent (Sobchack 1992; Cartwright 2008). (Teen) coming out narratives aligned themselves with the utopic (or should I say cruel?) optimism of homonormativity and reproductive futurity, becoming reproductive entities through which new experiences would be reproduced.

Bronski contends that coming out narratives "are a prime example of the problems that arise when artists—in response to the broader political climate—feel that they have to create and promote 'positive images'" (2000, 20). But there is something more going on here. Although many coming out, and specifically teen coming out, films employ a realist style and submit to realist conventions, an undeniable feeling of fantasy permeate them, to such a degree they verge on the surreal, becoming almost "would-be" liberal utopias.

Writing about British coming out films in the 90s—specifically *Beautiful Thing* (1995) and *Get Real* (1999)—Santiago Fouz-Hernández recounts how many people involved the various productions saw them as films meant to give "hope to gay teenagers" (2003, 149), but notes that this "hope" relied on them being "safe for straight viewing" (2003, 154). Coming out films in the 90s placed considerable emphasis on the formation of identity but kept sexual contact to a minimum, preferring to allude to it or returning to the suggestive ellipsis of the production code era (Williams 2008). If sexual contact was shown, it was between two young people falling in love and almost always stopped at kissing.

Fouz-Hernández (2003) observes that *Get Real* and *Beautiful Thing* were praised by some queer critics, but criticized by others for pushing a normative agenda and coming off more like fairy tales than realistic portrayals that failed to engage and examine the harsh realities of being young and gay. Indeed, comparing these films to their social and legal contexts (Matthew Shepard was tortured and killed on October 6th 1998, for example), they are more *optimistic* than *realistic*. If we follow Berlant's (2011) logic on optimism, the teen coming out film was (and is) in service of some sort of future and not necessarily reflective of the present they claim to represent. The "cluster of promises," to use Berlant's terminology, within teen coming out

narratives both implicate and interpellate the figurative youth as a symbol of hope we should reorient ourselves toward.

AIDS melodramas such as *Philadelphia* (1993) sought to deploy the affect of empathy to reiterate AIDS as a phenomenon that affects, and can infect, everybody. The coming out film further reconfigured empathy, but instead of focusing on adults or those suffering with AIDS, it directed empathy toward younger individuals, particularly adolescents, who are victimized by a blanket oppressive intolerance and the threat of AIDS itself. On the cusp of, and during, the post-epidemic era, the future was increasingly re-envisioned through the figure of the gay youth and young adult. AIDS equalled death, which equaled no future; healthy, protected, and accepted youthful gay subjects represented the possible future, a future that needed direct action in the present in order to make a reality.

According to Edelman, all sexuality is driven by a self-destructive force "that tears apart both the subject's desire and the subject *of* desire" but whose burden "falls only to certain subjects"—namely homosexuals. (Heterosexual) Love becomes the metaphysical suture that maintains reproductive futurity, positioning those who "fail to fall in love" (promiscuous homosexuals) as threats (Edelman 2004, 73). To love is to commit oneself to the future, to something greater than oneself. Edelman cites Dan Savage's 1998 public declaration in *The New York Times* as evidence of this effect and of the radical shift in the queer political landscape:

> 'Gay parents,' [Savage] wrote, 'are not only making a commitment to our political future, but to the future, period….And many of us have decided that we want to fill our time with something more meaningful than sit-ups, circuit parties and designer drugs. For me and my boyfriend, bring up a child is a commitment to having a future. And considering

what the last 15 years were like, perhaps that future is the ultimate status for gay men'

(2004, 75).

It is not surprising that almost all coming narratives revolve around love, and more often than not, a secret love. It is love that compels characters to come out. Characters often come out to declare their love for someone or are inspired by love to declare their love for themselves, suturing together love, empathy, identity, and futurity. Characters fall in love, and in turn come out to be loved by their family and community. Love becomes the emotional common denominator through which empathy and compassion circulate between not only the characters, but also viewing subjects and characters.

In almost perverse fashion, rather than subverting Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign, the teen coming cycle appropriates its logic. The cycle positions the queer youth as a symbolic harbinger of life we are meant to feel and live for, redirecting us away from the past and toward a brighter, healhier future—the inverse of queer negativity. In the wake of so much death and despair, there was an unconscious need and desire for youthful renewal. The closet in the teen coming out film, and specifically the mid-90s cycle, takes on meta-vaginal qualities— the public declaration of one's sexuality akin to being reborn. The films communicate a palpable need to affirm the struggle against AIDS had not been in vain and that out of the ashes of the thousands who had passed new life would sprout. The gay youth became a symbolic disciplinary figure that sought to marginalize queerness and difference, championing a non-threatening sameness: positive images and not "HIV-positive images" or images of being HIV-positive.

The focus on youth and replacement of the struggle with AIDS with the struggle for youths to come out to a safe and secured world symbolically marked the beginning of a new generation of gay and lesbian cultural and visibility politics. The teens in the teen coming out

film became metaphysical children that needed to be nurtured in order for a new generation of gays and lesbians to flourish. The subgenre allowed viewers to witness young gay men and women living in the world that gay rights activists envisioned before the AIDS epidemic knocked them off their trajectory—but which, in hindsight, also allowed them to achieve their vision. The late 90s teen coming out film allowed those who survived the epidemic to metaphorically bear witness to their own rebirthing. The teen coming out cycle is both a symptom of gay culture's and particularly gay men's desire to be reborn into a world where they are accepted and free from AIDS, as well as an appendage of a larger apparatus that sought to fulfil that wish. There was a desire to move beyond the trauma and horrors of AIDS and begin anew. Coming out narratives involving youths (continue to) exude feelings of optimism and a desire to secure a safe space free from hostility, violence, disease, and discrimination—even those that don't conform to a demand for a typical happy ending, such as the 2000 French film *Come Undone* (*Presque rien*).[22]

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[22] One could argue that *Head On* defies my framework, but although entirely invested in the politics of the closet, *Head On* is not a "coming out" film and too also never mentions AIDS. Ari, the main character, never declares an identity and becomes visibly upset when his gender-fluid friend (Johnny) shows up in drag one evening at a Greek bar. *Head On* is affiliated with NQC (Pidduck 2003; Jennings and Lominé 2004; Tziallas 2010b), rejecting many of the political and identificatory discourses embodied by the (teen) coming out film/cycle. If anything, *Head On* is the teen coming out cycle's queer double.

One could also argue *Mysterious Skin* (2004) and *L.I.E.* (2001) defy my framework, but both films place such heavy emphasis on the threatening figure of the pedophile it is difficult not to see them as complicit with a political regime of normativity (Waugh 2010). Both films

While AIDS campaigns flooded billboards and red ribbons became the most fashionable accessory at award shows, AIDS was somehow simultaneously divorced from the gay (male) body, or "de-gayed" (Patton 1990; Román 1998). Throughout the 90s, gay characters began to crop up on television, which aside from Chad Lowe's (straight) character on *Life Goes On* (1989-1993) were uniformly HIV-negative. Representation implicitly became more optimistic, if not utopic, by simply leaving any discussion or representation of HIV/AIDS offscreen: the possibility of a future came with divorcing AIDS from gay identity and reconfiguring and outsourcing it as discourse. But while television was where gay and straight characters interacted to varying degrees—with gay characters in both lead roles (*Will and Grace*, *Queer as Folk*) and supporting roles (*Rosanne*, *Friends*) appearing with greater frequency—mainstream cinema lagged, and still lags, behind.[23]

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invariably position children as figures that need to be protected from older gay men, both of whom represent gay culture vis-à-vis the generation of Gay Liberation: in *Mysterious Skin*, the abuse takes place in 1972 and in *L.I.E.*, the pedophile is middle-aged, approaching his senior years.

[23] In 2013 GLAAD began its "Studio Responsibility Index" (available at: https://www.glaad.org/tags/studio-responsibility-index), a compendium of queer representation and companion to its "Network Responsibility Index," which started in 2007 (available at: https://www.glaad.org/tags/network-responsibility-index). GLAAD assess not only the "quantity," but also "quality" and "diversity" of LBGT (note: not queer) representation. GLAAD rates studios according to the number of feature films (mostly fiction) that feature queer characters, but also whether the characters were portrayed "positively" or "negatively." Their problematic framework, what they call the "Vito Russo Test" (see studio link for details), and

methodology aside, the reports do give a sense of Hollywood's continued resistance to LGBT(Q) representation. There are a number of reasons for the continued marginality of LBGT(Q) representation in film (Knegt 2013; Suebsaeng 2013) and television (Thomas 2014), but various identified issues ultimately boil down to money and profit.

Network TV needs to appease advertisers and appeal to a wide range of viewers, which is likely why the best and most provocative queer representations at the time of writing are found on Netflix (*Orange is the New Black, Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*), FX (*American Horror Story*), Amazon (*Transparent*) and HBO (*Looking*, *Game of Thrones*, *True Blood*, and even *Girls* [Rich 2013d]. Despite their proliferation on the small screen, though, queer characters still tend to be found in supporting and not lead roles. With regard to film, Hollywood has turned its attention away from mid-budget films, sinking a disproportionate number of dollars into over-bloated and over-budget blockbusters. There's less money for challenging material and less room for challenging characters or characters who may challenge (read: turn off) mass (read: straight) audiences. Films (less so with TV) with LGBT(Q) leads tend to mirror the gay-straight binary that GLAAD, ironically, helped to enact, automatically being labelled "gay movies" and thus not "for" straight audiences. Even a star-driven film like *Behind the Candelabra* (2014) was released on HBO and not in theatres because of financial concerns:

> In Soderbergh's view, the reason you can't see *Behind the Candelabra* in American theaters has as much to do with financially—though not politically—conservative executives as it does with the palate of the American movie-going public. "It's all economics," he says. "The point I was trying to make was not that anyone in Hollywood is anti-gay. It was that economic forces make it difficult, if not impossible, for people to think outside of the box…If audiences were going in great numbers to see stuff that was

Mainstream movies kept and continue to keep gay characters to a minimum and often in supporting roles, at times relying the gay "queer minstrel" trope for a quick laugh (Russo [1981] 1987; Raley and Lucas 2006), such as with Harvey Fierstein's character in *Independence Day* (1996). And although indie hits with queer leads such as *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), *Gods and Monsters* (1998), and *TransAmerica* (2005) managed their way into the mainstream market and popular consciousness, *Boys* and *Gods* relied on the safety of melodrama while all three relied on "art house" prestige to sell tickets. Only when gayness is fetishized for the purposes of accruing accolades and awards do movies tend to find (minimal) success outside queer circles.

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       not down the middle, then everyone would be doing that…[Hollywood is] merely

       responding to what people are telling them they want to see! (Suebsaeng 2013).

Although Soderbergh makes an important point about the relationship between audiences' tastes and financing, studios are also notoriously clueless about marketing queer content (Setoodeh 2012). And his attempt to divorce conservative politics from conservative economics is naïve and flimsy at best (Duggan 2003).

Sadly, *Bruno* (2009) and to some degree *The Kids Are Alright* (2010) ($20 million domestic box office gross: http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=kidsareallright.htm) and *The Imitation Game* (2014) are the only movies since *Brokeback Mountain* to be embraced by a mixed theatre-going audience—although it should be noted that Turing's homosexuality is minimally present in *The Imitation Game*. Bruno's racy and politically incorrect content, however, straddles the line between critical caricature and offensive stereotype, dividing opinions (Lim 2009; Scott 2009). The North American audience's reluctance to embrace films with gay leads, or even supporting characters, speaks prominently to the disconnect between gay marriage/rights and gay acceptance (Conrad 2010).

Queerness may have evolved into a burgeoning style and diverse independent international cinema (Pidduck 2003; Benshoff and Griffin 2006), but coming out narratives continue to be a choice style of narration for queer filmmakers. The teen coming out film remains one of the more popular subgenres, helping to spawn, and often overlapping with, the gay romance and romantic comedy (See Appendix A). The trend toward assimilation resulted in a larger number of mixed productions, obfuscating the division between queer and non-queer authored work. But rather than see this development as a case of straights "stealing" or diluting queer representation, Julianne Pidduck suggests that it is in fact queers who have penetrated, poached, and altered the mainstream. Speaking of Almodóvar's *All About My Mother* (1999) and Marleen Gorris's *Antonia's Line* (1995) and partially quoting Richard Dyer, Pidduck writes that the films "share a non-realist utopian impulse where popular entertainment fulfils a craving for 'the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something that our day-to-day lives don't provide'" (Pidduck 2002, 292-293). These feelings likewise permeate the teen coming out film.

Pidduck stresses the family as an important site of contention in queer cinema throughout the 90s. Unsurprisingly, the teen coming out film takes place mostly in familial settings. "The theme of family running through art video (Fung), new queer cinema (*Head On, Poison*), Hollywood and art cinema," Pidduck observes, "illustrates a persistent dialectic between the political and aesthetic energy of the margins and the capacity of mainstream culture to reach across different contexts and address broader audiences" (2002, 293). For Pidduck, "these films negotiate a broader lesbian/gay/queer crisis of belonging and continuity, a project shared by a number of recent international family dramas that often include romance and 'coming out'," citing Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), Deepa Mehta's *Fire* (1996), the Swedish *Show Me Love* (*Fucking Åmål*) (1998) and the UK *Beautiful Thing* (1996) as examples.

Peculiarly, "the family cycle," Pidduck points out, "reiterates the complicated state of contemporary lesbian/gay *authorship*, where the translation of lesbian/gay experience into mainstream cinema means that some of the freshest and most topical queer films being made by non-gay directors" (2002, 293), which in addition to all of the films mentioned just above also includes Wong Kar-Wai's *Happy Together* (1997), *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) and *Bound* (1996). Under the banner of liberal inclusivity, ethnography and autoethnography become almost indistinguishable.

Ending her assessment in 2003 rather optimistically, Pidduck contends that "the range of 'queer' family films and videos signals the capacity of lesbian/gay/queer experience, sensibility, scriptwriting and direction to *renew* itself and to infiltrate popular genres across different cultural contexts" (239; emphasis mine). The radical potential of, and need for, self-authored works diminished as the border between gay and straight becomes fuzzy and less threatening. But the turn toward the family and away from direct representations of AIDS, non-conforming sex practices (including S&M and intergenerational relations [Davies 2007]), and in many cases sex also demonstrates the dramatic paradigm shift that occurred throughout the 90s. The homosexual becomes less threatening because many of the things that make the homosexual the homosexual have been extracted from the homosexual. Although queerness has influenced the mainstream, it is obvious that the mainstream has exerted far more influence over queerness.

The lingering potentiality of queerness continues throughout the new millennium, but is minimal in comparison to the number of works that naturalize the closet and identity and focus on romance and the family. Daring, provocative, and occasionally explicit works by John Cameron Mitchell [*Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (2001), *Shortbus* (2006)], Bruce LaBruce [*The Raspberry Reich* (2004), *L.A Zombie* (2010), *Gerontophilia* (2013)], Almodóvar [*Bad Education*

(La mala educación) (2004), *The Skin I Live In* (La piel que habito) (2011), as well as the American indies L.I.E (2001) and Araki's *Mysterious Skin* (2004) and the recent French film *Stranger by the Lake* (*L'Inconnu du lac*) (2013) testify to NQC and queerness's influence and endurance. But these works are met by equally popular although far less radical hits like the Québécois *C.R.A.Z.Y.* (Canada, 2005), UK *Weekend* (2011) and French *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* (*La vie d'Adèle*) (2013), among a slew of coming out and romance comedies and dramas: *Come Undone* (*Presque rien*) (France, 2000), *You'll Get Over It* (*À cause d'un garçon*) (France, 2002), *Latter Days* (USA, 2003), *Mambo Italiano* (Canada, 2003), *Saving Face* (2004), *Summer Storm* (*Sommersturm*) (Germany, 2004), *Poster Boy* (USA, 2004), *Outing Riley* (USA, 2004), *Touch of Pink* (Canada, 2004), *Adam and Steve* (USA, 2005), *The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of Ethan Green* (USA, 2005), *Whole New Thing* (2005, Canada), *Boys Culture* (USA, 2006), *Water Lilies* (France, 2006), *Shelter* (USA, 2007), *Mulligans* (USA, 2008), *Undertow* (Peru, 2009), *The Big Gay Musical* (USA, 2009), *Prayers for Bobby* (USA, 2009), *Eyes Wide Open* (Israel, 2009), *Is it Just Me?* (USA 2010), *Loose Cannons* (*Mine Vaganti*) (Italy, 2010), *Circumstance* (Iran/USA/France, 2011), *Pariah* (USA 2011), *eCupid* (USA, 2011), *North Sea Texas* (*Noordzee, Texas*) (Belgium, 2011), *Mixed Kebab* (Belgium, 2012), *Beyond the Walls* (France, 2012), *Scenes from a Gay Marriage* (USA, 2012), *Free Fall* (*Freier Fall*) (Germany, 2013), *Geography Club* (USA 2013), and *G.B.F* (USA, 2013).

The above generated list articulates a symptomatic shift and is by no means comprehensive and does not cover all different genres; rather, it is a small portrait of a queer cinematic landscape that collectively continues to focus on youth, coming out, and love (read: heteronormative coupling). Queerer and more abrasive works do find distribution and festival support but are generally made by well or better known auteurs. Generally speaking, though, in

order to find distribution and an audience, one needs to tone down explicit and radical content (such as Bruce LaBruce did with *Gerontophilia*) and appeal to "mass" audience's desires for romantic comedies, genre flicks (horror, thrillers, sci-fi), and, of course, coming out stories.[24]

Case study) Three Teen Coming Out Films

 I would now like to look at three teen coming out films released between 1996 and 1999 as exemplars of the mid-to-late 90s teen coming out cycle, which itself is a concentrated look at the discursive contours and underpinnings of the coming out subgenre. I will begin by examining the British *Get Real* (1999) and then move on to another UK film *Beautiful Thing* (1996). I will conclude with a look at the American *Edge of Seventeen* (1998). Although much can be said about these films, I pay particular attention to how setting the coming out process within the

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[24] It is important, however, to highlight the role of government funding, particularly for non-U.S. films, the power of film festival programmers, and the US pedophile taboo as important contributing factors. European and Canadian filmmakers' access to public funds allow them more leeway to explore taboo subjects (child and youth sexuality) and approach queer subject matter from an alternative point of view. American filmmakers, however, have no government funding or subsidies and instead have to rely on "free market" economics to fund and distribute their works. Film festivals, both queer (Inside/Out, Image-Nation, Frameline, Outfest, Reeling) and non-queer (Berlin, Toronto, Sundance, and to a lesser extent Cannes) remain crucial venues and avenues for queer film. Success on the festival circuit increases a film's chance of being picked up for distribution by a queer (Wolfe, TLA, Strand Releasing, Breaking Glass) or mainstream distributor (Focus, The Weinstein Company, IFC), which then opens the possibility of being listed on-demand streaming sites like Netflix.

context of the family helps to naturalize a cohesive gay identity that is a part of, and not other to, the family. Coming out narratives as well as queer family and romantic comedies/dramas are not interested in deconstructing or unpacking desire or identity; they take as fact an inner essence that needs release, compatibility, caring, and nourishment.

I have chosen to focus on these three films for several reasons: 1) because they frequently appear in various "top/best gay movies" lists[25]; 2) because they were seen as comprising a cycle

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[25] According to a poll conducted by *The Backlot*, *Beautiful Thing* is the 3rd best gay movie of all time *(http://www.thebacklot.com/top-100-greatest-gay-movies-2/01/2015/12/)*, while *Get Real* comes in at 21 (http://www.thebacklot.com/top-100-greatest-gay-movies-2/01/2015/10/) and *Edge of Seventeen* at 66 (http://www.thebacklot.com/top-100-greatest-gay-movies-2/01/2015/5/) out of a possible 100. In their list of "The Top 175 Essential Films," the editors of *The Advocate.com* pick *Beautiful Thing* as the 16th most essential film (http://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/film/2014/06/23/top-175-essential-films-all-time-lgbt-viewers), while *Get Real* comes in at 40 (http://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/film/2014/06/23/top-175-essential-films-all-time-lgbt-viewers?page=0,1), and *Edge of Seventeen* at 86 (http://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/ film/2014 /06/23/top-175-essential-films-all-time-lgbt-viewers?page=0,4). These lists are, of course, entirely subjective, but they speak to the popularity of not only the teen coming out films I discuss, but also coming out narratives generally, beating out other heavyweights like *Shortbus*, *Rope*, *To Wong Foo*, the Fassbinder classic *Querelle* (1982), Almodovar's *The Law of Desire (1987)* and even *Cruising*, which *The Advocate* lists at 54. There are innumerable user lists on IMDB (http://www.imdb.com/list/ls055756012/; http://www.imdb.com/list/ls050268170/; http://www.imdb.com/list/ls009949181/) that list all three films as their top choices, but

(Holden 1999); and 3) because they collectively illustrate the socio-political shift toward

normativity. Although the teen coming out cycle is NQC's sanitized double, NQC, as noted

above by Pidduck (2003), also took an interest in familial dynamics and questions of futurity,

themes that are particularly prominent in *Paris is Burning*, *Poison*, and *My Own Private Idaho*.

Speaking of *Edward II* (1991), Arroyo observes that "if we read the young prince as the future,

then the future is gay…the role of Edward's son in the narrative can also be read as a wish for

hope. He is the new generation" (1993, 88). Attention to youths as symbolic harbingers of a

better future was implanted in NQC.

As important, and in conjunction, is Arroyo's contention that "while acknowledging

cultural specificity…I think we must also recognize a shared Anglo-North American gay

culture," noting that "it was no accident that the moniker [(NQC)] mostly refers to films made by

gay men from either North America or England" (1993, 92). AIDS and film festivals solidified a

pan-Anglo circuit within a broader Western and increasingly global gay culture that continues to

drive cultural political discourse (Massad 2007; Dean 2015)—a phenomenon bolstered by digital

communication and the variety of distribution networks, both legal (iTunes, Netflix, Amazon,

TLA Releasing) and illegal (torrents, online streaming), that make queer content available

(almost) everywhere. Although I too only focus on two UK and one American film about young

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Beautiful Thing tends to outrank *Get Real* and *Edge of Seventeen*, although not always. Again,

fan/user lists are subjective, throwing together *Bound*, *Philadelphia*, *Brokeback Mountain*,

C.R.A.Z.Y., *The Big Gay Musical*, and *In & Out* (1997) under the generic "gay-themed"

umbrella, but they collectively paint a portrait of not only contemporary consumer tastes but the

enduring legacy of certain gay films, both queer and normative.

gay men, their continued popularity and discursive influence make them an ideal corpus through which to examine the influence and legacy of teen coming out narration.

Before moving forward I feel I should also acknowledge how this particular period saw the representation of, and engagement with, surveillance and the gothic fade from the screen. This is largely the result of an overall realist production design, which is meant to reinforce both the images' realness and the cohesiveness of the identities therein. This is not to suggest that teen coming out films don't engage the gothic or surveillance. They do, but in ways that displace the brooding artsiness and formalist reflexivity we see in NQC and even the two hate cycles, along with their respective questioning of identity. Realist aesthetics are meant to demarcate the experiences as "real:" the screen is meant to look like a crisp mirror image of the world it claims to reflect—although one could even argue that the turn toward realism is also a way to wash these images clean of their gritty aesthetic, and represent these bodies as sanitized new ones different from those of the past. Throughout my analysis I pay careful attention to moments where the gothic and surveillance are evoked and examine how their reconfigured uses differ from previous invocations, affirming or challenging the discourse they represent.

Get Real (1999)

Get Real is adapted from the 1992 play *What's Wrong with Angry* by Patrick Wilde. The film revolves around Steven Carter[26] dealing with a secret romance and ends with him coming

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[26] Although the characters represented in the teen coming out film may be under the age of majority, the age of the actors portraying them didn't necessarily synch up with their characters. Ben Silverstone who plays Steven Carter in *Get Real* was born in 1979 and Brad Gordon who plays John Dixon was born in 1974. If the film was shot in 1998, a year before its release,

out of the closet at an award ceremony in front of his high school classmates and their parents.

The film begins with Steven recounting his introduction to sex at a young age (bondage porn and a school video on the mating habits of porcupines) and then transitions into the present with him as a teenager heading to the public toilets to cruise. Steven is approached by, and begins to converse with, a slightly older man. The film abruptly cuts to Steven returning home, where he sees his friend Linda washing her brother's car and tells her about his adventure. Linda chastises him, telling him that cruising is dangerous, but Steven informs her that he is always safe, to which she retorts, "What's safe about picking up men in toilets?" Steven defends his actions by presenting his actions as *social* necessities, not sexual ones. "Well where else am I supposed to meet other blokes like me?" he rhetorically asks. Linda responds by reminding him how risky his behaviour is—rape, arrest—to which Steven responds, "Life's a risk Linds."

From the very beginning we see sociality not sexuality legitimizing less than savoury behaviour. If Steven and other boys his age were allowed to be openly gay and date like everyone else, he wouldn't have to take such risks. He's not doing this for sex; he's doing this to find people like him and someone just for himself. "He's not some randy old glit; his name is Glen. And he's up for the same thing I am," he impatiently informs Linda about his new crush before heading into his house.

Silverstone would have been 19 and Gordon would have been 24. Glen Berry who plays Jamie in *Beautiful Thing* and Scott Neal who plays Ste were both born in 1978. If the film was shot in 1994, the year before its release, both actors would have been 16. Chris Stafford who plays Eric Hunter was born in 1977 and Andersen Gabrych who plays Rod was born in 1973. If the film was shot in 1997, a year before its release, Stafford would have been 20 and Gabrych would have been 24.

Steven finds his father sitting at the kitchen table building a plastic Dalek—a figure from the long-running British television series *Dr. Who?*—and his mother setting the table. The sight of his father assembling a toy figurine is meant to ensure we see him as someone youthful with a bit of a geeky side who will likely be supportive of his son's sexuality and not an overly masculine ogre. Steven takes a seat, but before he can take his first bite his father informs him that he was spotted at the park by a neighbour, meaning that he was not doing research for his article, which was what Steven said he was doing after school. Familial surveillance extends beyond the home. Eyes are everywhere in a small town —every acquaintance a potential spy.

Steven's father confronting Steven about his afternoon sojourn at the local park   Steven struggling to invent an alibi on the spot

Both Steven and his father are shot individually and in medium close-up from the same positions and at the same level, emphasizing their connection. Although Steven's father takes up a bit more screen space and Steven shares his with his mother's torso, the scene communicates a sense of caring and equality, rather than interrogation and top-down observation. Here we see the interaction between the harder and softer side of surveillance and their respective emotional undercurrents: paranoia and care. Steven is worried about being caught and outed, while his parents simply want to protect him. Paranoia maintains the self-surveillance of the closet (Tziallas 2010b), while parental care and the safety of the family is presented as the antidote.

We cut to Steven arriving at school the next morning and bear witness to the harassment he receives from fellow classmates, and then to Steven bringing Linda to the public toilets to meet his future life-partner Glen. But Glen never shows up. Linda leaves after a handsome young

man makes eye contact with Steven. Steven waits a moment and then heads into the bathroom.

We cut to the interior and see Steven enter the public bathroom. In comparison to the bright

outdoors, the interior is laced with gothic overtones. The bathroom is dark and muted, but not

overly threatening. If anything, it is eerily comforting. The camera is angled toward a mirror that

hangs over the sinks, allowing us to see Steven glance at the man at the urinal against the back

wall. But the decision to film our first look at Steven's private sexual experiences through a

mirror symbolically frames this space as a heterotopia and underscores his conflicting dual

identity. In here Steven sees and understands himself differently than he does outside. His

experiences in here are liminal—simultaneously real and not real. Although enshrouded by soft

darkness, the activities that take place and desires released therein cannot be entirely contained

by this semi-private space's physical walls. What happens in here bleeds back into the outside

world.

Steven making eye-contact through the mirror with
a man standing at the urinal behind him

Public bathrooms are of crucial importance to the formation of both modern and

contemporary gay male subculture (Humphreys 1970; Chauncey 1994; Betsky 1997; Higgs

1999), acting as social and sexual interlocutors. Their contestation during the epidemic and post-

epidemic era, however, has rendered them spaces discursively imbricated by both surveillance

and the gothic. The surveillance of public toilets, or "tearooms," is not a new phenomenon

(Ryland 1966; Maynard 1994), but in the wake of the AIDS epidemic, the push to privatize

sexual activity (Warner and Berlant 1998) led to widespread police monitoring of public bathrooms and mass-arrests for indecency (Desroches 1990; Greyson 1993; Waugh 1996; see also William E Jones film *Tearoom* [2008] and Biber and Dalton's (2009) analysis of the film). Public bathrooms during and after the AIDS epidemic became permeable sites inextricable from surveillance, but whose paradoxical subversion by the desire to make sex private imbues public toilets with a sense of haunting—of histories and experiences erased by surveillance but kept alive as ghosts by memories of a more vibrant past. Although womblike, the public bathroom in *Get Real* is also saturated with lingering ghosts and the threat of surveillance—Steven was, after all, spotted by an invisible source in the vicinity only a few days ago. The public toilet is a manifestly gothic space that not only reflects its own precarity—safe, but risky; sexual, but social—but metaphorically also embodies Steven's dual identity and the precarity of gay male culture and identity during the transitional liberal era.

After holding his glance for a few seconds, Steven heads into a private stall. Unlike in *Taxi Zum Klo* where a rather large erection is slid through the hole in the shared stall divider, a pen with a note wrapped around it is pushed through, startling Steven, almost stabbing him in the eye—a visual allusion to *Un chant d'amour* (1950), which underscores the transformation of gay desire into normative identity.
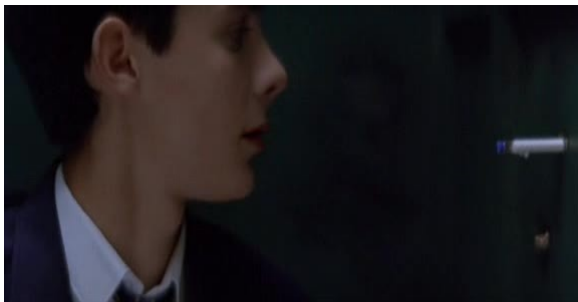
Steven receiving a note through the the bathroom stall's divider	Protagonist in *Un Chant D'amour* breathing in cigarette smoke through a straw

The note inquires about Steven's age, to which he replies, "I'm young." Steven's pen stops working and tells the person in the next stall to meet him outside. Steven sits at the bench waiting for this mysterious pen pal to join him. To Steven's shock and joy John, the school heartthrob, exits the bathroom. A secret emerges from the gothic space.

The two boys leave and head to Steven's empty home. After brief talk about their differences, a playful boyish tussle over a teddy bear leads to a moment revelation and intimacy that is cut short by John's panic. "It's okay John, lots of gay blokes feel like kissing," Steven reassures John. "I'm not gay," John proclaims before he gathers his things and runs out of Steven's room. We cut to Steven walking down the hallway the next day, where he sees John approaching from the opposite direction. Steven addresses John with a cordial "hello," but is rebuffed. John walks right by, ignoring him. A chance encounter with John in the boy's bathroom at school a few scenes later reinforces the social importance of semi-public homosocial spaces. The two make brief awkward conversation, and as John tries to make his way past Steven, he half-jokingly tells John, "We have to stop meeting like his." The comfort of the bathroom placates John; he feels more at home there than at home.

After the school dance and an evening of implied carnal pleasure, we are treated to a brief endearing scene of domestic bliss. At the school dance, we watch Steven negotiate and navigate the spectacle of teenage heterosexual courting, longingly watching John dance with a girl to Ian Harrinson's rendition of "You are so Beautiful." Although Steven doesn't notice, John also stares at him with a similar longing gaze. Steven heads home, and while changing in his bedroom is surprised by John. The two sit on Steven's bed in his darkly lit room and John, no longer able to keep in his secret, confesses his gay identity—not his sexuality; Steven figured that out before.

The scene is delicately shot. John in a black t-shirt sits at the edge of the bed facing the camera, away from Steven. Steven in a white collared shirt sits behind John, looking at the back of his head. John's shoulder and arm slightly cover the left side of Steven—even though the two aren't touching, they are connected. Rather than a shot reverse-shot pattern that would fragment them, they are shot together in one long take. But as with their first encounter at the toilets, there remains a divide between them. In comparison to its daytime representation, the room is now laced with gothic overtones, conceptually realigning momentarily with the public bathroom: as with *The Boys in the Band*, this brooding dark space is now set for the repressed's return. Shadows isolate these two boys on the bed as the John recalls a painful early memory about his first sexual discovery for other men. This tender confession leads to John seeking out the comfort of Steven's arms and lips. The divide has disappeared, at least for the moment. They have exited the bathroom and left it behind—or one of them at least has.

John coming out of the closet   Steven embraces John post-traumatic confession

Although this confession brings these two boys together, there is also something unsettling about the way it is delivered. A pronounced overhead light shines down on the scene, reminiscent of the final confession in Araki's *Mysterious Skin* (2004), where one of the characters recounts to another a moment of shared child abuse—that sequence too had two men close together in a dark room with an overhead light shining down on them. An emotional undercurrent runs through John's confession that equates the closet to abuse and coming out to a

traumatizing psychological revelation, affectively underscoring the film's broader social agenda to save and protect gay teens from the violence of the closet.

Overhead shot post-traumatic confession in *Mysterious Skin*

The abused protagonists reliving their childhood trauma

The next morning we see John nude in bed waking up to the sounds of Steven downstairs preparing breakfast. As John orients and dresses himself, Steven jokingly yells up to John that his parents have returned and are downstairs. We are treated to a glimpse of John's toned muscular back and bum as he stands up before he puts on his underwear and pants in yet another moment of panic. We then cut to Steven downstairs in the kitchen with a wide grin on his face making breakfast while listening to the radio. The kitchen is a mess, but Steven doesn't care—he's experiencing domestic bliss. After John calls home to check in with his mom, Steven walks in with breakfast in-hand. "By the way, you hogged the bloody duvet last night," Steven coyly says—the joys of domestic intimacy. Juxtaposing this scene of post-coital serenity with the previous evening's emotional journey back to dark times and feelings, it is important to stress the normative overtones that underscore the bed as a site of emotional and political conflict. Nowhere is AIDS or condom use mentioned.[27]

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[27] Although one could argue the play's 1992 release undercuts my argument about the teen coming out film and the erasure of AIDS, it only further supports it. The desire felt by gay men to move beyond AIDS was palpable in the early 90s, and the economics of theatre production allowed ideas to take root that would sprout later in the more conservative and risk-averse terrain

A bit of prurient titillation winks at last night's evening of passion left offscreen

Domesticity as paradise

The second half of the film chronicles John's struggle to reconcile his feelings for Steven and fear of being outed, and Steven navigating the dichotomy John has set up. At school, Steven is instructed not to talk to John. John doesn't want people seeing them together—the divide hasn't disappeared, it's just shifted. Steven has been unable to fly under the radar (gaydar), and John doesn't want Steven to "contaminate" him or tarnish his image. His peers will question why a buff butch athlete like him is associating with a thin sensitive writer like Steven. Steven is in love and doesn't care, but John does, forcing Steven to keep their relationship quiet, often leaving them little choice but to continue to meet privately in public.

The two head to the forest one evening when their homes are occupied, transplanting the gothic energies of the public toilets to another popular cruising zone (Grube 1997). The two sit under a tree with Steven in John's arms. John smokes a cigarette while the two talk about the future—having children, Steven visiting John at Oxford next year. Shadows, protective greenery, and soft mist create a private almost womblike atmosphere, but its security, like the toilets, is never fully secured. The sound of a cracking branch sends John into yet another panic. "We should split up he says," as he abandons Steven and runs off…again. Steven, disoriented, runs

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of film production. Regardless of the respective release dates, the film adaption maintains the embargo on AIDS—no doubt also a result of the AIDS cocktail's 1996 debut.

straight into a police officer. The officer takes him home, where he is interrogated by his parents about his whereabouts.

John and Steven sharing an intimate moment alone in the forest

Steven hangs his head in shame under the gaze of institutional and parental authority

The thought of his son in the bushes scares and disgusts Steven's father. "He could have been molested by some dirty old queer," he informs his wife. "God the thought of it makes me sick. What on God's earth possessed you?" his father asks. Unlike the first time we encounter Steven and his father, the framing now emphasizes differential power dynamics. Steven is being examined. His father's gaze has aligned with that of institutional authority via the police officer's interpellation—soft surveillance becomes hard surveillance. Steven looks down at the ground, mirroring his behaviour when he arrived at school and made eye contact with his bully—we can feel his sense of alienation and shame. Steven's father is framed in close-up while Steven is framed in medium long shots with his mother standing nearby but not next to him. "Well where else are we supposed to go?!" Steven blurts out before storming out of the room. Steven's dad wonders whether it's drugs. Steven's mother follows Steven to his room, where next to him sees several black and white pictures of John. She returns downstairs to her husband. "I don't think it's drugs," she tells him.

| Medium long shot underscores Steven's feelings of alienation and vulnerability | Tight framing emphasizes Steven's father's anger | Steven trying to avoid his bullies' gaze |

The two boys continue to meet in private in the forest and at each other's homes, and John, seeing how much the strictures of his closet are hurting Steven, promises to be less aloof in public when they're together. A romantic private day and evening together spent in John's pool sets up a false expectation that the two will come out together. Alas, after finding out that "someone" has submitted an anonymous "coming out" article (that has been censored) to the school newspaper, John becomes enraged at the thought of him possibly being outed by proxy.

Near the end of the film in a particularly difficult scene in the boy's locker room—the prototypical primal scene where young gay boys are often treated to their first glimpse of male nudity (Pronger 1991; Alvarez 2008) and discover for the first time the pleasures and dangers of wanting to see and touch other men's bodies—John berates and then physically assaults Steven. After a brief chat with Steven, John (again) dashes out of the locker room, leaving his bag behind. Steven kneels before the bag and grabs hold of John's worn shorts, holding it momentarily to his face. He is caught, however, by his homophobic peers, and when John returns to retrieve his bag, under the pressure of his peers' gaze, he physically attacks Steven while hurling slurs and insults. John is really attacking himself, his true self, by attacking Steven. Steven at that moment is not his lover, but his gay double. By destroying his double in front of the symbolic heterosexual gaze via his peers, John can both prove his heterosexuality and manhood and discipline himself. Steven, like Billy, has learned his lesson about lusting after that

which he cannot have and cannot be—about submitting to the fantasy, to the image, of the masculine straight athlete that keeps him in a place of submission.

Moments later, Steven makes a grand entrance into the school's filled auditorium where he declares his homosexuality and is given a standing ovation for his bravery. Today is "awards day," and after beating down Steven, John heads to the auditorium to receive his award for track and field. After receiving his award, Steven's name is called up, but Steven is nowhere to be found. When Steven does enter, he heads to the stage and with all eyes on him begins to detail the difficulty and loneliness of life in the closet. He talks about wanting to be loved for who he is and not who he's pretending to be. Unlike John's private confession, Steven's is very very public, and unlike John, Steven is mostly shot in close-up allowing us to see every emotional reaction in intimate, almost painful physical detail. The close-up framing reinforces his sense of isolation and the burden of the public gaze, but also forces us to take in, to feel, his emotional confession, not allowing us to avert our eyes from his face. This is his big moment and the close-up framing underscores both the vulnerability of publicly discussing his private secret as well as his valor. Like John, Steven cries. "This is so difficult," he gently whispers. "I'm gay," he finally states, and then apologizes to his parents. "It's only love," he tells everyone. "What's everyone so scared of?" He thanks everyone for listening, and as he walks off stage, he is applauded for his courage. Outside the auditorium, Steven's mother tells off his blonde bully and tells Steven that she's proud of him—gay children should be protected, not rejected, by their families.

| Empathetic identification | A very public declaration of self-love |

Outside the auditorium Steven approaches John who is sitting on a bench. Steven sits next to John, and John apologizes for everything he's done to Steven and tells him he loves him. Steven, although touched, doesn't go back to John. "Johnny, you do realize what I just did in there," Steven asks. Steven is a new person. Steven has been reborn. He is a new, happy, confident *adult*. Coming out is the gay man's rite of passage to adulthood. John is still closeted, and thus not mature. Steven tells John to "be happy" (read: come out) and walks away, leaving John alone on the bench with nothing but his trophy and cigarette. The two part ways where they first met in person: on a bench. Linda arrives with her brother's convertible, the one we saw her washing when we were first introduced to her, and Steven gets in. The two drive off into the sunset while Aretha Franklin's *Think* blasts from the radio. As Aretha belts out the word "freedom," the film ends with an upward crane shot of the two driving through a picturesque pastoral landscape. Steven has liberated himself from the prison of the closet, and similarly to Billy has walked away from his unhealthy relationship with his hunky, straight-acting but confused and conflicted lover. Steven has chosen himself and has achieved self-actualization and self-affirmation.

It's difficult to not feel sad for these two charming boys and happy for Steven when he comes out and chooses himself over his dysfunctional relationship. I've seen *Get Real* several times, and I can't help but get watery-eyed watching Steven give his speech and feel a lightning-quick rush of satisfaction when he walks away from John. Although *Get Real* is heavily invested in discourses of identity and identification, the film is more interested in aligning our sympathies with Steven, or empathetic identification. Indeed, his coming out to an auditorium of strangers reflexively mirrors what we as audience are doing: watching him come out and being

interpellated in the process. We may not identify with Steven in the psychoanalytic sense, but we can feel for him, whether we are, aren't, have been, or ever will be in the same position.

Get Real is not like *The Living End* where heterosexuals are blamed and punished and it is not *Edward II* or *My Own Private Idaho*, which represent "heterosexuality as a symbolic blockage to homosexual coupling" (Arroyo 1993, 93); rather, *Get Real* points the finger at "intolerance." The film smartly places the blame on "society" and not its possible (targeted?) straight viewers: it's "society's fault," and not yours. *Get Real* strategically avoids the pitfall of pointing the finger at those whom it's trying to court and win over—not only are there plenty of sympathetic straight characters in the film, but as the film approaches Steven's big speech (and especially afterward), more and more supportive straight characters appear. The film champions and uses homonormativity as an affective force, naturalizing coming out as a gateway to health and balance: normality. John is portrayed as infantile, backward, confused, and self-destructive: a figure of Steven's past. Coming out and loving yourself is normal, healthy and leads to happiness: leave the past behind. Never is the cohesiveness of identity questioned.

The carefully conducted emotional symphony of successes and setbacks is, however, contingent upon the erasure of HIV/AIDS and non-conformity. All Steven wants is love and to be loved, but that love tacitly depends on him being "clean" of AIDS. The homosexual may be part of, and allowed into, the home and family, but his AIDS isn't. The film makes no overt reference to either AIDS or condoms; only two subtle ones: at the beginning of the film when Linda reminds Steven that toilet sex is risky, and at the end after Steven's public confession when his blonde bully tells Linda and Steven's schoolmates to be "careful, you don't know if you might catch something." Although AIDS isn't mentioned a single time, the spectre of AIDS haunts the narrative. From misinformation about sex through porn and poor sex education, to

toilet cruising and references to risk, dirt, and disease, the film alludes to AIDS but only to position it as something to move beyond, represented by Steven's public confession and detaching himself from the unstable John. Although different from the agitprop didacticism of Greyson's *Zero Patience*, an undeniable admonition runs throughout *Get Real* and exemplifies the early stages of what Halperin refers to as a "sanitizing blackout" (2012, 71).

Beautiful Thing (1996)

The British film *Beautiful Thing* was released the same year as the AIDS cocktail and jumpstarted gay and lesbian cinema's love affair with young people triumphing over homophobia and achieving self-actualization by publicly coming out. Based on the 1993 play by Jonathan Harvey of the same name, the film opens with Jamie being teased at football practice and running away. From there, the film quickly transitions to a series of high-angle shots of some non-descript concrete estates as Jamie makes his way home. An optimistic shot taken from a low-angle of Jamie running up a set of concrete steps toward a large rainbow, however, counters our initial introduction to Jamie's life—and is also the moment when the film's title in the opening credits appears in large yellow letters. Harassment in *Beautiful Thing*, like in *Get Real*, acts as a framing device with bullying symbolizing the strictures of straight culture.

| Ste making his way toward the rainbow | Working class estates from CCTV's POV |

From there we are introduced to the film's main characters: Ste, his next door neighbour with whom he will fall in love; his mother, Sandra, a single parent waitress and soon-to-be pub

manager; and Leah, Jamie's young black neighbour who adores Mama Cass. Unlike the middle-class and all-white setting of *Get Real*, *Beautiful Thing's* working-class setting in the estates of South East London prioritizes class issues. The film takes a closer look at the way sexuality is negotiated in multicultural communities where different lifestyles are forcibly tolerated in cramped quarters, where gossip easily spreads, and where privacy is a luxury. The sprawling open concrete estates where skyscrapers are organized around public squares leave little room to hide—eyes are literally and figuratively everywhere in this architectural synopticon.

The estates' open spaces aren't all that open, but the proximity to other people also facilitates a type of intimacy different from middle-class environments where greater levels of privacy and space are the norm. Compared to our introduction to Steven and his parents, Jamie is home before his mother and the two sit next to each other on the couch for an afternoon snack instead of across from each other at a table. Unlike the shot/reverse shot pattern used to edit Steven and his father's conversation, Jamie and his mother are shot in the same frame, emphasizing their closer relationship. Jamie shares a small apartment with his single parent mother, not an entire house with two parents. It's this closeness that allows Sandra to yell and threaten Jamie while coming off warm and caring and not cruel or harsh.

Ste and his mom share a snack   Shot/reverse shot pattern underscores their physical and
                                                               emotional proximity

The difficult-to-negotiate balance between privacy and proximity symbolic of the closet is mirrored narratively through the management of noise. As Ste prepares bubble and squeak (an English dish) for his father who is napping on the couch, Leah decides to lock herself in her

room and blast her music. The music level goes from incidental background noise to live concert. Taking notice of his father's responsive restlessness, Ste runs past Jamie's house to Leah's and bangs on her door, yelling at her to turn down the music. Leah remains defiant, ignoring Ste and her mother. It isn't until Ste's brother arrives home that Leah complies—she has a crush on him. Unfortunately, Ste was in such a rush he forgot to take the meal off the stove before he ran over to Leah's. Ste serves burnt food to his brother and father. The two are visibly upset. The brother makes a threatening physical gesture as he walks out the room, and Ste's father, looming over and staring down at him, empties his burnt meal onto Ste's plate: this is not a happy well functioning family.

A few scenes later, Ste's brother makes good on the violent gesture he made toward Ste, hitting him for scuffing up his new pair of sneakers. Making her way home after work one evening, Sandra stumbles upon Ste sitting alone by the river visibly upset and invites him to stay with her and Jamie. "I'm not going back there," he tells her. "I know, love," she replies. Sandra knows about the abuse going on next door. She can hear it. Although the abuse has been going on for some time, Leah's loud music acts as the narrative breaking point that brings the two boys together. The lack of privacy leads to even greater degree of proximity, which leads to a greater degree of intimacy. Unfortunately, proximity, lack of privacy, and thin walls also lead to the boys' partial outing. At a party about halfway through the film, Leah informs Ste and Jamie that the walls are paper thin and that Ste's brother knows that the two boys have been sleeping in the same bed. The privacy of the bedroom is never really private.

While *Get Real*'s middle-class setting reiterated gay identity as a private phenomenon to be included in the family, *Beautiful Thing*'s working-class setting attempts to queer the family by presenting the family as already queer. Sandra is a single mother struggling to balance her job as

a waitress, raise her teenage son, and find a boyfriend—whom she rejects at the end of the film, choosing herself and her career instead. She lives next door to an older black single mother trying to raise her teenage daughter, and a single father who not only expects his younger son to raise himself but take care of him too. Both adults and kids smoke, drink, and swear in front of each other. There is nothing "normal" about these families in the politically "normative" sense. Because of their close living arrangements and diminished privacy, a variety of behaviour is more tolerated and less stringently regulated.

Although *Beautiful Thing* presents a queerer vision of the family, like *Get Real*, it also comes (dangerously) close to reinforcing the homophobic belief that abuse is the root cause of homosexuality. After an impromptu dip at a nearby park reservoir, the boys return home to dry up and change. Jamie goes to offer Ste, who's in the bathroom, some dry clothes and walks in on him just as he's pulling up his pants. The camera starts on Ste's bare bum and tilts upward as he pulls his pants up revealing a series of bruises. The film cuts to a close-up shot of Jamie and then back to Ste who spots Jamie staring at him in the mirror. Panicked, he quickly turns around, and confronts Jamie's gaze: he's been caught, outed. The unedited tilt upward creates a continuous flow, connecting sexuality to violence, indexing the proximate relations between violence, gay male sexuality, and the experience of the closet. Physical abuse takes on closeted connotations but also opens up the possibility of reversing this symbolic relationship.

What begins as an accidental voyeuristic peek…

turns into a moment of revelation and confrontation. The mirror is once again used to symbolize duality at a moment when cohesive identity has been undermined. Ste's body is an object of both sexual desire and violence.

Later that night, Jamie offers to rub some lotion on Ste's back to soothe his sores. While John's coming out in *Get Real* was relayed through the confession of traumatic memories, Ste's confession of abuse acts as a metaphor for his closeted sexuality. But like in *Get Real*, tearful confessions lead to tenderness and physical intimacy. The two sleep face to face in each other's arms that evening.

Coupling together abuse and same-sex intimacy leaves open the possibility of reading their growing intimacy as a displaced need for male intimacy resulting from their damaged relationship with their fathers. The film, however, mitigates these possible correlations by spending considerable time on the boy's physical intimacy. Ste turns onto his stomach and Jamie lifts up his shirt, revealing his bruises. We cut to close-ups of Ste with his eyes closed enjoying the feeling of Jamie's hands tenderly touching his body, Jamie looking down at Ste's back with care and compassion, and shots of Jamie rubbing cream on Ste's wounds. Ste rejects Jamie's offer to rub cream on his front claiming he's in too much pain—of course, Ste could also be hiding something other than his bruises from Jamie. After Ste decides to sleep face to face with Jamie, Jamie kisses him. Ste asks, "Do you think I'm queer?" "It don't matter what I think," Jamie replies, asking if he can touch him after turning off the lights. "I'm a bit sore," Ste tells Jamie. Jamie caresses his face— he'll be gentle. The next morning we see the two spooning each other. Jamie gets up quietly, briefly revealing his bare bum (again) in the process. He gets

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dressed and heads back home. Too focused on being quiet, Ste doesn't notice Leah outside on the walkway, returning home after being out all night—something queer is going on here.

Touching leads to touching

As the boys' feelings grow for each other and as they jointly negotiate the dynamics of their private relationship, they head to a gay bar for their first taste of genuine gay culture. Alone together in Jamie's room one evening, Ste confesses to not feeling right at either Jamie's or own his home—Ste feels homeless. Jamie smiles and pulls out a copy of *Gay Times* magazine and suggests the two venture out to the bar on page ninety two. They take the bus to the Gloucester and take in the drag show as they sip on their pints. Although in an alien environment and put on the spot by a flirtatious drag queen, the boys seem to feel more at home there than in their actual homes. A drunken stumble through a dark park leads to some passionate kissing. Now that they've seen more people like them, now that they've discovered their kin, there is no need for pretense or restrictions. They feel, momentarily at least, free.

An elated Jamie returns home satisfied and bit a drunk, only to find his mother sitting in the dark waiting for him. Jamie and Ste were too excited to notice that Sandra had followed them to the Gloucester. Sandra confronts Jamie about going to a gay bar and his marked-up notebooks. Jamie asks if Sandra's been spying on him. Sandra lies, saying a co-worker saw them enter the Gloucester—one can never escape the closet's gaze. When his mother begs him to talk to her, Jamie begins to cry. The coming out scene is both tender and raw. The mixture of pain, relief, and joy bears comparison to a scene of birthing: the struggle for freedom, the creation of a new

life, the trauma of being separated from the safety of the enclosed maternal womb and entering adulthood as an autonomous person. Coming out scenes in queer film aren't just moments of catharsis, but are also instances of a whole new person coming into being through encumbered performative utterances. Painful confession becomes a metaphoric self-birthing canal through which the out gay subject is born.

Familial acceptance rather than rejection

As with Ste's (and John's) moments of revelation and catharsis, Jamie comes out to his mother in his darkly lit bedroom. Unlike Steven's very public announcement, Jamie's takes place in the definitive metonymic space of privacy: the bedroom. Mirroring Ste's "coming out," Jamie lies down on the bed while his mother sits next to him, looking down at him with concern and compassion. Framing them individually in close-up builds to the emotional moment when Sandra takes Jamie into her arms and tells him that she loves and accepts him. Framed together now in close-up, the two hug and cry, and Jamie tells Sandra that he's in a relationship with Ste. Feeling a bit foolish that this furtive romance has been taking place in her house under her nose the whole time, Sandra leaves.

As the ripped open wounds heal, the film concludes optimistically with a defiant, if not utopic, public display of togetherness. Sandra informs Jamie, Tony (her boyfriend), and Ste that she got a new job managing a pub that comes with an apartment above it, meaning that Sandra and Jamie will be moving shortly. Although Ste is outed by proxy, he is more concerned about Jamie leaving and the only safe space he knows disappearing. Realizing that he doesn't have much of a choice, Ste embraces a public identity. He comes out to Leah by inviting her to the

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Gloucester and then the entire estate by dancing with Jamie in the communal concrete square. As the boys dance below, Sandra and Leah watch from up above—the soft side of surveillance replacing the hard. Holding hands, the two descend and join the boys as the neighbours stare with curiosity and surprise.

Multiple defiant public declarations

Although both *Beautiful Thing* and *Get Real* end with public and defiant declarations, *Beautiful Thing* has an additional coming together of racial and generational divides. Most importantly, instead of declaring self-love, the boys' declare their love for each other. The narrative revolves around struggle and perseverance and the need for love, and as with *Get Real*, it is very difficult to not feel for these boys. How can anyone feel that they don't belong together? I can admit that every time I watch the ending my heart swells with happiness and hope, but I can't help but wonder if I'm meant to feel optimistic for them or myself. Although the very conditions that they desire have also caused them pain and harm, as with *Billy*, they are revised or "queered" enough by the end to leave open the possibility of something better to come in the future through those very same conditions.

Both films are undergirded by feelings of optimism and a utopian sensibility, strategically presenting their typical narrative scripts about characters you just can't help but root for in realist fashion to underscore their potential *to become* real. Unlike older films such as *Abuse* (1983) that equated the family with violent oppression, the teen coming out film positions the now modified family as the only available safe space wherein young gays can live freely away from the

dangers of unassimilated gay culture. Watching these films, I can't help but wonder for whom they are meant. Who is *Get Real* and *Beautiful Thing*'s target audience?

As with *Billy*, there is a didactic undercurrent that runs through both films—so much so they can come off as movies meant more for straight rather than gay audiences. *Get Real* and *Beautiful Thing*'s narratives revolve not just around the secret love affairs of their youthful protagonists, but also their relationships with their families. Indeed, both films could be mistaken for visual manuals meant to train and educate a new generation parents with queer children, reflecting, and some ways an extension of, grassroots activism in 90s that sought to re-educate straight people about gay people (Javors and Reimann 2001).

The greater emphasis on gay-straight relationships in *Get Real* and *Beautiful Thing* is echoed by, if not a result of, their cross-cultural productions. Both *Get Real* and *Beautiful Thing* were produced, written, directed and acted by both gay- and straight-identified individuals (Argy 1999; Fouz-Hernández 2003). Doing away with the negativity and, relatively speaking, narrow appeal of NQC, the teen coming out film embraced a mass audience. The films were meant to speak to a straight audience as much as they were to those gay audiences not identifying with queer radical politics. In an interview with *Variety*, *Get Real*'s producer Anat Singh tells reporter Stephanie Argy that Simon Shore, the director, was determined

> to make sure that all audiences—gay or straight—could understand and relate to the
> dilemma of the lead character, Steven Carter. Shore says he felt strongly that as many
> people as possible should see the movie. "Parents who might have gay kids should see
> this, and friends of gay kids should see this," he says. "It's a gay film, but it's using that
> gay story as a metaphor for something that we all understand. Steven Carter's story is a
> metaphor for everyone's adolescence" (Argy 1999).

Or, to put it another way, it's a gay movie for straight people. Indeed, this sentiment was not something that flew by under the radar. Derek Elley in his review of *Get Real* for *Variety* wrote, "With the right marketing push and good reviews, pic could catch on locally and internationally in a moderate way among mainstream auds, *its true market*" (1998, emphasis mine). Teen coming out films attempted to strike a middle ground via empathetic identification in order to collectively (gay and straight) work toward a better future.

Beautiful Thing's ending emphasizes romance as a corrective to promiscuity that favoured easy sex and led to the AIDS epidemic. Sex is the thing that is supposed to bring us together. Gay Liberation, however, detached sex from commitment, and the AIDS epidemic turned sex into something that repelled the comingling of bodies. Delayed gratification, waiting to have sex and letting feelings develop first are presented as corrective remedies. The rise of the family problem film in queer cinema is itself offered as a corrective to a hyper-individualized subculture largely predicated on satisfying one's carnal desire at the expense of emotional fulfilment and compassion for others.

For Bernstein and Reimann, "The issue of visibility, and who can be visible, is intimately linked to whether family politics are tied to acceptance or transformation" (2001, 13). Because "the lesbian and gay movement regulates internally who are acceptable queers and who are the queers better left in the closet" (Bernstein and Reimann 2001, 5), "uneasiness remains when the 'wrong people' claim visibility. Thus *how* we present ourselves is as important as *that* we present ourselves" (Bernstein and Reimann 2001, 6). The teen coming out film merges visibility and family politics into a strategy for achieving acceptance and transformation: the turn to the family in queer representation is inextricable from their cultural-political reality. The problem, though, is that familial intimacy and legitimacy became tacitly contingent upon AIDS remaining outside

the metaphysical homes or in the past. By the late 90s and early 2000s, AIDS and representations of AIDS increasingly became the stereotype *du jour* we needed to move beyond.

Unlike in *Get Real*, *Beautiful Thing* makes explicit reference to AIDS twice: once when the boys peruse *Gay Times* and find out that HIV can't be transmitted through frottage, and a second time when Jamie comes out to his mother. The first instance is mentioned under the rubric of education, and the second instance is quickly brushed aside, bundled in with other concerns and misconceptions that Sandra might have about Jamie's sexuality—"You think I'm too young. You think it's just a phase. You just think I'm going to catch AIDS and everything." Its 1996 release indexes the continued prevalence of HIV/AIDS discourse, but the minimal discussion attempts to dilute its presence as an overarching psychic framework.[28] AIDS is posited as something to move beyond, as something outside of the family that must be surpassed in order for the gay subjects to be part of, or to (re-)enter, the family. My intention here is not to condemn these films, but rather to highlight how their narratives of self-discovery, love, and familial and social acceptance are contingent upon representing AIDS as something that has passed—AIDS is pushed so far into the background it feels as though it has been pushed into the past.

Edge of Seventeen (1998)

Edge of Seventeen is set in 1984 and chronicles the coming out process of Eric Hunter, a young gay man in Sandusky Ohio during and the summer before his final year of high school.

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[28] As with my argument about *Get Real*, the movie's original theatrical source released three years earlier only reinforces my argument about gay men wanting, if not needing, to move beyond AIDS—to put AIDS behind them. The playwrights symbolically re-birth themselves through these youthful protagonists the into a world where AIDS is in the distance behind them.

When *Edge of Seventeen* was reviewed by mainstream (straight?) critics, it was often discussed alongside *Beautiful Thing*, *Get Real*, and other teen coming out films. Many critics acknowledged that by the late 90s a number of teen coming out films had emerged and developed into a small thematic cycle. Dennis Harvey (1998) for *Variety* wrote that *Edge of Seventeen* was "reminiscent of both the American 'Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love' and Brit 'Beautiful Thing'," while Stephen Holden (1999) for *The New York Times* wrote that *Edge of Seventeen* is "the latest and most poignant in a recent spate of teen-age male coming-out-of-the-closet dramas." Acknowledging the pan-Anglo circuitry of images and discourse that Arroyo discussed and that characterizes the teen coming out cycle, Holden writes that "aside from its nationality, one thing that sets this American independent film [*Edge of Seventeen*] apart from two likable British forerunners, 'Beautiful Thing' and 'Get Real,' is its sexual candor." Not surprisingly, the generally prudish liberal Roger Ebert (1999) wrote a rather patronizing and condescending review:

> "Edge of Seventeen" is more about sex and less about love than most coming-out movies; its young hero, Eric, seems to aim directly for gay bars and empty promiscuity without going through intermediate stages of self-discovery, idealism or the qualities encompassed in the code word pride. He cheerfully wants to become a slut. This doesn't make him unusual; the libido is stronger than the intelligence in many teenagers. He'll grow up eventually.

Adding:

> "Edge of Seventeen" may be more realistic, if less encouraging, than a more sensitive gay coming-out story like the recent British film "Get Real." It deals with physical details with almost startling frankness and doesn't sentimentalize. If it seems to introduce Eric

directly into the world of gay clichés (drag queens and strangers in the night), perhaps in Sandusky in 1984 that was the only visible gay culture, and more substantial relationships were low profile.

While Holden valorized the film's frank depiction of sex as an integral part of Eric's self-discovery, Ebert saw it as dated cliché and the film itself filled with "stereotypes" that had no place in the contemporary landscape of affirmative and respectable identities, attributing Eric's sexual adventures to immature lust and lack of viable alternatives. In the politically correct liberal 90s, gay sex was under surveillance, and promiscuity became a stereotype one needed to be on guard for and "correct."

Although reviewers interpreted *Edge of Seventeen* in different ways, all the critics above (as well as many others) acknowledged the film's nostalgia and saw it as part of a larger cultural script. And yet despite it being a gay film set in 1984, none of the reviewers mentioned AIDS or the AIDS epidemic. Harvey (1998) describes *Edge of Seventeen* as "a gay-p.o.v. version of the deft early-to-mid-'80s John Hughes teen pics, even revisiting their era for trendy (but well-deployed) nostalgia value." While the heterosexual teens of John Hughes' movies were dealing with the "plight" of suburban privilege, gay teens and young adults were contracting and dying of AIDS offscreen. James Wolcott (2014) has gone as far to suggest the 80s have been "sanitized and nostalgified by John Hughes coming-of-agers," leaving offscreen the violence and trauma of Reaganomics and the moral majority's ascent to power. And although critics were correct to point out *Edge of Seventeen* fulfils a nostalgic desire to showcase representations of queer youth left off the 80s' silver screen, they bypassed the silence of AIDS that haunts *Seventeen*'s nostalgia-saturated images.

Despite its 1984 setting, the film somehow fails to mention AIDS or "the gay plague" a single time. Granted, the film is set in the Midwest and not in or around New York City, Los Angeles, or San Francisco, but by 1984 AIDS had become a mainstay in American media—although 1985 is generally considered the year it "peaked" and is also when blood tests that could detect the presence of HIV antibodies became available (Patton 1990). However, Eric wants to move to New York City the following year to attend music school; meaning that Eric would be at "ground zero" at the age of 18; meaning that Eric would be in a gay metropolis, studying the arts and exploring his sexuality at the peak of the epidemic. And yet, there isn't a single reference to AIDS or the gay cancer/plague.

The film offers a vision of a past about to be thrown off course by AIDS but also feels as though it skips over the trauma of the epidemic. The film is optimistic in that it exports nostalgia to the present (1998) in the hopes of continuing onward as though the AIDS epidemic never happened. *Edge of Seventeen* goes back to revision the past in optimistic terms at a critical point just before the AIDS epidemic took full effect, producing a "sanitizing blackout" akin to what Halperin (2012) describes by cutting out the reality of AIDS. While *Get Real* and *Beautiful Thing* are set in the present, or should I say present-future, *Edge of Seventeen* is set in the future-past, presenting us with images of what *could be* through images of what *could have been*.

As in *Get Real* and *Beautiful Thing*, we watch Eric struggle with his double life, get harassed by his peers, explore his sexuality, and come out to his mother—always the mother, never the father. We are introduced to best friends Maggie and Eric just before they begin their restaurant jobs at an amusement park the summer before their high school senior year. There they meet Angie, their bull dyke manager and local gay bar owner and Rod, a gay college student at Ohio State. Over the summer, Eric begins to change his appearance. Already obsessed

with the Eurythmics, Eric cuts his hair and dons new funky clothing. Rod takes notice, and as the summer comes closer to an end, Rod steps up his flirting. After a moment of boyish intimacy in the walk-in refrigerator and at a drunken end-of-summer party, both of which involve some more than suggestive touching, the two go out on a date.

After grabbing some takeout, they head back to Rod's. Standing face to face in intimate, soft, warm dim light, whose colour design (a fusion of orange, red, soft yellow, and brown) accentuates feelings of nostalgia, the boys slowly undress. The unrushed scene of undressing is shot in front of a large mirror and mixes together a variety of long, medium, and close-up shots. All the long shots are taken from behind and to the left of Rod, putting his body on display allowing us to see Eric's reactions. The medium shots are also profile shots weighted to Rod's side, suggesting that he is in control of this situation. The long shots help to situate the activity and treat viewers to glimpses of Rod's slowly exposed body, seducing us as it seduces Eric. The medium shots underscore Rod's greater sexual experience and emphasize the mirror in the background—the mirror underscoring once again a moment of identificatory transformation. The close-up shots communicate feelings of intimacy and pleasure, prioritizing facial and bodily responses and reactions to the sight and touch of each other. The two tenderly kiss, and before the camera fades to black, Rod softly tells Eric, "You'd make the coolest boyfriend." Counter to Ebert's claims, young love blossoms. At no point in this scene are AIDS or condoms mentioned.

| Medium shot taken from Rod's side puts Eric on display | Long shot taken from behind Rod shows us Rod's behind, even though Eric's eyes are closed | You'd make the coolest boyfriend": "budding romance or manipulative seduction? |

The summer comes to an end, and a new school year brings a new set of hurdles for Eric to jump over now that he's acted on his hidden feelings. An uncomfortable moment at an overbearing heterosexual dance party pushes Eric to head to the local gay bar, leading to his first anonymous sexual encounter. Eric heads to a party with Maggie. Eric initially stands at the sidelines watching Maggie dance with a cute boy, but can't help but court everyone's attention when he heads to the middle of the dance floor to let loose. The straight-ish persona he adopts evaporates once the song takes over. After being called a queer and running out to his car, Eric heads to Fruit & Nut Co. where he runs into a thrilled and welcoming Angie. As in *Get Real* (and *Beautiful Thing*), the straight party scene is used to reiterate the interstitial, ghost-like feeling closeted youth experience when forced to participate in these alien(ating) heteronormative rituals. Eric can't feel his way through this foreign rite of passage, observing simultaneously from within and from elsewhere on the outside. Eric, like Ste and Jamie, feels more at home in this newly discovered gay space among strangers. There he drinks, dances, and even gets picked up by a slightly older gentleman. After sniffing some poppers (similarly to what we saw in *Cruising*) and kissing a bit on the dance floor, the film cuts to the two in the stranger's car.

Without so much as an introduction the stranger begins to perform fellatio on Eric and then aniligus. With his face pressed up against the front passenger's window and while having his sphincter licked, Eric asks, "Don't you need a condom?" To which the man replies, "On my tongue?" After being dismissed without so much as a kiss goodbye and or eye contact, Eric decides to call Rod from a payphone. Countering Ebert's account, Eric seeks out emotional support after a somewhat degrading encounter, only to find out that Rod has gotten back together with his boyfriend, compounding Eric's feelings of rejection. During Eric and Rod's phone conversation, we discover Eric wasn't penetrated, but right before receiving the sad news that

Rod has gotten back together with his ex, Eric catches a brief glimpse of himself in the phone's reflective metal and realizes the stranger has given him a hicky. After an unsafe, but low-risk, anal encounter, Eric develops a lesion that visibly marks him as promiscuous; something everyone can see. This is the film's one and only reference to AIDS.

Eric negotiating condom use
during an encounter

Eric discovering a lesion after
an unprotected encounter

After his first gay bar experience and anonymous hookup, Eric begins to really embrace his gay identity. After being doubly rejected, he comes out to Maggie and begins to use her as an alibi to sneak out to the Fruit and Co. without raising any suspicions from his parents. The gay bar and dance floor hold a very special place in gay culture; they are where men and women go to let loose, perform a cultural identity, and display themselves sexually (Dyer 1971; Paterson 2011). Eric was punished for dancing inappropriately on the heterosexual dance floor, but on the queer one he finds freedom. In these dark spaces where beams of colour and human flesh meld together, a certain freedom denied to queer individuals off of the dance floor is seized upon and then some. As Eric continues to frequent the gay bar, his self-fashioned look evolves, reflecting his growing comfort and self-acceptance, as well as his identification with his surroundings. Fruit and Co. becomes Eric's second home, and its patrons become his second family. But despite his growing self-acceptance, again counter to Ebert's observations, Eric is still looking for that emotional connection that continues to elude him.

Eric, slightly intoxicated one evening, makes his way to Rod's dormitory. While Rod's roommate sleeps in the bed across from them, the two drink and begin to kiss. Beginning with a close-up tracking shot that starts on the their feet, the camera moves slowly along the way toward their faces, treating viewers to a few prurient moments of intertwined flesh and Rod's bare bum being massaged by Eric. As the two kiss and caress each other's bodies, Rod softly whispers, "I wanna fuck you," and asks, "Can I fuck you?" Eric informs him that he's never had anal sex, "I've never done it yet," he replies, which is perhaps why condoms weren't mentioned during their first encounter. Maintaining the camera's distance, Rod applies lube to his penis offscreen and goes to turn Eric onto his side. Eric stops him and asks, "What about a rubber?" Rod, nonchalantly replies, "Oh yeah" and moves offscreen to put on the condom. "I hate these things," he softly mutters. Rod re-enters the frame and tells Eric, "Remember...breathe." Eric tells him to wait and that it hurts, but Rod pushes forward telling him that he won't go deep. When Rod first enters Eric, ominous music begins to play. After a few thrusts, the film quickly cuts to black, and then to the next morning.

Eric experiencing ambivalence while being penetrated.

Eric reflecting on last night with regret

Eric is now fully dressed and standing by the door about to leave, staring down at Rod's naked body—his final look at Rod speaks of regret, rather than fondness. The scene of deflowering is presented as unpleasant and emotionally unfulfilling: losing his anal virginity has left Eric feeling alienated and ambivalent. The encounter itself is portrayed as dangerous, dark,

and brooding, with the director taking full advantage of the gothic undertones of shooting at night—shadows, soft twilight, silence punctured with creaky noises and heavy breathing—to emphasize Eric's inner conflict and a sense of risk. Eric doesn't fully trust Rod, symbolized by the condom Eric asks Rod to apply before entering him.

But Eric's insistence that Rod wear a condom has less to do with the epidemic underway in 1984, and more to do with safer-sex protocols that had become de facto law by 1998. Eric's deflowering is an important moment where the film's 1998, or 1997, production intervenes in its 1984 setting. Condoms were not a mainstay for gay men in the mid-80s (Patton 1990), but the film's 1998 release would likely have provoked a backlash had Eric not told Rod to put on a condom—the sight of two teens "barebacking" would have sparked outraged. Nowhere is the word AIDS uttered or a single reference to the epidemic made; instead, AIDS is represented as a spectre—as something that has already past—and the condom, a symbol of and for the future.

The film comes to a close with Eric finally coming out to this mother. After returning home from a solitary afternoon, we are treated to yet another tear and hug-filled coming out scene. Shot in medium long shot and in one long take with the two in the same frame, Eric tells his mother that he's gay. We cut to a medium close-up of them hugging, but instead of affirming her love and acceptance, Eric's mom withdraws from the hug and room, telling him, "I don't know how to accept this." Jovial acceptance would have seemed out of place for the film's 1984 setting, but neither does the film end with his mother berating, attacking, or throwing him out of the house. If anything, her ambivalent response leans more toward the side of acceptance than rejection. *Edge of Seventeen* ends with Eric showering, donning a blue suit, black fedora, and gold sequin shirt, and heading to Fruit and Co. He is a new person about to about to begin his

new post-high school life away from home. Although Eric comes out to his mom at home, the film ends at the gay bar: Eric's real home.

All three films discussed above end in public spaces. Although each movie features at least one coming out scene inside the private sphere, they all end with their outed protagonists in public, affirming not only their gay identity as a public one, but also the public space as inextricable from their new identity. *Edge of Seventeen*'s more ambivalent ending situates it within the era it portrays, but nonetheless ends optimistically. Eric's mom will likely learn how to deal, and until then Eric has his second family at Fruit & Co. to support and nurture him. Similarly to *Billy*, the last image we see of Eric is of him cozying up to a cute blonde boy he ran out on a few days earlier—hope lives on.

Conclusion: "Born This Way"

According to Castiglia and Reed, the present is characterised by "forms of temporal distancing that have accompanied the traumatic losses occasioned by AIDS" (2012, 10). "Trauma," the duo write, "causes an incomplete eradication: the traumatic experience hovers, not forgotten but not remembered, on the edge of consciousness" (2012, 10)—like a ghost. They contend that "official memories," such as those captured in film, "constitute a potent form of forgetting even as they purport to traffic in memory. The assault on gay memory following AIDS took precisely this form, offering 'cleaned-up' versions of the past as substitutes for more challenging memories of social struggle" (2012, 2)—which *Edge of Seventeen* and the mid-to-late 90s (teen) coming out film more generally demonstrate rather emphatically. "Futurity," write Castiglia and Reed, became "the displaced location of the past" (2012, 8), whereby orientation toward the future negated the potentials of pre-AIDS formations—something all three films I

analyzed, but especially *Edge of Seventeen*, embody via their teenage protagonists and optimism about their future.

As with several NQC films that indirectly allude to, but don't actively discuss, AIDS (Arroyo 1993), the spectre of AIDS haunts *Edge of Seventeen* and the teen coming out cycle as a whole. AIDS was the force that controlled what the teen coming out cycle showed and how they showed it, and AIDS is also why youth-oriented normative queer films were and continue to be generally embraced by general audiences. *The Way He Looks* (2014), for example, is a coming-of-age story about a blind gay teen that not only won the Teddy, the award given for best queer feature, at the Berlin International Film Festival, but was also chosen as Brazil's Academy Award submission for Best Foreign Language Film (Mango 2014).

"Straight time" is how Halberstam (2005) characterizes linear time patterns organized around rights of passages that are contingent upon procreative futurity, and "growing sideways" is how Kathryn Bond Stockton (2009) characterizes the queer child's orientation in a world ordered according to the chronology of straight time. Castiglia and Reed observe that "the queer child is, for Stockton, a spectral presence," and argue that "if we think of queer culture as having a spectral childhood, a collective past, Stockton helps us see how our memories enlarge the present" (2012, 12). The teen in the teen coming out film is demonstrative of a spectral condition that remains endemic but which liberal activists want identified, solidified, and inserted into "bent" straight time—exemplified by Ebert's (1998) desire to integrate Eric into heterosexual chronology. If the teen coming out film is itself a metaphoric child characterized by an orientation toward the future through a re-imagined, lingering past, then it also helped to institute a kind of "cultural genetics" that naturalizes liberal rhetoric about gays being "born this way."

One of queer liberalism's main political weapons was to present gay identity, but not necessarily sexuality, as a naturally occurring phenomenon and not a deviation from the natural or normal. Being gay is not a choice; it is who I am, naturally. The focus on youths, teens, and families in the latter half of the 90s sought to realign gay identity with genetic science. The cultural appropriation of "reproductive futurity" parallels research on the "gay gene" (Grant 2014; Servick 2014), with the spectacle of the queer family and queer youths not only metaphorically visualizing the reuptake of empirical explanations for homosexuality, but also bolstering them at the same time. While the scientization of homosexuality was resisted in NQC and deconstructed in AIDS media, the symbiosis between science and identity is not only figuratively embraced on, but fortified through, the normative queer screen.

Although research on the gay gene continues to be published, evidence of homosexuality as a naturally occurring phenomenon has failed to stamp out homophobia or significantly alter opinions about homosexuality (Allen 2014; McCarthy 2014). More importantly, as Stephanie Allen (2014) observes, the obsession with the biological basis of same-sex desire is inextricable from not only the socio-political climate of the mid-90s, but also Bogard's notion of "info-politics:"

> The '90s were different times for both popular science and the cultural acceptance of homosexuality. 1996 falls squarely in the heyday of the Human Genome Project, a time when we were trained by science media, as Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin observes, to regard DNA as an unimpeachable "doctrine" that governed our lives. And in 1996, Congress was passing the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and the American Psychological Association hadn't yet published its <u>resolution</u> against conversion therapy.

Desperate times call for desperate measures and, in its initial stages, the search for a "gay gene" seems to have been a bid for the imprimatur of the latest and greatest hard science. The Human Genome Project is the convergence of surveillance and futurity at the microscopic level; its heyday curiously intersecting the AIDS cocktail's debut in 1996 and the ascent of the (teen) coming out cycle.

If over the last century science was the homosexual's enemy, in the mid-90s, science became the homosexual's friend. Narratives about being "born this way" continue to permeate popular culture (exemplified by Lady Gaga's 2011 hit song "Born This Way," which is, in fact, a rendition of Valentino's 1975 gay anthem "I Was Born This Way"), buttressing a normative ideological system through those scientifically-tinged performative utterances. But while positioning themselves in opposition to a veritable series of discursive scientific declarations that endlessly speak homosexuality's genetic origins, queer theory and what can be called "bareback activism" did likewise, appropriating the logic of genetic origin themselves. In many ways, the discourse of futurity produces its antithesis by way of research that seeks to return us to the past (Freeman 2010; Castiglia and Reed 2011). Recent queer theory has turned to the past as a way to move forward. But by locating the future in the past, queer theory ends up replicating the genealogical discourse on which normativity is rests and which queer theorists tacitly seek to undo. Upholding Gay Liberation as the future of queerness posits queer sexuality in the 70s as "the truth" of same-sex sexuality—we were born *that* way, not this.

My intention with this chapter has been to demonstrate how coming out narratives, specifically those that revolve around teenagers, not only reflect assimilationist strategies and liberal rhetoric about the family, but were also vehicles used to promote the normative political agenda they themselves represented. In the previous chapter, I examined the effects of AIDS's

onscenity on identity and representation. In this chapter, I explored the inverse: the impact of AIDS's obscenity. In the previous chapter, we saw a variety of ambivalent visual strategies resist mainstream media portrayals. In this chapter, we saw queer visual strategies converge with the mainstream. In the previous chapter, we saw film and political discourse proliferate the fact of AIDS. In this chapter, we have seen the reverse: film and political discourse suppress and erase AIDS. In the previous chapter, we saw filmmakers focus on negativity, dystopia, and death. In this chapter, we saw representations reorient themselves around positivity, utopia, and life.

The potential for a queer future was re-imaged as a complete break from all things past, particularly AIDS and promiscuity. Commitment to family and the future generation would ensure the future of the queer community. More than documenting this ideological shift, the teen coming out film became a disciplinary appendage to the surveillance of queer negativity and AIDS. But in the same way that the liberal left tacitly embraced and appropriated genetic scripts to promote their political agenda, a number of gay men began to do likewise subculturally, growing and nurturing a culture of barebacking (Rofes 1998; Dean 2009).

Gay Liberation under current queer models becomes both a primal *and primordial* scene, with the paradoxes around the rhetoric of being "born this way" culminating in the twenty-first century with the bareback crisis. In the latter half of the 90s, the homosexual was transformed into an actual clone by genetic science—gays (can) mimic straights, but are ultimately different at the microscopic level (Stacey 2010). Throughout the 2000s, though, the good gay clone was forced to confront the past they repressed via the monster they created in the process: the barebacker. In my final chapter, I take an extensive and intensive look at how the repression and silencing of AIDS throughout the 90s produces its returns in the twenty-first century through similar genetically-tinged discursive and visual strategies. It is to this issue I turn next.

Chapter 6) Feeling Positive; Feeling Negative

Feeling Sex: Dystopia/Utopia

<u>Introduction: Retro AIDS Cinema</u>

At the end of the *Test* (2013), a film set in San Francisco in 1985, Bill, the protagonist, in bed next morning after an evening of condom experimentation with his friend-turned-recent-lover ponders as to whether "there's going to be this, like, wave of monogamy because of all of this?"—"this" in this instance meaning AIDS. "It's one way to be sure, right?" his lover responds. "It seems so unnatural, though, just being with one person. It's like some sort of massive unnatural challenge. It's like a test." Shot with each character on their own in medium close-up, their exchange emphasizes the distance between them brought about by condom use. 1985 is the year blood tests that could detect HIV antibodies became available. The film's title suggests that the "test" in question is Bill's, which we see him take about midway through the narrative and comes out negative. It's not until the very end we realize the title's irony—it was referring to the beginning of an ongoing emotional and sexual test gay men would have to endure, not the newly developed HIV-antibodies one.

The title's play on words very smartly connects condom use to the medicalization and constriction of gay male sexuality. The word "unnatural" reveals the uphill battle safer-sex advocates themselves had to endure to convince gay men to wrap their penises with a synthetic sheath every single time they had intercourse (Patton 1990, 1991). At the same time, "unnatural" speaks to the disciplinary power of images and the way images and politics synthesized during the epidemic: something "unnatural" was "naturalized" through images and became the norm. Although a poignant end to a thought-provoking film, unprotected sex is still represented as something located in the past—that can only be discussed if it's in the past. Comparing *Test* to

Edge of Seventeen we can see two different versions of Castiglia and Reed's *unremembering* in effect, insofar as the discourse of AIDS, particularly in *Test*, is rendered "safe" by its containment in the murky realm of "elsewhen." But the difference between *Test* and *Edge of Seventeen* is that *Test* subtly acknowledges that gay men are failing the test.

Final scene in *Test*: Condom as emotional barrier

Test is part of a recent spate of films that can be collectively referred to as "Retro AIDS Cinema," [29] which in addition to *Test* includes the screen adaptation of Larry Kramer's *The*

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[29] Beside their concurrent release, there are four factors that distinguish the films from previous cinematic representations in the 2000s that together constitute a cycle in its own right: 1) except for *Behind the Candelabra,* all the films are specifically about AIDS; 2) all the films have either queer leads/figureheads (mostly [white] gay male) or crucial, not incidental, queer supporting characters/participants (*Dallas Buyers Club*); 3) all the films are set entirely in the past (although the documentaries include footage from the present, the footage provides analysis and commentary on the past); and 4) their popularity, the media attention and awards they've received—less so from mainstream sources for the single queer-authored indie *Test* and documentaries.

My advocating a recent cycle should not suggest that AIDS disappeared from the film screen in the new millennium. Examples of millennial AIDS-related work include: *The Hours* (USA, 2002), *The Event* (Canada/USA, 2003), *Angels in America* (USA, 2003), *Yesterday*

Normal Heart (2014), *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013) as well as *Behind the Candelabra* (2014) and the recent documentaries *We Were Here* (2011), *How to Survive a Plague* (2012), *United in Anger: A History of Act Up* (2012), and *Larry Kramer in Love and Anger* (2015). The recent surge in AIDS representation hasn't gone unnoticed (Murray and Tobias 2013; Saason 2014; Wolcott 2014), sparking a lively conversation about the various ways filmmakers have approached, and for some revised, the past (Juhasz and Kerr 2014; Fox 2014; Schulman and Jung 2014; Staley 2014b). Although offering multiple vantage points through which to revisit the AIDS epidemic, all the films are *retro*spectives on AIDS, not about AIDS in the present. The

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(South Africa, 2004), *A Home at the End of the World* (USA, 2004), *Poster Boy* (USA, 2004), *My Brother…Nikhil* (India, 2005), *3 Needles* (Canada, 2005), *Rent* (USA, 2005), *Girl, Positive* (USA, 2007), *The Witnesses* ([Les témoins] France, 2007), *Life Support* (USA, 2007), *Fig Trees* (Canada, 2009), and *Precious* (USA, 2009). In comparison to the Retro AIDS cycle, a few things about this list should be noted. 1) Most of the films were released in the earlier half of the 2000s—the further away from the AIDS cocktail's debut, the less frequent the engagement. 2) While *The Event*, *Angels in America*, *My Brother…Nikhil*, *Poster Boy, Fig Trees,* and to a lesser extent *The Hours*, are queer-centred narratives, the rest are not. 3) *Poster Boy* and *The Hours* aren't about AIDS but rather feature an HIV-positive character: a heterosexual woman in the former and gay man in the latter. 4) Most of the above listed works feature queer HIV-positive characters in supporting roles (*Home*, *Rent*, *The Witnesses*) and heterosexual HIV-positive characters in leading roles (*Yesterday*; *Girl, Positive*; *Precious). Three Needles*, a film about the globalization of AIDS, features no identified queer characters. 6) Besides *The Event* and *Poster Boy*, few, if any, other queer independent works discursively engaged AIDS in meaningful ways or featured any HIV-positive characters. 7) The Retro AIDS cycle is exclusively American.

films tacitly acknowledge that AIDS is an issue that hasn't been dealt with, but they don't actually discuss or represent what living with HIV is like in the present: all the films are (primarily) set in the mid-to-late 80s during height of the AIDS epidemic. Even though all the films are about AIDS, AIDS somehow manages to remain ghostly.

The Retro AIDS cycle, more so the fiction films, have been discussed alongside earlier representations of AIDS, namely *Parting Glances*, *A Longtime Companion*, and *Philadelphia* (Murray and Tobias 2013; Juhasz and Kerr 2014; Saason 2014; Wolcott 2014). In conversation with Scott Tobias, Noel Murray (2013) observes that "We've come a long way in terms of how much of gay life makes it onto film and television, but in the process, AIDS has largely fallen out of the picture, which gives *Dallas Buyers Club* an almost retro feel, like a movie that could've been made in 1990." Indeed, all the fiction films have a retro look and feel, but their faithful aesthetics also imbue them with a nostalgia that in many ways attempts to reinsert them into, and by extension bring us back to, the period they represent. The films can't (and don't necessarily want to) erase their presentism, and similarly to *Interior. Leather Bar* their vague chronology renders them uncanny: familiar but unfamiliar, radical but normal and safe, caught somewhere in between past and present, but also future.

Although cross-cultural productions, the fiction films, besides *Test*, were, like previous Hollywood productions, made for a general (read: straight) audience and have been criticized for whitewashing the epidemic and *bolstering* neoliberal and neoconservatives politics (Fox 2014; Juhasz and Kerr 2014; Schulman and Jung 2014). The Retro AIDS cycle although addressing the persistence of AIDS in queer culture, also embodies the schism between HIV/AIDS and

normative discourse vis-à-vis gay marriage that has manifested itself in recent queer cultural politics (Staley 2013a).[30]

Writing about *The Normal Heart* and *Dallas Buyers Club*, Scott Wolcott (2014) rhetorically asks, "Why this, why now?" Answering, "Because as the decades pass we are in danger of forgetting forever what went down." And yet the films have also been criticized for "unremembering" AIDS, reinforcing amnesia (Juhasz and Kerr 2014) and revising the past so as to be more palatable to a mainstream audience (Schulman and Jung 2014)—others, however, have defended the films' accuracy while acknowledging their problematic lack of diversity (Staley 2014b). Although containing AIDS in the past, their uncanniness bespeaks imminent return. What is in process of returning remains vague and unclear, but the normalized cooptation of AIDS that effectively positions sex, past sex, as the spectre that haunts the cycle's narration curiously coincides with heated debates about replacing latex with chemical prophylaxes (Truvada/PrEP), which Kramer himself has publicly condemned (Healey 2014).

Speaking of Truvada and Kramer's *Normal Heart*, Max Fox (2014) asks, "If gay men are now able to take a pill to dodge the threat of fatal infection from sex, how will they know to refrain from the promiscuity Kramer thinks is so deadly?" It is precisely the decoupling of liberal

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[30] Besides the endless coverage of the various gains and setbacks over gay-marriage rights, a recent uptick in movies about or which intersect the discourse of gay marriage—*The Kids Are Alright* (USA, 2010), *I Do* (USA, 2012), *Bridegroom: A Love Story, Unequaled* (2013), *The Case Against 8* (USA 2014)—as well as several television shows with gay marriage plot points—*Modern Family*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Brothers and Sisters*, *Scandal, Brooklyn 99, The L Word*, and the daytime soap opera *All My Children*—coincide with the Retro AIDS Cinema cycle. We again see discursive doubling framing queer cultural political discourse.

normativity from safer sex that pervades the AIDS Retro cycle's screen and navigates millennial queer political discourse. Fox has gone so far to suggest that "As today's chapter in gay history appears to be drawing to a close, Kramer's signature work has ostensibly been brought back to remind us of the pain of an earlier era and the rightness of Kramer's dire warnings." Rather than critique liberal normative values, the AIDS Retro cycle has discursively returned AIDS to the mainstream's foreground to reaffirm normativity at time when those rendered "other" by its divisive politics have managed to loosen its grasp.[31] Gay may once again come to equal AIDS— the spectacle of the scaffold has returned, but in altered form.

Beliefs that Truvada can both revive and bring an end to the AIDS epidemic have been articulated.[32] Indeed, the polarizing debates around Truvada not only crystallize but are also a microcosm for the diverging and politically contingent views about sex rooted in the AIDS epidemic: the paths toward utopia and dystopia are contained within Truvada; or, to put it another way, the futurity of gay/queer sex will be determined by Truvada. Because Truvada makes the condom all but unnecessary, barebacking may very well become the new norm. And although not bound to practices of promiscuity, Truvada threatens to unravel a normative order that has historically been bound together by latex. AIDS was the repellent that maintained

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[31] Although Hubbard and Schulman's *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP* positions itself as the antithesis to other HIV/AIDS documentaries, namely *How to Survive a Plague*, the film undermines its own agenda but maintains a historical focus, becoming an inadvertent ancillary to the Retro AIDS cycle's normative agenda.

[32] See Vice's 3-part short documentary *Stopping HIV with the Truvada Revolution* (2015) for an excellent survey of the issues and various points of views: ww.vice.com/en_ca/video/stopping-hiv-with-the-truvada-revolution-part-1-111

normative attachment: the threat of AIDS as *Test* attests became the never-ending trial that coerced gay men to embrace normativity. It is the potential return of a culture of promiscuity via the normalization of unprotected sex that the AIDS Retro cycle attempts to speak to, but can at the moment only bespeak.

Rather than represent the daily experiences of those with HIV in the present or tackle the issues they currently face, the films continue to represent AIDS as a historical phenomenon. AIDS remains in the past implicitly reiterating, but also reifying, AIDS as a (white, urban, and presumably elder) gay male disease; this, despite reports about the continued and growing rate of infection in the West, primarily (queer) people of colour and youths/young adults (Garcia 2012; Sun 2012; Hobbes 2014).[33] What is perhaps even more problematic is how the cycle coincides with the release of Truvada, or PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis). But while several of the films have garnered widespread acclaim and media attention, the CDC's recommendation that doctors prescribe Truvada as an effective tool to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS has been all but ignored by major media outlets (Saason 2014; Brinker 2014).

Throughout the new millennium's first decade, however, queer cinema continued to trumpet those who came out of the closet and fell in love, maintaining its tacit gag order on HIV/AIDS and the behaviour that can result in its transmission. Conversations about, let alone representations of, barebacking/unprotected sex and HIV/AIDS were almost nonexistent in queer cinema and mainstream representation. When (gay) sex was represented, condom use was referenced, implied, or inferred, and when HIV/AIDS was discussed or engaged, it was either used as a backdrop to bolster a character's desire (and need) for love, such as in *All Over the Guy*

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[33] Visit the *CDC's* http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/statistics/surveillance/incidence.html and *AIDS.gov's* https://aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/statistics/ websites for comprehensive breakdowns.

(2001) or *The Big Gay Musical* (2009), or to position HIV/AIDS as a dated stereotype and a film's characters as responsible and mature adults, such as in *Three Day Weekend* (2008). But while queer cinema and mainstream representation ignored or minimized HIV/AIDS and barebacking, a handful of rogue studios—*Treasure Island Media, Hot Desert Knights, SX Videos*—took it upon themselves to shine a light on the behaviour and people mainstream culture industries quietly pushed into the shadows.

Writing about the continued schism between the copious media attention given to gay marriage and minimal attention given to HIV/AIDS, Pater Staley (2013) writes,

> During the worst years of the AIDS crisis, from 1981 to the advent of effective medications in 1996, the gay community forged a new definition of love: It [sic] encompassed traditional romantic love, but it went beyond the love between two people. Often shunned by our biological families, we created our own, complete with brothers and sisters who cared and fought for one another and elders who mentored the young.

AIDS produced a queer family, whose metaphoric genetic bonds are strengthened not only by its discursive double (gay marriage), but also the practice of barebacking, too. For decades, a subculture of barebacking has been breeding a new identity and kinship system through the (at time purposeful) transmission of the HIV virus (Dean 2009), appropriating and perverting the normative family, producing a perverted doppelgänger collective in its place. In my final chapter, I examine the socio-sexual-political discord that manifests itself in the 2010s through the discourse of barebacking, focusing on the evolution of bareback pornography and the representational, industrial, and discursive responses to its proliferation in the 2000s.

In the previous chapter, I looked at how mainstream gay-rights activism and cinema turned toward normativity as a way to move beyond the dystopia and anti-futurity of AIDS and

queer negativity. Focusing mainly on American gay male pornography, in this chapter I explore

competing visions and sensibilities of utopia and dystopia that arise out of the tension between

the risks and potentials of sex. I argue that what plays out through the discourse of bareback

pornography over the new millennium's first decade is an intracultural political struggle to, on

the one hand, "liberate" the queer community and on the other maintain control over it.

I begin with a comparative look at the gay male art-porn film *Descent* (1999) and the

explicit queer art-house hit *Shortbus* (2006). I then move on to a comparative studio analysis of

the most successful and infamous of all gay male bareback porn studios, the San Francisco-based

Treasure Island Media (henceforth TIM), and one of the most successful safer sex gay male porn

companies, *Raging Stallion Studios* (henceforth RSS). I use *Descent* and *Shortbus* as exemplars

to explore competing notions and visions of dystopia and utopia. Both films revolve around the

anxieties over and potentials of touch and visual affect. But while *Shortbus* finds optimistic hope

and redemption in film's ability to touch and put people in touch with one another, *Descent*

exudes ambivalence over touch and its status as a visual entity designed to facilitate but also

limit touch. *Descent* and *Shortbus* are reflexive films that engage not only the spectre of

barebacking and HIV/AIDS, but also the precarity of the recording apparatus. Both films

implicate themselves in their discursive engagements, and I use their ambivalent dialectic as a

framework to structure my comparative studio analysis.

Focusing my attention on a single film by each studio, *Dawson's 20 Load Weekend*

(2004) by TIM and *Focus/Refocus* (2009) by RSS, I dedicate the majority of the chapter to

examining industrial changes in the gay male porn industry and the cultural and political

anxieties that arise out of the spectacle of barebacking's proliferation. Through detailed textual

and contextual analysis, I demonstrate how barebacking and its representation become praxes

that undermine narrative scripts put forward by the normal majority. As barebacking's unofficial ambassador (Dean 2009) and harbinger of the bareback (re-)crisis (Kagan 2015), I argue TIM seeks to resist the cruel optimism of reproductive futurity by appropriating and perverting its genealogical impulse. Although in some ways replicating the metaphysical genetic discourse it strives to subvert (Patton 2014), TIM evolves into a bareback propaganda machine that sees itself as salvaging queer futurity by reviving the past through behaviour symbolically repressed by the condom (Morris and Paasonen 2014). TIM positions itself as the antithesis and "antidote" to antiseptic safer-sex discourse and their inextricable normative politics. Although RSS remains opposed to TIM and bareback sex, my analysis of *Focus/Refocus* suggests that the safer-sex studio industry recognizes that its role as gay male culture's unofficial ambassador is slowly coming to an end—a discursive swan song for era in the process of becoming a ghost.

Descent (1999): Dystopia

The sci-fi gay art-porn film *Descent* (1999) directed by Steven Scarborough is a surprisingly reactionary film. A self-aware and self-critical safer-sex porn feature, it portrays a controlled, enclosed, antiseptic, and austere future brought about by submission to recording technology and images. Although sexualizing the dystopia it portrays, it also clearly fears it; rather than pornotopia or porno-utopia, it is "pornodystopia," displaying deep seated anxieties about pornography and the technology that has made it so popular. The film's art direction channels John Maybury's experimental *Remembrance of Things Fast: True Stories Visual Lies* (1994). In his review of *Remembrance* for *Variety*, David Rooney (1994) writes,

> Subtitled 'True Stories Visual Lies,' pic juxtaposes gay self-perception with the view
>
> from outside. The control exercised by the media over all aspects of contemporary
>
> society is cleverly lampooned [by Maybury] via a computer-generated terrain of news

flashes, commercials and scrambled soundbites…An even more tangible presence is

AIDS, though like every ingredient in Maybury's food-for-thought smorgasbord, it's

dealt with in unexplicit terms.

Descent references *Remembrance* and appropriates and reconfigures the film's aesthetics and

iconography to resituate its politics within a hard core context.

Stills from Maybury's hypnotic collage

Stills from *Descent*

   Descent captures and engages the growing sense of detachment and alienation spurred by

technological and social changes in which touching others takes place through touching oneself

and various computer and electronic hardware. Released at the turn of the millennium, *Descent*

looks back, while looking forward, at the significant change gay culture underwent during and

after the AIDS epidemic, a crisis that also coincides with the rise of video culture (Juhasz 1995).

Challenging Linda Williams's belief that pornography is the "frenzy of the visible," Bogard

argues that pornography and sex in the digital era is characterized by "a frenzy of *touch*" (1996,

155). *Telesexuality*, or sex at a distance, is the reality of "sex in telematic society," according to

Bogard (1996, 153), and throughout the epidemic era pornography for gay men became more

and more of a replacement for physical contact (Burger 1995). Physical touch was slowly

substituted with vision and virtual touching: what once brought people together to touch each

other became a replacement for the thing it showed (Champagne 1997).

Bogard argues that "in telematic societies the spectacle *is* the reality and truth of sex"

(1996, 158), and during and after the AIDS epidemic what we see with the standardization of

condom use in gay porn is the symbolic transformation of pornography itself into a social

prophylaxis. As Bogard writes, "You can see sex everywhere…but you can't get too close or

touch it without protection of some kind…AIDS means: look, but don't touch; if you touch,

you're dead. Or rather: if you touch, put a screen, a surface, between you and whatever you

touch, something without any holes" (1996, 166). Telesexuality usurps the tactile and reformats

it into discursive and networked affect (Paasonen 2011; Arroyo 2015). It is precisely the fear of

sex brought about by AIDS and the ascent of telesexuality that TIM and barebacking seek to

subvert, and what *Descent* ambivalently engages, unsure of its own complicity and complacency.

Descent is a science fiction film, and as Steven Shaviro reminds us science fiction "is not

about literally predicting the future. Rather, it is about capturing and depicting the latent *futurity*

that already haunts us in the present" (2010, 66). *Descent* is "futuristic" in the sense that it is "an

anticipatory inflection of the present…[that] shows us an otherness, an elsewhere and elsewhen,

that is inextricably woven into the texture of the here and now" (Shaviro 2010, 66). Importantly,

Shaviro observes that "we usually think of haunting as traces from the past; but the future also

haunts us with its hints of hope and danger, and its promises or threats of transformation…if the

past *persists* in the present, then futurity *insists* in the present, defamiliarizing what we take for

granted" (2010, 66-67). *Descent* is about examining the present through the lens of the future-

past, an interrogation of both technology's and the AIDS epidemic's impact on gay male sexuality as sociality.

The movie begins with a young topless man running down an almost pitch-black street, lit by only a flickering spotlight. A narrator with a deep stern voice informs us that this young man is gripped by fear, crushing loneliness, and a chilling sense that madness is always on his heels. The unidentified male jumps behind a dumpster and awakens in "another place, another world, somewhere in the future, the new millennium perhaps." The transition from real world to alternate world is visualized as a rebirth. A brief intertitle sequence composed of still images of the young man nude, curled up in a fetal position, is juxtaposed to an image of a crescent moon, with the camera dropping downward, symbolizing his "descent" and reincarnation.

| Rebirth | Alienation | Cybernetic future | Art Deco Past |
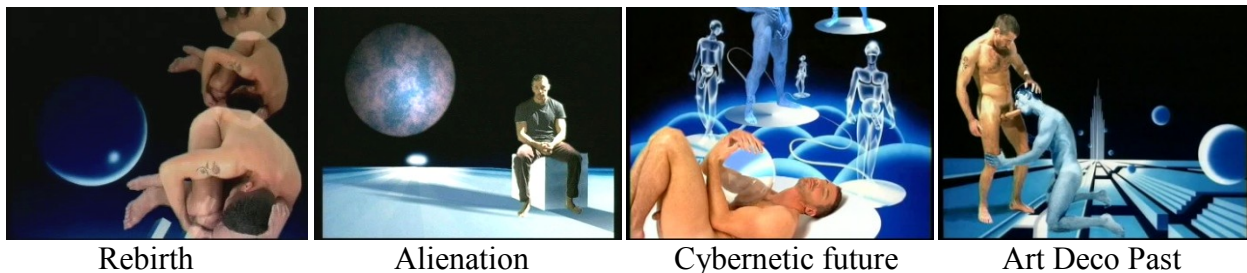
Before entering the pornographic diegesis, viewers are treated to a brief but revealing montage. The man, now clothed, sits on a white cube on the right-hand side of the frame. A large blue and pinkish moon takes up almost a quarter of the screen space in the top left with the screen vertically split into two by a plain white terrain and a black sky. After a few images of the protagonist, now nude, discovering his new surroundings, we dissolve to him lying on his back with his eyes closed holding a clear ball. In the background, various humanoid templates and tinted humans are connected by a long white cord that signifies this new world as cybernetic—he has entered the machine. Although the mise-en-scène reads as futuristic and prominently features familiar science fiction iconography, it is also inspired by an Art Deco aesthetic. A few images

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later, for example, we see our protagonist receiving oral sex in front of what appears like the Empire State Building. In this parallel world, future and past converge.

Just before the opening sex scene, we are informed the protagonist has been captured by strangers, tied to a chair, and is being ritualistically "prepared, perhaps, for the last great fuck of his life." The first sequence begins with the protagonist tied up, kneeling on the floor, having his hair shaved off. Two men, also bound, sit in the background watching with their mouths taped shut. Save for the rope, the trimmer, the chair, and a retro camera-speaker apparatus, which records the action, the entirely white blank space sits hollow, filled only with the reverberating buzz of the shaver. After his symbolic initiation, which is shot in an extreme close-up, the man shaving the protagonist's head kisses him. The scene then abruptly fades to the protagonist receiving oral sex from one of the tied up men.

The first sex sequence eschews typical pornographic syntax, convention, and general coherence. With little narrative or familiarity to orient the viewer, it begins with the protagonist in the foreground receiving oral sex, then cuts to the initiator receiving oral sex from the other tied-up male performer, which is shot with a blue tint. The film then flashes-forward to a shot of the protagonist, bound again, kneeling with a noose around his neck, surrounded by the three other man who stand over him. The sequence continues in this pattern, cutting from one coupling to another to a bukkake grouping, ending with the protagonist and initiator ejaculating onto the backs of the men who were initially tied up, and the protagonist, in a bukkake parallel universe/dream/futurist sequence, covered in the three men's semen.

Initiation under surveillance   Atypical composition   Fantasy within fantasy

The film's unique formal presentation presciently captures the feeling of techno-sexuality in the Web 2.0 universe, incorporating its implied cybernetic setting into its editing. *Descent* facilitates and visualizes the experience of fragmented porn consumption in the age of telesexuality—searching through an endless number of sources; combining together and jumping back and forth between memories, collected images, and bookmarked videos. Its jarring editing, sombre score, oblique angles, awkward framing, alienating mise-en-scène, narrative non-sequiturs, contrasting colour design, and artful textures push the film into "unmasturbatable" territory—kept back just enough from the threshold, thanks to Scarborough's skilful directing.

Pornography is many things, but its primary purpose in contemporary society is to facilitate masturbation (Ullén, 2009). Using a sexual formula that is stereotypically analogous to sexual activity in real life—touching, kissing, manual and oral stimulation, penetration, climax—narrative commercial pornography doles out sexual performances with an editing rhythm as choreographed as the sex itself. Commercial pornography tends to strike a balance between giving viewers enough time to concentrate on a particular action performed and presenting the activity in various ways so as to not bore them. *Descent* purposely frustrates this editing rhythm: instead, it offers confusing temporal and spatial jump cuts and discontinuous editing that spoil and purposely challenge easy consumption. Poaching avant-garde tropes that mirror *Remembrance*'s schizophrenic presentation, Scarborough uses displeasure and abrasion to subvert the genre's promise to inundate viewers with pleasure and to make sex as transparent and

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easily digestible as possible. The film uses negative affectivity to make its imagined viewer feel its ambivalent politics inside their own body.

Bogard's work and *Descent* underscore the anxieties felt about the convergence of tactility and visual affect that developed throughout the 90s with digital media's rapid expansion and mobilization. A "solo scene" of a young man masturbating to the image of our protagonist under surveillance on a nearby TV screen crystallizes Bogard's analysis of sex in the 90s and the film's ambivalence toward its own telesexuality. In this haunting yet oddly erotic scene we see and almost feel the distancing force of video pornography and its transformation into a social prophylaxis. But there is something more going on in *Descent* and this scene in particular than meets the eye. Aiden Shaw, the star/protagonist was diagnosed with HIV in 1997 (Shaw 2006), and although viewers may have been unaware of his status, producers and performer were not.
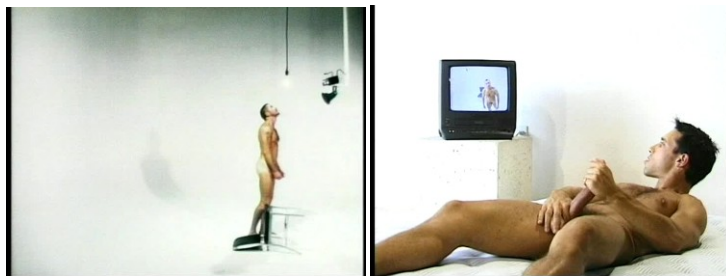
Surveillance and telesexuality   More isolation

There is something brutally honest captured in the image of a man masturbating to Shaw's image because he doesn't want to touch him. But there is also something very sinister about seeing Shaw exposed and vulnerable, forcibly trapped on the television screen. This scene not only reflexively acknowledges the surveillance of HIV-positive bodies, but also the fusion of surveillance and representation that came about as a result of the AIDS epidemic. Bogard's observation that we put something not porous, something that disallows permeability, between us speaks not only to anxieties about AIDS but also to an underlying desire to construct and secure

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solid borders in an increasingly fluid and borderless world—one brought about by fibre optics and cybernetic technology (Chun 2006, 2011).

The future *Descent* depicts is alienating, isolating, austere, and devoid of any human sensibility, similar to George Lucas' vision of the future in *THX-1138* (1971)—another film *Descent* references throughout. *Descent* is a vision of the posthuman sexual landscape coming into being, but yearns for a time and place long past. Unable to provide a real solution (without explicitly condemning itself), *Descent* ends like the typical sci-fi dystopia and with a final nod to *THX-1138*: a return to the natural and pastoral. The film concludes with our protagonist finding love on a beach, with the beach in this instance not only referring to the real, but also the past, ending where gay pornography was symbolically birthed in *Boys in the Sand*. Shaw returns to the past via the real, which considering his HIV-positive status seems to metaphorically foreshadow the impending flood of bareback porn to come: the return to the real, the return of the past.

Descent's Final shot   Aiden Shaw in *Descent*

THX-1138's final shot   Robert Duvall in *THX-1138*

Cleansing and rebirth in *Descent*: a recurring theme in gay male (sexual) representation. We once again see a nude male making his way out of the ocean toward the shore

Descent: Real intimacy in a natural setting, on a beach no less, reminiscent of both *Boys in the Sand* and *A Very Natural Thing*

    Descent is mired in ambivalence and uncertainty, simultaneously looking toward the future and past. Scarborough's decision to juxtapose the minimalist prison in which the majority of the movie is set to the warmth and openness of the beach at the end speaks to a very strong desire to escape and be free. But from what precisely is unclear. If we think of Shaw as a gay male symbolic figure, from which prison is Scarborough suggesting he needs to liberate himself? Recording technology? Safer sex? Porn? AIDS? In many ways, *Descent* can be read as an allegory for gay male pornography caught in the nexus of surveillance and liberation, almost placing itself under surveillance, questioning its own complacency with a regime of visibility that now seems to do gay men more harm than good. *Descent* looks into the future, but can only imagine escape to the past, to another time and not another place, as the only way out. Watching *Descent* in the present day one can't help but feel as if the video wishes it could escape itself.
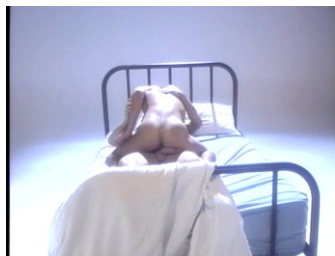
Descent   *THX-1138*   *Remembrance*

The sterile and isolated setting of future sex in the telematic society

Shortbus (2006): Utopia

Summarized by Judith Halberstam (2008), the antisocial strand of queer theory rejects the "US imperialist project of hope" (141) and moves sex "away from projects of redemption, reconstruction, restoration and reclamation" (140). Antisocial queer theory is anti-relational at its core, recognizing and embracing "the selfishness of sex and its destructive power," rejecting the view of sex as a "life-force connecting pleasure to life, survival and futurity" (140). No wonder Damon Young argues *Shortbus* (2006) is a "welcome corrective to queer theory's recent embrace of 'social negativity' (2013, 137). Indeed, in *Shortbus* John Cameron Mitchell offers us a vision of sex completely antithetical to that proffered by queer negativity, attempting to recuperate and merge together the utopia of sex and power of queerness. For Mitchell, they are phenomena implicitly about connection rather than alienation.

An ensemble cast film, *Shortbus* tells the overlapping stories of the Jamies, a white middle-class gay couple who are both named James preparing to "open up" their relationship; Sophia, their Chinese-Canadian pre-orgasmic sex therapist and her husband Rob; Severin, a lonely dominatrix; Ceth, a young model-songwriter; and the Jamies' stalker, Caleb. The film revolves around confession and the search for privacy. We follow the characters through journeys of self-exploration, watching them seek out secluded private spaces in which to let down their guard and be themselves. Sex and verbal communication mirror yet efface each other in *Shortbus*. The physical mechanisms of carnal communication are in abundance, but communication remains truncated: Sophia cannot orgasm; James (one of the Jamies) is preparing to kill himself but can't bring himself to tell his partner, creating an experimental suicide video instead; Severin is sexless and detached but yearns for connection; Caleb is a voyeur without a television; Ceth is looking for love though his cellphone; and Rob's into S&M but is afraid to tell

Sophia. All the characters are connected and eventually congregate at Shortbus, a semi-private pansexual sex club in Brooklyn that becomes their shared therapeutic space and home.

The Shortbus club is a utopic queer space, a place where sex, indie music, indie film, art, and all races, ethnicities, and gender and sexual variations come together in beautiful harmony. But *Shortbus* also articulates a level of self-awareness that positions the Shortbus club as a metaphor for cinema: it too is a space where people congregate to watch that "confounds any firm delineation of public and private" (Davis 2008, 628). Mitchell places heavy emphasis on learning by observation, and although an ensemble cast film, the movie positions Sophia as our guide to this pansexual world. Like Burns in *Cruising*, Sophia is there to learn, and as with Burns Sophia's ethnographic journey transitions into autoethnography the more she acclimatizes herself to her surroundings and embraces Shortbus's denizens. As a therapist, the alibi of "science" allows Sophia to investigate the space and interrogate its denizens without seeming invasive, but her vocation also reflexively underscores the film's undeniable didacticism. As we watch Sophia observe and learn, we (hopefully) do likewise.

Peter Ruppert argues that the "utopian film is better understood in terms of the social attitudes and assumptions that operate in various film genres and in various film styles; it is better gauged in terms of what a film does: its functions and effects on the audience" (1996, 140). *Shortbus* is very much a utopian film, and Mitchell harnesses the affective qualities intrinsic in film to make people feel something optimistic: Mitchell wants people to feel the queer optimism of safe public sex (Snediker 2008). Countering queer negativity and the anti-pleasure impulse of screen theory, Mitchell tries to get spectators to feel the potential unifying power of queerness and sex freed from identity (MacCormack 2008; Davies 2013). *Shortbus* is

visual queer theory that prioritizes affect, but as Ellis Hanson notes, "Most queer theory about affect is really about trauma" (2011, 106).

Marta Figlerowicz (2012) reminds us that affect is wrapped up in issues of time and timing, and in *Shortbus*, utopia is inextricable from past trauma. Of representing utopia Ruppert writes, "More absent than present in the film itself, utopia is more like a shadow that haunts our social and personal psyches" (1996, 140). As with *Descent* and the teen coming out film, the spectre of AIDS haunts *Shortbus*. And although the film attempts to recuperate the value of public sex that had been slowly picked apart by gentrification and the turn toward consumerist normativity (Berlant and Warner 1998; Halperin 2012), it can't quite seem to move beyond the lingering trauma of the AIDS epidemic. Mitchell uses 9/11 as a metaphoric backdrop (Koutras 2010) for the AIDS epidemic and sublimates the trauma of AIDS through truncated confession (Hallas 2010); represented best by the Jamie who can't bring himself to tell his partner how depressed and miserable he is (the sad gay man lives on) and instead turns to video to exorcize his demons. The only open acknowledgement of AIDS happens during a moment of intergenerational intimacy between Ceth and the ex-mayor of New York City (read: Ed Koch), symbolically connecting past and present via the characters' respective age.

Sitting next to each other and shot in close-up while the band plays softly in the background, the ex-mayor tells Ceth that people target New Yorkers because they are permeable and thus sane, while others are impermeable and thus insane. This reference to 9/11 is followed by a personal recollection about his time in office during another moment of turmoil, hysteria, and fear. He confesses his guilty conscience to Ceth, telling him that people think he didn't do enough to stop the AIDS epidemic because he was closeted. "Coming out" in his own way, his borderline religious confession—guilt + sex—is linked to the trauma of AIDS via the trauma of

9/11. His confession acknowledges the past's lingering ghost-like presence. Seeking solace, he

tells Ceth that New York is where everyone comes to be forgiven and asks for what sins Ceth is

here to atone. Spliced between this statement and question is a brief scene where Sophia peeks

around a corner and observes a heterosexual couple having unprotected sex in the orgy room. By

inserting a scene of unsafe sex in between two statements that characterize New York City as a

forgiving place, the film symbolically foregrounds sex as the thing that needs to be atoned for,

and the thing with which we need to come to terms.

Ex-mayor "coming out"

The scene of utopia and trauma

Sophia taking a childlike peek, almost afraid to see the unfolding spectacle of pleasure
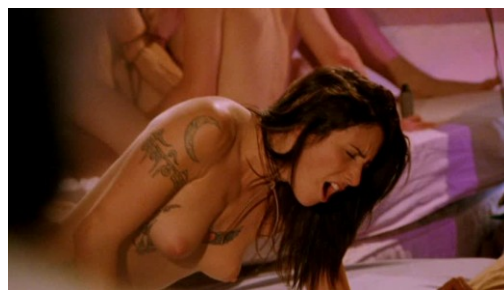
Although Sophia observes two heterosexual lovers, their sexual practice takes place in a

space meant to facilitate casual anonymous sex as a form of community itself, framing them as

"queer." They are all connected to each other, but the couple's heterosexuality and emotional

commitment is what allows Mitchell to film unprotected sex while bypassing the slippery terrain

of "barebacking"—showing two men doing the thing that brought about the AIDS epidemic

would elicit very different responses, especially in this symbolic utopic space.

The scene is uncanny, collapsing past and present, reiterating queer futurity's pastness. Through Sophia we bear witness to the activity that birthed the AIDS epidemic: freely available unprotected public sex. But through Sophia we also bear witness to an era that preceded the AIDS epidemic: Gay Liberation and the Sexual Revolution. Although the heterosexual couple in question doesn't practice safer sex, Mitchell is sure to emphasize the availability of condoms— earlier on, Creamy, the maître d', walks around offering condoms and lube, along with potcorn (marijuana laced popcorn) while he films the orgy. Although haunted by the epidemic, Mitchell refuses to capitulate to AIDS's socio-sexual stratification, finding redemptive power in queer public sex. Safer sex doesn't have to be limiting, and neither does being in a relationship.

As with *Descent*, AIDS is the deafening silence that controls the channels of communication in *Shortbus*. Returning to the two men, the ex-mayor makes a rather harsh confession about native New Yorkers such as himself. Home, he says, "can be very unforgiving." New York City, home, is uncanny. It is safe, yet unsafe; familiar, yet unfamiliar; forgiving, yet unforgiving. Permeability is what defines New Yorkers and New York, but permeability is also what brought about the AIDS epidemic. Mitchell places considerable emphasis on the word "permeable," having the ex-mayor character bracket the word with pauses before and after. Permeability remains mired in trauma: the desire to be open and to let things and others in is matched by the fear of the very things. Permeability in *Shortbus* is, among other things, code for barebacking, for unmediated connection. The AIDS epidemic lives on through our ambivalence toward permeability.

It is curious that a film about public sex and the trauma of AIDS would adopt an aesthetic of surveillance and revolve its narrative around the search for privacy. The opening scene is of a drone-like camera flying through a digitally simulated clay-animated New York City that spies

on our protagonists—on Sophia and Rob having sex, Jamie filming himself in a bathtub and then autofellating, Severin working over a trust fund client, and Caleb who watches Jamie autofellate from the neighbouring building with his telescope. The film reflexively plays with the border between voyeurism and surveillance, using Caleb figuratively to represent their ideological proximity and overlaps (Zimmer 2015). Throughout the film, Caleb will get physically closer and closer to the Jamies. He follows them everywhere and eventually intervenes to save Jamie from his attempt at suicide. Caleb begins as a figure of voyeurism, pleasurably watching from afar, but his incremental proximity to his objects and eventual intervention also configure him as an agent of surveillance.

| Jamie in the tub: multiple layers of observation | Caleb watching from afar | Caleb watching from a closer distance |

The conflation of voyeurism and surveillance mirrors cinema's innate drive to blur the public and the private. "The subject of sexuality," Damon Young argues, has "arguably always been primary for cinema," contending that cinema itself is a penetrative technology "in two senses: first, in the sense of a literal penetration by the camera into the domestic interior; 'breaking' the 'fourth wall,' it literally enters the space of the domestic. Second, cinema breaches the divide between private and public in its mode of circulation, as a mass medium that it delivers its intimate images *to* a mass public." For Young, cinema is a "*technology of publicity*, which is to say a technology whose mode of operation is to render the private public" (2013, 143). Making the private public has also been a driving force of contemporary surveillance protocols, whose incarnation in the electronic age has increasingly relied on recording

technology. Cinema and surveillance are not proximate, but inextricable (Zimmer 2015). Cinema has helped to reshape and mold private acts and relations into a manageable public entity. *Shortbus*, although positioning itself as a corrective, is no different. It renders public the private and semi-private to correct recent political and social trends deemed harmful and counterproductive to community: homonormativity and AIDS phobia.

My brief comparison of *Descent* and *Shortbus* was meant to demonstrate how the spectre of the AIDS epidemic continues to govern queer sexual representation in the post-epidemic era. Touch becomes sublimated through visual affect (Bogard 1996; Sedgewick 2003), and the precarity of touch in the post-epidemic becomes exacerbated by the rising popularity of barebacking. The utopia of touch becomes the dystopia of touch. We want to touch, but are afraid to touch. You can touch, but only if you are protected. As the physical is supplemented and supplanted by the virtual and digital, anxieties about witnessing touch intensify—seeing people touch can lead to us being touched by those people we see touching. The fear of touch leads to us further regulating touch, but in restricting touch, we come to yearn for it even more.

Mitchell's choice to frame the AIDS epidemic through the trauma of 9/11 is telling of how feelings of insecurity become sublimated through sex: we secure ourselves by making sex safer and more secure. But sex is inextricable from risk and permeability, and it is precisely this paradox TIM seeks undo by embracing sex as a "self-shattering" phenomenon (Bersani [1987] 1989, 1995). Rather than fear touch or let the fear of touch lead to self-imprisonment, such as we see in *Descent*, TIM embraces the risk inherent in touch, poaching but subverting the utopia and optimism we see in Mitchell's *Shortbus* (Paasonen and Morris 2014).

TIM is not just a porn company making a "healthy" profit in TIM's eyes; in TIM's eyes, TIM is porn activism. TIM's videos have a purpose beyond getting guys off: TIM seeks to undo

normativity inherent in safer sex by normalizing barebacking through the very same visual strategies that naturalized the unnatural spectacle and practice of safer sex. TIM's videos are extended invitations that were accepted by a growing number of gay men over the latter half of the new millennium's first decade. Anxieties over the proliferation of barebacking both on and offscreen culminated with the passing of Measure B in 2012—an ordinance that bans the production of pornography without physical latex condoms in Los Angeles County. The failure to regulate touch and take control of the social through the regulation of touch becomes increasingly displaced onto its representation.

It is not surprising that in the new millennium queer theorists attempt to resist the regime of normativity by supplanting queer negativity with negative affectivity (Caserio et al., 2005), recuperating and finding solace in feelings such as shame (Sedgewick 2003; Halperin and Traub 2009), pain (Ahmed, 2004), loss (Love, 2009), failure (Halberstam 2011), depression (Cvetkovich, 2003, 2012), and the cruelty of optimism (Berlant, 2011). TIM rejects negative affectivity in favour of the affect of queer negativity. Bareback pornography brings the frenzy of the visible (Williams [1989] 1999) and the frenzy of touch (Bogard 1996) into unstable proximity, insofar as TIM leverages the affective power of porn and moving images to destabilize normativity by normalizing instability. By removing the condom as a physical barrier, TIM seeks to symbolically liberate gay men from the prison of HIV-phobia and security-complex of marriage, monogamy, and normativity.

Feeling Positive: Case Study) Treasure Island Media

Dawson's 20 Load Weekend (2004)

TIM began producing videos in 1998. Over the subsequent decade and a half the studio evolved from low-budget fringe underground smut producer to community builder, activist

organization, and fully branded propaganda machine. In 2004 the studio released *Dawson's 20 Load Weekend*, which Mark S. Kings (2012) suggests is the most important gay porn film ever made because it marks a crucial turning point for barebacking in gay porn. The video begins with a nude man in a dark room staring out a window overlooking Central Park. Overlaid intertitles read: "Dawson came to New York for a big city gang breeding. He told us he wouldn't be satisfied until he took 20 Loads." The man, still shrouded in darkness, turns around. The film then fades to black—an aura of mystery and anonymity frames the following casual encounters.

Two different introductions to Dawson

From there we fade into the interior of a hotel room. We see the torso and lower half of two nude men shot in medium close-up. The shot cuts off the upper portion of their body, including their head, continuing the theme of anonymity. The man on the right (the bottom) is bent over on all fours, and the man on the left (the top) holds his large uncovered erection with his right hand and his partner's left bum cheek with his left hand. We see him inserting his penis (sans condom) into the man's anus, and then cut to a front angle of the man on the receiving end who is now identified as Dawson in overlaid text. Only after the bottom is penetrated is he identified.

We then cut back to a medium close-up of the scene of penetration as the top (now identified as Mike Cummings) begins to thrust himself in and out of Dawson—first with his hands holding onto and controlling his bottom's bottom and then on the back of Dawson's

shoulders, pinning Dawson on the mattress while Dawson sticks his bum in the air. The performers utter typical porn speak (in English and French)—"you like that big dick?;" "oh yah fuck that hole!"—and along with slurps, heavy breathing, and the sound of Mr. Cummings' testicles slapping up against Dawson are the only things heard in an otherwise silent room.

The videographers are visible, as is the recording apparatus they hold, and audible. They give instructions and provide feedback, not as "directors," but as participants who are commenting on a live scene of action ("holy fuck that's hot man, yeah fuck him good, fuck his ass harder"), "blurring the distinction between participants and witnesses" (Dean 2009, 105) that characterize TIM's amateur style (Scott 2015). The camerawork has all the signs of amateurism: hand-held, shaky, mobile. The lighting is soft, avoiding the antiseptic aesthetic of studio lighting. There are no costumes, minus leather cock rings, and there is no plot or narrative, other than a good-looking muscular white guy coming to New York to have a bunch of strangers ejaculate in him.

Cameraman as witness-participant to the scene of fluid transmission

After a couple of minutes, the video fades to black and then back to Dawson in medium close-up on all fours performing fellatio on someone. The camera pans to the left and reveals a new person who begins to penetrate Dawson anally. The scene continues with this new individual (identified as Roman) penetrating Dawson from behind while Dawson kisses and performs fellatio on Mike Cummings. The scene cuts between shots of Dawson enjoying himself

and close-ups of him being penetrated. Although Mike started the scene, it is Roman who ejaculates first into Dawson. Roman pulls out, ejaculates onto Dawson's sphincter, and then reinserts himself, pushing his exposed semen into Dawson, what Dean calls a "compromise shot" (2009, 131)—"oh yah, push it up in there good," someone is heard saying offscreen. The video then cuts to a shot of Dawson with white semen dripping out of his behind as he slowly turns over. A digital graphic is superimposed, reading "Load Count: 1."

The almost two hour video continues on in this fashion. New men are brought in to fuck and cum in Dawson. The movie consists mostly of alternating medium close-up shots of Dawson being penetrated and a fewer number of long shots that capture the entire scene, including the videographer filming the close-up portions. Most of the video is shot in the same hotel room, but about a quarter is shot in a makeshift sex dungeon at the back of video store —"Friday Night - Dawson goes to a dungeon," reads a transitional intertitle. Dawson, wearing thigh-high leather boots and a leather jockstrap, lies on his back in a leather swing. His legs are spread wide open and his bum hangs off the harness's edge, making his exposed asshole easy to access. The scene is reminiscent of Frank's anal exam in *Taxi*. But while in *Taxi* Frank was being subjected to medical probing, Dawson's probing is in service of disassembling the medical-surveillance apparatus that has since claimed ownership of gay male sexuality.

Several men in different leather attire gather around Dawson and take their turns penetrating and ejaculating into him—a shot of all the semen that has entered and spewed out of Dawson's rectum testifies to the image's evidentiary truths (Gaines 1999). The swing is then replaced with a leather bench. Dawson now lies on his stomach, making no eye contact with the men taking their turns with his sphincter of steel. The camera men stay close to the action, in part because the dungeon is basically a tiny room filled with various contraptions and props. The

sound of their heavy breathing and of the performers' hard swallowing, grunts, and sexually charged commentary rivals the eroticism and intimacy of the action. The way TIM uses sound makes you feel like you are right there in the scene with them. By the end of the dungeon scene, the Load Count totals 14—an intertitle follows and informs us that Dawson took "easily a dozen" loads later that evening at a local sex club.

Rectal exam/probing for truth   Visible evidence   Visual evidence
(recalls *Taxi*'s Frank in stirrups)

The video cuts back to the hotel room the next day, where we see a small group of about six nude men surround the bed and wait to take their turn with Dawson. Dawson begins to take two people at a time. The men alternate between penetrating and being fellated by him. The video continues on in this fashion until the end, with Dawson's official Load Count totaling 23. At no point throughout the video does anyone ever fellate Dawson, and at no point does Dawson penetrate anyone. He is a pure or "total" bottom. No one asks questions about HIV status and no one uses condoms. Dawson himself is HIV-positive—although nowhere does the video stipulate this—but we cannot assume that those who penetrate him are themselves positive. Having HIV-negative tops penetrate HIV-positive bottoms is a common serosorting practice (organizing people with similar serostatus, or arranging sexual activity to minimize risk of infection/transmission), as the risk of the negative top contracting HIV is minimal (Dean 2009), even more so if the HIV-positive individual is on anti-retroviral medication. The performers, positive or negative, assume the risk. Why?

In his controversial and polarizing *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (2009), Tim Dean conducts an insider-ethnographic study of the subculture of barebacking and its representative visual incarnation. [34] Dean argues the resurgence of barebacking among gay men is a response to trends delimiting intimacy by way of the monogamous couple's exclusive right to fuck without condoms. Unprotected sex is the embodied experience and expression of intimacy and is officially sanctioned by a (gay) couple's monogamy. For Dean, monogamy is a self-appropriated prison and disciplining system. Barebacking, conversely, is a lifestyle that embraces what Ulrich Beck termed the "risk society" (1992) and resists monogamy's false security, subverting the reward of intimacy for "self-imprisonment." For some, barebacking is political, a way to subvert homonormative privilege by poaching the legitimated intimacy afforded to monogamous gay couples. Barebacking also targets heterosexual privilege more broadly. If heterosexuals are afforded the luxury of not being demonized if they outright reject condoms or fail to use them outside of a monogamous relationship, then why are gay men pathologized for doing or thinking likewise?

Indeed intimacy is precisely what *Dawson's 20 Load Weekend* attempts to capture, more so than "self-annihilation" via an endless barrage of penises. The video represents a typical pornotopia, a world of abundance, but rather than the abundance of sex, it is the abundance of intimacy the video attempt to capture and transmit to its viewers via the abundance of semen— Dawson literally takes in so much ejaculate it begins to fall out of him. The sounds of sex and of the men enjoying each other's bodies seem to emanate naturally from within and speak a truth not found in typical commercial offerings. The moans aren't as over the top; they aren't as

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[34] Although the book was published in 2009, Dean conducted ongoing research and wrote the book between 2000 and 2005. It took four years to be published (Dean 2015).

rehearsed as they are, or at least seem to feel, in most porn videos. The men, in fact, often speak softly and whisper to each other, emanating feelings of proximity that bolster the activity's intimacy. The tight framing and videographers' propinquity leave little space for contemplation, immersing viewers in the action.

The bodies themselves, in comparison to commercial porn stars, read as real: they are generally unadorned, save for the occasional tattoo or piercing, and unencumbered by gym and diet regiment, appearing natural rather than manicured—although a combination of tattoos, piercings, and facial and body hair are themselves adornments of a particular "tribal masculinity." TIM leverages the reality effect and an aesthetic of amateurism in service of evidencing the intimacy and closeness that exists between Dawson and his various partners. "There are no actors in these films, just participants," according to Dean (2009, 105). These videos claim to "present" sex, rather than "represent" it.

But why not use condoms? Speaking personally, I find the video incredibly erotic. I would even argue that if the performers were using condoms the video wouldn't lose any of its raunchy appeal. Although the moment where the top ejaculates and then reinserts his erection into Dawson is supposed to be the "money shot," or "reverse money shot" (Dean 2009, 195)—the selling point of this bareback video—for me, it is everything but the money shot that is the most appealing. It is the way the sex is shot and had (or performed) that I find to be the most alluring, and new research suggests I may not be the only person who consumes bareback pornography for reasons other than the condom's absence (Galos et al. 2014).

A noticeable aesthetic difference divides bareback and safer-sex pornography: bareback porn is almost always shot with an amateur aesthetic and under the production banner of "amateurism," and lacks a narrative structure. Safer sex is often, although not always, a feature

of narrative pornography and tends to be professionally shot with higher production values. These aesthetic and production differences lead to very different stylistic representations of sex: bareback porn feels as though the performers are *having* sex, while safer sex porn feels as though the performers are *performing* sex. Bareback porn *feel*s more real because of how the sex is shot and performed, while safer-sex porn seems less real for the exact same reasons. The overall aesthetic design bolsters, if not *determines*, the images' eroticism, whereby the spectacle of skin-on-skin contact becomes the displaced affect of its mode of production. The performative utterances the condom and its absence make are fortified and filtered through their respective productions. The condom, or more accurately its absence, comes to bear the burden of the real.

Dean argues that "bareback sex seems to call for witnesses and thus to generate documentary evidence, as well as communal bonds," suggesting "that barebackers have been breeding not only a virus but also a way of life" (2009, 104). Indeed Hansen, Needham, and Nichols ([1986] 1991) have, as Van Doorn (2010) observes, drawn "comparisons between the aesthetic and discursive aspects of pornography and ethnography, arguing that pornography's careful visual analysis of bodies and pleasures relies on a 'documentary impulse' shared by the ethnographic film's 'will to knowledge' about the reality of human relations" (416). TIM exploits the aesthetics of documentary to buttress an aura of authenticity (Lee 2014), perverting in the process the very idea the home movies (Zimmerman 1995).[35]

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[35] According to Tim Dean, Paul Morris, TIM's founder and owner, is not only a documentary filmmaker, but also in some cases a wedding videographer. Morris "reports receiving requests from ordinary men who wish to become infected with HIV on camera" (2009 128), writes Dean, contending that "the apparently mind-boggling request for a photographic or video record of

"Breeding" (also known as "seeding") refers to ejaculating into someone's rectum. The term eroticizes heteronormative language and conscientiously co-opts and perverts a hetero-specific phenomenon as a way to appropriate the ultimate form of sanctioned intimacy: procreation.[36] In the case of TIM and *Dawson's 20 Load Weekend*, Dawson is being "bred," but since he is already HIV-positive he is not being seroconverted; rather, the symbolic breeding we bear witness to is that of a new culture and tangentially a new identity. At the time of the film's 2004 release, to actively bareback was to reject a normative identity and the regimented practices on which that identity is predicated (Dean 2009). Breeding is not necessarily about breeding new HIV-positive bodies or consciously spreading HIV/AIDS; rather, it is about breeding a new sociality.

Breeding poaches and perverts the intimacy ascribed to the family, subverting in the process the power and privileges afforded to genetic relations therein. Breeding seeks to dislodge the family as a figurative disciplining institution and image that exerts control over gay male sexuality and culture vis-à-vis sexual regulation—as it does heterosexuals. Dawson is breeding a new family, a new community that is symbolically linked together through his rectal womb. Whether anyone has been seroconverted or not they are all symbolically connected through "cultural genetics," through symbolic procreative praxis.

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one's seroconversion (or infection) could be regarded in light of the wholly conventional desire for wedding photographs or a digital recording of one's nuptials" (2009, 129).

[36] To breed someone in gay male culture, though, does not necessarily mean to seroconvert someone, or pass on "the gift" of HIV. Although the term carries procreative connotations, breeding is often used as a shorthand umbrella for barebacking, regardless of the intents or specificities.

TIM isn't interested in just getting people off. TIM wants to transform gay culture through his representations (Morris 1998, 2011). Dawson becomes not so much an object to be passed around but the symbolic bearer of community. Inside him they are one: together, the same, no different. Dawson becomes a symbolic maternal figure and his partners, symbolic paternal figures. The men "plant their seed" in his perverted womb, and his rectum, in turn, becomes a vaginal opening through which gay culture can be reborn. Considering bareback pornography has proliferated and barebacking has evolved from a niche subculture into a casual practice that transcends identity (Harvey 2011) since the film's 2004 release, it seems TIM's optimism about transforming gay male communal relations through porn wasn't entirely wishful thinking.

In a recent printed conversation in *GLQ* between Susanna Paasonen and Morris (2014), the two explore the dynamics of bareback pornography as it intersects current and historical queer visual-cultural politics. Summarizing the conversation, Paasonen states:

TIM's films build, and build on, a utopian sensibility of transparency, community, abundance, energy, and intensity within the bareback subculture. TIM's utopian sensibility—its aesthetics and politics—are in explicit conflict with the utopia of monogamous life partnership, as well as with the pornotopias catered by other gay porn companies, such as the San Francisco-based Titan Men, Raging Stallion Studios, and Colt Studio. *One person's or group's utopia is—by necessity—another's dystopia*; and one person's sense of intensity and authenticity is likely to leave another one cold, or even disgusted. The appeal of porn is nevertheless tied to its promise of utopian potentiality—a sense of possibility—that operates through and in the bodies of the people producing and consuming it (237; emphasis mine).

Dawson's 20 Load Weekend is a utopian film. It's a film that wants to affect its viewers, to instil feelings and inspire. The film wants to metaphorically "breed" its viewer, to plant its seed in its consumer. There are a "cluster of promises" embedded within its utopian sensibility that transcend and go beyond the practice's heightened visceral sensations—promises that undermine those metaphysically embodied by the condom (Ashford 2015).

Barebacking opposes both hetero- and homonormativity, which is why, according to Dean, "the gay community is so reluctant to talk openly about barebacking: it jeopardizes public acceptance of homosexuality and represents astonishingly bad PR" (2009, 9). This is precisely why the Retro AIDS cycle can discuss AIDS but only through a historical lens: to openly acknowledge gay men have returned to the practice that brought about the AIDS epidemic would be "astonishingly bad PR." Because barebacking challenges the stability of an identity on which a normative socio-political system relies, bareback porn is in effect the only space where barebacking or being HIV-positive for that matter is not only acknowledged, but also affirmed. Jeffrey Escoffier maintains that "bareback subculture depends on video pornography for its own self-representation" (2011, 135). But barebacking is no longer a subcultural practice that demands firm commitment: barebacking is now a casual practice (Harvey 2011). Barebacking no longer comprises the other side of the safer-sex binary; instead, it falls somewhere along a condom use gradient spectrum. And it is precisely because barebacking is no longer a contained phenomenon that measures such as Measure B have been taken to contain its discursive spread.

Measure B: Stopping the Spread

In 2012 the county of Los Angeles passed Measure B, an ordinance that mandated condom use in all commercial porn. The law was the brainchild of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (henceforth AHF), a nonprofit Los Angeles based HIV prevention organization

started by Michael Weinstein in 1987, and was promoted under the rubric of protecting workers'

rights to not be exposed to hazardous material. Yet as gay male porn performer and writer

Conner Habib (2014) notes, "Despite hundreds of thousands of HIV diagnoses between 2005 and

2014 in the general population, there have been zero demonstrable on-set HIV transmissions in

that period." Indeed performers and industry insiders in both the straight and gay porn industry

have argued that the law is ineffective and may even lead to greater health issues (Cooper 2012;

Schwyzer 2012; Taormino 2012). Why then has the state of California put in such diligent efforts

to force ineffective protocols that seem largely symbolic?

It is painfully obvious that lawmakers are working under a remedial media effects

model—monkey see condom, monkey use condom—that is supposed to substitute for better sex

education; something notorious anti-porn feminist Gail Dines stated quite clearly in her glowing

support for the measure in the *The Guardian*, arguing that pornography is a "public health

risk…to us all, because we now have a generation of boys (and, to a lesser extent, girls) being

groomed to believe that hot sex is sex without a condom" (2012). Measure B is a desperate

overreaction to failed condom policies and safer-sex advocacy. Rather than revise an abstinence-

only sex education policy (in America), the hope is that if people see only sex with condoms they

too will use condoms, thus diminishing the desire to have unprotected sex. Problem solved. It is

the affective powers of porn that lawmakers fear, and yet it is porn's didactic and mimetic

powers they are simultaneously attempting to leverage in service of a stealth visual healthcare

campaign. Measure B is not only tantamount to (condom) surveillance, but also an attempt to use

material that has traditionally challenged institutional authority to now serve institutional

authority.

Although Measure B (and its proposed state-wide initiative AB 1576) affects the heterosexual porn industry far more than the gay porn industry, the social ramifications for the gay porn industry run far deeper and carry far heavier and greater consequences. Although some have argued that barebacking is no different than unprotected heterosexual intercourse (King 2013), conflating the two practices and their representation ignores the cultural and biological differences between the two acts, their respective risks, and the taboo and fetishistic aspects of unprotected sex and HIV/AIDS in the gay male community. Different contexts carry different erotic currents. Barebacking is not a taboo in straight culture, but it is in gay culture, and AIDS or the possibility of transmitting AIDS is not fetishized in straight porn and culture as it is in gay porn and culture (Dean 2009, 2015; Scott 2015). Gay men will approach, engage, and interpret images of two or more men having unprotected sex differently than heterosexuals will of unprotected straight sex.

Countering the AHF's charge that this is a public health issue and not a form of censorship, Christopher A. Ramos writes, "Measure B denies individuals the ability to perform, record, and disseminate a fundamental aspect of their lives—indeed, their identities" (2013, 1866). But Ramos contends that Measure B also denies people the ability to engage materially with something that "helps shape imaginations" (2013, 1855). Referencing Muñoz's (2009) work on queer utopia, Ramos contends that "'there is a performance of futurity embedded in the aesthetic' of bareback pornography." For Ramos, "The futurity within bareback pornography is a public mandate that '[w]e must dream and enact . . . other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds'" (2013, 1855), going as far as to argue that "third party consumers receive the product and share in its 'utopian kernel.'" (2013, 1856). It is ultimately that "utopian kernel" the AHF wants to stop from being planted. In the same way that liberal gay and lesbian

rights activists co-opted mainstream and queer representation (teen coming out film) to plant a

normative "utopian kernel" that would flourish with time, the AHF is now attempting to stop

companies like TIM from, to use an infamous 2004 title from TIM that became its own series

(2005, 2008, 2013), "*Plantin' Seeds*."

Dean maintains that "the assumption that pornography conditions the behaviour of its

viewer, whether for better or for worse, fails to explain the emergence of bareback subculture,

since if gay men had been conditioned by gay porn during the '90s, then they never would have

invented barebacking" (2009, 118). Indeed, there is little evidence that watching bareback porn

leads to increases in risky behaviour (Rosser 2012, 2013; Galos 2013; Mowlabocus, Harbottle

and Witzel 2013; Nelson 2014). So then why institute mandatory condom usage? It's because

Measure B is a *social prophylaxis*: it is an attempt to quarantine and nullify risky behaviour at a

distance via its representation. Measure B is a reaction to barebacking's proliferation as a casual

practice, hoping that if it can block bareback porn's "spreadability" (Jenkins, Ford and Green

2013), it can also impede the practices it represents. Bareback porn is a scapegoat for

barebacking, and Measure B (and AB 1576) is an attempt to block the affective transfers

between bodies and screens (Paasonen 2011)—an attempt to stop barebacking's "seed" from

taking root and its cluster of promises from flourishing.

In gay cultural politics, barebacking is the socio-political dividing line between

assimilation and anti-sociality and between responsible citizenship and reckless narcissism

(Ashford 2010, 2015), which is perhaps why the AHF has pursued these content-based forms of

censorship so relentlessly—and recklessly. But David Oscar Harvey, countering the rhetorical

formations that "barebacking celebrates the rectum as the grave *tout court*" (Bersani 2011, 108),

argues instead that barebacking actually has more to do with "discourses [that] relate to life"

(2011, 158). "The act of barebacking far from assures death," writes Harvey, observing that "HIV transmission may not occur and, even if it does, the acquisition of HIV is no longer a death sentence" (2011, 158). Indeed, retroviral medication and chemical prophylaxes (PrEP/PEP) have altered gay men's attitudes toward condom use and along with it, the gay male porn industry itself.

Several bareback studios such as Jake Cruise try to present themselves as responsible pornographers by posting "warning labels" on their products in the form of an introductory intertitle, which inform viewers that all performers have been tested for STDs and advise them *not* to mimic what they see in their personal lives—"*I want to urge everyone to always practice safe sex in their personal lives. All of my movies are meant to be entertaining and not instructional. In other words, 'don't do this at home!'*" (http://jakecruise.com/general/about.php). Jake Cruise's intertitle makes an appeal to fantasy as a way to bypass its investment in reality. But as with *Cruising*, posting a five second disclaimer that tries to bypass its own mimetic implications amounts to little more than a lazy attempt to wash one's hands clean of responsibility. The opening intertitle functions similarly to the disclaimer added to *Cruising*'s beginning, which in this context also creates an odd and eerie correlation between sex and death. The warning attempts to circumscribe the inextricable ethnography, didacticism, and visceral affect the video traffics and is entirely dependent upon.

Jake Cruise's intro intertitle warning against mimicking…the very behaviour it eroticizes

Companies such as Sean Cody, College Dudes, Corbin Fisher, and Lucas Entertainment have "gone bareback," or "been converted," joining a growing list of bareback porn companies such as Dark Alley Media, Raw Fuck Club, Jake Cruise, Maverick Men, and of course TIM. Major players such as RRS, Men.com, Colt Studios, Hot House, Falcon Studios, Titan Men, and Cocky Boys remain safer sex only, but most of those studios have been around since the epidemic era or were started in the late 90s in post-epidemic era. Studios from before the Web 2.0 boom are far more likely to remain committed to representing and tacitly promoting safer sex, entrenched in feelings of communal responsibility. But a handful of studios have begun to challenge the bareback/safer-sex binary[37], reflecting the fluidity of condom use among gay men in physical reality. Companies such TIM Tales (different than TIM), Bel Ami, Chaos Men, Randy Blue, and Manhandled offer both safe and bareback scenes and gay male porn stars such as Antonio Biaggi and Adam Russo transgress the condom divide, performing with and without condoms.

Measure B (and AB 1576) is not just about stopping studios such as TIM from planting their seeds in their viewers; it's also about stopping safer-sex studios from converting to bareback and porn companies from representing condom use as something negotiable and contextual. Barebacking is no longer a death sentence or committed practice, yet gay male culture remains entrenched in an antagonistic serodiscordant relationship (which refers to a mixed-status relationship comprised of one partner who is HIV-positive and one partner who is HIV-negative). Considering Truvada has been proven to significantly reduce the possibility of transmitting HIV (Boseley 2014, 2015; Brady 2015) and advancements in anti-retroviral therapy

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[37] Although as Stuart Scott (2015) notes, TIM has occasionally featured the condom in their videos, such as in 2004's *Plantin' Seed*.

(ART) have succeeded in reducing viral loads to the point where HIV cannot be transferred (Cairns 2014)—what's known as having a "zero" or "undetectable" viral load—rather than subside, socio-political discord over safer-sex practices has only intensified with the introduction of chemical prophylaxes. Why?

<u>The Truvada Revolution: Poz vs. Neg</u>

Two conversation pieces put together by King reveal the degree to which barebacking and HIV continue to divide the gay community. One article is titled "Ten Things HIV-Positive Guys Want Negative Guys to Know" (2014b) and the other, "Get Ready for Ten Things HIV-Negative Guys Really Need Positive Guys to Hear" (2014a). The positive article features an image of the backside of a man's neck sporting a red ribbon with a plus sign in the centre of the ribbon's loop. The word HIV is located above the ribbon, and the phrase "on this day my new life began" with the numbers 12.30.09 tattooed on the back of the man's neck. The HIV-negative article is listed under the thematic banner "Viral Divide" and features two white male model types sensually embracing in front of a luminous white backdrop.

QUEERTY (June 28, 2014)   QUEERTY (May 23, 2014)

These contrasting images crystallize the socio-political divide that falls along a serodiscordant divide. On the right, the white backdrop signifies cleanliness and health, with the two typical magazine models reaffirming the degree to which normative gay identity has been subsumed by consumerism (Dean 2009). On the left, we see a man who has inscribed his sero-discovery date onto his skin. December 30th 2009 is his new birthday: the day he was reborn. Rather than lament his HIV-positive status, the individual in the image on the left has chosen to celebrate his seroconversion as a new identity. Indeed, gay identity, which is healthy, clean, and responsible, has been recently challenged by a growing trend within a broad constellation of HIV destigmatization campaigns that can colloquially be referred to as "poz pride." Unofficially, being HIV-positive is something one should lament, not celebrate, and ongoing attempts to destigmatize those with HIV and bridge the serodiscordant divide have led to some very heated public debates over safer-sex practices and shame.

In "Gay-on-Gay Shaming: The New HIV War" (2014a), AIDS activist Peter Staley discusses the continued unwillingness of normative gay culture and HIV-negative individuals to treat HIV-positive gay men as equal. In stark contrast, Mark Adnum (2013) has written about how militant AIDS activism has begun to border on bullying, silencing and shaming the majority for putting in an effort to stay HIV-negative. In an earlier piece, Staley (2013b) made the controversial argument that "you can't have safer oral sex with a 'negative' guy because you can never know for certain that he is in fact negative." Adnum (2014) responded by writing, "I think it's curious, since if HIV prevention is the goal of those who claim that stigma is causing new infections, then why stack stigma on top of stigma?" Marc-André Leblanc (2013) echoes Staley's call for those who are HIV-negative to "fuck poz guys!" arguing "that negative guys who don't always use condoms should seriously consider limiting that condomless sex to poz

guys who have an undetectable viral load." Medication has subverted typical hierarchical configurations: it is HIV-negative gay men who are now less trustworthy and quite possibly less desirable partners than those who are HIV-positive. This is where the conversation over Truvada becomes a form of tacit HIV-shaming.

The epithets "Truvada Whore" and "Condom Nazi" speak to how the sero-divide has transferred over to the debates about Truvada. The term "Truvada Whore" comes from a short article written by David Duran (2012) for *The Huffington Post*. Duran suggests Truvada may lead to more gay men becoming infected with HIV because it can lead to more risky behaviour and greater levels of promiscuity. Since the article's publication, Duran has published a supplementary piece backtracking on his initial observations (2014a). The term, however, remains in circulation but has been appropriated by gay men on Truvada as a way to resist its shaming connotations (Glazek 2014). San Francisco AIDS activist and counselor Adam Zeboski has even manufactured and sold #TruvadaWhore t-shirts as a way to destigmatize Truvada and raise funds for charity (Higbee 2014). Although a greater number of gay men are taking Truvada and coming out of the "Truvada closet" (Weiner 2014; King 2015), the perception that Truvada is synonymous with promiscuity and a commitment to unprotected sex remains—no doubt aided by Michael Weinstein, the director for the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (the grouped that petitioned for Measure B), publically declaring Truvada a "party drug" (AP 2014; Stern 2014).

Truvada complicates shaming the behavior that divides the good responsible gay citizen from the bad, reckless, narcissistic homosexual (Addison 2014). Longtime AIDS activist and liberal-normative figurehead Larry Kramer has gone so far to publically condemn those taking Truvada. "'There's something to me cowardly about taking Truvada instead of using a condom. You're taking a drug that is poison to you, and it has lessened your energy to fight, to get

involved, to do anything',"Kramer tells Patrick Healy (2014). Although devastating, AIDS also galvanized and politicized queer people; it gave them a reason to fight for something more than just the right to fuck each other. In Kramer's eyes, Truvada threatens to make queer people, specifically gay men, complacent—too busy fucking to care about anything else. The return to a culture of promiscuity may effectively undo active commitment to rights-based politics, which are grounded in a commitment to normativity and safer-sex, because promiscuity via barebacking undoes normativity. Unsurprisingly, "Mr. Kramer badly wants younger people to take up protest politics, and he hopes the new movie [*The Normal Heart*] will inspire them" (Healy 2014).

Problems arise when discussing barebacking in relation to an HIV-positive identity. While being HIV-positive discursively overlaps with barebacking, barebacking does not entail being or wanting to become HIV-positive and is as much a casual practice (Harvey 2011) as it is an identity (Dean 2009; Blas 2012; Ashford 2015). Gay men in committed relationships "bareback," as do those who prefer to have sex without protection or occasionally forego condom use by choice or by accident.[38] Truvada reveals the binary erected and maintained by the

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[38] There are websites that cater to those who identify as barebackers, such as *BarebackRT.com*, *Bareback.com*, and *Bareback Gay Dating*, but their use is not limited to those who are HIV-positive or wish to seroconvert. Men on dating/hookup websites and mobile applications will identify themselves as barebackers ("bb only;" BBJock4U) or individuals who never practice safer sex ("skin-to-skin only;" "no condoms"), as will those who only practice safer-sex ("no bb;" "safe only"). But some men will also self-identify as HIV-positive *or* negative by attaching a plus or minus sign next to their name (BBJock4U [+]; BBJock4U [-]), and a growing number will affirm their commitment to breaking down the sero-divide by adding an equal sign

condom as imaginary and in service of protecting something more than just the bodies of the collective gay male population. The stigma attached to Truvada is meant to ensure the utopic and dystopic cluster of promises within never come into fruition. Curiously, Paul Morris has described his porn as destigmatizing work, too.

In an interview for *LTASEX,* Morris (2011) tells Jerome Stuart Nichols that lately he's "been motivated to produce pornography to directly address the appalling phenomenon of the HIV 'closet'." Morris reminds us that "it took several generations for the doors of the original gay 'closet' to be even partially opened," and argues that "the HIV closet has simply taken its place." The problem boils down to stigma. "So long as people think of people who are poz as victims, heros, pariahs—or as being ill—the closet endures. In the developed world, being poz isn't an illness, it's simply a fact." But stigma endures because of how barebacking and AIDS intersect the past—because of the AIDS epidemic's lingering ghost.

"HIV continues to be stigmatized in the US, often by middle-aged gay men who are habituated to living in a world of fear and tragedy and refuse to believe that the crisis is truly over," Morris bluntly states, arguing that "to a great extent, the current gay mindset surrounding HIV is a result of a generation of men living with PTSD." Moving beyond the ineffableness of trauma, TIM's videos see themselves as sexual therapy in service of helping gay men and gay male culture recover from the trauma of the AIDS epidemic. It's not the condom with which Morris has a problem, per se, but what the condom represents: division. And TIM's goal is to channel the past through its videos as a way to make AIDS-phobia a thing of the past. TIM's

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(BBJock4U [=]), meaning that they date/sleep with those who are HIV-positive and negative. Barebacking and sero-statuses overlap in complex ways that defy easy categorization, which is why barebacking is often framed as queer praxis.

videos are inextricable from the past (Dean 2011; Scott 2015). But they don't just visualize the past; they are also reincarnations of the past: they are the incarnation of the return of the repressed.

Uncanny Archives: The Ghost of the Past Returns

"The condom is built into barebacking" (2015, 222), writes Stuart Scott, arguing that "the memory of the condom appears also to extend backwards in that it exists symbolically when and where it never existed physically": Gay Liberation. "Gay pornography can be categorised into three broad, overlapping genres and time periods," Scott observes: "in reverse chronological order, they are Bareback, Condom and Pre-condom," arguing that "it is this pre-condom, prelapsarian state that much bareback pornography harks back to" (2015, 220): the utopia of unfettered sex. There was no "bareback" before the AIDS epidemic. The condom instantiated a break in time (pre-condom/condom) as well as the beginning of queer: barebacking ruptures the queer-time continuum.

HIV "viscerally connects a body in the present to a period—and, indeed, a set of socio-sexual relations—in the historical elsewhere" (2011, 93), argues Dean, and suggests that the "rhetoric of haunting" offers us "another vocabulary for describing how some things survive their ostensible death and certain pasts return in the future" (2011, 92). Morris wants to liberate us from the tyranny of the condom by visualizing *and* actualizing in the here and now the cluster of promises contained within the memory of Gay Liberation but contained by the condom. Through the spectacle of barebacking, TIM's videos seek to return us to a period before identity had solidified around safer-sex, AIDS-phobia, and a commitment to heteromimesis—to a time before gay men became divided from each other.

TIM creates "a visual archive of its actions," according to Dean (2009, 104), calling TIM "visual ethnography" and Paul Morris an" amateur anthropologist" (2009, 119). I, however, would argue TIM is visual *auto*ethnography and Morris an autoethnographer. TIM's videos are thus uncanny autoethnographies and its library an uncanny archive. TIM's videos not only collapse past, present, and future, but are also archival journeys through the figurative image double that binds queer self-hood to "larger social formations and historical processes" (Russell 1999, 276). TIM's videos are pre-condom porn filtered through the residual lens of trauma, becoming a "vehicle and a strategy for challenging imposed forms of identity" (Russell 1999, 276). They are familiar and unfamiliar; they inspire dread and revolt, in both senses of the word, yet they also captivate and transfix our gaze.

But TIM is more than just an archive, though. TIM is the fusion of pornography as heritage (Waugh 1996) and symbolic queer lineage via the materiality of AIDS. According to Morris, "TIM is two things, basically. We're developing a living archive of real male sexual experience. And we're a laboratory that performs experiments that the men involved in our community propose. You could say that we're a genetic *laboratory exploring the vital sexual symbiosis of human and viral DNA*" (2014, 217). The videos are a "ritual summoning of ghosts" (Dean 2009, 143), reviving the past by forging a lineage through the sharing of semen captured on video, whose material and immaterial heritage stretches beyond the AIDS epidemic to Gay Liberation. Images and symbolic queer DNA converge, becoming one through the actual and symbolic transmission of HIV (Scott 2015). "Breeding" and "seeding" strategically conflate barebacking and the HIV virus, whereby the former symbolically reproduces a subversive double through the latter.

Bareback porn is a metaphoric cloning technology (Stacey 2010) that seeks to unravel neat patters of identity and the privilege afforded to them therein by symbolically converting viewers into anti-normative replicants. According to Morris:

The issue here would be one of becoming gay, and queer, as a process where seropositive status links with resistance and viral contagion replaces hereditary production. In other words, forms of queer breeding do not reproduce the species but a sexual subculture based on alliance. The notion of queer kinship created through breeding and seeding involves a sexual and communal utopia that is detached from what Lee Edelman calls reproductive futurism: the promise of and commitment to a better future, as encapsulated in the figure of the Child (Morris 2014, 220).

In repudiating reproductive futurity, barebacking becomes an alternative form of reproduction: replication. For Morris, "The information that's transmitted through queer sex involves the creation of the self…Queers replicate through social, sexual, and creative promiscuity. We don't reproduce, we replicate" (2014, 229); and as J. P. Telotte reminds us, replicants frequently revolt "against their shallow, servile status" ([1982] 1997, 156): TIM is the revolt of the revolting double (Jenzen 2011).

The double, as Mladen Dolar reminds us, is a twisted self-other who "arranges things so that they turn out badly" and realizes "hidden or repressed desires" for things one "would never dare to do" (1991, 11). Although preceding safer sex, barebacking was invented and simultaneously repressed by safer sex, becoming a rogue doppelgänger subculture that has haunted a normative one from within the moment of its very inception. This perhaps explains why the reaction to bareback porn and Truvada has been so emotionally charged. Although bareback porn may not compel us to bareback, it teases and seduces us with fantasies of life

without restraint or consequences (Dean 2015). They are images that force us to realize our "repressed desires" for things we "would never dare to do." TIM is manifestly gothic media: metaphysically haunted spaces populated by perverse doubles who have returned from their repression to undermine those who deemed them a threat and repressed them in the first place.

The condom continues to metaphysically maintain those with HIV as ghostly subjects: there, but not there. "Culturally unaccounted for or misrecognized by anachronistic characterizations, we the HIV-positive experience ourselves as befuddled, somehow off, and ghostly," confesses Harvey (2013). "Recognition of one's selfhood is often conferred through identifications with the other, with community. Lacking this dialectic of conferred similitude, the subject is made to feel disjointed, alone, and even abject" (Harvey 2013). Despite bareback pornography's onscenity, HIV-positive gay men remain ghostly because they are still left offscreen. There remains a poverty of HIV-positive representations in both mainstream and queer media that reflects daily life as an HIV-positive subject, leaving those with HIV with little more than bareback pornography to validate their existence. And yet even with bareback pornography, HIV and the HIV-positive subject are there only as traces. HIV status is rarely openly discussed, if ever, often relocating the identity of the virus to the spectacle of semen, which may not contain HIV, and if it does, may not be active because of its exposure to the elements (Scott 2015). Even in bareback porn the HIV-positive subject is only able to identify with another spectre.

AIDS remains the psychic trauma we so diligently try to unremember, and as Harvey reminds us, "like trauma, ghosts are a temporal hiccup, something grounded in the past that recurs in the present due to a lack of resolution" (2013). The AIDS crisis has not been resolved, but its return from its repression through barebacking and bareback porn opens the possibility of

resolving it properly. As Scott reminds us, "To insert oneself into a viral lineage does not necessarily extricate oneself from the influences and, indeed, interruptions of other persistent historical traumas," arguing that "the memory of the condom carries on carrying out its prophylactic function by denying the contemporaneous replication of pre-condom sex" (Scott 2015, 222). Only when the condom has disappeared will barebacking dissipate. Only when the past has fully remerged with present can we move toward a future free of statuses and divisions—symbolic, physical, or otherwise.

For many, to bareback is to embrace queer futurity as an "event on the horizon" (Muñoz 2009) toward which we orient ourselves toward (Ashford 2015). "Barebacking," argues Matthew Halse, "has shifted the parameters of what it means to be queer" (2012, 26), in part because "barebacking epitomizes promiscuous sex" (Dean 2015)—concerns about Truvada by the liberal-normative left aren't entirely unfounded and unwarranted. For Halse, "Barebacking, breeding, and, more generally, HIV, have simultaneously become that which creates the alternative sexualities upon which queerness is predicated and become that which is feared and thus sexually constraining" (2012, 25). Morris argues that "we [TIM] do what the web is supposed to do: we connect communities of identical desire around the world" (2014, 217). To which Paasonen responds, "The potential contagions experienced by porn viewers can be seen as loops of intensity where bodily boundaries of safety are negotiated with notions of pleasure and disgust, as images and sounds come close, and perhaps resonate. The sense of contagion has to do with being touched or impressed in particular ways: something has managed to stick" (2014, 218). It is precisely the threat of contagion and resonance Measure B and Truvada-shaming seek to prevent and hinder.

TIM sees itself as sousveillance, as a resistant and defiant look back from below at those above, whose videos brilliantly converge the literal and figurative meanings of "viral marketing:" the studio offers everything from duffle bags to Christmas ornaments stamped with the studio's insignia—"'Tis the Season to Be Breeding." But if TIM is sousveillance, and if sousveillance is inextricable from surveillance, then TIM is also a disciplinary apparatus, one that is too in service of molding identity—even if it sees itself as doing the exact opposite. If we think of safer sex as a form of (socio-political) branding, then TIM is a doppelgänger brand, a "family of disparaging images and meanings about a brand that circulate throughout culture…[that] can undermine the perceived authenticity of an emotional-branding story…"(Thompson, Rindfleisch, Arsel 2006)—like those associated with safer-sex porn and (teen) coming out narratives. TIM is the evil double of safer-sex videos from the late 80s and early 90s. TIM is condom pornography's evil branded double, becoming the unofficial spokesperson and ambassador for barebackers and even those with HIV.[39] Unsurprisingly, barebackers themselves have also embraced branding as a subversive strategy.

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[39] As a way to claim allegiance to those continually repressed by the HIV-closet, Morris has provocatively gone as far as to argue that "a gay man who doesn't have a virus in his blood is no longer a complete gay man. Without the sense of separateness the virus enables, he lacks entirety and becomes all too easily a social ancillary to heterosexuality and straight society" (2014, 218). Although a bit extreme, we should understand Morris's proclamation as a symbolic call to break down the division enacted by the AIDS epidemic. Even though on the surface he seems to be replicating the serodiscordant divide, Morris seeks to re-appropriate the implied hierarchy as a way to subvert the shame attached to the HIV virus, which upholds an implicitly normative gay

Branded TIM items available for
purchase on TIM's website
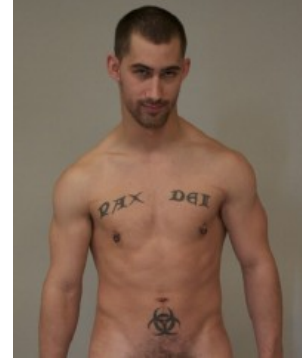
The barebacker's brand:
TIM performer Ethan Wolfe

Some committed barebackers have opted to brand themselves with a biohazard as a way to re-appropriate its negative connotations (similar to #TruvadaWhore) and signify their commitment to an anti-normative lifestyle, specifically a culture of breeding. The biohazard symbol is the condom's perverse double, subverting "the symbol's traditional prophylactic connotations…to signify an intentional disavowal of safety" (Halse 2012, 19). The biohazard symbol is an affective symbol. Rather than signify distance it signifies proximity and intimacy: touch (me), rather than don't touch (me). "As we justifiably rail against the transmission of a virus that haunts us still," writes Halse, it is "only by imagining the conditions of the biohazard, only by imagining a *place* for barebacking in the panoply of queer sexual possibility…does queer sexuality come into being" (2015, 23). It is anxiety over this coming into being we see coming into the foreground of queer representation at the tail end of the millennium's first decade.

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identity. HIV symbolically subverts normative genetic narratives of being "born this way," acknowledging queerness as a form of "becoming" (Morris and Paasonen 2014, 218-219).

Feeling Negative: Production Wars

From Condom to Bareback: Lucas Entertainment

In the new millennium, explicit sex returned to narrative cinema. Hard core art house film was mostly a European phenomenon, although films like Mitchell's *Shortbus*, Larry Clark's (banned) *Ken Park* (2002), Vincent Gallo's *Brown Bunny* (2003), and Travis Mathews *I Want Your Love* (initially a short film released in 2010 and then a feature length released in 2012) ensured that American cinema wasn't left out of the trend. While narrative fictions were exploring the boundary between art-house sex and pornography, *Focus/Refocus* along with several other commercial studio productions were doing likewise but from the other side of divide. Narrative fiction filmmakers looked to explicit sex to explore the limits of storytelling, sexuality and subjectivity, and the affective potentials of cinematic form (Downing 2004; Williams 2008; 2014; Lewis 2009; Barker 2013). Returning to their porn chic roots, commercial studio productions turned to higher production values, extended storytelling, character development, and cinematic aesthetics. Hoping to close the gap between porn and film, porn makers adopted cinematic strategies to bring back viewers they were losing to free amateur content (XTube), "professional amateur" (ProAm) (Sean Cody, Corbin Fisher) porn, and bareback studio productions (TIM). Throughout the millennium's first decade, a battle over the control of the pornographic gaze emerged within the gay porn industry.

In addition to facilitating the "do-it-yourself"/amateur porn revolution, the democratizing capabilities of digital technology allowed a new generation of ambitious tech-savvy entrepreneurs to start their own porn companies (McNair 2002; Attwood 2007; Jacob 2007; Hardy 2008; Paasonen 2010, 2011). Online studios such as Sean Cody and Corbin Fisher tended to adopt an amateur aesthetic and favour shooting individual scenes rather than entire movies. By

forgoing a narrative structure, these studios were able to cut production costs to a bare minimum. And by selling their content over the internet, they were able to sell subscriptions to their online repositories, giving subscribers access to all their videos for a weekly, monthly, or yearly fee. "Pre-digital" studios such as RSS and Falcon continued to sell their products as physical copies on VHS, DVDs, and later Blu Ray, using narrative as a way to string together a standardized four or six sex scenes to sell a discreet product. Digital studios embraced a "compilation format," suturing together scenes according to content or theme rather than a storyline.

The demand for amateur and ProAm content presented the non-digital commercial gay porn industry with some challenges—challenges that were only exacerbated by the demand for porn without condoms. Shooting paid professional models with an amateur aesthetic became a lucrative enterprise, satisfying people's desire for something real but with better production values than free amateur content. Bareback companies such as TIM capitalized on this trend, selling professionally produced porn that mimicked the home-made ones one would find on amateur-centred platforms such as Xtube (Lee 2014). Realism became defined by both aesthetic choices *and* a lack of a central organizing plot. Indeed, bareback studios tend to adopt amateur aesthetics and reject both the condom and narrative, as narrative is seen as the concern of commercial safe-sex productions and a hindrance to the real. The effect of the demand for greater amounts of realism in porn cannot be understated, but it is important to stress how distribution practices have also had impact on content as well as style (Patterson 2004; Mowlabocus 2010b; Paasonen 2011), especially in the case of bareback pornography.

What developed during the 2000s was an ideological split that manifested itself across formal, aesthetic, and economic lines, which was largely contingent on the presence or absence of the condom. Not all bareback porn lacks a narrative or is filmed with an amateur aesthetic and

not all safer-sex productions are grounded in cohesive plots or shot with high production values. With that said, there is a tendency for bareback studios to make barebacking *the* narrative, if not the star, and commit themselves to a more amateur aesthetic and style of presentation. Most work on bareback pornography tends to focus on TIM (my own included) in part because the studio has positioned itself as the unofficial (brand) ambassador of barebacking discourse, courting attention however it can (Dean 2009, 2015; Lee 2014; Scott 2015; Ashford 2015). But there is a veritable cornucopia of bareback pornography available for discussion and dissection, and what I would like to do now is turn my attention to Michael Lucas's Lucas Entertainment, a recently converted bareback studio, to take a closer look at the impact barebacking has had on the safer-sex commercial gay porn industry. In the transition from condom to bareback we see a number of discursive and aesthetic changes that come with the condom's removal, and it is this phenomenon I wish to explore in further depth before moving on to my analysis of RRS's *Focus/Refocus*.

Lucas Entertainment (henceforth Lucas) began to offer bareback/condomless videos and scenes through its new "BARE" label in late 2013. One of the most apparent and immediate changes that came with Lucas's conversion was the appearance of the word "bareback" or related terminology on their product's covers. "Bareback" is not only often printed just as largely as the star's, if any stars are being featured, but also hijacks the entire title, reorienting eroticism around the spectacle of the condom's absence: "X barebacks Y" replaces "X fucks Y." Titles such as *Barebacking Balls Deep* (2014), *Trenton Ducatt goes Bareback* (2014), and *Bareback Sex Fest* (2014) speak to how the studio's embrace of barebacking quickly altered its business and marketing strategies. Barebacking terminology is thrown in everywhere: *Gentlemen 12: Barebacking in the Boardroom* (2014), *Bareback Auditions* (2014), *Raw Double Penetration*

(2014), *Jonathan Agassi Goes Bareback* (2014). Under "New Releases" on the studio's website, seventeen out of thirty two films listed on the first page are identified as "BARE." Indeed, after the release of the studio's first foray into bareback territory, *Bareback Lovers* (November 18, 2013), only seven films are not identified as "BARE"—*Adam Killian's Raw Wet Dream* (2014) isn't categorized under the "BARE" label but is promoted as Adam's "debut bareback sex performance"—meaning only six out of twenty four videos released over the year aren't designated "bareback" videos. All six safer-sex videos, however, are "collection" videos—four are retrospectives of an individual performer's work, and two are compilation videos. (http://www.lucasentertainment.com/movies/view_alls/New_Releases/: accessed Jan 20, 2015).

Screen shot of Lucas's New Releases page (accessed June 27, 2015)

Although there is a discrepancy between the screen grab's date and the date of my analysis, my observations about the studio abandoning condom use after their first bareback video remains valid. Going through the website months after my initial perusal, I still see the

studio releasing bareback-only films. November 18th 2013 is the studio's cut-off date, the day

Lucas fully converted and committed itself to barebacking. All films on their website not labeled

"BARE" were released before *Bareback Lovers* (http://www.lucasentertainment.com/

[movies/view_all/](http://www.lucasentertainment.com/movies/view_all/): accessed June 27th, 2015).

Not too long ago Michael Lucas was an avowed proponent of condom use in porn (Lucas

2006; Kinser 2014). With Truvada and medical advancement bringing viral loads to an

undetectable level though, Michael Lucas has changed his personal behaviour as well as his

views on unprotected sex and barebacking in porn (Lucas 2013). But Lucas doesn't make the

same videos with actors simply forgoing the use of condoms. Lucas's entire brand has been

altered by his decision to go bareback, appropriating fetishistic and subcultural language as well

as shooting styles to sell his "new" product(s).

Since going bareback, the studio has turned its attention away from narrative structures

and toward non-narrative ones, displacing erotic appeal and symbolically outsourcing the labour

to the condom's *absence*. The lack of condom becomes the selling feature, and its disposal has

had a noticeable effect on the studio's productions. Lucas has always offered a wide range of

filming styles. The *Auditions* series for example compiles interviews and "casting couch"

auditions potential models have gone through to determine their suitability for employment. This

amateur-styled series lies in stark contrast to the studio's reputation for high budget narrative

spectacles. Lucas is known for producing glossy, high budget narrative porn with high

production values, whose hits include *Dangerous Liaisons* (2005), *La Dolce Vita* (2006), which

landed him a lawsuit from the Fellini estate (Gardner 2010), *Gigolo* (2007), *Kings of New York*

(2010), and *Assassin* (2011). Regardless of the shooting style, the studio places great emphasis

on intimacy, romance, and intense passion, a signature style I would call "masculine but

scented." After removing the condom from their production, however, the studio products gravitated toward its *Auditions* style of shooting: narrative disappeared and the videos tended to be shot with an amateur aesthetic. More intriguing, however, is the curious amount of attention paid to "love" and "lovers."

"Barebacking" appears in larger or equal sized font
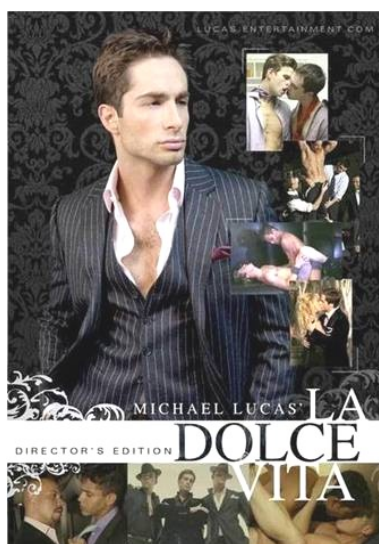
The changeover to barebacking shifts the focus away from high production values to sex
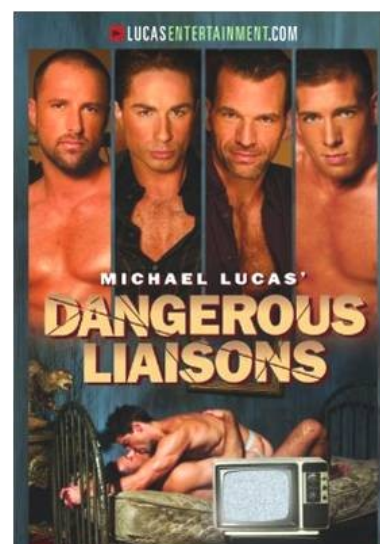
Raw Passion (2014), for example, "begins with a kiss and ends with a bareback ass fucking, as proven by our cast of romantically sizzling men!" according the website's brief synopsis (http://www.lucasentertainment. com/movies/view/raw-passion), while the description for *Loving Him Raw* (2014) proclaims:

> If you really care about your partner in bed, then there's no better physical expression than "Loving Him Raw"! Marcus Isaacs and Drew Sumrok are both aware of this, so they have bareback sex slowly and intimately with one another. Nova Rubio and Austin Chandler enjoy deep and intimate raw sex by candlelight, while Joseph Rough and David Lambert demonstrate why young love is the most intense. And David Sweet and Axel Fulling give each other the gift of cum to express their feelings! Don't hold back when you're "Loving Him Raw"!

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Passion, rawness, intimacy, barebacking, love: feel the real! *Loving Him Raw* mimics amateur couple porn one could easily find on Xtube, only shot with better equipment and professionally edited. The video doubles up on its claims to authenticity by not only removing the condom and shooting with an amateur lens, but poaching the implied realism of couplehood and its mundane connotations (Barcan 2002). It is, however, the studio's first bareback release I personally find more concerning and problematic.

Title covers of each film

"Fucking like a pornstar" is colloquial shorthand often employed by gay men to describe a desire for sexual intensity. Wanting to "fuck like a porn star" is an idiom for intimacy: to fuck so intently so as to viscerally manifest the deep intangible connection between each other. *Bareback Lovers* poaches while redoubling the intimacy of wanting to fuck like a porn star by using actual porn stars in an amateur setting. *Bareback Lovers* (2013) features "real lovers" expressing their intimate connection whose ineffable truth and beauty are beyond words and can only be captured through unprotected sex:

'Bareback Lovers' demonstrate [sic] the height of true passion: real-life couples share their stories before having sex on camera without the use of condoms for the first time in the studio's history. Seattle-based boyfriends Billy Santoro and Exclusive Seth Treston were the first to set the trend by discussing their relationship before Seth takes Billy's raw cock and hot load up his ass

(http://www.lucasentertainment.com/ movies/view/bareback-lovers).

Lucas borrows from his Auditions formula, which features preliminary interviews before models perform on camera. As with the Auditions series, pre-confessions bolster subsequent sexual confessions, insofar as the sex is authenticated by the performative utterances that precede it.

In many ways, Lucas has become TIM's clean-cut yuppie double, offering more romanticized (and surprisingly sanitized) visions of what you get from TIM. TIM is not interested in love, but filth and intensity. Lucas on the other hand turns to condomless sex to portray barebacking as the ultimate form of *love* and intimacy: anything less is less. What we see with Lucas's foray into barebacking is a complete and total subversion of what we see in TIM and what TIM stands for. The ramifications of this inverted mimesis are surprisingly complex.

On one hand I find a video like *Bareback Lovers* not only insulting, but also far more dangerous than anything produced by TIM. The video not only co-opts love to sell bareback porn, but also suggests that anything short of ejaculating into your lover's anal cavity is a form of failure: if you fail to mimic this behaviour, if you're not doing this, you're not in love, have never felt true love, and can never feel real love. Even though the studio previously released titles such as *Surrender to Love* (2013), *The Power of Love* (2013), and *Love and Devotion*, which was released exactly one month prior to *Bareback Lovers* on October 18th, 2013, to love now, according to Lucas, is to bareback and to bareback is to love—condoms don't block just

semen but also love from entering you. "Bareback pornography," according to Ramos, "possesses the power to express profound emotions such as love and trust" (2013, 1859), and apparently now safer sex doesn't. Subverting typical narratives that equate self-protection with communal and self-love, the condom is now a psychological block to love, to being emotionally "permeable."

On the other hand, I can't help but feel Lucas's *Bareback Lovers* testifies to the limits of barebacking as queer transformation, visualizing Dean's (2015) recent arguments about Truvada detaching barebacking from its erotic context. If barebacking is a practice that undermines safer-sex campaigns, and if safer-sex is in service of promoting and maintaining normative cultural politics, what does it mean to co-opt barebacking in service of "love"? Michael Lucas's decision to convert to bareback was largely a result of Truvada's successful test trials (Lucas 2013; Kinser 2014). But if barebacking's subversive edge is contingent upon the thrilling risk of contracting HIV or literally breeding a new identity through the transmissions of HIV, and if Truvada and antiretroviral medications make transmission all but impossible, then isn't Lucas simply feigning subversion to profit while reinforcing the very normative structure barebacking is meant to undermine? Isn't Lucas's decision to go bareback really "surveillance at the biomolecular level?" (Dean 2015, 241).

High budget narratives were one strategy safer-sex studios employed to retain viewership, but another was a focus on passionate, intimate sexual performances. A very recent example of the latter would include Cocky Boys' *A Thing of Beauty* (2013), whose most well-received scenes have porn stars and real-life friends Colby Keller and Dale Cooper kissing as hard as they fuck, and doing similarly with a third (Gabriel Clark). Set primarily at a beachside resort, the film co-opts the beach setting and reorients its associations with the real and natural

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around the spectacle of intimate safer-sex: the presence or absence of a condom doesn't determine the degree of intimacy or intensity, the film suggests. The studio's website describes *A Thing of Beauty* as a series of "erotic poems" and Colby and Dale's scene as a "kind of poetry that will *resonate* with you *physically* as much as *emotionally*. By the end of it, you will see these two men not as porn stars but as living, breathing humans *just like the rest of us*. And by witnessing such *intimate lovemaking*, you'll *learn* how important it is to also *love yourself* (http://www.cockyboys.com/featureFilms/thing-of-beauty/; accessed June 27th 2015; emphasis mine). The studio has carefully chosen words to re-centre love and self-love around safer sex instead of barebacking, emphasizing chemistry and passion rather than the simple intake of semen.

Dale and Colby:
kissing and fucking

Dale, Colby, and Gabriel kissing and fucking: the film places heavy emphasis on kissing and close body contact

Cocky Boys has been described as "arthouse erotica" (Stuart 2013) and has managed to secure its position as a major industry player by embracing experimentation with narrative and form. Cocky Boys is one of two major New York-based gay male porn companies: the other is Lucas Entertainment. Similarly to Lucas, Cocky Boys produces a variety of videos, but is best known for its narrative features, and in many ways takes up where Lucas left off. Its lauded *The Haunting* trilogy (2013) not only revolves around murder, ghosts, and the return of past lovers (haunted by barebacking?), but has been praised for ushering in "'a new era in pornography:" "There's plenty of filmmakers that have explored pornography in independent films, but I can honestly say Jaxson [(Cocky Boys' studio head)] is one of first pornographers I've seen

successfully work in the opposite direction, exploring the art of creative filmmaking through pornography" (Matthews 2013). Both studios have a similar aesthetic and commitment to high quality explicit entertainment, but while Lucas has embraced barebacking, Cocky Boys has maintained its commitment to condom use. Cocky Boys is Lucas Entertainment's safer-sex double and presents a sustained challenged to Lucas's attempt to re-orient love and intimacy around the sharing of fluid.

Lucas and Cocky Boys' dialectic present an interesting case study for the future of barebacking in porn and the cluster of political promises embedded within practices of barebacking. While the destabilizing powers of barebacking are questionable, its effects on the porn industry are not. In the concluding section of my final chapter I would like to conduct an in depth reading of RRS's lauded 2009 release *Focus/Refocus* to corroborate my assessment of the gay male porn industry. A highly self-aware and self-reflexive film, *Focus/Refocus*, similarly to *Taxi Zum Klo,* is swan song for an era slowly being ushered out the door by not only by barebacking, but also the ascent of democratized amateurism. The futurity of barebacking and future it will bring remain unclear, but what *Focus/Refocus* suggests is that for better or worse the future of gay male sexuality will no longer be molded by porn studios.

Focus/Refocus (2009): Death by Amateurism, Amateurism as Death

If TIM sees itself and the past it brings forth as a combined path toward utopia, then *Focus/Refocus*, a two-part feature, sees the return of that past as a path toward dystopia. If *Descent* envisioned the gay male porn industry's control over gay male sexuality as dystopia and a return to the natural and real as a path toward utopia, ten years later *Focus/Refocus* symptomatically manifests the exact inverse. In *Focus/Refocus* we can feel the commercial safer-sex industry struggling, not only barebacking's encroachment, but also amateur technology and a

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demand for heightened forms of realism that has them scrambling to find ways to compete. *Focus/Refocus*'s 2009 release foreshadows not only bareback's penetration of the commercial safer-sex studio industry, but also the safer-sex industry's displacement as the hub through which gay male sexual identity and culture are filtered.

The internet made porn more popular and mainstream than ever before (Williams 2004), but also "killed" the industry in the process (Stabile 2012; Theroux 2012): pirating and tube sites allowed consumers to access content for free (Brown 2014), and live webcamming offered new interactive ways to engage sexually with images onscreen (Henze 2013). Since the early 90s, the commercial gay male porn industry has dually acted as an ambassador for safer-sex and ambassador of (Western) gay male culture. Indeed, safer-sex advocates were able to instil their vision precisely because the gay porn industry was composed of a small number of studios (Mercer 2006) that collectively controlled the pornographic gaze. But with pornography's onscenity came the loss of control. A re-cut, non-explicit, retail version of *Focus/Refocus* was released as *Focus/Refocus: When Porn Kills*. The porn in question, though, is not commercial pornography, but amateur pornography.

Amateur pornography in *Focus/Refocus* is a stand-in for the internet and barebacking, which the film indicts for "killing" the commercial porn industry. *Focus/Refocus* very clearly condemns the democratizing capabilities of digital technology for robbing the studio industry's ability to control the cultural artifacts that define gay identity, fantasy, and culture. The gay male porn star has been a critical focal point for gay male culture (Dyer [1994] 2003; Burger 1995; Fejes 2002; Nguyen 2004; Lucas 2006; Mercer 2006; Escoffier 2009; Stuart 2013). But along with the gay male porn industry's expansion comes the decline of the porn superstar (Stabile 2015) and the safer-sex industry's control over the figurative ideal (Dean 2009). *Focus/Refocus*

testifies to how gay male culture, sexuality, and identity are inextricable from porn and pornographic representation. But *Focus/Refocus* isn't just cultural critique; it's also a critique of the industry at the pinnacle of a multipronged faceoff. The film, explicit and non-explicit, cannot be properly understood outside an industrial context.

But *Focus/Refocus*, similarly to *Descent*, is still a porn movie and has certain expectations to fill—namely to turn on viewers and help them get off. Thus despite its industrial-cultural critique, *Focus/Refocus* tries to meet its audience halfway, blending together amateur- and professional-style shooting into a two-part explicit neo-noir erotic thriller. The film's narrative revolves around the hunt for a serial killer attacking gay men in San Francisco's Castro neighbourhood. The plot, somewhat similar to *Cruising*, doubles as a densely layered investigation of contemporary gay male sexuality and subjectivity in the digital era. *Focus/Refocus* places significant focus on the amateur recording apparatus, framing it as a failed object of surveillance. Rather than visibility acting as a trap, it becomes conduit for the return of the repressed: condomless sex.

In a pivotal interrogation scene near the end of the movie, when asked by the detective conducting the examining interview why Joe decided to confront Eddie, his killer ex-boyfriend, on his own rather than call the police, Joe rhetorically asks the interrogating officer, "Why do you smoke? You know it's going to kill you one day. Why do people jump out of perfectly good airplanes, or why are guys having bareback sex?" He goes on to tell the detective that he'd had a taste of risk, "*real* risk" and liked it. "I mean, it was fucking exciting!" he exclaims, confessing that Eddie saw and exploited that underlying impulse. The decision to equate barebacking with cigarette smoking aligns unprotected sex with not only risky thrill-seeking, but also illness and death. Besides a singular reference to barebacking, HIV/AIDS isn't mentioned once throughout

Focus/Refocus; and yet, AIDS is everywhere. From the attempt to insert the condom into an aesthetic regime that has been co-opted by barebacking, to the focus on risk, anxieties about the loss of privacy, and of course the unusually large number of deaths for a porn movie, AIDS haunts every image, character, and sexual encounter.

Although *Focus/Refocus* never emulates CCTV, the iconography of surveillance structures the film's narrative and formal engagements. The film begins with Joe being interrogated by a police detective. The officer records the interrogation with a small camcorder that sits on a tripod to the left and slightly behind him. It points diagonally at Joe from across the corner of the table, focusing entirely on him. The camcorder's position implies CCTV. Although the scene is mostly edited in a shot reverse-shot pattern, the diegetic camera occasionally shoots from behind the officer and from a slightly higher level looking down —from a "surveillance angle" that denotes and connotes CCTV (Tziallas 2010a).

The narrative is told through a series of flashbacks, and before transitioning into the first flashback, the interrogating officer asks Joe to "start from the beginning." Shot first from a surveillance angle, we see Joe point at the camcorder and say "Okay, I'll start with one of those." The film then cuts to a close-up shot of the camcorder's screen. The camcorder's screen is centred, and in the out-of-focus background we see Joe pointing accusingly at the camcorder. The in-focus image of him on the screen is surrounded by digital information, imitating CCTV footage. The image of Joe on the camcorder's screen has him pointing directly at the viewer. His finger covers his mouth; his accusatory finger says everything. From the very beginning the film conflates the digital recording apparatus with surveillance, and by strategically adopting the detective genre as its generic vehicle, the film codes the scenes of explicit sex as "evidence" to be examined. The opening scene's final image "refocuses" our attention to the digital recording

apparatus, suggesting that this exploration into Joe's past will revolve around recording, revisiting recordings, shifting perceptions, and parallax views.

Surveillance angle shot of interrogation scene

Personal recorder as surveillance technology

From the opening interrogation scene we transition to a POV shot of Eddie lying in his underwear in bed, staring up at Joe into his camcorder. Eddie asks Joe, "Is it that thing in focus?" Joe responds by informing Eddie that "It's autofocus, no thinking necessary," with Eddie playfully adding, "or skill." Right from the beginning there is a critique lobbied against amateur porn productions—legitimate porn that requires skill and thought; amateur porn requires neither (Paasonen 2010). The film cuts back to the diegetic apparatus and shows Joe on top of Eddie filming him. Eddie confesses that he's done this before. Surprised, Joe asks, "You did porn?" To which Eddie defensively responds, "No no, nothing like that, it was a home video." Joe seems really into the idea, so Eddie decides to indulge his fantasy. The explicit home movie, however, will soon be uploaded to "Porn Tube," a fake amateur porn site, transforming it into a public entity whose circulation will have very real consequences inside and outside the bedroom.

Snapshots of Joe and Eddie's home sex tape

Eddie and Joe together in bed

Joe filming Eddie performing oral sex on him

Joe filming while riding Eddie

Eddie filming Joe applying a condom in close-up.

Joe sitting on Eddie's covered erection

The diegetic camera filming the amateur camera filming the scene of action

Eddie filming Joe in close-up while penetrating him

Eddie watching himself have sex, or, Eddie watching porn while making porn

The above collage summarizes the twenty-three minute sex scene and gives a good sense of how *Focus/Refocus'*s directors (Chris Ward, Ben Leon, and Tony Dimarco) play with a variety of shots to blend together professional and amateur aesthetics. While the integration of amateur-style shooting acknowledges its target audience's demand for realism and tries to meet them halfway, it also attempts to recode, if not recuperate, video's aesthetics of intimacy (Chin 1992) and re-align them with safer-sex practices. *Focus/Refocus* places heavy emphasis on condom use, and its first sex scene wants to assure us that despite the videos we may encounter online, gay men in relationships still use condoms. Before we see Joe sit on Eddie's penis, we are treated to a POV close-up of Joe applying the condom and then giving it a little kiss. Rather than a barrier, the condom is an ingrained part of the couple's intimacy.

Focus/Refocus co-opts the aesthetic of realism and the mundane to interpellate its viewer. The opening scene in particular comments on the degree to which pornography has shaped gay male sexuality (Mowlabocus 2007, 2010; Patton 2014; Tziallas 2015d) as well as how amateur

porn tends to efface the influence and inflections of professionally produced pornography (Van Doorn 2010)—as though it could ever divorce itself from previous and ongoing mediation (Dean 2015). But the first sex sequence also sets up an underlying critique of self-shooting as a form of intimacy, consciously aligning the amateur recording apparatus with surveillance and the erosion of privacy (Barcan 2002).

The various shots throughout the first sequence tend to fall under three general categories that prioritize different emotional currents, the most prominent and out-of-character being the embodied POV shot. POV shooting is common in amateur and ProAm porn, a style of shooting and subgenre known as "gonzo," but rare in narrative commercial porn. Gonzo porn is intimately connected to reality, amateurism, and the domestic, and gonzo-style shooting tends to be featured outside typical narrative configurations (Hillyer 2004; Biasin and Zecca 2009; Paasonen 2010; Tibbals 2014). But amateur POV shooting and its signature aesthetics—handheld, shaky, grainy, mobile, low quality—are synonymous not only with an aesthetics of realism, but also surveillance (Tziallas 2014; Zimmer 2015), and their use in pornography conflates the two (Patterson 2004; Bell 2009; Van Doorn 2010).

The embodied POV shot taken through the personal digital recording apparatus has become somewhat of a staple in contemporary cinema since *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), which of course owes its success to documentary film (Roscoe 2000). But more recently the POV gaze in cinema has become aligned with consumer surveillance and the rise of the producer-consumer (Zimmer 2015), or what Christian Fuchs terms "prosumer" (Fuchs 2011c). First-person shooting is inextricable from a culture dominated by participation and interactivity rooted in surveillance, what Mark Andrejevic calls "the digital enclosure": "the creation of an interactive realm wherein every action and transaction generates information about itself" (2007,

2). In *Focus/Refocus*, the appropriation of gonzo shooting not only reflexively critiques our faith in the POV shot's authenticity and its implied proximity to reality, but also positions the recording apparatus itself as a technology inextricable from surveillance. The private home video will eventually be uploaded to the internet and become a part of the public pornographic assemblage (Arroyo 2015; Tziallas 2015d): whatever is filmed for private purposes can easily be made public in the digital era, and the sexual objects that often seem to beckon our gaze are those that were at one point private.

The following sex scene discursively extends into the previous one and has Joe renting a video of his favourite porn star, Dario Stefano, and returning home to masturbate. Upon his return home, Joe pops in his rented DVD and begins to masturbate to Dario's "solo" scene. In a bit of a generic twist, rather than voyeuristically spy on a character masturbate, Joe instead watches his object of desire perform on his television screen. The intimate and affective relations between pornographic images and consumers are reflexively incorporated into the scene's layered mise-en-abyme structure: Joe mimics the behaviour displayed onscreen and we (presumably) do likewise. We again see the directors actively trying to appease their viewers. If the previous scene played with gay pornography's tendency toward the reflexive (Dyer 1985, [1994] 2003) to undermine barebacking's co-option of intimacy and realism, then this sequence incorporates reflexivity to stress as well as critique the mimetic relations between screens and bodies.

Both porn and film are contingently mimetic, but porn more so than film requires mimesis not only to "succeed," but also to be ontologically "complete" (Ullén 2009). Porn is about mimicking if not the activity, then at least the feelings of pleasure being simulated or projected through self-stimulation: you watch porn to feel what those on screen feel (Paasonen

2011). Although acknowledging its own status as a masturbatory aide, the scene oddly channels, if not directly references,[40] *Descent*. The sight of two handsome men pleasuring themselves is tantalizing, yet is also imbued with a sense of unease. At one point the camera zooms out from a reflection of Joe masturbating on the television screen to an image of Dario masturbating. As the camera pulls back, Joe's erection is placed in the foreground and the television in the background, almost replicating that moment of extreme televisual alienation we saw in *Descent*. There is a sense that Joe, through and because of porn, is beginning his descent into places unknown.
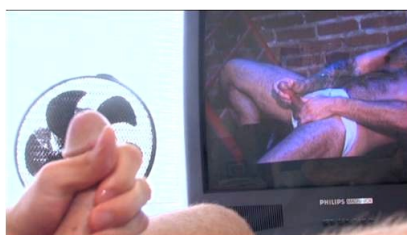
Close-up of Joe masturbating
to Dario masturbating

Descent: Close-up of erection covering the
televisual image of a trapped Adain Shaw

What we see in this scene is Joe's over-identification with the image. Joe doesn't want to be with Dario: Joe wants to *become* Dario. The sequence is carefully shot to position Dario as Joe's televisual double, a symbol of who he desires to be and will try to become. It is not insignificant that Dario's last name, Stefano, is also that of gay porn legend Joey Stefano, who was diagnosed with HIV in 1990 and found dead of an overdose in 1994 (Isherwood 1996). Joe is temporarily living out his porn star fantasy through mimetic fandom. By mimicking Dario, Joe is identifying with, and learning how to become, his desired image double. The sequence ends

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[40] Director and RSS owner Chris Ward is not only good friends with *Descent's* director Steven Scarborough, but was also bequeathed Hot House by Scarborough! (private correspondence between author and Chris Ward, March 7th, 2015). See also Waxner-Herman (2014).

with Joe standing next to, and ejaculating onto, the television screen—a moment that recalls Max

Renn's (James Woods) intimate relationship with his television in Cronenberg's *Videodrome*

(1983); another film about the intersection between recording technology, surveillance, and

sexuality. By the end of his masturbatory session, Joe has been absorbed into the screen.

Joe getting progressively closer to the television screen until…
he gets too close and gets absorbed into the screen

| Joe ejaculating onto the screen | *Videodrome*: televisual absorption | Dario left, Joe right: Joe becomes an image |
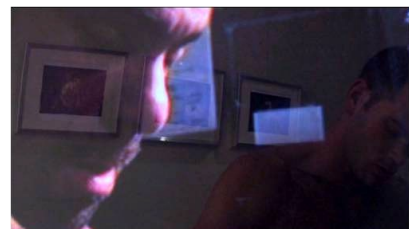
Narratively, this scene sets up the relationship between Joe and the soon-to-be-revealed

homme fatal Dario. Conceptually, it sets up Joe's quest to make the fantasy world of

pornography his reality. Emotionally, though, there is an ominous feel, which similarly to

Descent, exudes extreme ambivalence. The proliferation of the manufactured gay male porn star

coincides with the popularity of VHS, and by the mid-80s, a "small group of companies

dominated the production of gay male pornography" (Mercer 2006, 146). The gay male porn star

became a vital ancillary for securing sales and profits. Performers often signed exclusive

contracts with studios, and many still do today—such as RRS "exclusive" Steve Cruz who plays

Dario—but the porn industry's evolution has also fundamentally altered its star system as well as

the star's identificatory currency.

The gay male porn star was a figure of idealized health (Mercer 2006). The porn star's body not only reflected the turn toward the "gym body" gay men took up in the wake of the AIDS epidemic, but also helped to normalize that body and its masculine connotations as the ideal (Pronger 1990; Alvarez 2008)—even the Eastern European Czech studio *Bel Ami*, which debuted in 1993, succeeded in part by subtly promoting "health," allowing audiences to gaze at newly discovered, unalloyed, healthy, young white bodies that had been kept hidden by an iron curtain (Tziallas 2015a). The gay male porn star was a crucial figure of identification that helped to mold gay male sexuality, becoming an important ancillary to safer-sex campaigns (Lucas 2006). Now, anyone with a camcorder and a penchant for exhibitionism can become a porn star, decentralizing the controlled image of the commercial performer. Joe's journey from private citizen to wannabe porn star is a parable for the dangers of amateur pornography: the personal dangers of shedding one's privacy for visibility as well as the collective danger of allowing anyone with a camcorder to co-opt the pornographic gaze.

After Joe ejaculates onto the television screen, Eddie barges in and begins to scold him for uploading their private sex tape to the internet: Joe likes the attention; Eddie doesn't. Turns out the video has gone *viral*. Joe is now a porn star: his fantasy has become a reality—foreshadowed by the image of his reflection on the television screen. Eddie is furious that his privacy has been violated and breaks up with Joe right then and there. Turned on by his newfound visibility and popularity, Joe decides to indulge his desire for this type of public sex. The next few sex scenes further obfuscate the distinction between amateur and professional and real and creative performance. We first see Joe filming himself in gonzo style while performing oral sex on an anonymous stranger in a secluded public space. He then heads to an underground

parking garage and secretly films two men having sex. Joe is an exhibitionist and voyeur, star

and director, blurring the lines between amateur and professional as well as Pro/AM.

Scene of anonymous sex shot in long shot. A single, carefully positioned spotlight maintains the receiver's anonymity, poaching yet another amateur porn trope

Self-shot gonzo close-up focuses all attention on the star and his pleasure

Joe secretly filming two men unaware

Shot of activity from Joe's POV

A clearer view of the unfolding sex scene

We again see *Focus/Refocus* playing with and twisting the conventions and meaning of

POV shooting and amateurism—Joe is both an actor and director, but so is porn performer Cole

Streets who plays Joe. The porn performer in this instance is also a figurative *and* literal porn

maker, collapsing the performer's and character's body into a singular ProAm entity. With

respect to the self-shot oral segments, if Joe/Cole is in control of the camera and decides how to

film himself sucking cock and how he wants to suck that cock, how does it differ from anyone

else who does likewise and then uploads the video to Xtube? Insofar as the oral sequence cuts

between the professional/diegetic and amateur lens, the scene is metaphorically ProAm. Even if

the self-shot scene is part of a larger narrative script, the very act of self-filming demarcates

those instances as actually amateur and not feigned amateurism. Indeed, if one were to cut out

the professional shots and edit together the ones shot by Joe and by his anonymous partner, the video would look, and in many ways be, no different then what one would find on Xtube.

The directors are making a concerted effort to obscure the division between narrative (representation) and reality, constructing a story with which many viewers can identify—less so in the case of *Refocus*, whose narrative revolves entirely around death. Up to this point, *Focus* has remained grounded in reality, emulating activity and playing out scenarios that could be deemed typical of gay male experience: Joe has sex with his boyfriend; Joe masturbates to porn; Joe films himself giving a blowjob; Joe watches two guys have sex through an amateur lens and on a digital screen. There's nothing fantastical or entirely out of the ordinary going on here. And considering more than half of *Focus*'s sex scenes are shot with an amateur lens, primarily by Joe, the entirety of *Focus* verges being a ProAm production, whose irony the directors' reflexively engage in *Focus*'s final scene.

After gaining enough experience on his own, Joe decides to take the next step and try his hand at a professional shoot. Joe and Eddie's video lands Joe a private filming gig starring none other than Dario Stefano. Before heading to the shoot though, Joe re-watches a private video he received and realizes that Dario had previously made a private sex tape with the person found murdered a few days ago. Titillated and fascinated, Joe accepts the job offer. When he arrives at the private residence, he finds four men preparing for their close-ups. Joe begins to record their warm up. A few moments later Dario walks in, disrobes, and joins the group.

This lengthy forty-minute scene fulfils the obligatory "three-or-more" requirement of almost every gay male commercial porn video, but it also allows for extended visual and ideological play. What we essentially observe is a professionally choreographed scene that is supposed to appear like a "behind the scenes" making of a pornographic home movie—or,

amateur porn through a professional lens. As with earlier sequences, the camera cuts back and

forth between POV shots of Joe's amateur recordings and the professional/diegetic camera,

slowly blending the two gazes together. The final group-cum sequence has Joe masturbating over

the video's patron, who temporarily takes over the filming duties and records Joe stroking

himself to orgasm. Joe begins as a passive observer recording the action, but as the two gazes

align, he becomes a full-fledged participant. This pivotal scene is where fantasy and reality

collide. Joe has managed to insert himself into the pornographic image: Joe has become a real

porn star, and Cole, a real porn maker.

Joe as observer-participant

Joe passing the camcorder to the patron: from observer to participant

In part two we discover Eddie has a secret murderous past that refused to stay in the past

and a murderous instinct he just couldn't seem to suppress. The much darker sequel features as

many murders as it will orgasms. We see several characters—a local bartender; a detective

secretly following Joe; Joe's friend Barton who works at the porn shop, Dario, and Eddie—get

off and get killed off too. By the time we reach the narrative's dramatic reveal and duel, it

becomes apparent that the entire film has revolved around not only the return of the repressed,

but also its return through the personal recording apparatus—something made more apparent on

Focus/Refocus's retail cover then its explicit one. The personal recording apparatus becomes a

conduit not only through which reality and fantasy literally and figuratively converge, but

through which the past can return—crystallized in the final battle between Joe and Eddie.
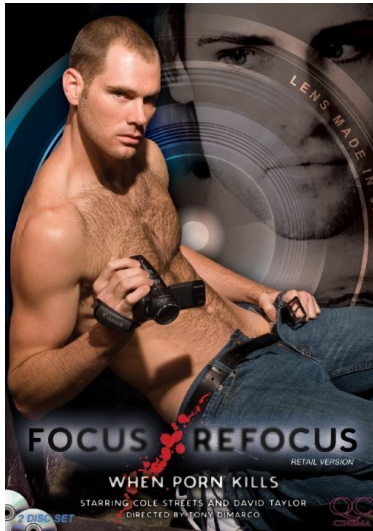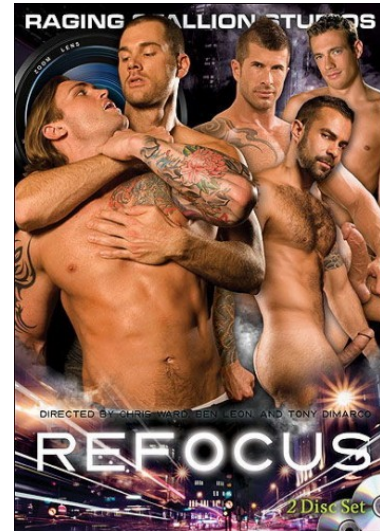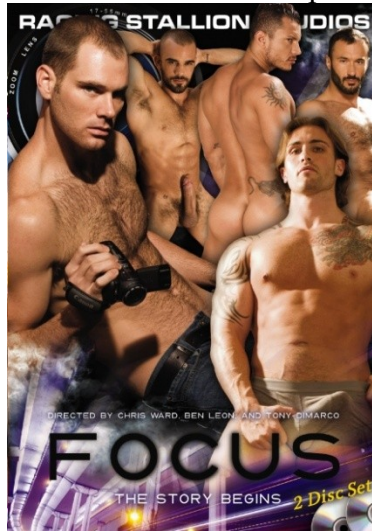
The retail version's cover explicitly ties the amateur recording apparatus to death (read: AIDS). The personal camcorder's lens literally points directly at the word "kills." In combination, the explicit versions make a similar gesture. The image of Joe holding the digital recorder on *Focus*'s cover is replaced with an image of Eddie in a chokehold in front of a camera lens—now more prominently featured in the background.

Joe enters an abandoned theatre and sees his sexual encounter with Dario being projected on a big screen. He also sees the detective who's been watching him from afar with his throat slit sitting in the audience. Eddie enters from the shadows to the left and stands on stage in front of the big screen. Eddie, in typical "bad guy" form, makes a grand confession, detailing his lust for risk and admits to sleeping with Dario and other risk takers, indulging his "good and evil sides." He goes on to tell Joe that he wanted to find someone "normal" to show himself how "normal people live," but realized that deep down Joe was "just itching to go bad." The final sequence appropriates the generic good vs. evil binary to juxtapose barebacking ("risky") with safer sex ("normal"). Even though we see Eddie use condoms when he has sex (RSS is a committed safer-sex company), Eddie is coded as a barebacker and AIDS: the return of the repressed.

| Amateurism as the new "silver screen" attraction | Joe confronting Eddie. Dead detective on left | Eddie detailing his master plan |

It is not insignificant that the final showdown is set in a movie theatre. The porn theatre, was a social space where gay male culture and sexuality flourished (Cante and Restivo 2001, 2004; Campino 2005). The directors' decision to exhibit private amateur rather than commercial footage in this abandoned public space is indicative of the degree to which the real has become the spectacle we now seek—the spectacle of real sex has replaced the desire for artistic mediation. But the return to the pornographic theatre is also a return to the gay identity's primal scene, bringing post-Stonewall gay culture full circle and in many ways, to a close—the space that brought us together, projected our desires, and validated our existence (Burger 1995) has been replaced with privatized consumption and creation that mimics but chips away at gay pornography's original goals—almost like a clone.

The theatre in *Focus/Refocus* is coded as a gothic space haunted by past ghosts, symbolized by the dead detective in audience seat and Dario's image onscreen—an ideal space for the repressed, Eddie's true persona, to return. After the obligatory villain confession comes the obligatory final face-off, but rather than battle it out with guns or fists, the two fight to the death with their cocks and assholes as their weapons of choice—*la petite mort* cum actual death. The final showdown begins with Eddie bending Joe over one of the theatre seats in the front row, pulling down his pants, and entering him from behind. Lacking the ubiquitous condom shot, it seems as though the two are engaging in unprotected sex. The first close-up, however, reveals Eddie is wearing a condom. As Eddie thrusts himself into Joe the camera cuts between close-ups

of penetration and medium-long shots of the actors' bodies in the foreground and the amateur

footage playing onscreen in the background. Eddie is going to fuck Joe to death, this *dénouement*

symbolized by the projected home video that resulted in Dario's death.

Joe vs. Eddie: A symbolic and literal battle to the death

As the scene progresses Eddie and Joe pause momentarily, and before making their way

to the stage Joe performs oral sex on Eddie. What is unique about this brief moment is that Eddie

continues to wear a condom while Joe fellates him, something rarely seen in porn let alone

practiced by gay men. Partly functional (lubricating his erection for re-insertion) and partly

symbolic, the practice recalls earlier attempts to eroticize condom use in porn such as in *On the*

Rocks (1990) where a young man inserts a condom into his mouth and then rolls it down the

head and shaft of Jeff Stryker's erection before intercourse. It's a good thing Joe always

practiced safer sex, even in a relationship—you never really know who you're sleeping with.
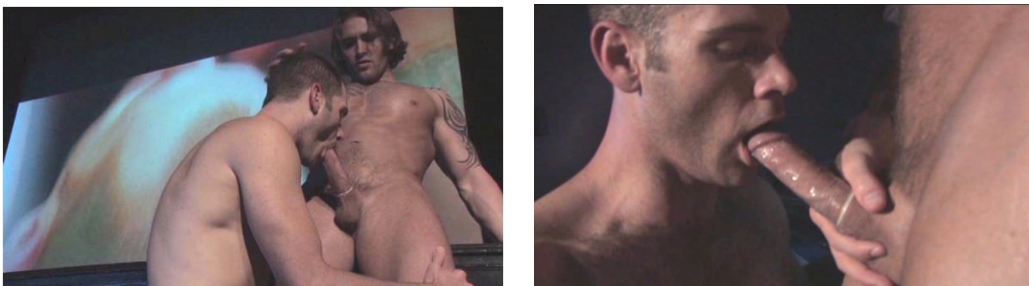
Eroticizing condom use and self-protection

The two then make their way to the stage for their final carnal tryst. Eddie lies on his

back while Joe is on top. Facing each other, they begin to strangle one another as they fuck, and

right before he dies Eddie removes his condom and orgasms. Although momentarily shocked by

his actions, Joe continues to masturbate and ends the scene by ejaculating over his ex-lover's corpse. The film cuts back to Joe in the interrogation room where he is formally charged with murder. The narrative ends with Joe picking up the officer's cigarette and taking a drag. The cigarette, a symbol of risk and death, is in this context also a symbol for HIV. Joe has been infected. The condom wasn't enough: the images became too real. Leo Bersani argues that "barebacking is a literalizing of the ontology of the sexual. As such, it also implicitly destroys the crucial psychoanalytic distinction between fantasy and reality" (2011, 107). It is precisely the role pornography plays in facilitating the collapse between reality and fantasy *Focus/Refocus* exudes anxiety over.

| Death via the image of "death" | The final struggle | "Deadly load" |

Focus/Refocus's narrative is an allegory for the return of the behaviour that brought about the AIDS epidemic. Eddie is AIDS: a serial killer of gay men. Although Eddie kills before Joe uploads their private sex tape to the internet, it is only after the video has gone viral that Eddie begins to kill at a more rapid rate. Rather than hinder or curtail his killing spree, the amateur recording apparatus aided its acceleration: visibility has failed to discipline and control the undesirable.

The spectre of AIDS haunts the narrative and sex scenes. The film is heavy and pregnant with a sense of foreboding—ambivalent, perhaps, about its own complacent appropriation of realist aesthetics, straddling the line between professional and ProAm. While lamenting the past's passing via the theatre, the film is also deeply anxious about the past's return through

digital media technology. The prelapsarian past can never come into being in the present because it can never bypass the consequences that brought about its fall. If pornography is a utopic genre that visualizes pornotopia (Williams [1989] 1999, 2008), *Focus/Refocus* seeks to purposely undermine that impulse. If the past is returning, then it will come with baggage: there is no beach to which we can escape. The return of the past and (re)turn to the real: dystopia rather than utopia.

Conclusion

I began my concluding chapter with a brief overview of a small cycle of AIDS-related fictions and documentaries, which I call Retro AIDS Cinema, to underscore the continual resistance to discussing the reality of HIV/AIDS and gay male sexuality, namely barebacking, in the here and now. The introduction acted as discursive framework through which I filtered my analysis. The chapter was dedicated to exploring the representational and ideological discourse embodied by, and which gave rise to, the Retro AIDS cycle. In hindsight, a discursive schism between explicit and non-explicit representation became more pronounced throughout the 2000s. While cinema and television upheld liberal-normative values, pornography increasingly turned its attention to transgressive activity that undermined, and in some cases purposely sought to tear down, those values. My concluding chapter's goal was to demonstrate that anxieties over barebacking, its practice and representation, are really about the unraveling of normativity and the subsequent loss of social control.

The condom is the emblematic icon of liberal normativity, whose abandonment may very well entail the return of previous cultural formations that lie in stark contrast to the one promoted over the last few decades. Liberal normativity is contingent upon the conservative ideals of life, health, security, and productivity, whose ideological underpinnings were embodied by the

condom. Barebacking, conversely, was, and in many ways still is, about engineering an alternative ideological and social reality to the exclusively normative one projected across the big and small screen.

The discourse of barebacking reveals deep seated anxieties over the potential loss of social control, whose roots stretch back to the late 70s. Legal rights and social acceptance were contingent upon building an idealized façade to appease a hostile, fearful majority spurred on by Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign and the AIDS epidemic. Barebacking threatens not only that idealized image, but also the ideological and discursive circuitry on which that image has been built. The threat of contracting and tacit shaming of those with HIV steered gay men toward modelling themselves after their heterosexual counterparts. With biomedical advancements such as Truvada and undetectable viral loads, the threat of HIV diminishes and along with it, the strictures buttressed by that threat.

Scott (2015) suggests gay male pornography falls into three temporal categories: pre-condom (Gay Liberation to mid-epidemic [1990]), condom (mid-epidemic to late 2000s), and bareback (mid-2000s onward). As the condom era comes to a close, so too might liberal normativity's reign—a soon-to-be-memory of a period gone by. The onscenity of barebacking and continued obscenity of HIV/AIDS has rendered the HIV-positive subject ghostly—but perhaps not for too much longer. Gay men are failing the test. For some this is a call for celebration; for others, a reason to panic. What the future holds is unclear, but what is certain is that the future will be shaped by the past and its incremental return.

Conclusion: The Return of the Repressed

Summary

This project began with a simple observation: despite the proliferation of the HIV virus and onscenity the behaviour that transmits (although not always), there remains a deafening silence around HIV/AIDS discourse in queer and mainstream representation. As I sought out explanations for this schism, my inquiry transformed and expanded into a historical excavation of gay male representation, sexuality, and identity. I realized that in order to understand why HIV/AIDS remains at the margins of visual discourse, I had to return to, and begin at, the period when gay visibility and identity made their collective above-ground debut: Gay Liberation. B. Ruby Rich observes that "when Gay Liberation arrived, it came hand in hand with the movies": "a new era was born. And with it, a new cinema" (Rich 2013c, 5). Gay identity and cultural political discourse are inextricable from visual representation. And what I discovered was that the socio-political tensions around HIV/AIDS fundamentally boil down to ongoing strains between visibility and invisibility kick-started by the Stonewall riots, but with roots in far more complex discourse.

Modern sexology transformed the nature of (Western) sexuality and produced two oppositional beings: the heterosexual, who was normal, and the homosexual, who was abnormal (Katz [1995] 2007). While heterosexuality needed to be regulated, homosexuality needed to be banished: suppressed and repressed. The homosexual became the spectre that perpetually haunted the manufactured realm of normality, but on June 28th 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in New York City the ghost resolidified and has since refused to return to the realm from where it once came. Although out of the closet and into the streets, the homosexual remained a threatening double and became associated with all things dark, perverse, and regressive. The border between

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normal and abnormal persisted, but in order to appease those who deemed the homosexual a threat, the homosexual came to mimic the normal ideal. Difference was slowly reduced to nothing more than differing genital interaction that takes place in private behind closed doors. And my second and third chapters were dedicated to exploring early visual and political responses to the onscenity of homosexuality, with particular attention paid to the discourse of authorship cum identity formation and the mimetic relations between bodies and screens.

But not all those tacitly grouped under the manufactured banner of "gay" identified with or wanted to mimic those ideals; in fact, many of those grouped under umbrella of gay had to be silenced and pushed into the shadows for that constructed image to have any sort of political and social currency: identity requires, at least on the surface, cohesion to qualify as an identity. In my fourth chapter, I examined the effects of the AIDS epidemic, paying careful attention to how the epidemic affected and further fused together visual representation and cultural identity politics. In the wake of the AIDS epidemic and the ascent of the moral majority, while claiming inclusivity, gay identity became synonymous with the very oppressive ideals it sought to disassemble: gay identity is both liberatory and repressive, allowing some individuals to flourish and others to falter at the wayside. This is precisely the phenomenon I explored in my fifth chapter by conducting close readings of key (teen) coming out narratives, which I argue acted as discursive facilitators of "reproductive futurity."

The border between "us" and "them" needed to be carefully and constantly policed, but those who have been left offscreen and deemed obscene have not gone away. And in my extensive final chapter, I examined the return of various queer formations that were repressed by discursive reproductive futurity and normativity through their visual manifestations and their impact on queer cultural politics. New identities such as queer, barebacker, and HIV-positive

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have formed and have tenaciously resisted their marginalization through various means at different junctures. Although not the same or entirely congruent, queerness, barebacking, and an HIV-positive status overlap discursively and ideologically, forming a quasi allegiance that has over the last decade grown stronger and more vocal—their shared commitment to resisting their subservient status binds them together. In the eyes of liberal normativity queerness, barebacking, and HIV-status are undesirable and run counter to the image of health, responsible citizenship, and productivity collectively put forth by the normal majority; as a result, all three overlapping practices and identities have been configured as not only ghostly, but also monstrous.

The gothic is surveillance's double, and although their ongoing dialectic obviously extends far beyond the limits of queer discourse, the inherent struggle between discursive visibility and invisibility within the dictum of gay identity is an inextricable extension of that centuries-old friction. Queer theory finds allegiance with the gothic in part because the gothic is "definitively negative" and "considered anti-social" (Botting 2014, 2). But queer theory is also drawn to the gothic because of its ghostly and destabilizing connotations: "returns of the past…ghostly recurrences manifest an unease and instability in the imagined unity of self, home or society, hauntings that suggest loss or guilt or threat" (Botting 2014, 3). I can think of no better way to described queerness, barebacking, and the perception of those with HIV/AIDS.

By way of conclusion, I would like to offer an in-depth analysis of the psycho-sexual thriller *Pornography: A Thriller* (2009) (henceforth *Pornography*). A tale of fragmented identity that revolves around pornography, surveillance, and the return of the repressed, *Pornography* discursively encapsulates the entirety of my project. *Pornography* was released the same year as *Focus/Refocus* and is in many ways its mirror equivalent. The film radiates anxiety over the return of HIV/AIDS and bareback pornography, their impact on social and self-identity, and their

potential to undo a system of normativity. Although constructed in haste and a bit excessive, the film captures a feeling a dystopia that permeated queer discourse at the tail end of the 2000s and crystallizes the unstable interdependencies between representation, identity, and sex.

Pornography: A Thriller (2009): Normativity and the Self Come Undone

Pornography begins with a man with a casual suit addressing a disembodied voice from offscreen. Shot through a digital camcorder with the time code displayed near the bottom of the frame, this unidentified individual attempts to answer an incredibly elusive question for his fans: why is pornography important? The man sits in a pinkish chair that is slightly to right of centre. A cheaply made sign with a purple border and graphics of burning trees with the words "WILDFIRE VIDEO" in the middle is placed just behind and to his left. A book and gold mask sit on top of a chest with gold fixtures underneath the sign. The wall behind him is red and is partly covered with a shimmering gold curtain or throw. The mise-en-scène reads "cheap," as if it were put together for less than five dollars.

We are led to assume the person being interviewed is a porn star answering questions for a "behind the scenes" DVD featurette. We are also led to assume by the mise-en-scène and the quality of the camcorder's image that this porn studio isn't exactly in the business of making big budget films. As the interviewee attempts to formulate meaningful responses, the film makes several jump cuts, marked with a brief "beep" and spliced shots of distorted TV colour bars. The image slowly zooms in while centring on his face. The performer tells us that pornography is about empowering fantasy. He tells us that it helps bring people together; that even though not everyone can fuck a porn star they can learn to fuck like a porn star; that porn helps make dreams come alive, onscreen. The endlessly zooming lens is penetrative, digging deeper with each jump cut: the camera is a microscope and he our specimen to be examined.
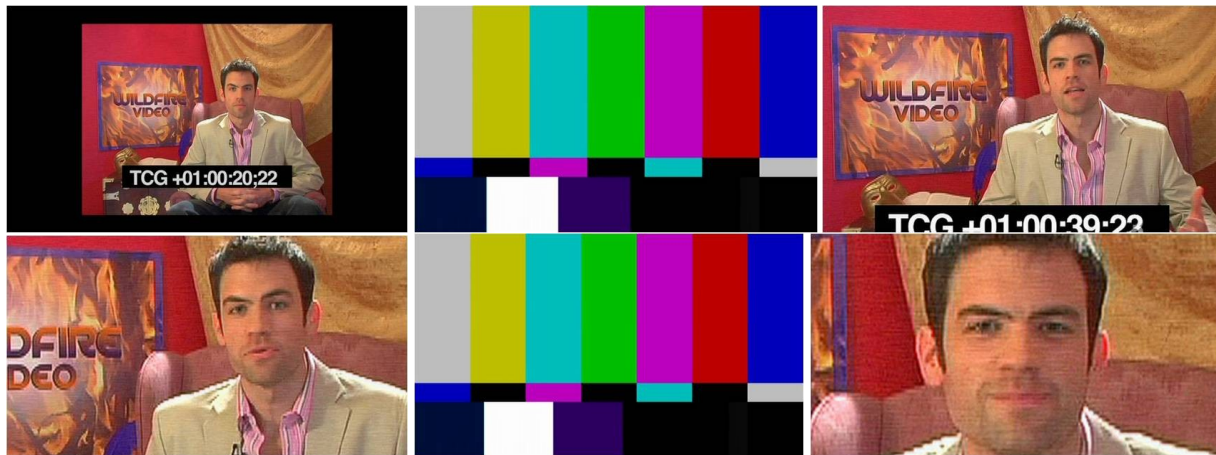
*Pornography'*s opening sequence: the penetrating camera

Pornography isn't really about pornography. It isn't anti-porn like *8mm* (1999) or *A Serbian Film* (2010) or even critical of the gay porn industry like the gay indie *Going Down in La La Land* (2011). But *Pornography* isn't really pro-porn either. Its 2009 release comes at the tail end of the "torture porn" cycle, and although not a torture porn film itself, it shares similar thematic concerns and iconography. In a previously published paper I argue the torture porn subgenre was about surveillance and revolved around anxieties over visibility and the ubiquity of recording technology (Tziallas 2010a). The torture porn subgenre is itself part of a larger "extremity" trend in European and Japanese horror that revives exploitation horror and combines it with slasher, revenge, and body horror narratives (Horeck and Kendall 2011). But while the "torture" portion of the subgenre's title is apparent to anyone who's seen any of the *Saw* (2004-2010) or *Hostel* (2005-2007) films, the "porn" portion has attracted various speculation (Lowenstein 2011; Jones 2013; Allen 2013). The torture porn subgenre was about seeing the exposed body have things done to it: it was about the violence of visibility and the crisis of privacy that ensued after 9/11 (Tziallas 2010a). These extreme images have been generally framed as pornographic because of how they augment and foreground the uncomfortable intersection between pleasure and pain and the pleasure of seeing others in pain. *Pornography*

engages similar concerns but with added subcultural specificities and burdens. What *does a culture of surveillance and ubiquitous visibility mean for gay people*? *How does, or how will, being too visible and having too much of our bodies, desires, and identities made public affect us*?

     Pornography reanimates concerns about "airing out our dirty laundry in public," but with the added effect of not being able to control and suppress those deemed threatening, thanks to new technologies. *Pornography*, similarly *Focus/Refocus*, is anxious about recording technology becoming conduits between the past and present and its failure to adequately control and discipline undesirable subjects. *Pornography* is about the return of past sex, about barebacking and AIDS and the threat they pose to the stability of normativity and the normative self. Porn in *Pornography* is a symbol for the return of repressed sex and the inextricable nonconforming cultural politics that return along with it. But porn in *Pornography* is also a metaphor for surveillance and identity, represented from the outset in the opening credits.
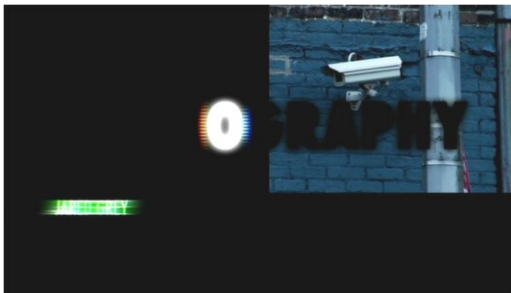
Surveillance camera observing a blank space soon to be occupied by a spying camera eye and recorded porn imagery

On the left, the popular 1991 porn video the narrative revolves around. On the right, an unknown individual takes some secret photographs

     Split into three acts, *Pornography* begins with Mark Anton, an ex gay porn star who is offered $40,000.00 to make one last private sex tape for a secret admirer. An art student trying to move beyond his porn persona and past, Mark decides to take his ex-producer's offer after a particularly harsh critique of his art project. When he arrives at the designated meeting space, he

finds himself alone in a room with nothing but a single chair, a camcorder, and small speaker. A disembodied voice projected through the speaker asks him increasingly intimate and invasive personal questions while the camera, just a few feet in front, records him. When Mark tries to leave, a large horrific figure in surgical gear enters the room and injects him with a serum that knocks him out.

The second act continues with an entirely new character named Michael and his partner moving into a new apartment in New York City. Michael is writing a book about the history of gay male pornography and while researching his project, he comes across the mythical legend of Mark Anton. Michael also comes to discover his apartment was once fully rigged with surveillance cameras. His discovery leads him to the legendary torture-snuff film featuring Mark Anton that just happens to be hidden in the wall behind his bookshelf. His narrative ends similarly to Anton's; he is drugged by the same horrific medical figure.

The final act concludes with Matt Stevens—the person in the opening interview—a porn star/aspiring "porn thriller" scriptwriter/director who lives out, while typing out, the previous two acts. Matt begins to suffer from dissociative delusions, becoming the characters and living out the narrative he creates/dreamed about and that we saw in the previous two acts. The film and final act concludes almost exactly like the first one, but ends with a final shot of Matt staring up at, and directly into, a surveillance camera, stripping down to nothing, and asking, "Isn't this what you wanted to see?"

Pornography is a doppelgänger narrative about the mistrust of the self in the age of ubiquitous visibility and recording, a narrative about the nexus where the trauma of unremembering meets the trauma of not being able to forget. Of video's ability to maintain permanent archives, Catherine Russell contends that "everything will be retrievable; nothing will

be lost, except the sense of loss" (1999, 314). Video surveillance has in many ways become reality's uncanny (Tziallas 2014). It is precisely that unease that manifests itself in *Pornography* and produces the opposite of Russell's contention that "subjectivity subsists within image culture as an 'other reality'—a utopian space where hierarchies of vision, knowledge, and desire are diffused and collapsed" (1999, 313): dystopia rather than utopia.

Russell argues that video, "because of its 'coverage,'" has the capacity to be "an instrument of surveillance" (Russell 1999, 313). In *Pornography*, however, video is not only inextricable from surveillance, but is also entirely subsumed by and in service of surveillance. Our sense of self and present constantly rubs up against our past selves and realities, disciplining and controlling us in the process. Even though surveillance is a phenomenon synonymous with, and an extension of our desire for, verification (Pecora 2002), it seems as though the more we try to verify ourselves and reality, the less we come to trust both.

Pornography is an intricate, if convoluted, exploration of subjectivity in the surveillance society and Web 2.0 era—fragmented and torn between past and the present and between authenticity and fabrication. Not only can we no longer trust others, but according to *Pornography* we can't even trust ourselves: our presumed self may not truly be our self at all. *Pornography* asks: in a world saturated with, and run by our, digital doppelgängers and image doubles, who is the real "me"? But *Pornography*'s narrative of self-mistrust dually functions as an allegory for the queer past, haunting and thwarting normative stability in the present.

Pornography uses the pornographic archive to symbolize the return of HIV/AIDS and anti-normativity to the forefront of queer visual and cultural political discourse. The doubling and splitting of the cotemporary gay subject expressed through Matt's cognitive and psychic dissociation articulates a subcultural feeling that normativity's reign is in the process of coming

undone: the youth who tries to leave his porn past behind dies; the white middle-class gay couple

dies; and the porn director strips down in front of a surveillance camera and confronts his

complicity with a system of visibility that has left him exposed, vulnerable, and with no

defences. Surveillance, ubiquitous recording, and easy retrievability means the past can no

longer be contained in or by the past.

Pornography's first act revolves around interrogating the self through one's documented

history. Two recurring motifs help to frame Mark's journey of self-discovery as a riddle that

needs to be solved: the crossword puzzle that Mark seems to be always doing and the scrambled

alphabet magnets on Mark's fridge, both of which offer clues and help guide the narrative.

Close-ups of Mark writing out words like "ACTION" and "MONITORED" in his crossword

puzzle give viewers hints, as do occasional glimpses of words such as "Mark," "Fuc," and what

appears to be a combination code "16 90 10" along with "0%" written out with his fridge

magnets. Mark's identity is an enigma he needs to figure out, and his identity is inextricable from

his recorded past.

At Mark's *vernissage*, we see his photographs arranged in a way that mimics a

surveillance monitor console. Six medium sized black and white images with equally thick black

borders around the top and side and a thicker border at the bottom are arranged in two rows with

an equal amount of space in between each photograph. Each image is of a space that haunts

Mark, and each image is accompanied by a short enigmatic statement about the documented

space—"This is where I didn't know any better;" "This is where I cried when no one was

looking;" "This is where I fucked for money." His project is titled "This is Where" and is

reminiscent of Canadian visual artist Vincent Chevalier's project "Places Where I've Fucked."

Chevalier's project consists of a series of photographs taken from Google of places where he has

fucked with added minimal details such as his age when he had sex in those places and the sexual activities in which he engaged. Chevalier's project is also about surveillance—medical surveillance: Chevalier is HIV-positive.

| Mark's photography project | Caption reads: "This is the place I most fear" |
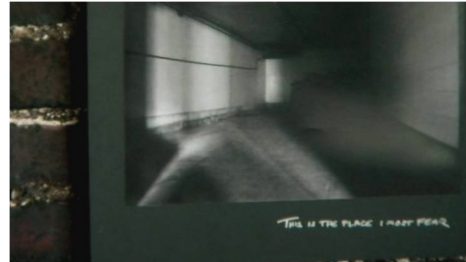
Anton's professor is uninspired, telling him that "anyone can shoot a room and put words at the bottom. What you need to do is shoot a room in a way I've never seen before." Adding, "Nice mounting work though." The emphasis on the images' arrangement is important, as is Mark's instruction to make the spaces he shoots uncanny. But the images are already uncanny. Anton, like Chevalier, is everywhere but nowhere in those images. They are captured memories of spaces that haunt and identify him, rendering him ghostlike. These private memories are coded as surveillance. Their layout aligns, if not equates, the personal recording apparatus with surveillance, constructing surveillance as a gateway to his haunted past. Although *Pornography* is not referencing Chevalier's project specifically, Chevalier's visible defiance and pride in his sexual activities that empower his HIV-positive identity are precisely what *Pornography* fears.

Mark is desperate to escape his past and porn persona that haunt and control him. Mark's porn star doppelgänger follows him wherever he goes, including his home, itself portrayed as uncanny—as not home. Mark's home doubles as his darkroom. It is a small, dark, unwelcoming space often lit with dramatic lighting filled with deep shadows and dark colours—very typically neo-noir. Strings used to hang developing film run from wall to wall that together create a web of

images invoking feelings of entrapment, paranoia, and mistrust. The home is often used to symbolize one's interiority. The arrangement of these pictures unsettles the space and speaks to his unsettled state of mind and identity.
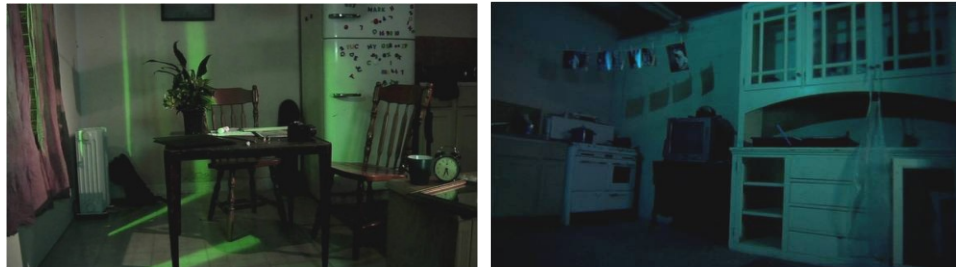
Home/not home: Mark's combined dinning-kitchen-living area

While sitting at his dining room table one evening examining a ring marked with an odd insignia (another piece of the puzzle), Mark quickly turns around after hearing a noise behind him. Seeing no one, he turns back around but decides to turn his camera sitting on the table next to him toward the area behind him, hoping to catch the elusive phantom. Mark snaps a picture, and the film quickly zooms in on the photography camera. Accompanied by a swooshing sound, the film briefly cuts to an image of a black and white image of a clock and of the turned-off television behind him. The camera captures the physical representation of time itself: his past is the ghost that watches him. The television may be off, but the image of him continues to play on televisions sets everywhere.

Mark staring behind him at the empty space   The captured phantom clock

Mark isn't haunted just by a separate but conjoined self, but also by the feeling of his first onscreen encounter attached to that other previous self kept alive by video. While Mark is

sleeping one evening, we see what is either a memory, a dream, a delusion, or some combination of all three. It is of Mark on his back with his legs up in the air being penetrated by his former co-star, Jason Steele (who is real life porn performer Dylan Vox). We return to the scene of trauma; the primal scene that birthed his porn persona. We enter this liminal space with a long shot of blindingly bright lights pointing down at the action, making the intimate act feel cold and sterile. We cut to a near POV shot from Mark of his co-star thrusting into him, and then a reverse shot taken in close-up of Mark's hollow dead eyes staring at the lights.

The diegetic camera leaves the scene of action and floats over to the camera shooting the sex scene and then turns upward to the lights that look and feel more like flood lights. As the diegetic camera makes its way over to the pornographic one recording the sexual activity, the image becomes distorted, emulating damaged video footage—this is the first time the diegetic camera announces its artifice and aligns itself with the various other recording technologies it represents. As the diegetic camera makes its way past the videographers, we see an unidentifiable person in surgical garb watching menacingly from behind the scenes. Mark immediately wakes up, looks at his television and the images that hang over it, and while staring directly into the diegetic camera reflexively instructs us—"Stop watching me." His past and present are cemented. He can't let go of the feelings he developed for Jason during that scene that made him a star, precisely because they made him a star. That private moment of intimacy and intensity that was captured on video, that made that video (*Manhattan Video Boys* [henceforth *MVB*]) a bestseller, tethers him to the past, to those feelings of closeness and vulnerability that strangers now jerk off to in the privacy of their home.

On the set of *MVB*: the three spotlights will be a recurring motif throughout the film

Jason Steele from Mark's near POV

Mark with a dead look in his eyes staring off into the distance

The diegetic camera distorts

VHS covers of the video currently being filmed

Faceless figure in medical attire lurks behind the scenes

Desperate to make enough money to finish art school and stop escorting, Mark decides to make the private video for his anonymous admirer. Mark enters an empty, seemingly abandoned office space and makes his way down a dark, almost pitch-black hallway—the same one we saw at his *vernissage*, labelled "This is the place I fear the most." Before entering, he puts on the mysterious ring that seems to beckon to him. The room is empty, containing nothing more than a voice-box, a camcorder, an empty chair, and three lights—the same number of light fixtures arranged in the same way we saw in his dream/flashback. This space is uncanny. It is familiar yet strange; alluring yet off-putting.

Mark putting on the branded ring

"This is the place I most fear" Image and reality become one

The scene of physical and psychological penetration

Mark sits under the lights in front of the camera. The patron speaks to Mark through the voice-box. Mark is left to stare into the cold eye of the recording machine. As he responds to the voice's personal questions that peel away his exterior layers, the diegetic gets closer to him as well as the lens of the camera that records him.

The diegetic and personal camera penetrates Mark and slowly extracts informing

What begins as an interview quickly becomes a psychological cross-examination—reminiscent of the interrogation scenes in *Focus/Refocus*. The personal, private camcorder takes on deeper, more sinister connotations, and the film begins to cut between the diegetic camera and personal one more frequently. The scrambled voice is particularly interested in his role in *MVB*. It rhetorically asks Mark why his other videos didn't sell as well, answering his own question by telling him, "Because you enjoyed making it." The voice then asks, "After that video, were you genuine, Mark? Did you mean what you said and did?" Mark responds by telling the voice that he is an actor, implying that his job is to perform authenticity, to make people believe that what is being performed is real. The voice quickly responds by telling Mark that he is here to be real:

"You are here tonight to perform something real. That is why you were paid to come here. We want you to be real with us." Mark angrily responds by confessing a history of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, telling the voice that they can have his "time, image, and voice" but that they cannot have his "pain." His pain is real—it's private and not for sale. Mark then exposes his genitals to the camera, asking, "Isn't this what you wanted to see?" When he goes to put them away, a door opens. The large faceless man we caught a glimpse of in Mark's dream appears. Mark tries to escape, but fails. The voice tells him, "You're going to be a star Mark, the biggest star ever. Isn't that what you always wanted?" The surgical figure injects him with an unknown substance, bringing his plotline to an end.

The return of the repressed: intravenous injection was another way HIV was spread

The first act is aesthetically dark and sombre, imbued with heavy emotions and an alienating gothic feel. It reflects Mark's fractured and displaced identity—two different selves caught in two different temporal flows. Mark is alienated from himself. Mark doesn't know himself. Most importantly, Mark doesn't trust himself. His image double, his past, splits him into two different people he can't control. Why did he return to the office he fears the most? Why did he put on that ring? When forced to confront his past, he resists, and when he resists, his past materializes and takes him down. The medical figure is his corporealized past, and it is curious that the past is represented by a menacing faceless doctor. It isn't until the second act that we find out *MVB*'s year of production: 1991, which in the third act we found out was actually 1992. The AIDS epidemic was still ravaging the gay male community, and although the commercial

gay male porn industry had adopted the condom as the new norm by the early 90s, condom use in this transitional period was not universal. In the second act, when Michael manages to track down Jason Steele to enquire about Mark Anton, Jason tells him that Mark "probably got what he deserved."

We are first introduced to the ominous medical figure on a porn video set while Mark is bottoming for his first time, and then again when Mark avoids confronting his past. It isn't clear whether Mark and Jason used condoms, but this anonymous sinister figure that watches, and continues to haunt, from afar suggests that they didn't. Who is this foreboding figure? He is AIDS, and AIDS has returned to claim Mark three years later—Mark's act is set in 1995, one year prior to the AIDS cocktail's debut in 1996. It is not insignificant that the faceless medical figure uses a needle to take down Mark: intravenous drug users were and still are at a high-risk for HIV. The needle is symbol for AIDS.

While the first plotline revolved around Mark Anton confronting himself and his past via his image double, the second plotline revolves around the search for a cultural identity through pornography, or, personal identity through the collective memory of pornography. We are introduced to our new protagonists as they tour a potential new rental unit. When Michael, questioning the apartment's relatively low rent, suggests that "it's probably haunted with the ghosts of tenants past," his partner, Will, rhetorically asks, "Show me an apartment in New York that isn't haunted." The couple's new apartment is consciously foregrounded as a gothic space, an uncanny haunted home. Michael is writing a book about gay male pornography, which for Michael is "a time capsule" and an "examination of where we've come from." Setting this archival journey into the past in a haunted space metaphorically aligns pornography with the gothic and the return of the repressed. What develops over *Pornography*'s second act is an

emerging unconscious feeling that AIDS not only infected cinema and pornography, but is also slowly *re*-infecting them.

A few days later, after picking up some mail and opening a anonymous package containing a photo of a seemingly random clock—the image we saw when Mark tried to capture that ghost behind him—Michael returns to his research, and we are treated to a revealing "work montage" sequence. Starting (somehow) with the film's opening interview of Matt playing on Michael's computer monitor while Michael talks on the phone, the film then cuts to some close-up shots of his handwritten notes. We see titles of a few gay pornographic films from the 70s such as *Boys in the Sand* and *Bijou* scribbled down. While interviewing someone on the phone, Michael states rather bluntly, "You were working in an era when a lot of your co-stars got sick." The film then cuts to a close-up shot of Michael's notepad and an anonymous list of people who have passed away. The word "Died" followed by a year, "1984, 1987…" are listed in two descending parallel columns—the names are conveniently left offscreen. We cut back to Michael asking, "Can you tell me about that?" and then cut to a close-up of him writing out "AIDS?" The montage continues with Michael contacting more people and the film cutting to close-ups of his notepad, with particular attention paid to death ("presumed dead") and memory ("selective memory"). This brief montage posits AIDS as an inextricable part of gay memory, sexuality, and moving image history—as something one cannot get over or simply leave in the past.
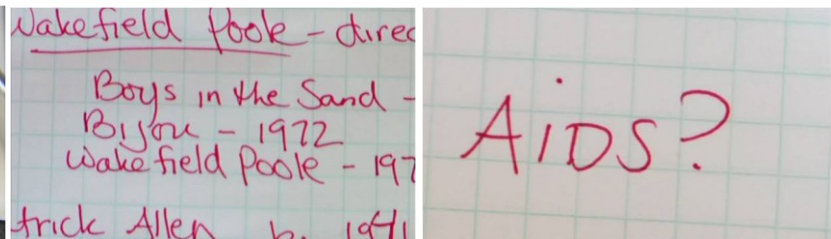
Michael's desk   Michael's handwritten notes

Pornography is gay male cultural memory (Burger 1995, Waugh 1996), but *Pornography* goes further suggesting that porn isn't just gay identity's memory, but is also its DNA—its genetic heritage. AIDS in *Pornography* is the metaphoric physical marker of the past encapsulated by pornography. AIDS, the memory of better (Gay Liberation) and worse (epidemic) times, is physically and metaphysically engraved into gay identity and sexuality. Although done with the best of intentions, Michael's archival journey disrupts the ghosts of the past, ultimately leading to this white, monogamous, stable middle class couple's undoing: the repressed returns to destabilize the tranquil present and destroy the symbolic figure of normative privilege and exclusivity that sustains it at the expense of less privileged others.

Pornography, similarly to *Focus/Refocus*, undermines surveillance's unity with security, realigning it instead with the return of the repressed and instability. Just after moving into his apartment, Michael notices oddly patterned holes in several corners of his new living space. He quickly realizes that the holes were drilled to install ceiling mounts to hold up cameras. At one point his entire apartment was completely *covered* by video recorders—even his bathroom. The personal recording device was used as a surveillance camera, but rather than secure the private sphere, surveillance compromised the home's security, leaving it vulnerable and exposed. Surveillance collapses past and present, fusing together the space captured on tape and the one Michael currently inhabits. The recording apparatus becomes the conduit through which the past returns, framing it as a dual entity haunted by its own disciplinary origins. Although the cameras are gone, the physical index of their previous existence maintains them as spectres. Michael can feel the ghost-like apparatus watching him—the past has not disappeared. And similarly to another set films about surveillance and the home released around the same time, the

Paranormal Activity series, one evening the phantom surveillance cameras come alive and possess the men, turning their home into a modern day haunted house.

Michael figuring out the holes' function

Michael shot from a surveillance angle

Michael, feeling the spectral gaze, turns around and discovers…

holes in the corner of his shower. Even the bathroom was monitored

After a quiet evening making dinner and discussing the motivations for his book, Michael decides to screen *MVB* as an example of good porn filmmaking made after 1977 for Will. "There is something about it" Michael likes. "It seems more genuine," he says, jokingly adding, "Bet they never thought they'd be watched years and years later on video… forever." Will, with an almost blank look in his eyes, responds with a whisper, "You're going to be a big star; the biggest star ever." Seemingly possessed by the video, he tells Michael, "Something about this…this video. Something's wrong." The film then cuts to the couple in bed and then to a surveillance angle shot of Michael alone in bed. The camera distorts a split second before Michael wakes up and then again a few seconds later. As though under the camera's power, Michael gets up and like a somnambulist heads to his computer, where he discovers a video file labelled *KEEP OUT.mov* has mysteriously appeared on his computer's desktop.

Michael shot from a surveillance angle   The diegetic camera distorts

This is the second time we see the diegetic camera distort, but this time the allusion to surveillance is far more pronounced. Not only is the diegetic camera adopting a surveillance angle, but it is also located in the room's corner where a previous camera that kept the bedroom under surveillance was mounted. The diegetic camera's distortion announces its temporary modification into a surveillance camera—into an instrument of control. The camera no longer passively observes, but actively intervenes. Most importantly, however, its temporary manifestation into an instrument of surveillance collapses past and present. The eyes of the past watch Michael and Will, and the activities of the past haunt their home: previously recorded images and present physical reality fuse together.

Michael clicks the video and sees Will bound and gagged on a gurney—he has been transported into the televisual realm of pornography. After about three seconds, the faceless medical figure jumps into the frame scaring Michael awake—it was just a dream. The next morning while putting away books, Michael sees a loose panel behind his bookshelf. He removes the panel and finds a mini DV cassette, which also happens to bear the insignia we've seen on Mark Anton's ring. Michael inserts this found footage cassette into his DV camera. Distorted images of someone who looks like a struggling Mark Anton strapped to a gurney play briefly on Michael's television. The video, however, tangles after a few seconds.

From observation to participation: Will gets absorbed into the screen after watching Mark Anton's moment of emotional trauma in *MVB*

Michael's historical investigation has led him to an infamous and elusive snuff video of Mark Anton. Michael befriends a local video store owner and porn expert, Harry, who helps him with his research. Harry tells Michael about the snuff video—"a real life ghost story," according to Harry—which becomes the key to unlocking Mark Anton's past and the code to deciphering Michael's attraction to his hit video. The snuff film is pornography's dystopic double—it is where *la petite mort* and *la mort* collide. Not surprisingly, it is also a term used by some to describe bareback pornography—"an attenuated version of a snuff film" (Dean 2009, 113). In *Pornography* the snuff video symbolizes both AIDS and barebacking—sex that leads to death; sex as death. Although *MVB* is not a snuff film per se, it helps lead Michael to the snuff film, conceptually aligning the two. Michael decides to re-watch *MVB* for new clues.

MVB is a sex-filled quest to retrieve a home sex tape two boyfriends shot but accidentally returned to their local video. At one point in *MVB* Mark Anton sarcastically tells Jason Steele he hid their tape behind the bookcase, compelling Michael to look behind his bookcase a second time. The first time was based on a hunch, compelled by his dream the night before. The second time is an informed choice: he has textual evidence. Michael doesn't find another video, but what he does find is a business card with a password and the same insignia found on the video. While shooting the card in close-up, the diegetic camera distorts. Michael is getting closer. This discovery leads him to a secret underground club where people screen snuff films.

The snuff club is presented as a gothic space unsettled by the captured ghosts of the past, but on the surface reads as a kink club: dark, anonymous (everyone wears a mask), a series of shadowy hallways link together private and public (screening) rooms. The snuff club alludes to kink as a way to combine the primal rawness of leather sexuality and dreamlike fantasy of the cinema, but whose tone, lighting, and colour palette also bear uncanny resemblance to Mark Anton's apartment, symbolically suturing together these two spaces. Voyeurism is tantamount to participation in the snuff club: transformation through observation. Like Burns in *Cruising*, Michael is out of his element in this perverted underworld that has drawn him in. As in *Shortbus*, the space he discovers is a public gathering for people to explore their alternative sexuality. Similarly to *Focus/Refocus*, we see amateur footage of sexualized death being publically projected on the big screen, and like Joe, Michael is lured to this haunted space by a homemade sex tape—the fictional one in *MVB* and his own.

Michael watching a video of a young man being killed projected on the big screen

After peering into one of the screening rooms and seeing someone being murdered on the big screen, Michael panics and heads to bathroom to calm himself, repeating, "It can't be real." A masked stranger approaches him and asks, "You like to watch"? Michael replies, "Yes, I like to watch." Michael is taken to a room filled with videos, sequentially numbered and branded with the mysterious insignia—similar to the videos we saw when Mark Anton was trying to escape the faceless medical figure. He flatly states, "Mark Anton" and is given a DVD and a portable DVD player. Instead of Mark Anton's snuff video, Michael sees surveillance footage of

himself handing over the damaged snuff video to Harry, watching himself act out *MVB*'s key plot point—the moment Mark Anton mistakenly returns his personal recording to the video store, compromising his and his boyfriend's privacy. Although by this point *Pornography* has established the relationship between video, surveillance, and the past, this is the first moment where it links pornography to surveillance and the return of the repressed. Michael panics and runs away, but not before catching a glimpse on a television screen of someone being injected with an unknown substance. Michael has seen too much. The images will resonate with him.
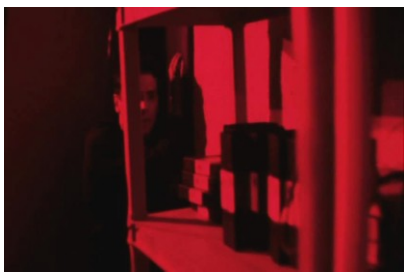
| Mark hiding in a room filled with stamped VHS tapes | "Branded" DVDs | Michael watching surveillance footage of himself at Harry's store |
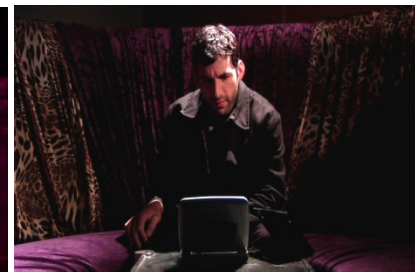
Wedged in between Michael's visit to the snuff club and his discovery of the snuff video is an important scene where Michael and Will decide to make their own sex tape. The scene is introduced with a quick close-up pan of Michael's notes written in red ink with the word "AIDS" standing out rather prominently amongst scribbled-together names and dates. From there we cut to the happy couple in bed, and then Will jumping out of bed to place their personal camcorder on a plastic container at the corner of the room facing their bed—from the same place where the diegetic camera watched Michael sleep before. The film cuts back and forth between shots of the recording apparatus staring menacingly at the couple being intimate and shots of the couple taken from the camcorder's POV. The sequence repeats the zooming motif we saw earlier during Mark Anton's examination. As the gaze gets closer and closer, the frame gets tighter and tighter: the personal camcorder becomes the mediator, the midpoint between the diegetic and surveillance camera.

The POV shots are taken from a surveillance angle, although from not as high a level, and too begin to distort. Rather than Michael with Will, we see Michael gyrating all alone, moaning as if possessed or having sex with a ghost. We cut back to the diegetic camera and Will, seemingly possessed again, stops and tells Michael that someone is in their apartment. The couple head to the living room where Will, naked and in a trance, points to where the surveillance cameras were located and says, "There was one there and one there…he wanted to get all the angles," and whispers, "Smile for the camera." The homemade sex tape scene is manifestly gothic. Both Will and Michael seem to be possessed by some outside force, and minimal lighting ensures the space and characters are engulfed in pitch black shadows. Michael and Will's faces lie half in the dark, underscoring their duality: their sense of self is split; they exist in two places and temporal periods at the same time. As on previous occasions, the gothic is invoked to underscore a moment when identity is coming undone—curiously, in this instance, when emphasis is also being placed on surveillance.

The penetrating camera returns   Televisual control: cameras are everywhere

Similarly to *Focus/Refocus*, the private couple's decision to film their sexual activity leads to their demise: they mimicked what they saw in porn, and it led to their downfall. Michael and Will end up living out *MVB*'s narrative, as if they couldn't stop themselves from making the sex tape—as if they were playing out a script already written for them. In the surveillance society, one can never truly escape the past or themselves.

The second act comes to a close with the return of the masked medical figure. Michael returns home from the snuff club and loads the salvaged snuff footage from a private backup drive he stole from Harry's store onto his computer. Mark Anton's heavily distorted final testimony plays, followed by images of him being strapped down to a gurney. In dreamlike fashion Michael discovers an envelope on his desk filled with photos from the future: they are of him looking at the pictures he is currently looking at, taken from where the surveillance camera used to be located. "This Is Where They're Coming" is written on the back of the photograph—a reference to Mark's art project. Mark Anton screams to Michael from within the video that he wrote the note on the back of the photograph. Mark tries to warn Michael (from the past?) but is too late. Will enters the apartment looking like a husk of who he used to be. He tilts his head upward releasing a demonic noise that summons the evil faceless doctor. The medical figure knocks Will to the ground and traps Michael in a corner. He injects Michael with a syringe, transporting him into the torture video. Michael looks up at the camera, gives a diabolical glance, and then injects a needle into Mark's neck. Michael is absorbed into the televisual. His and Will's sex tape has unleashed the past, allowing the repressed to return and fully merge with the present. AIDS has claimed them too.

| Michael looking at a picture of himself looking at that very same picture | Mark Anton trying to warn Michael in the present from from the past | Timelines collapse: Michael is absorbed into the televisual |

The third act begins with Matt Stevens, the person we first saw being interviewed, waking up from a nightmare. He heads to the bathroom and then to his table where he begins to type out the first two acts—our first full image is of him split in two by his medicine cabinet's mirror. Matt is a porn star who wants to try his hand at directing. Apparently the first two acts were a dream that he now wants to turn into a "porno thriller"—like *Focus/Refocus*. Matt heads to work and as he make his way to the porn studio boss's office to pitch his idea, he gives a stagehand—who happens to be Harry's video assistant from the second act—a brief synopsis:

> The first act is guided by the theme of "Innocence" and tells the story of Mark Anton, a young man who "gets brought into the biz by an unscrupulous, low-rent producer; makes a few movies, big hit. Bam! Act two. 'Complications.' He's on smack. His co-star fucks him over. Weird shit's going on. Is it real? Is it all in his head? So he gets out, gets clean. But then act three, Bam! He's with the love of his life. There's a big money one night offer. Mark knows this is his one chance to leave that world forever. So…" Matt stops there, telling the stagehand he has to read the script to find out the rest, but tells him that "the end is killer."

Mark and Michael are, apparently, the same person in this fictive dream turned potential porn flick. In a move right out of David Lynch's playbook (Steward 2010), and several others, *Pornography*'s third act is actually the second act of Matt's proposed story. What we saw were

the first and third acts jumbled together—Mark's descent and Michael's (Mark's) relapse. What we're going to see now is technically the second act, the one where "he's on smack" and "his co-star fucks him over." As the final plotline unfolds, we are introduced to various characters from the previous two acts but as entirely different people; the most important being Will who is now a porn star named Jason (Steele?). Matt meets Jason at a club one night, and tells him, "I dreamed about you. You were my boyfriend, but you weren't really you and I wasn't really me." Jason and Jason Steele are never in the same scene, suggesting that they are the same person— the *homme fatal* that fucks Matt over.

The final act is both intricate and purposely vague, collapsing various timelines, characters, realities, and alternate realities into one singular dreamlike nightmare. The line between reality and fantasy completely dissolves by the end of the third act. Reality gets absorbed into pornography. Porn literally swallows up reality: reality becomes a porn movie. Matt discovers a copy of *MVB* but begins shooting his "remake" anyway, becoming Mark's doppelgänger and vice versa in the process. We watch Matt, playing Mark Anton, get interviewed ("audition") by the unscrupulous low-rent porn producer and introduced to Jason Steele. We then watch Matt as Mark and Jason Steele recreate the scene of passion that made Mark a star and his downward spiral into drug addiction. "You have to fall in love a little bit with the guy you're with," Jason Steele tells Matt right before they film their scene. "The camera can see it somehow.[41] The hottest scenes come from the most intimate place." Although a

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[41] In his interview with Paasonen, Paul Morris makes an interesting correlation between surveillance, authenticity, and bareback porn. "Energy and intensity are critical elements in gay porn, elements that are watched for and monitored by audiences," he claims (2014, 224). Morris aligns the process of watching pornography with surveillance: a scrutinizing gaze examining

professional production this specific scene is denoted as "amateur"—Jason and Mark are/were, after all, filming a "private" home sex tape. But Jason's word choice, "intimacy," adds an additional level of rawness to the scene's realness. Curiously, condom use is never mentioned.

Watching this uncanny seen unfold in front of our eyes, we return to the primal scene, to the scene of trauma that Mark/Matt tries unremember, to escape from. We watch Matt as he conceives *and* gives birth to his own image double, his porn doppelgänger that slowly consumes and annihilates him—the search for real love and intimacy in and through porn ultimately destroys his sense of reality. The primal porn sequence makes heavy use of superimposition and distortion—worlds and identities collide. A few scenes later when Matt and Jason/Will return to Mark Anton's apartment, the uncanny home, to shoot their sex scene, the medical figure appears. As in Mark's flashback/dream, Matt is on his back being penetrated and catches a glimpse of the evil surgeon honing in on his ring—AIDS will claim him too.

Matt and Jason: "You have to fall in love a little bit with the guy you're with."

behaviour that is always on the lookout for any moment that shatters the illusion of the real. "If participants use a condom, this will be real sex for some but not-real (that is, not "committed") sex for others" (2014, 222). To which Paasonen, referring to Dyer's work on utopia and cinema ([1977] 2003), writes, ""'authentically,' without holding back.' These aspects are particularly central to the performance styles and the physical presence of the people doing porn" (2014, 224). The camera can "detect" fraudulence. The camera is an agent of detection.

Identities, realities, temporalities converge

Pornography's uroboric narrative concludes by returning to Mark's storyline. Matt is guided to an undisclosed location and told to enter the basement. His descent recalls Michael's entrance into the snuff film club and Mark's entrance into the testimonial space, equating the two types of recordings via their spatial convergence. Matt makes his way to the same room we previously saw Mark enter. Matt, like Mark, puts on a ring bearing the same insignia before he enters, and like Mark he is asked to sign a contract, legally relinquishing control over his image. When he refuses to sign, an apparent live feed of Will/Jason tied to a gurney with a ball gag in his mouth being tortured by the faceless doctor appears. Matt complies and begins to talk to the camera. He becomes increasingly frustrated, and as his frustrations wear thin the diegetic camera begins to distort—he is coming undone. As this scene of unraveling unfolds, the diegetic camera continuously finds itself shooting from a surveillance angle—the scene of surveillance is under surveillance. Matt demands the person watching him come out and deal with him, telling him that he's a real person made of flesh and blood and not just an image—a speech directed at both patron and viewer alike. Matt rips up the contract and then leans forward and disconnects the feed to the lone camcorder.

The scene of surveillance under surveillance

History repeating: the past is inescapable

We cut to the very first shot we saw of Mark doing a crossword puzzle back at the diner. Is this a dream? Have we gone back in time? Has Matt entered and merged himself with the recorded image, like in *Bijou*? Matt sees and walks up to Mark and tells him that he can write his own story; all he has to do is wake up. We cut to a shot of a surveillance camera and then back to Matt telling Mark to stop pretending and to "be real" for him—Mark can never change the recorded past, though; his image double will always be breathing over his shoulder. We then see Matt sitting at the booth alone—he has fully merged with, and taken over, his manufactured image double. He looks up at the surveillance camera. The film cuts to a shot of the surveillance camera, and then to a shot taken from the surveillance camera's POV. Matt stands up, walks to the camera and begins to disrobe. The image frequently distorts and similarly to Mark ends with Matt rhetorically asking, "Isn't this what you wanted to see?" Instead of Matt posing this question to a personal camcorder he poses it to a surveillance camera. Surveillance hasn't devoured the recording apparatus: the recording apparatus was always a surveillance apparatus. The surveillance camera quickly zooms in on Matt's face and cuts when Matt says "cut"—cinema, porn, and surveillance have converged into a singular stream.

Matt, like the construction worker in *Bijou*, strips down and confronts his image, but rather than an image in a mirror, he confronts the apparatus that reduces him to an image

In his short review of *Pornography*, Henry Stewart (2010) observes that

> any gay-themed ghost story is also going to touch on that heftiest specter of all haunting
>
> the gay community. Montgomery [Michael] has nightmares about a snuff film that turns
>
> out (possibly) to be real: in it, Grey [Mark] is strapped to a gurney, gagged, screaming
>
> muffled cries for help; the setting looks like a nightmarish take on a hospital, provoking
>
> thoughts of, say, St. Vincent's in the 80s. That the story of a lost porn star hangs over
>
> strangers fifteen years later suggests how, in the After-AIDS gay community, the past
>
> still looms particularly heavy over the present.

Pornography engages subcultural apprehensions over the return of HIV/AIDS and barebacking

and the threat they pose to normativity, stability, and cohesion through the theme of self-

fragmentation and degeneration. The film is not so much concerned about porn, but about the

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return of the past through porn—through past porn buried in the archives. Snuff in *Pornography* is a metaphor for bareback porn—the apex of intimacy, vulnerability, and the real in gay male culture. *Pornography* opens with a Matt directly addressing an amateur camcorder but ends with him stripping naked, hiding nothing, from a surveillance camera. The recording apparatus has stripped him bare, leaving exposed, vulnerable, and fragile. The technology that promises to liberate is also one that disciplines and never forgets. *Pornography*'s uroboric narrative: a meta-narrative of gay culture's birth and death through images. The repressed has returned: liberation through discipline.

Coda: Sex, Apps, and Videotape: Future Research Paths

Doubling is a theme endemic to queer representation, but the sameness of psychic splitting and sexual desire only partly accounts for this phenomenon. Political and ideological differences as well as technological changes play crucial roles in maintaining gay identity as an implicitly doubled phenomenon and experience, cinched by the battles over gay marriage. On June 26th, 2015 the United States Supreme Court legalized gay marriage. The fight for marriage equality in America has come to an end. But while thousands have fought long and hard for the right to legally wed, gay male culture had been undergoing a concurrent counter-revolution.

Since its 2009 launch, Grindr as well as several other gay male social networking applications (GMSNAs) have transformed "what it means and feels like to be gay" (Tziallas 2015d). GMSNAs such as Grindr and Scruff have presented sustained challenges to the mainstream liberal-normative framework of monogamy and family. The ideological split is immediately apparent to anyone who actively reads gay media publications: on one hand a series of headlines about gay marriage victories (and defeats) and images of happy couples embracing on the steps of various legislation buildings or reciting their vows; on the other hand, a series of

headlines that comment on, and images that depict all things relating to, GMSNAs: the prevalence of open relationships, cock pic decorum; the tyranny of headless torsos; concerns about safer sex and STD infections; and list goes on.

On one hand we have a discursive set of media representing liberal normative values, projecting a collective image of continued heteromimesis; on the other hand, we have a set of discursive media that represents gay culture as the exact opposite, openly and avowedly testifying to gay male culture as anti-normative: promiscuous and non-committal. Although in queer media this split is more obvious, one generally only hears about gay marriage in mainstream media. Hipper publications distributed online (Huffington Post, Slate, Salon, Vice) will feature the occasional article, but printed media tend to avoid discussing GMSNAs, but not entirely (Harris 2013)—unless, of course, it's to pathologize gay male sexuality, such as in the recent trial of Canadian killer Luka Magnotta (Minksy 2014). If something can be used to demonize non-normative practices, then major media outlets will pay attention.

The future of commercial pornography and queer cinema is unknown, as is the role they will play shaping the contours of gay social and self-identity, but the conceptual framework they've enacted has transferred over to the realm of digital interaction. Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000) argue that traces of previous media are present within each evolutionary media interval, calling this phenomenon *remediation*. More recently, Catherine Zimmer (2015) has argued that contemporary media have evolved to negate their surveillance base structure, while I have argued that GMSNAs are forms of "gamified surveillance" (Tziallas 2015d). GMSNAs mediate cinematic and pornographic forms of identification, interaction, and affect (Arroyo 2015), returning gay male culture to its gothic origins but through the circuitry and logistics of surveillance—digitizing and expanding the tearoom (Mowlabocus 2008). The ability to touch

and be put in touch with a seemingly endless supply of gay men just outside one's reach has engendered a culture where gay men appear and then dissipate into him air—such as Peter Fisk in *Boys in the Sand*. But rather than take place entire within physical reality, these ghostly encounters are mediated through screens. Conversation start, end, and re-start again. Profiles and people appear, disappear, and reappear again.

GMSNAs rely on surveillance technologies, techniques, and protocols as well as the disciplinary underpinnings of gay male culture (Mowlabocus 2010; Roth 2014)—*masc musc* (masculine muscular) seeking same; hairy and bearded for same only: the Castro clone has returned! Although the men may disappear, they leave traces behind in the form of images and captured conversations. Traces are always left behind in the surveillance society; traces that can be traced back to that person (Reigeluth 2014). On GMSNAs there is no past, only permanent present. One's digital double is not entitled to the same privacy as their corporeal referent (Young 2012): the things they say, do, and show aren't easily forgotten, if at all. GMSNAs have rendered the experience of gay culture uncanny. Images and people become one and the same— *You look so familiar…I know you from somewhere*….But rather than return us to gothic visions of *Sand*, GMSNAs seem to actualize the gothic essence of *Stranger by the Lake*; rather than community there is only the self always centrally located within the dead centre of an imaginary notion of "community." The return to, or of, the origins of gay identity through the lens of surveillance may actualize the anti-social impulse of queer negativity and the neoliberal consumerist logic that undergirds Gay Liberation's self-driven, fleeting connections (Wilson 1984).

Telepresence is how Ken Hillis describes new media culture of the understanding of the self in the age of hyper-media. "Telepresence is really akin to creating a sign in the form of an

index or trace," writes Hillis. "It literally asks the individual to become one with the image" (2009, 215), arguing that the "haunting return of the trace" governs our sense of self (Hillis 2009, 217). With GMSNAs absorbing and fundamentally altering more and more of aspects of gay life, what we are experiencing and witnessing is the convergence of the gothic and surveillance. And *Pornography* and *Focus/Refocus* are not they only films that demonstrate anxiety about the potential consequences of two antithetical driving forces further fusing together through technology. Several queer films from across the globe have reflexively engaged the precariousness of the recording apparatus as an object of surveillance and gothic entity through which the past is always and already set to return.

Blackmail has become a recurring theme once again. The 2003 Greek film *Blackmail Boy* (*Oxygono)* focuses on a young Greek man being blackmailed by his brother-in-law with a tape of him having sex with an older man. The 2010 American film *Blackmail Boys* revolves around a plot to seduce, film, and then blackmail a homophobic religious figure having gay sex. *Surveillance 24/7* (UK, 2007) is told almost entirely through CCTV and follows a young gay man being hunted by a group of elites for taking accidental possession of evidence of a secret gay affair in the royal family. All three films centre on not only sex, but also surveillance and doubling—the enduring duality of the closet and the surveillance of gay sexuality—returning to the standard pre-Stonewall gay plot of blackmail that dates back to *Anders als die Andern* (Germany, 1919) and reused again in *Victim* (UK 1961)—from evolution and progress to devolution and regression.

Other films have explored the relationship between recording and temporality delving further into the connections between surveillance and the gothic vis-à-vis doubling. In the American indie film *Judas Kiss* (2011), Zachary, a failed filmmaker, returns to his alma mater to

judge the same student film festival he won fifteen years ago that ultimately ruined his life. Seemingly going back in time, while there he meets and sleeps with his twenty-year-old self, giving him a chance to correct his previous mistakes and save himself from his present misery. In *2 Minutes Later* (USA, 2007) a lesbian police offer helps a sexually conflicted gay man solve the disappearance of his twin brother, a portrait artist, whose identity he appropriates to track his brother down, becoming his actual double.

Botting referring to Derrida (1992) writes: "Always at the limits of normality, monsters point to the future, opening a space for something other, 'that for which we are not prepared.' 'A future that would not be monstrous,' he continues, 'would not be a future; it would already be predictable, calculable, and programmable tomorrow'" (2014, 12). Without futurity's haunting (Shaviro 2013), without the unpredictability of the gothic, there is only surveillance. In our hyper-media present, however, what we are collectively bearing witness to is the fusion of the gothic and surveillance. The above mentioned films along with the AIDS Retro cycle collectively bespeak the imminence of something's return. Is it another AIDS epidemic? Indiscriminate promiscuity? The closet? All three? The return of freedom? The end of freedom? Only time will tell, but hopefully this study will help to better prepare us for that something when it arrives.

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Appendix A: Sample List of Adolescent Coming Out/Of Age/Romance Films

The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love (1995), USA, Dir. Maria Maggenti, b. 1962: Two high school girls (17/18 years old) fall in love with each other.

Beautiful Thing (1996), UK, Dir. Hettie Macdonald; Playwright, Jonathan Paul Harvey, b. 1968: Two British adolescent boys fall in love and publically come together to their neighbours.

Edge of Seventeen (1998), USA, David Moreton: A 17 year old boy slowly comes out of the closet during his final year of high school.

Fögi Is A Bastard (F. est un Salaud) (1998), Sweden, Dir. Marcel Gisler, b. 1960: A 15 year old boy falls in love with a male rock singer ten years his senior.

Head On (1998), Australia, Dir. Ana Kokkinos, b. 1958: A day in the life of Greek 19 year old male living in Melbourne.

Show Me Love (*Fucking Åmå*) (1998), Sweden, Dir. Lukas Moodysson, b. 1969: Follows the blossoming of two female Swedish teens.

But I'm a Cheerleader (1999), USA, Dir. Jamie Babbit, b. 1970: satire about a 17 year old lesbian sent to ex-gay therapy.

Get Real (1999), UK, Dir. Simon Shore, b. 1959: A British high school student develops a crush on a closeted athlete and publically comes to his entire school and family.

Come Undone (*Presque rien*) (2000), France, Dir. Sebastien Lifshitz, b. 1968: Two French 18 year old boys fall in love over a summer and slowly out of love.

Nico and Dani (*Krámpack*) (2000), Spain, Dir. Cesc Gay, b. 1967: Two 17 year old male Spanish friends explore their sexuality with each other.

L.I.E (2001), USA, Dir. Michael Cuesta, b. 1963: 15 year old boy explores his sexuality with someone his own age and an older ephebophile/pedophile.

You'll Get Over It (*À cause d'un garcon*) (2002), France, Dir. Fabrice Cazeneuve, b. 1952: A 16 year old male French high school student struggles with his secret romance and is eventually kicked out of school after being outed and bullied.

Latter Days (2003), USA, C. Jay Cox, b. 1962: A gay party boy falls in love with a young male Mormon missionary.

Dorian Blues (2004), USA, Dir. Tennyson Bardwell: Dorian is a gay male teen who starts coming out to friends and family in his last year of high school and deals with the subsequent fallout.

Mysterious Skin (2004), USA, Dir. Gregg Araki, b. 1959: Examines the diverging paths into adulthood two pre-adolescent boys take after being sexually abused by their baseball coach.

Poster Boy (2004), USA, Zak Tucker: A closeted college student and son of a conservative U.S. senator throws his father's campaign off course with the help of new slightly older crush.

Summer Storm (*Sommerstrum*) (2004), Germany, Dir. Marco Kreuzpaintner, b. 1977: A young male German teen is gently nudged out of the closet when his rowing team is forced to camp with another team of gay-only rowers.

The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros [*Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros*] (2005), The Philippines, Auraeus Solito: A 12 year old male Filipino youth falls in love with a police officer and seeks acceptance from his family.

C.R.A.Z.Y. (2005), Canada, Dir. Jean-Marc Vallée, b. 1963: Chronicles the adolescence of Zac and his sexual self-exploration in Quebec in the 70s.

Whole New Thing (2005), Canada, Dir. Amon Buchbinder, b. 1958: A 13 year old Nova Scotian teen falls in love with his teacher.

Glue (Historia adolescente en medio de la nada) (2006), Argentina, Dir. Alexis Dos Santos, b. 1974: A 15 year old Patagonian teen explores his sexuality with teens of similar age.

Water Lilies (*Naissance des Pieuvres*) (2006), France, Dir. Céline Sciamma, b. 1978: A coming of age film that revolves around the sexual awakenings of three 15 year old girls in the suburbs of Paris.

Shelter (2007), USA, Jonah Markowitz: A recent high school graduate puts college on hold because of family obligations and falls in love with his best friends' brother.

Were the World Mine (2008), USA, Tom Gufstafson: An openly gay male high school teen uses magic to turn a homophobic small town gay and help a curious rugby player in need of guidance.

North Sea Texas (Noordzee, Texas) (2011), Belgium, Dir. Bavo Defurne, b. 1971: Set in Belgium in the 70s, the film chronicles the adolescent sexual awakening of Pim and his secret love affair with Gino.

Pariah (2011), USA, Dee Rees: A black teenage lesbian comes to term with her sexuality, identity, and mother's rejection.

Blue Is the Warmest Colour (*La vie d'Adèle*) (2013), France, Dir. Abdellatif Kechiche, b. 1960; Author, Julie Maroh, b. 1985: A closeted young French high school girl falls in love with a slightly older out woman.

Gerontophilia (2013), Canada, Bruce LaBruce, b. 1964: 18 year old boy falls in love with a male senior citizen.

Geography Club (2013), USA, Gary Entin 1985: A fake high school geography club doubles as an association for closeted teens and helps closeted Russell come to terms with his secret relationship.

Filmography

#

The 1,000 Load Fuck. Treasure Island Media, USA, 2009, Adult Movie

2 Minutes Later. Robert Gaston, USA, 2007, 78 min

3 Needles. Thom Fitzgerald, Canada, 2005, 127 min

8mm. Joel Shumacher, USA, 1999, 123 min

A

Abuse. Arthur J. Bressan Jr., USA, 1983, 94

Adam and Steve. Jeff Kanew, USA, 2005, 91 min

Adam Killian Raw Wet Dream, Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2014, Adult Movie

The ADS Epidemic. John Greyson, Canada, 1987, 5 min

The Adventures of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert. Stephen Elliott, Australia, 1994, 104 min

All About My Mother (Todo Sobre Mi Madre). Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 1999, 101 min

All Over the Guy. Julie Davis, USA, 2001, 95 min

All the Presidents Men. Alan J. Pakula, USA, 1976, 138 min

American Horror Story. Brad Falchuk and Ryan Murphy, USA, 2011-present, TV Series

An Early Frost. John Erman. USA. 1985, 100 min

And The Band Played On. Roger Spottiswoode, USA, 1993, 141 min

Anders als die Andern (*Different from Others*). Richard Oswald, Germany, 1919, 50 min

Angels in America (USA, 2003)

Antonia's Line (Antonia). Marleen Gorris, The Netherlands, 1995, 102 min

Army of Lovers or Revolt of the Perverts (*Armee der Liebenden oder Revolte der Perversen*).

Rosa von Praunheim, Germany, 1979, 107 min

Assassin, Lucas Entertainment. USA, 2011, Adult Movie

B

Bad Education (La mala educación). Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 2004, 106 min

Bareback Auditions. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2014, Adult Movie

Bareback Lovers. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2013, Adult Movie

Bareback Sex Fest. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2014, Adult Movie

Barebacking Balls Deep. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2014, Adult Movie

Basic Instinct. Paul Verhoeven, USA, 1992, 127 min

Beautiful Thing. Hettie Macdonald, UK, 1996, 90 min

Bedrooms and Hallways. Rose Troche, UK, 1998, 96 min

Behind the Candelabra. Steven Soderbergh, USA, 2013, 118

Better Than Chocolate. Anne Wheeler, Canada, 1999, 101 min

Beyond the Walls. David Lambert, France, 2012, 98 min

The Big Gay Musical. Casper Andreas and Fred M. Caruso, USA, 2009, 90 min

Bijou. Wakefield Poole. 1972, USA, Adult Movie

Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss. Tommy O'Haver, USA, 1998, 92 min

The Birdcage. Mike Nichols, USA, 1996, 117 min

Blackmail Boy (Oxygono). Thanasis Papathanasiou and Michalis Reppas, *Greece,* 2003, 100 min

Black Swan, Darren Aronofsky, USA, 2010, 108 min

Black Star: Autobiography of a Close Friend, USA, 1977, 85 min

The Blair Witch Project,. Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, USA, 1999, 81 min

Blue Is the Warmest Color (*La vie d'Adèle*). Abdellatif Kechiche, France, 2013, 179 min

Body Double. Brian De Palma, USA, 1984, 114 min

Blow Out. Brian De Palma. USA, 1981, 107 min

The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros (*Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros*). Auraeus Solito,

     The Philippines, 2005, 100 min

The Bonfire of the Vanities. Brian De Palma, USA, 1990, 125 min

Boys Don't Cry. Kimberly Peirce, USA, 1999, 118 min

The Boys from Brazil. Franklin J Schaffner, USA, 1978, 125 min

The Boys in the Band. William Friedkin, USA, 1970, 118 min

The Boys in the Sand. Wakefield Poole, USA, 1971, Adult Movie

Bound. Andy and Lana Wachowski. USA, 1996, 108 min

Boys Culture. Q. Allan Brocka, USA, 2006, 88 min

Bright Eyes. Stuart Marshall, UK, 1984, 85 min

Brokeback Mountain. Ang Lee, USA, 2005, 134 min

Brothers and Sisters. Jon Robin Baitz (Creator), USA, 2006-2011, TV series

Brown Bunny. Vincent Gallo, USA, 2003, 93 min

Bruno. Larry Charles. USA, 2009, 81 min

Bug Chaser. Ian Wolfley, USA, 2013, 20 min

But I'm a Cheerleader. Jamie Babbit, USA, 1999, 85 min

C

Caravaggio. Derek Jarman, USA, 1986, 93 min

Chaser. Sal Bardo, USA, 2014, 15 min

The Case Against 8. Ben Cotner and Ryan White, USA, 2014, 109 min

Un Chant d'amour. Jean Genet, France, 1950, 26 min

Christian and His Stamp-Collector Friend. Germany, c. 196—

Chutney Popcorn. Misha Ganatra, USA, 1999, 92 min

Circumstance. Maryam Kshavarz, Iran/USA/France, 2011, 107 min

A Clockwork Orange. Stanley Kubrick, UK, 1971, 136 min

Clueless. Amy Heckerling. USA, 1995, 97 min

Coma. Michael Crichton, USA, 1978, 113 min

Come Undone (*Presque rien*). Sébastien Lifshitz, France, 2000, 98 min

The Conversation. Francis Ford Coppola, 1974, 113 min

C.R.A.Z.Y. Jean-Marc Vallée, Canada, 2005, 127 min

Crimes of the Future. David Cronenberg, Canada, 1970, 70 min

Cruising. William Friedkin, USA, 1980, 102 min

D

Dallas Buyers Club. Jean-Marc Vallée, USA, 2013, 117 min

Dangerous Liaisons. Stephen Frears, USA/UK, 1988, 119 min

Dangerous Liaisons. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2005, Adult Movie

Dawson's 20 Load Weekend. Max Sohl, USA, 2004, Adult Movie

Deleted Scenes. Todd Verow, USA, 2010, 89 min

Demon Seed. Donald Cammell, USA, 1977, 94 min

Descent. Steven Scarborough, USA, 1999, Adult Movie

Desert Hearts. Donna Deitch, USA, 1985, 96 min

Dorian Blues. Tennyson Bardwell, USA, 2004, 88 min

Dressed to Kill. Brian De Palma, 1980, USA, 105 min

E

eCupid. J.C. Calciano, USA, 2011, 95 min

Edge of Seventeen. David Moreton, USA, 1998, 99 min

Edward II. Derek Jarman, UK, 1991, 87 min

The Event. Thom Fitzgerald, Canada/USA, 2003, 110 min

Eyes Wide Open (Einayim Petukhoth). Haim Tabakman, Israel, 2009, 91 min

F

Fast Trip, Long Drop. Gregg Bordowitz, USA, 1993, 54 min

Fatal Attraction. Adrian Lyne, USA, 1987, 119 min

Femme Fatale. Brain De Palma, USA, 2002, 114 min

Fire. Deepa Mehta, Canada/India, 1996, 104 min

Fireworks. Kenneth Anger, USA, 1947, 20 min

Floating. William Roth, USA, 1997, 90 min

Focus. Chris Ward, Ben Leon, and Tony Dimarco, USA, 2009, Adult Film

Focus/Refocus: When Porn Kills. Chris Ward, Ben Leon, and Tony Dimarco, USA, 2009,

      75 min

Fögi Is A Bastard (*F. est un Salaud*), Marcel Gisler, France/Switzerland, 1998, 91 min

Fox and His Friends (*Faustrecht der Freiheit*). Rainder Werner Fassbinder, Germany, 1975.

123 min

Freak Orlando. Ulrike Ottinger, Germany, 1981, 126 min

Free Fall (*Freier Fall*). Stephen Lacant, Germany, 2013, 100 min

Friends. David Crane and Marta Kauffman (Creators), USA, 1994-2004, TV Series

Frisk. Todd Verow, USA, 1995, 88 min

Futureworld. Richard T. Heffron, USA, 1976, 108 min

G

Game of Thrones. David Benioff and D.B. Weiss (Creator), USA, 2011-present, TV Series.

G.B.F. Darren Stein, USA, 2013, 92 min

Gentlemen 12: Barebacking in the Boardroom. Lucas Entertainment, 2014, Adult Movie

Gerontophilia. Bruce LaBruce, Canada, 2013, 82 min

Get Real. Simon Shore, UK, 1999, 108 min

Geography Club. Gary Entin, USA, 2013, 80 min

Gigolo. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2007, Adult Movie

Girls. Lena Duhnam (Creator), USA, 2012 - present, TV Series

Girl, Positive. Peter Werner, USA, 2007, 88 min

Glue (*Historia adolescente en medio de la nada*). Alexis Dos Santos, Argentina, 2006, 110 min

Gods and Monsters. Bill Condon, USA, 1998, 105 min

Going Down in La La Land. Casper Andreas, USA, 2011, 104 min

H

Happy Together. Wong Kar-Wai, Hong Kong, 1997, 96 min

Head On. Ana Kokkinos, Australia, 1998, 104 min

Hedwig and the Angry Inch. John Cameron Mitchell, USA, 2001, 95 min

High Art. Lisa Cholodenko, USA, 1998, 101 min

Hi, Mom! Brian De Palma, USA, 1970, 87 min

A Home at the End of the World. Michael Mayer, USA, 97 min

Home Movies. Brian De Palma, USA, 1980, 90 min

How to Survive a Plague. David France, USA, 2012, 110 min

The Hours. Stephen Daldry, USA, 2002, 114 min

Hustler White. Bruce LaBruce, Canada/USA, 1996, 79 min

I

Identity. James Mangold, USA, 2003, 90 min

The Imitation Game, USA, 2014, 114 min

In & Out. Frank Oz, 1997, 90 min

The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love. Maria Maggenti, USA, 1995, 94 min

Independence Day. Roland Emmerich, USA, 1996, 145 min

Interior. Leather Bar. Travis Mathews and James Franco, USA, 2013, 60 min

Is It Just Me?. J.C. Calciano, USA, 2010, 93 min

It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives (*Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt*). Rosa von Praunheim, Germany, 1971, 67 min

I Want Your Love. Travis Mathews, USA, 2012, 71 min

J

Jeffrey. Christopher Ashley, USA, 1995, 92 min

Jonathan Agassi Goes Bareback. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2014, Adult Movie

Judas Kiss. J. T. Tepnapa, USA, 2011, 94 min

K

The Kids Are Alright. Lisa Cholodenko, USA, 2010, 106 min

Kings of New York. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2010, Adult Movie

Ken Park. Larry Clark, USA, 2002, 93 min

L

La Cage aux Folles, Édouard Molinaro, France/Italy, 1978, 110 min

La Dolce Vita. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2006, Adult Movie

Larry Kramer in Love and Anger. Jean Carlomusto, USA, 2015, 82 min

Latter Days. C. Jay Cox, USA, 2003, 107 min

L.A Zombie. Bruce La Bruce, USA/Germany, 2010, 103 min

Law of Desire (*La ley del deseo*). Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 1987, 102 min

Lianna. John Sayles, USA, 1983, 110 min

L.I.E. Michael Cuesta, USA, 2001, 97 min

Life Goes On. Series Creator Michael Bravemen, USA, 1989-1933, TV Series

Life Support. Nelson George, USA, 2007, 87 min

The Living End. Gregg Araki, USA, 1992, 92 min

Looking. Michael Lannan (Creator). USA. 2014-2015. TV Series

Loose Cannons (*Mine Vaganti*). Ferzan Ozpetek, Italy, 2010, 110 min

Long Time Companion. Norman René, USA, 1989, 96 min

Logan's Run. Michael Anderson, USA, 1976, 119 min

Loving Him Raw. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2014, Adult Movie

M

M. Fritz Lang, Germany, 1931, 99 min

Madame X: An Absolute Ruler (Madame X: Eine absolute Herrscherin). Ulrike Ottinger,

    Germany, 1978, 147 min

Making Love. Arthur Hiller, USA, 1982, 113 min

The Making of Monsters. John Greyson, Canada, 1991, 35 min

Making the Boys. Crayton Robey, USA, 2011, 90 min

Mambo Italiano. Émile Gaudreault, Canada, 2003, 99 min

Mixed Kebab. Guy Lee Thys, Belgium, 2012, 98 min

Mission to Mars. Brian De Palma, USA, 2000, 114 min

The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of Ethan Green, George Bamber, USA, 2005, 88 min

Mulligans. Chip Hale, USA, 2008, 92 min

Mulholland Drive. David Lynch, USA, 2001, 147 min

Multiple Orgasms. Barbara Hammer, USA, 1978, 6 min

My Beautiful Launderette. Stephen Frears, UK, 97 min

My Brother…Nikhil. Onir, India, 2005, 120 min

My Hustler. Andy Warhol, USA, 1965, 79

Mysterious Skin. Gregg Araki, USA, 2004, 105 min

N

The Net. Irwin Winkler, USA, 1995, 114 min

A Night at the Adonis. Jack Deveau, USA, 1977, Adult Film

Nico and Dani (*Krámpack*). Cesc Gay, Spain, 2000, 91 min

Nineteen Eighty-Four. Michael Radford, UK, 1984, 113 min

The Normal Heart. Ryan Murphy, USA, 2014, 132 min

North Sea Texas (*Noordzee, Texas*). Bavo Defurne, Belgium, 2011, 94 min

No Skin Off My Ass. Bruce LaBruce, Canada, 1991, 73 min

Nymphomaniac: Volume 1. Lars von Trier, Denmark/Belgium/France, 2013, 145 min

Nymphomaniac: Volume 2. Lars von Trier, Denmark/Belgium/France, 2013, 180 min

O

The ODESSA File. Ronald Neame, USA, 1974, 130 min

Outing Riley. Pete Jones, USA, 2004, 99 min

On the Rocks. Jeff Stryker (star), USA, 1990, Adult Movie

Orange is the New Black. Jenji Kohan, USA, 2013-present TV Series

P

The Parallax View. Alan J. Pakula, USA, 1974, 102 min

Paranormal Activity. Oren Peli, USA, 2007, 86 min

Paranormal Activity 2. Tod Williams, USA, 2010, 91 min

Pariah. Dee Rees, USA, 2011, 86 min

Paris is Burning. Jennie Livingston, USA, 1990, 71 min

Parting Glances. Bill Sherwood, USA, 1986, 90 min

Passion. Brian De Palma, USA, 2012, 102 min

Perfect Pitch. Jason Moore, USA, 2012, 112 min

Personal Best. Robert Towne, USA, 1982, 124 min

Philadelphia. Jonathan Demme, USA, 1993, 125 min

Pink Narcissus. James Bidgood, USA, 1971, 71 min

Poison. Todd Haynes, USA, 1991, 85 min

Pornography: A Thriller. David Kittredge, 2009, USA, 113 min

Poster Boy. Zak Tucker, USA, 2004, 104 min

Positive Youth. Charlie David, USA (MTV), 2012, 44 min

Prayers for Bobby. Russell Mulcahy, USA, 2009, 90 min

Precious. Lee Daniels, USA, 2009, 110 min

Project Runway. Eli Holzman, USA, 2004-present, TV series

Q

Queer as Folk. Russell T. Davies (Creator), UK, 1999-2000, TV series

Queer as Folk. Ron Cowen and Daniel Lipman (Developers), USA/Canada, 2000-2005, TV

    Series

Querelle, Reiner Werner Fassbinder, Germany, 198, 108 min

R

Raising Cain. Brian De Palma, USA, 1992, 91 min

The Raspberry Reich. Bruce LaBruce. Germany/Canada, 2004, 90 min

Raw Double Penetration. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2014, Adult Movie

Rear Window. Alfred Hitchock, USA, 1954, 112 min

Redacted. Brian De Palma, USA, 2007, 90 min

Refocus. Chris Ward, Ben Leon, and Tony Dimarco, 2009, USA, Adult Movie

Rent. 2005. Chris Colombus, 2005, USA, 135 min

Remembrance of Things Fast: True Stories Visual Lies. John Maybury, 1994, USA, 60 min

Rope. Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1948, 80 min

Rosanne. Rosanne Barr (Star), USA, 1988-1997. TV Series

Rupaul's Drag Race. Logo, USA, 2009-present, TV series

S

Saving Face. Alice Wu, USA, 2004, 97 min

Scarface. Brian De Palma, USA, 1983, 170 min

Scenes from a Gay Marriage. Matt Riddlehoover, USA, 2012, 83 min

Sebastiane. Derek Jarman, UK, 1976, 86 min

Seed Money: The Chuck Holmes Story. Mike Stabile, USA, 2015, 71 min

A Serbian Film (*Srpski Film*). Srdjan Spasojevic, 2010, 96 min

Shelter. Jonah Markowitz, USA, 2007, 97 min

Shortbus. John Cameron Mitchell, USA, 2006, 101 min

Showgirls. Paul Verhoeven, USA, 1995, 128 min

Silverlake Life: The View from Here. Peter Friedman and Tom Joslin, USA, 1993, 99 min

Sisters. Brian De Palma, USA, 1973, 93 min

Skin Gang. Bruce LaBruce, Germany/Canada, 1999, 67 min

The Skin I Live In (*La piel que habito*). Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 2011, 120 min

Snake Eyes, Brian De Palma, USA, 1998, 98 min

Show Me Love (*Fucking Åmål*), Lukas Moodysson, Sweden, 1998, 89 min

The Silence of the Lambs. Jonathan Demme, USA, 1991, 118 min

Single White Female. Barbet Shroeder, USA, 1992, 107 min

Some Like it Hot. Billy Wilder, USA, 1959, 120 min

Stranger by the Lake (*L'Inconnu du lac*). Alain Guiraudie, France, 2013, 97 min

Steam Clean. Richard Fung, Canada, 1990, 4 min

Strange Days. Kathryn Bigelow. USA, 1995, 145 min

Strangers on a Train. Alfred Hitchcock, 1951, 101 min

Summer Storm (*Sommersturm*). Marco Kreuzpaintner, Germany, 2004, 98 min

Surveillance 24/7. Paul Oremland, UK, 2007, 87 min

Surveillance. Titan Media, USA, 2012, Adult Movie

T

The Talented Mr. Ripley. Anthony Minghella, USA, 1999, 139 min

Tan Lines. Ed Aldridge, Australia, 2007, 96 min

Taxi Zum Klo. Frank Ripploh, Germany, 1980, 98 min

Tearoom. William E Jones. USA, 2008, 56 min

Teorema. Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italy, 1968, 105 min

Test. Chris Mason Johnson, USA, 2013, 89 min

This Special Friendship (*Les amitiés particulières*). Jean Delannoy, France, 1964, 99 min

Three Days of the Condor. Sydney Pollack, USA, 1975, 117 min

Three Day Weekend. Rob Williams, USA, 2008, 84 min

THX 1138. George Lucas, USA, 1971, 86 min

Torch Song Trilogy. Paul Bogart, USA, 1988, 120 min

Transparent. Jill Soloway, USA, 2014-present, TV Series

Trenton Ducatt goes Bareback. Lucas Entertainment, USA, 2014, Adult Movie

True Blood. Alan Ball (Creator), USA, 2008-2014, TV Series

Tongues Untied. Marlon Riggs, USA, 1989, 55 min

To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar. Beeban Kidron, USA, 1995, 109 min

A Touch of Pink. Ian Iqbal Rashid, Canada, 2004, 91 min

U

Undertow (*Contracorriente*). Javier Fuentes-León, Peru, 2009, 100 min

United in Anger: A History of Act Up. Jim Hubbard, USA, 2012, 90 min

Urinal. John Greyson, Canada, 1988, 100 min

Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt. Robert Carlock and Tina Fey (Creators), USA, 2015-present,

 TV Series

V

A Very Natural Thing. Christopher Larkin, USA, 1974, 80 min

Victim. Basil Dearden, UK, 1961, 90 min

Videodrome. David Cronenberg, Canada, 1983, 87 min

W

Water Lilies (*Naissance des Pieuvres)*. Céline Sciamma, France, 2006, 85 min

The Wedding Banquet. Ang Lee, USA, 1993, xx min

We Were Here. David Weissman and Bill Weber, USA, 2011, 90 min

Weekend. Andrew Haigh, UK, 2011, 97 min

Were the World Mine. Tom Gustafson, USA, 2008, 95 min

Whole New Thing. Amnon Buchbinder, Canada, 2005, 92 min

Will and Grace. David Kohan and Max Mutchnick, USA, 1998-2006, TV Series

Windows. Gordon Willis, USA, 1980, 96 min

The Witnesses [Les témoins]. André Téchiné, 2007, 112 min

Women I Love. Barbara Hammer, USA, 21 min

Workers Leaving the Factory (*La sortie des usine Lumière*). Lumière Brothers, France, 1895.

Y

Yesterday. Darrel Roodt, South Africa, 2004, 96 min

You'll Get Over It (*À cause d'un garçon*). Fabrice Cazeneuve, France, 2002, 86 min

Z

Zero Patience, John Greyson, Canada, 1993, 97 min