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Gender Roomours II: Gender and Space

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About

Gender forum is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. gender forum also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

Opinions expressed in articles published in *gender forum* are those of individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the editors of gender forum.

Submissions

Target articles should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition) and should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length. Please make sure to number your paragraphs and include a bio-blurb and an abstract of roughly 300 words. Files should be sent as email attachments in Word format. Please send your manuscripts to gender-forum@uni-koeln.de.

We always welcome reviews on recent releases in Gender Studies! Submitted reviews should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition), have numbered paragraphs, and should be between 750 and 1,000 words in length. Please note that the reviewed releases ought to be no older than 24 months. In most cases, we are able to secure a review copy for contributors.

Article Publishing

The journal aims to provide rapid publication of research through a continuous publication model. All submissions are subject to peer review. Articles should not be under review by any other journal when submitted to *Gender forum*.

There are no submission or page charges, and no colour charges.

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Editoral

1 **Gender Roomours II** continues the discussion of the first **gender forum** issue on gender and space by presenting four articles which investigate the nexus of various (fictional) spaces - comprising a room in Paris, a brothel, the Wyoming mountains, and outer space - and (postmodern) gender identity in 20th-century fiction and film.

2 In "Astronautic Subjects: Postmodern Identity and the Embodiment of Space in American Science Fiction," Stefan Brandt explores how the figure of the astronaut functions in hegemonic and minority discourses as a means of stabilizing gender hierarchies and as a chronotope of boundary transgression and detachment from restrictive gender norms respectively. Drawing on Rosi Braidotti's model of the nomadic subject and Winfried Fluck's concept of expressive individualism, Brandt proposes the "astronautic subject" as a figuration which despite its utilization by hegemonic discourse allows for the production of subversive agency and self-empowerment.

3 Focusing on the development of the novel's protagonist, Luminita Dragulescu's "Into the Room and Out of the Closet: (Homo)Sexuality and Commodification in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*" traces the linkage of space and (homo)sexual identity in Baldwin's text. In her reading, Dragulescu emphasizes that while Giovanni's room may well be regarded as the place of David's "coming out," it does not serve as a sanctuary for a settled identity, but rather as a threshold introducing a "new" state of equilibrium.

4 Christian Lassen's contribution "'In the dark camp,' Or: Straight with a (Pastoral) Twist. American Western Masculinity in 'Brokeback Mountain'" argues for a critical reconsideration of the alleged "queering of the cowboy" in both the short story and the Hollywood movie. While most critical and public reactions seem to agree on the subversive potential of the story with regard to the Western genre, the article foregrounds how the debate which has accompanied the narrative's reception might profit from reading the story in terms of pastoral elegy.

5 Drawing on Hannah Arendt's concept of agonal and narrative action, Hedwig Wagner's "Places and Spaces: The Public Sphere and Privacy in Lina Wertmüller's *Love and Anarchy*" shows how the film's representation of public and private spaces challenges the patriarchal and totalitarian separation of these spheres. Wagner's analysis illustrates how *Love and Anarchy* stages the brothel, a place both public and private, as an alternative public sphere of empowerment.

6 This issue is completed by reviews of Liz Conor's *The Spectacular Modern Woman* and Nancy Copeland's *Staging Gender in Behn and Centlivre*.

Astronautic Subjects: Postmodern Identity and the Embodiment of Space in American Science Fiction

By Stefan Brandt, University of Siegen, Germany

Abstract:
This essay will deal with the embodiment, or more precisely, the gendering of space since the 1950s. My focus will be on the figure of the astronaut, which I interpret as a continuation of the cowboy and pioneer character in the context of Western, and more specifically, American culture. In the postmodern age, the astronaut is endowed with an important cultural function: Through the image of the spacewalker, gender can be simultaneously negotiated as a fragile construct - given the fact that the 1950s also marked the establishment of new gender roles and new ideas about sexual identity - and restored as an affirmative category in which issues of national and masculine identity are symbolically merged.

Introduction: Gender and the Space Age

1 Space has always posed both a temptation and a threat to Western cultural imagination. It entails notions of infinite possibility and boundary transcendence, nevertheless also creates an openness of experience that can be perceived as irritating and frightening. The image of limitless space leaves us speechless, but it also evokes a desire in us to position ourselves in relation to this new terrain. Setting out from this observation, my essay will deal with the embodiment, or more precisely, the gendering of space since the 1950s. My focus will be on the figure of the astronaut, which I interpret as a continuation of the cowboy and pioneer character in the context of Western, and more specifically, American culture. In the postmodern age, the astronaut is endowed with an important cultural function: Through the image of the spacewalker, gender can be simultaneously negotiated as a fragile construct - given the fact that the 1950s also marked the establishment of new gender roles and new ideas about sexual identity - and restored as an affirmative category in which issues of national and masculine identity are symbolically merged.

2 The starting point for this essay is Rosi Braidotti's model of the "nomadic subject," by which she characterizes female subjectivity as a provisional and transitory concept designed to resist power structures. I want to carry this approach one step further to include a hegemonic discourse in postmodernity that can be both emancipatory and stabilizing as far as normative codes of behavior are concerned. The "astronautic subject," I will suggest, is different from the "nomadic subject" in that it extends the radius of its actions even further, evoking a notion of limitless possibilities and unrestrained self-empowerment, yet also encompasses components of a manifestation of gender hierarchies. Being both a construct of hegemonic culture (e.g., in images of relentless space cowboys pursuing a politics of

'regeneration through violence') and an empowering field of continual becoming and performative agency (e.g., in the case of gendernauts), the "astronautic subject" offers a deeply ambiguous image, full of paradoxes and inconsistencies. It is both less gendered than the "nomadic subject" in its transgressiveness and detachment from existing value systems and more gendered in its connection to ideological discourses such as space technology and masculinity. The fact that the astronaut has become a key figure in the dominant imagery of Hollywood fiction as well as in the counter discourse of minority groups such as transsexuals, gays and lesbians (who, interestingly enough, utilize dominant texts such as Star Trek to create a form of fan fiction that stresses the liberating subtext of that imagery), illustrates the extraordinary potential of the concept. In a Deleuzian sense, the astronautic subject is bestowed with "multiplicities," i.e., it is equipped with a body that can be used as both an ideological object of power maintenance and a vehicle of transgression and emancipation.

A New Creation Myth

3 The opening sequence of the 1967 James-Bond movie *You Only Live Twice* presents us with an awe-inspiring scenario: A starship floats in silence through outer space. In the background we can see the light-blue contours of the earth surrounded by a starless sky. As the camera zooms in on the spacecraft, we recognize the label "United States" on its upper torso. Suddenly, the silence is pierced by a voice, "Calling Cape Com. Cape Com. This is Jupiter 16." What follows is a series of juxtaposed shots - close shots of the two astronauts on board of the spaceship as well as long and extreme long shots of the Ground Control Center and the silhouette of the earth. We are obviously witnessing a space expedition controlled by American scientists. The initial voice, we soon learn, belongs to an astronaut named Chris[1] who is just about to leave the capsule for a spacewalk, an enterprise repeatedly referred to as "EVA" - the technical term for extra-vehicular activity. "Don't stay out too long, Chris," the operator from the command center warns him. But it is already too late. As Chris deboards through a hatch, in slow motion, and starts floating in midair, an uncanny melody prepares us for the dramatic events which are about to occur.

4 Before we actually see anything at all, the voice from ground control informs us that "an unidentified object is closing in" on the spacecraft from astern. The object is a giant rocket, in fact that of James Bond's archenemy Ernst Stavro Blofeld. The camera angle

[1] The name "Chris" can be interpreted as a metonymy, referring to the pioneer status of the astronaut in the 1960s. Like Jesus Christ, the astronaut is both a missionary and a martyr. The iconic function of the astronaut in *You Only Live Twice* is underpinned by the fact that the actor who plays Chris is not specified in the film's credits which only refer to Norman Jones and Paul Carson as the actors playing the two astronauts on the first spacecraft.

switches to an extreme long shot, revealing an eerie sight: Blofeld's aircraft slowly approaches the American spaceship, getting ready to swallow the smaller vehicle. "It's coming right at us," Chris exclaims in terror, "the front is opening up!" With the shocked astronaut, we now see the hostile rocket from a frontal view. The rocket's hatches, equipped with menacingly pointed edges, make the machine look like a giant set of teeth. As Blofeld's missile slowly devours the American spaceship, we can still see Chris hovering in the air, attached to his mother ship only through a thin cable evocative of an umbilical chord. A close-up shows the rocket's mouth biting off the astronaut's connection to his spacecraft, a moment effectively highlighted by Chris's desperate exclamation, "My lead line! It's cu…" His voice is abruptly stopped by a dull, mechanical sound. Then we see the astronaut's body, still positioned in the center of the camera frame, as it slowly drifts away into the depths of outer space. When Chris's lead line is cut off, the music also stops.

Fig. 1.

5 The astronaut's disconnection from his mother ship is marked as both a death and a rebirth. He is released into a new, mysterious terrain, different from the Old World in almost

every aspect. The meaningful term EVA, used three times in the short sequence, contributes to this impression. The movie here utilizes a creation myth which was becoming increasingly important in the 1960s - that of man being reborn in space. Hence, the mission shown in the sequence is filled with notions of both *recon*struction and *de*struction. Significantly, the American astronaut is no *Adam*, the possible forefather of future generations, but a *Chris*(tian), a martyr for the idealistic cause. Hardly protected by his spacesuit, Chris is carried to new regions in outer space, maybe to a new universe. Although we can conclude that Chris certainly dies on this trip, we might also stick to the illusion that something will survive (since we do not actually see him perish). Notably, his appearance in the spacesuit is still the same, revealing no signs of the fatal interference to his life-saving functions. Similar images of space as a destructive, yet also reproductive power have accompanied science-fiction texts from early on. The February, 1934 cover painting of the American science-fiction magazine *Astounding Stories* shows two astronauts in metal uniforms moving towards the planet of Mars. In a caption in the lower right half, the story "Rebirth" by Thomas McClary is announced in blazing capital letters. Space travel is linked in this imagery to a notion of overcoming not only space, but time itself.

Fig. 2.

6 Modern criticism has long debated the function(s) of utopian fantasies for the process of cultural self-fashioning, pointing to the peculiar link between visions of the future and references to the present. "[B]y examining people's ideas about the future," Claudia Springer observes, "we can learn about their responses to present-day issues, for contemporary cultural battles find expression in even the most shocking and improbable speculations about the future" (15). Conceived in this manner, the obsession of contemporary science fiction with images of transgression can be seen as a comment on the current dilemma concerning identity roles. The realm of science fiction abounds with visions of gender-neutral or matriarchal societies, of sex-changes and miraculous bodily transformations, of hypersexual, multisexual, and sometimes asexual creatures. In this essay, I will argue that the motif of identity subversion is combined in American science fiction with another key image most characteristic of cultural self-models: the discovery and utilization of new frontiers. The merging of gender issues with issues of cultural self-fashioning is necessarily ambiguous, revealing a model of the future that can be both affirmative and subversive. This model may reconstruct old frontiers in the guise of new ones, but it may also open up truly alternative ways of conceptualizing the world.

Fashioning the Astronautic Subject

7 The figure of the astronaut stands at the center of such fantasies. Sci-fi texts can either accentuate the spacewalker's national affiliation or point to his/her resistance to any form of collective identity. The fashioning of "astronautic subjects," however, is not limited to the realm of science fiction, nor is it restricted to a certain terrain within the cultural imagination. The "astronautic subject" is a quite real phenomenon of postmodern social and cultural practice. Since it ostentatiously conceals the protagonist's actual biological sex behind a thick uniform, the concept of astronautic subjectivity encourages us to question the validity of any form of core identity. Moreover, by highlighting the astronaut's desire to conquer new terrains, it intimates the possibility of a far-reaching transformation of social patterns.

8 Hence, the astronaut can be seen as a chronotope for the transcendence - and eventually subversion - of (gender) identity. In a Bakhtinian sense, the space traveler not only transgresses time and space, but also condenses time *in* space. The images of the first spacewalker, Edward H. White, taken in June, 1965, can hardly be distinnational icons attached to it and the helmet (which even hides facial features), we guished from the pictures of Bruce McCandless, shot almost twenty years later. Time seems to be meaningless for the spacewalker. In such illustrations, astronautic identity is portrayed as a surface - *consistent* in

its utter appearance, but also *inscrutable* as far as the structure *behind it* is concerned. The lack of mimic play and outward gestures makes the astronaut a projection field of our own ideas. Since the astronaut's appearance is marked mainly by the spacesuitwith its are continuously looking for clues behind this cold façade - some hidden meaning, a sign that enlightens us about the astronaut's true identity.

Fig. 3. and 4.: Astronautic subjects: Edward H. White in June, 1965, and Bruce McCandless in February, 1984.

The Nexus of Time and Space

9 The symbolic nexus of time and space has always been a characteristic feature of scientific texts on space traveling. Pointing to the potential transformation of individual experience during aeronautic activities, time and space serve as central metaphors for the constitution of astronautic identity. Two years after the founding of NASA, Manfred E.

Clynes and Nathan S. Kline published a path-breaking essay, "Cyborgs and Space," in which they praised the astronaut as a model of human progress. "Space travel challenges mankind not only technologically but also spiritually, in that it invites man to take an active part in his own biological evolution" (26). In his introduction to D.S. Halacy's bestselling book on cybernetic organisms, *Cyborg - Evolution of the Superman*, Clynes summarized this view, now emphasizing the frontier as the marker of astronautic identity:

> A new frontier is opening which allows us renewed hope. The new frontier is not merely space, but more profoundly the relationship between "inner space" to "outer space" - a bridge being built between mind and matter, beginning in our time and extending into the future. (7)

10 According to Clynes, the astronaut must be regarded as a wanderer between the worlds, a composite creature which oscillates and mediates between inside and outside, present and future, mind and matter. One of the main challenges of space travel, the two scholars argue, is that it invites the scientist to control the processes of human evolution, endowing the astronaut with the capability of adapting to an alien environment. If the human body could be integrated into the necessities of the space age, the result would be a new form of humanity. The main task, according to Clynes and Kline, was to adapt man's body "to any environment he may choose" (26). Although the alterations in the astronaut's body that Clynes and Kline recommend - hypnosis, the use of drugs, especially mental energizers and amphetamines, and even surgery to improve the bodily system - do not appear realistic today, the vision behind it is still frighteningly present in current discourses. By arranging a collaboration between cybernetic systems and the astronaut's own bodily powers, man would be "[left] free to explore, to create, to think and to feel" (Clynes & Kline 27). The declared goal of this rhetoric was the modification of the man-machine complex into a self-regulating organism which incorporated the spirit of individual freedom while also retaining a notion of human progress. In an interview published thirty-five years later, Manfred E. Clynes reaffirmed this credo:

> The main idea was to liberate man from constraints as he flies into space - […] it seemed necessary to give him [the] bodily freedom to exist in another part of the universe without […] constraints. (Gray 47)

The Cyborg as Superman

11 This rhetoric is not only charged with images of progress, technology, and emancipation, it is also highly *gendered*. In his introduction to Halacy's *Cyborg - The Evolution of the Superman*, Clynes makes the following observation:

> A new word was created in 1960 to describe a new concept for man's venture into

> space: *Become* a superman; live in space as at home - if possible, better than home! Do not take into space earth's hindrances and encumbrances. Be a free spirit in space, weightless and not weighted down by the limitations of terrestrial ancestry. (7)

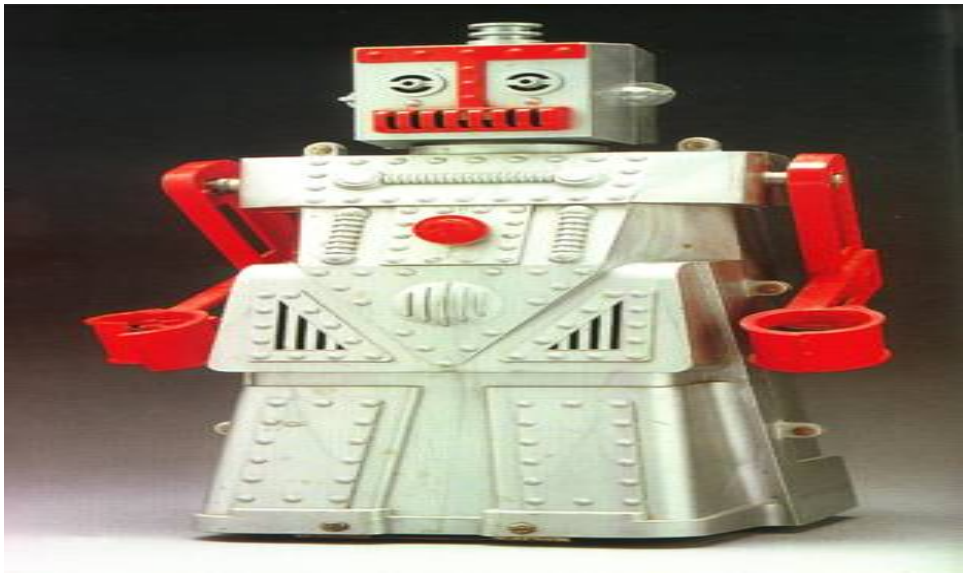
The deployment of Nietzschean imagery in Clyne's statement (and, above all, in Halacy's book) is symptomatic of a phallogocentric approach. Masculinity here functions not only as an indicator of technology and progress, but also as an agent of democracy itself. Given the background of the Cold War, the astronautic superman in 1960s cultural iconography had to be male and masculine, fighting for the tenets of Western civilization. His voyage into distant spheres is marked as evidence of his energy and will-power. Donna Haraway contends that such images echo the old myth of man as tool-maker, according to which "man makes everything, including himself out of the world that can only be resource and potency to his project and active agency" ("Promises" 297).

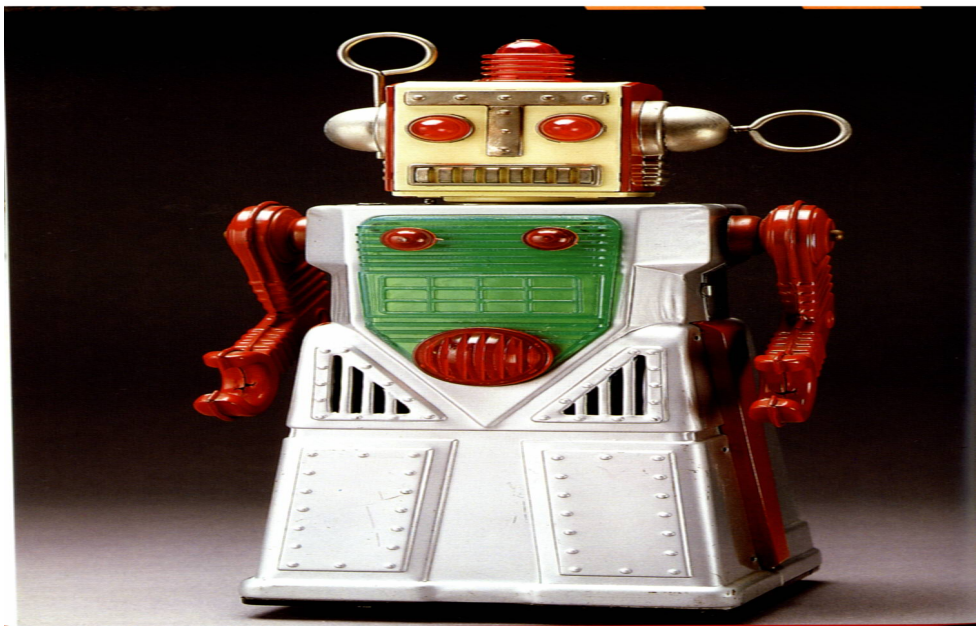
12 However, the spacewalker in Clynes's article is not only coded as a gendered creature, but also as an independent thinker, a "free spirit in space" (ibid). By leaving the terrestrial sphere and delving into a previously undiscovered terrain, the astronaut literally overcomes the constraints and limitations symptomatic of life on earth. As an exposed figure of cultural imagination, the spacewalker is capable of detaching him-/herself from existing formula and constructions, including codes of gender identity. Astronautic imagery suggests that the limitations of terrestrial ancestry can be deconstructed through the metaphor of spacewalking, the meandering and trespassing between two worlds.

The Gender of Astronauts

13 The astronaut floating through space appears almost sexless and genderless. His/her spacesuit protects him/her not only from harmful influences in outer space, but also from a penetrating and inscribing gaze. We do not see what is inside of the astronaut's shell-like exterior. Behind the technological masquerade, we may find either sex, either gender. In the face of this elusiveness it seems only logical that science-fiction imagery has continuously attempted to fill the void behind the spacesuit, to endow the astronaut with a specific gender identity. The American toy industry offers a good example of this ideological reconstruction of the space explorer. In the early years the space robot is still machine-like, clumsy, and often sexually ambiguous. "Robert Robot," for example, is a rolling automaton with a huge lower body and a triangle-shaped groin. This type of toy is endowed with rather "feminine" attributes, offering the viewer an image of the robot as a mere instrument manufactured to satisfy his master's wishes. The "Modern Robot" has a similar physical appearance, only that its head is equipped with two metal appliqués reminiscent of earrings. As symbols, the metal

appliqués fulfill two contradictory functions: On the one hand, they gender the space robot female, thus underlining its subservience and passivity. On the other hand, they contribute to the image of the robot as a "pirate," possibly revolting against the race of humans.[2] In addition, this robot has two round buttons or knobs in the area of its upper chest, vague reminders of the human physique. Another device is the "Nonstop Robot" that comes all in pink. This toy shows us its interior "organs" that seem to consist solely of screws and small wheels.





[2] In the 1940s and 50s, science-fiction literature strongly emphasized this dualism within the robot's nature: Originally created as a useful machine, the robot in these texts was bound to develop a consciousness. Due to a more refined technology, robots of the later generation were about to become more self-aware and finally resist their initial objectification. This popular vision of a subjectified robot identity can be found, for instance, in Isaac Asimov's texts, collected in an early anthology with the apt title *I, Robot* (1950).

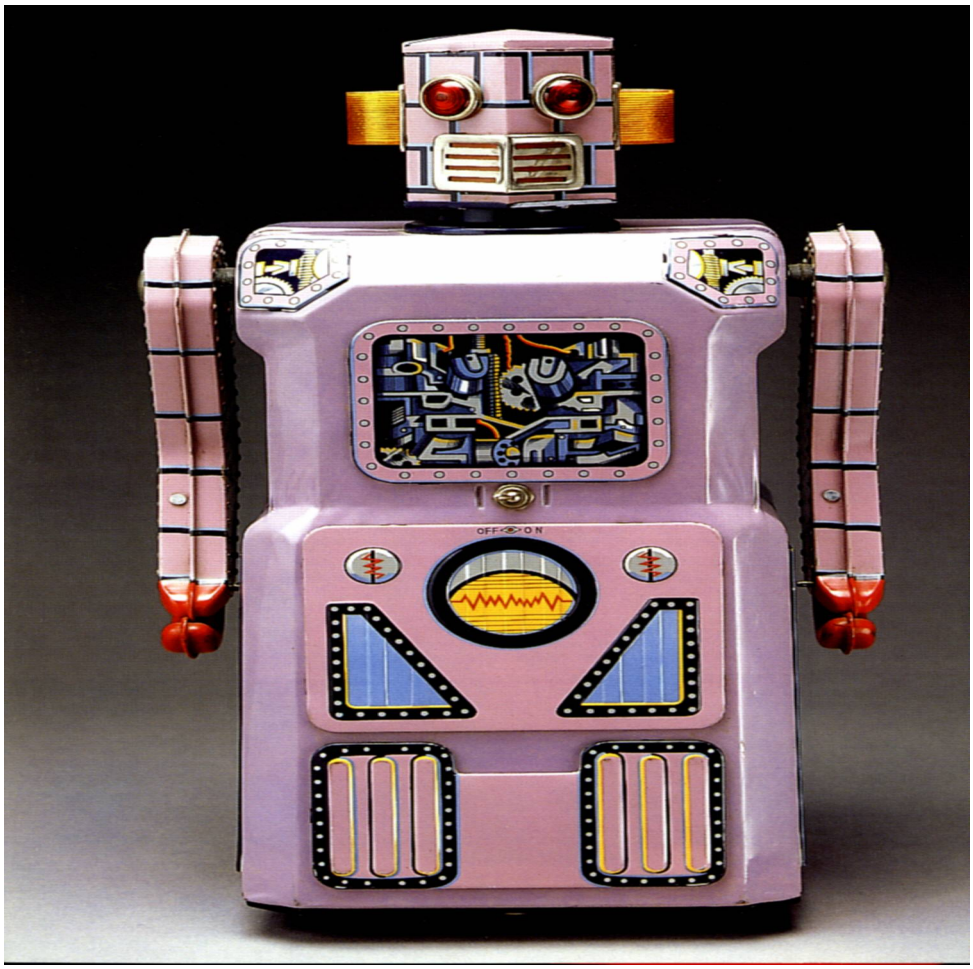
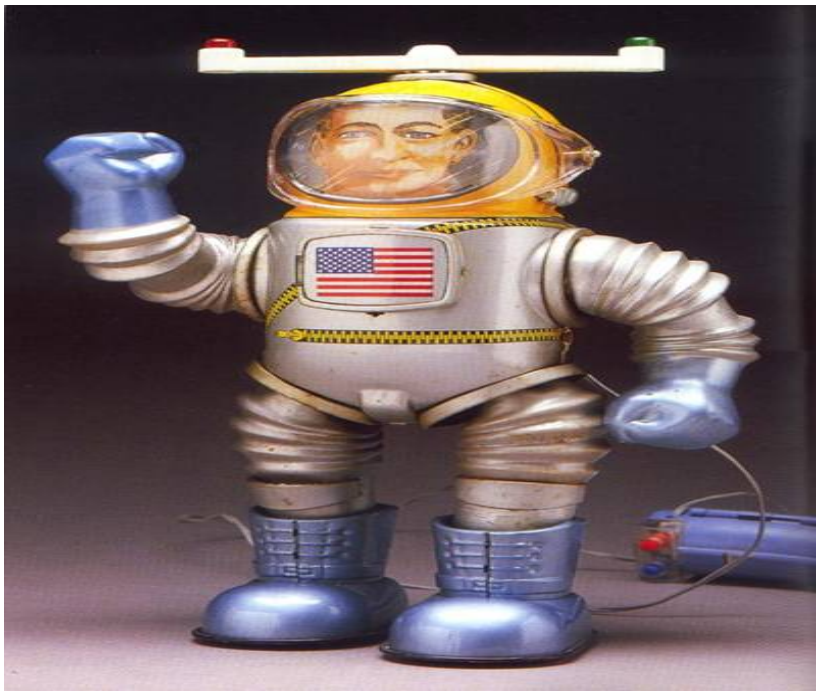


Fig 5., Fig 6., Fig. 7.: Androgynous creatures. Robert Robot, Modern Robot, Nonstop Robot (1950s).

14 The 1960s constitute the stage for a new type of space robot - the patriotic Moon Scout, which not only carries the American flag on its uniform, but also exudes an aura of masculine vigor and vitality. The toy clearly signals a paradigm shift in postwar ideology from the initial objectification of space technology to a masculinization of space itself. Absorbing the traditional signifiers of male gender identity, the Moon Scout illustrates the increasing conflation of national and gender issues in space discourse. A variation of this toy is the "wind-up walking astronout [sic]" from the 1970s which comes together with a razer (an instrument to extinguish potential enemies). Although positioned on wheels and equipped with a mechanism for winding it up (indicators of the astronaut's initial servility as a servant of his country), this toy is clearly designed to exemplify the new qualities of the astronaut as a he-man, suggesting charisma, vigor, and energy. Another significant aspect is the emergence of masculine facial features. Notably, this new variant of the space explorer openly displays his fists, as if to confront us with his extraordinary strength. In addition, he is endowed with a conspicuous bulge in his "pants," which both emphasizes his maleness and - one might add -

his "Americanness." This is the birth of the astronaut as a patriotic individualist and conqueror of new worlds. Yet, it is also through these overt inscriptions that the constructed character of the astronaut becomes obvious. It seems as if these markers of male vigor are necessary to endow the figure with an identity that would otherwise not be recognizable.



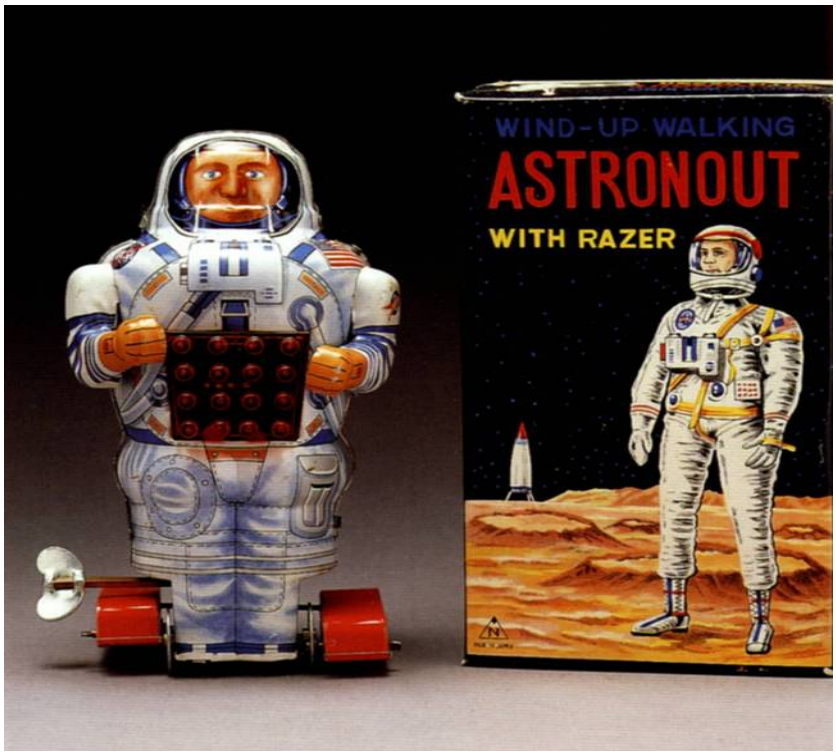


Fig. 8., Fig. 9.: The Moon Scout (1960s) and the wind-up Walking Astronout [sic!] with Razer (1970s) – epitomes of vigorous masculinitity.

15 In this era, the body of the astronaut is increasingly used as a projection screen for anxieties concerning the stability of gender categories. This is especially obvious in the genre of bionic fiction that was specifically popular in the US in the mid 1970s. In the TV-series *Six Million Dollar Man* (1976), we encounter the crash victim Steve Austin (played by Lee Majors) who is rebuilt by space researchers in a laboratory as a cybernetic organism. The goal of the researchers, we are told, is to make him fit to go into space. The show's concept was based on a peculiar conflation of the identities of the show's producers and the scientists who build the Bionic Man. At the beginning of the first episode, a narrator informs the viewers, "Gentlemen, we can rebuild him. We have the technology." The astronaut's masculinity is presented here not as a natural asset, but as the result of extensive technological studies which fashion male subjectivity according to the ideals of efficiency and functionality: "We have the capability to make the world's first Bionic man. Steve Austin will be that man. Better than he was before. Better … stronger … faster."[3]

16 It is no coincidence that the TV-show keeps underlining the connection between NASA and cybernetic engineering. The male astronaut here functions as a hinge between the relatively new discipline of aeronautics and the old vision of progress through technology. Interestingly enough, the actual site of bionic fiction is not space, but the surface of the earth. The act of "going into space" is translocated to a very earthly sphere, either being a research laboratory or a restricted area for tests. Susanna Paasonen observes that in bionic fiction it is the human body which becomes "the space to explore and modify" (par. 31). The body of the astronaut, in this reading, is the actual ground of contestation where different visions concerning gender, progress, and technology are blended. This type of body is a site of contradiction, given the fact that it is loaded with gender, yet also revealed as a scientific construct. As an imaginary body, the figure of the astronaut offers us the option to find new identities and transcend the dichotomies dictated by Western society. As a symbolic body, however, it reminds us of the restrictions that cultural representation always implies. In the figure of the astronaut in cyber discourse, gender is at once debunked as a superficial idea and reinstated as a cultural fact.

Postmodern Subjectivity and the Body without Organs

17 This dilemma corresponds to the situation of the postmodern subject who is also torn between the trajectories of boundary maintenance and deconstruction. The 'grand narratives' of an alleged truth and hermetic unity have become obsolete in postmodernity. Stable

[3] These lines are from the show's trailer aired in television spots during the year 1976. See http://vodpod.com/watch/3450218-better-stronger-faster-the-six-million-dollar-man.

meaning has been replaced by the free play of the signifier. By detaching itself from the phallogocentric inscriptions into the body, the postmodern subject begins to incorporate a new model of liberty and emancipation. In the words of Susan Bordo, "Western science and technology have now arrived […] at a new, postmodern imagination of human freedom from bodily determination" (*Unbearable Weight* 245). Within the postmodern imagination, anatomy is thus no longer destiny. The individual him/herself decides which position within the symbolic order she or he wants to take. The most obvious example of this new form of individual self-fashioning is the transsexual body, which combines organic and technological features to a new and unique concept - "the romance of the knife," as Sue-Ellen Case has put it (115). The old slogan, "Become whatever you want to be," assumes a new meaning in the age of plastic surgery and body modification. Everyone can forge his or her own individual body. Referring to the transsexual body in cyberpunk fiction, Cathy Peppers thus speaks of a "utopian subjectivity founded on the pleasure of boundary confusions" (166). The act of transcending boundaries is no longer a sacrilege but a promise.

18 The poststructuralist philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have developed a theory that almost sounds like an instruction manual: "How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?" (149). The traditional image of the body as a stable unity is replaced here by the notions of malleability and human creativity. According to Deleuze and Guattari,

> the body without organs is not a dead body but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization. […] The full body without organs is a body populated by multiplicities. (30)

In this model, subject and object are no longer seen as homogenous unities separate from each other, but as loose interconnections of energy, movement, flow, strata, segments, and intensities (Grosz 167). Through a process of continual becoming, Deleuze and Guattari explain, diverse forms of identity constitution are facilitated. The postmodern body image encompasses a multitude of different identity options. It almost seems as if the feminist ideal articulated by Susan Suleiman has already become a reality: "[We must] get beyond the number two" (24). The moment we engage in this journey to search for new ways of identity constitution, we are confronted with a confusing, yet also liberating number of possible identities. Subjectivity here assumes a nomadic quality, far from normative inscriptions.

Man as Mother, or, Gender Trouble in Space

19 Feminist cyber fiction has paid special attention to issues of gender construction and subversion. Ursula Le Guin's dystopian novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), for example, deals with a hermaphroditic race living on the planet Gethen. Although all

inscriptions based on gender identity have been abolished on this planet by decree, the battle over dominance still continues, and there is no real balance. According to Le Guin, the aim of the novel was to outline *that* symbolic field which is shared by men and women ("Necessary" 133). Her model is based upon Jung's concept of animus-anima, according to which every individual has both feminine and masculine traits. A similar attempt to examine and criticize the disastrous split of human subjectivity into masculine and feminine can be found in Joanna Russ's novel *The Female Man* (1975). The novel's anti-hero, Jael, is a hybrid creature. Her cyborg body is endowed with a number of deadly weapons, claws and teeth made of steel, and a technologically enhanced muscular apparatus.

20 American science fiction films have added some imaginative settings to the scenario of gender confusion. Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) offers a frightening image of dislocated biological patterns, especially patterns of reproduction. The queen of the malicious aliens is a gigantic breeding machine that even abuses the *male* members of the human crew as "mothers" for her ghastly offspring. One the most impressive scenes in the movie shows a male astronaut, played by John Hurt, from whose belly the monster bursts in the form of a bloody birth. The image of the mother is crucial in this context since the whole spaceship, on board of which the alien makes its nest, is called "mother." In this sense, it is not only the individual male astronaut who gives birth to a child but also science itself (in the form of the spacecraft), which becomes symbolically feminized.

21 A more gentle version of male reproductive powers can be found in Douglas Trumbull's 1972 eco science-fiction movie *Silent Running*. Here, a male botanist named Freeman is left all alone on a space-station orbiting Saturn where he takes care of the last remnants of vegetation of a nuclear-devastated earth. When Freeman gets the advice to destroy the plants, he decides to ignore the order and bring his spaceship on a course away from earth. Together with his drones, three little robots, he tends his garden, speaking of himself as "mother." When all fails he sends the garden into deep space to facilitate a possible second chance for mankind. Freeman is in more than one sense a free spirit in space. Not only does his name, Freeman, signify a liberation from restrictions and constraints. He is the only character left on a spaceship after abandoning both his former co-workers and his civilization as a whole. He becomes a silent martyr with only two children to survive: the garden and one of the robots.

The Longing for a Third Sex

22 Other science fiction movies make use of sexually ambiguous characters to negotiate

the in-between-ness of space. In the *Star Wars* quintology we meet the comical figure Jar Jar Binks, a huge, clumsy, yet good-natured Gungan, who is marked as a composite figure not only through his appearance (he wears a skirt and has a wiggly-kind-of walk), but also through his speech. Jar Jar does not speak the high dialect of his community, but a Gungan/Basic pidgin. In addition he has a high, soothing voice that leaves it unclear if the character is a male or a female. An outcast of his native clan, Jar Jar has to survive in the swampland of Naboo and live on raw shellfish before he is rescued by the official fleet of the Galactic Republic. All these signifiers establish him (or her?) as a highly ambiguous creature. Jar Jar Binks is not the only ambiguous character in the *Star Wars* quintology. *Episode II: Attack of the Clones* features a warrior woman who fiercely attacks the beautiful senator Amidala. This amazon figure, it turns out, is a so-called "changeling," that is, in the terminology suggested by the makers of *Star Wars*, a creature that can alter its biological sex as well as its general appearance. "The 'he' is a she," one of the Jedi knights remarks and adds, "she's a changeling." Unlike the Jar Jar Binks figure, the changeling is a dubious and potentially threatening character. The act of changing is associated here with deceit and hidden danger, since the changeling is never what he or she seems to be.

23 Steven Spielberg's movie *E. T.* from 1982 offers a less threatening version of alien boundary crossing. As Vivian Sobchack has convincingly shown in her essay "Child/Alien," the friendly creature E.T. stands for an androgynous, innocent life form (20). Yet, E.T.'s environment obviously has some problems with this gender ambiguity. The very first question that little Gertie asks when she sees E.T. is, "Is it a boy or a girl?" Although E.T. *is* repeatedly associated with symbols of masculinity in the course of the movie, these attributes are quickly neutralized through a movement of infantilization. The glowing phallic finger, for example, does not represent a threat but offers a healing effect, standing for affection and warmth. E.T.'s voice is rather dark and coarse, yet also childlike and affectionate, suggesting both vulnerability and tenderness. These images can be seen as indicators for a tendency in Western culture that has been described as a hidden "longing for a third sex" (Uecker 124-135).

24 In the postmodern age - and here I return to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a malleable identity -, such desires have taken on the form of a play with the possibilities of self-fashioning. This playful challenging of given boundaries encourages us to deconstruct the mechanical patterns of gender hierarchy. In the disorderly room of experimentation, new and potentially inexhaustible forms of identity constitution can be developed, tested and, if necessary, discarded. The "other" here no longer appears as an enemy, but as an integral

element of one's own identity. Notably, the technical term E.T. stands for both "extraterrestrial" and "embryo transfer." Analogously, postmodern subjectivity is not only flexible and volatile, but also transferable. E.T.'s alternative gender identity, we may conclude, will be transferred to the children who save him from the pursuers. Identity is no longer seen as something essential but more and more as a performative feature. It becomes, to rephrase Joan Riviere's famous concept from the 1920s, a masquerade. In a carnivalesque manner, postmodern discourse entices us into experimenting with preliminary identities, trying them out and eventually discarding them as if they were clothes in a supermarket.

The Astronautic Subject as Cultural Figuration

25 In her book *Nomadic Subjects*, Rosi Braidotti describes those women as nomads whose subjectivity is constituted on a temporary basis and whose thinking and actions resist established power structures. I want to take Braidotti's concept one step further and suggest the notion of "astronautic subjects" as an appropriate figuration for postmodern subjectivity. Following Braidotti, I use the term *figuration*[4] to point to a "politically informed account of an alternative subjectivity" (1). In her phrase, the concept refers to "a style of thought that evokes or expresses ways out of the phallocentric vision of the subject" (ibid). By using the figuration of the "astronautic subject," I delineate a form of unattached and independent identity constitution symptomatic of the individualizing tendencies in postmodernity. This highly expressive mode of self-constitution does make use of existing codes of behavior; yet, it distorts and disseminates the signs attached to such strategies beyond recognition. Astronautic identity is nomadic in the sense that it avoids a recognizable affiliation with cultural norms and standards. However, in contrast to nomadic identity, it lacks an awareness of the full possibilities and the exact outcome of the exploration. The astronautic subject embarks on a voyage in which the geographic range and the dimensions of this transformative process are not predictable. Components of "astronautic identity" can be found, for example, in the actual lives of cosmopolitans and transsexuals. German filmmaker Monika Treut has made use of the motif of the astronaut in her film *Gendernauts: A Journey Through Shifting Identities* (1999), which deals with transsexuals living in the San Francisco Bay Area. On the

[4] In social science, the term *figuration* is usually deployed to denote a social network of mutually dependent individuals. As Norbert Elias explains in his introduction to sociology, a figuration is marked by a nexus of power structures. In Braidotti's adaptation of the term, the imaginative function of a *figuration* becomes much stronger. Whereas Elias concentrates on the element of power maintenance in social *figurations*, Braidotti underlines the utopian quality of the term, signaling a path for a development of new power structures. I want to express my gratitude to Renate Kroll for pointing out to me the relevance of Elias's text.

official website for the movie, we are informed that this is "a film about cyborgs, people who alter their bodies and minds with new technologies and chemistry."[5]

26 Astronauts are often depicted in Western cultural imagery as postmodern migrants, independently traveling or rather floating towards new territories. While the motif of the nomad evokes a clear-cut and manageable range or radius in which the individual operates, astronauts are faced with the task of conquering, interconnecting, and traversing new galaxies. Astronauts are travelers not only in space but also in time. Instead of remaining within the geographical limits of cultural affiliation, the astronaut is searching for "the final frontier," to quote the opening lines of the original *Star Trek* series. The starship Enterprise, the narrator tells us, sets out to explore "strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before." Since the 1960s, central parameters of astrophysics have been integrated into the postmodern imagination. Galaxies - this is a key thesis of modern space research - are not singular or homogeneous objects, but agglomerations, complex structures with unstable limits and a heterogeneous distribution of mass in relation to time and space. The postmodern subject has recognized in the metaphor of the "new frontier" his and her own situation, which is equally marked by a multiplication and complication of life worlds. Due to fundamental changes in the ideological and social fabric of society in the course of the 20th century, the postmodern individual learned to make adaptability part of his and her body scheme. The result of this development is, as Susan Bordo has demonstrated, a type of "postmodern body" that builds its self-conception on a logic of constant transformation and assimilation:

> [T]he postmodern body is the body of the mythological Trickster, the shape-shifter: of indeterminate sex and changeable gender […] who continually alters her/his body, creates and recreates a personality […] [and] floats across time, from period to period, place to place. ("Feminism" 467)

27 The image of "floating across time, from period to period, place to place," conjured up by Bordo, can equally be applied to the figure of the astronaut. In the image of the independent spacewalker, the components of spatial and temporal boundary crossing are represented in a condensed form. Like hardly any other mythological figure, the astronaut stands for the ideals of exploration and conquest of new territories. Comparable only to the courageous settler in the early phases of the westward movement, the space pioneer epitomizes the aspirations and yearnings of the American quest. Western cultural imagination

[5] See http://www.hyenafilms.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=35&lang=english

has found the ideal expression for this belief in Neil Armstrong's famous words, articulated after he first set his foot on the moon: "That's one small step for man - one giant leap for mankind." The astronaut in this imagery is not only a rugged individualist. Moreover, his masculinity is a model for humanity itself. Such gendered ascriptions were confirmed in the Sixties and Seventies with the medial presence of spacemen such as Neil Armstrong und John Glenn. It was not until the Eighties that, with female astronauts like Sally Ride and Judy Resnik, a more diversified image was established. In the past twenty years, the figure of the astronaut has not only feminized visibly, it also become more "androgynous." The term "androgyny" is explicitly used by NASA experts to signify a need for balance and harmony during space expeditions. A recent study published on the official homepage of NASA, titled appropriately "Living Aloft: Human Requirements for Extended Spaceflight," contains the following statement:

> [A]ndrogyny appears highly desirable for astronauts, for a strong instrumentality combined with interpersonal sensitivity should be associated with both task accomplishment and social harmony. (9)

Androgynous personalities, the study concludes, are endowed with positive self concepts and the ability to develop satisfying interpersonal relations. By "androgynous personalities," the scientists define individuals of either biological sex who are capable of performing different social roles in everyday practice in space. "Androgynous crewmembers," the scientists claim, "may have the value of increasing social variety within a crew" (ibid). The question of a transformability of traditional gender roles raised in the NASA report touches upon a number of issues situated in the nexus of social and cultural practice. To the extent that the boundary lines within our imagination are altered, the figure of the mythological boundary crosser, too, becomes multi-layered.

The Cyborg as Icon of a Post-Gender World

28 This development is already foreshadowed in the conception of the astronaut as a cyborg, intimated in D. S. Halacy's 1965 study. Donna Haraway's approach, developed twenty years later, makes this parallel even more obvious. In her words, the cyborg is always a social construction, "a creature of social as well as a creature of fiction" ("Manifesto" 149). A cyborg is defined here as a postmodern hybrid who has internalized the settings of a technological culture into the bodily sphere. According to Haraway, we have all become cyborgs, integrating contact lenses, pacemakers, and implants into our bodily sphere. By effectively combining technological and organic features, the cyborg transgresses the limits of conventional identity. Like the astronaut, the cyborg has to be regarded not as a homogeneous

entity, but rather as a fragmented set of possibilities, "a kind of disassembled and reassembled postmodern collective and personal self" ("Manifesto" 164). As such, he/she participates in a constant "border war" fought over the validity of traditional values and the legitimacy of new ones. Since it draws upon the permeability and transgressiveness of boundaries, cyborg identity is constantly changing, fractured and reconstituted anew (Balsamo 32). These components - namely, the continual transformation, refracturing, and re-assembling of identity - cast a characteristic light on the conceptualization of the astronaut as a cyborg figure. To see the space traveler as a cybernetic organism implies a secret recognition of the dangers underlying the concept, especially the instability and potential disintegration of astronautic identity. At the same time, however, this ambiguity also makes the concept of the astronautic cyborg so usable for a discourse on postmodern subjectivity.

29 The questioning of gender hierarchies is an elementary pattern in the cyborg's world perception. After all, the cyborg is, in Haraway's phrase, "a creature in a post-gender world" ("Manifesto" 150). In cyberfeminism, the emancipatory potential of this approach is utilized to develop new modes of identity constitution. Cyberspace, Zoë Sofoulis argues, offers ideal opportunities for an interconnection and merging of identities.

> [T]he future is unmanned, that is, neither dead or collapsed, but animated by other dynamic agents, including women and machines. From the perspective of cyberfeminism […] the question is not one of dominance and control of or submission and surrender to machines, but of exploring alliances and affinities, co-evolutionary possibilities. (63)

The cyborgization of the individual thus represents the transformation of our life-world. Sherry Turkle has cogently shown in *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* that identity is used by many users of the World Wide Web as a highly decentered and multi-layered feature. As digitalized cyborgs we are no longer limited to one territory, but we become boundary crossers between the galaxies. The Internet offers us, in Sandy Stone's words, a "charged, multigendered, hallucinatory space" that we actualize through immersing into what she calls "the cybernetic act" (91). "To become the cyborg, to put on the seductive and dangerous cybernetic space like a garment," Stone claims, "is to put on the female. This cyberspace both *disembodies* […], but also reembodies in the polychrome, hypersurfaced cyborg character of the console cowboy" (ibid). In the figure of the cyborg, we discover our own predicament as postmodern subjects, being equally torn between the temptations of self-empowerment and the restrictions of ideology. In her introduction to *Cybersexualities*, Jenny Wolmark argues that this ambiguity lies at the very heart of the cyborg concept, bestowing it with both an affirmative and a subversive quality:

> By its very nature, the cyborg is a contradictory boundary creature: on the one hand, it is the product of the masculinist technologies that, in the 1980s, sought to produce a so-called defensive Star Wars weapon that had every possibility of leading to some kind of final apocalypse. On the other hand, because it is a hybrid creature, the cyborg marks a refusal to sustain the very dualisms that structure existing relations of power and control within science and technology. (4)

30 As a literary and cinematic figure, the cyborg is gendered, disgendered, and regendered, thereby reaching an almost absurd level of ambiguity. The symbolic challenge of the cyborg concept lies in the fact that we have to visualize an imaginary unity that resists logical reference. Born and raised in the Western cultural hemisphere, we are used to allocate the signs of cultural imagery to a clear-cut system of references and meanings. Floating signifiers necessarily pose a problem (and a threat) to any form of dichotomous and Manichaean thinking. The cinematic characters in the science-fiction classic *Forbidden Planet* (1956) are confronted with a similar dilemma: When the crew members meet the speaking robot Robbie for the first time, they cannot specify its sex. "Hey, Doc, is it a male or a female?" the cook thereupon asks the board physician. The answer comes from the robot itself: "In my case, SIR, the question is totally without meaning." Later in the film, the creator of Robbie the Robot, an evil genius named Dr. Morbius, reveals to the scientists that he has modeled the automaton on images of his own wife. The feminization of the robot becomes especially obvious in a scene when Robbie takes the role of a housewife, entertaining the guests and pouring coffee in their cups. Faced with the robot's household skills, one male crew members exclaims with delight, "I thought Robbie had managed very charming feminine touches." Significantly, the characters are only able to position the robot within the symbolic order when they make use of the traditional dualism of feminine vs. masculine. It is only under these auspices that the identity of the cyborg can be deciphered and rationalized.

The Mechanics of Engenderneering

31 The usual pattern for the literary and cinematic construction of cyborg characters is the following: At first, there is a semiotic openness, which is later dissolved in favor of clear demarcation lines. In this process, the machine is endowed not only with sexuality, but also with a clear function within the gendered patterns of social practice. Roy Schwartzman has described this process of a gradual transformation of robotic identity in cyborg fiction as *engenderneering*. The term is defined by Schwartzman as "personification with a twist: the investiture of non-human entities with a gendered identity" ("Mechanics" 1). The act of *engendeneering* is necessarily an ideological operation, comically integrating the cyborg into an environment that tends to regard it as an abject creature. Due to the bizarre and almost

carnivalesque nature of this transformation, the engendeneered object also serves as a reminder for the viewer of how such processes are structured. The robot's unwilling appropriation as a gendered "person" illustrates both the arbitrariness and the absurdity of such procedures.

32 The astronaut in the sci-fi genre finds himself placed in a similar dilemma as the cyborg: Clad in a unisex suit that defies attributions regarding gender and sex, the astronaut is grotesquely engendeneered by ideological discourse. In the course of this re-semantization, the initial innocence of the spacewalker becomes abandoned for the sake of bizarre ideological inscriptions which delineate the figure as a penetrator of the universe. The astronaut's actual sexlessness or asexuality, Vivian Sobchack argues in her essay "The Virginity of Astronauts," is concealed by an aura which is coded as both masculine and technological:

> [W]hether named Buzz or Armstrong, Buck, Flash, or Bowman, our public astronauts reek of locker-room camaraderie, but hardly of male sweat or semen. As if in training for the big game, they have rejected their biology and sexuality - pushed it from their minds and bodies to concentrate on the technology required to penetrate and impregnate not a woman, but the universe. ("Virginity" 108)

Sexy Galaxies: Gender Bending in Science-Fiction Parodies

33 In this context, we have to mention the conspicuously "camp" element of contemporary science fiction. Comical distortion of traditional genre components has been a popular strategy since the early days of sci-fi films. In the meantime, many classics have been turned into spoofs, making fun of the hypermasculine settings of the originals. Examples include the *Austin Powers* trilogy, which shows us phallus-shaped rockets and children's toys functioning as giant spaceships, and the German Star-Trek parody *Starship Surprise*. In the opening lyrics for the cult film *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, sung by Richard O'Brien, this hilarious aspect of 20th century science fiction is articulated in the famous lines, "Science fiction, double feature, Doctor X will build a creature. Androids fighting Brad and Janet, Anne Francis stars in *Forbidden Planet*." Later on, the song makes reference to the infamous Flash Gordon movies from the late 1930s, "And Flash Gordon was there in silver underwear," ridiculing the courageous explorer as a flamboyant sex object. The title song "Science Fiction / Double Feature" anticipates the comical plot of the movie that revolves around a couple of aliens from the planet Transsexual in the "sexy galaxy of Transsylvania." The ambiguous touch of American science-fiction movies is exposed here to the point of total deconstruction. The image of the heroic adventurer in space is debunked as a mere joke.

34 In the American cartoon series *Futurama* created by Matt Groening in the late 1990s, we find a similar mocking of existing clichés concerning the male space traveler. One of the main characters of the TV-series is the robot astronaut Bender who travels through space together with his friends Fry and Leela. The name *Bender* is already informative, standing for someone who undermines existing boundaries and norms dictated by the cultural hegemony. In the episode "Raging Bender," the character is discovered as a new talent by the manager of a wrestling foundation after unintentionally smashing another robot's electrodes. From that moment on, Bender climbs into the ring as "Bender the Offender." In the course of events, he even volunteers to fight in women's clothes, literally transforming into a "Gender Bender," which also becomes his new nickname in the ring.[6] As the epitome of the astronautic cyborg, the Bender figure ironically resists social conventions and constraints. The act of continuous change and mutation - what is called "bending" - is a crucial feature of astronautic identity. Boundaries are almost superfluous in this imagery. Limitations are rather marked as relics of an old structuring system which is still obsessed with power maintenance but has long become obsolete.

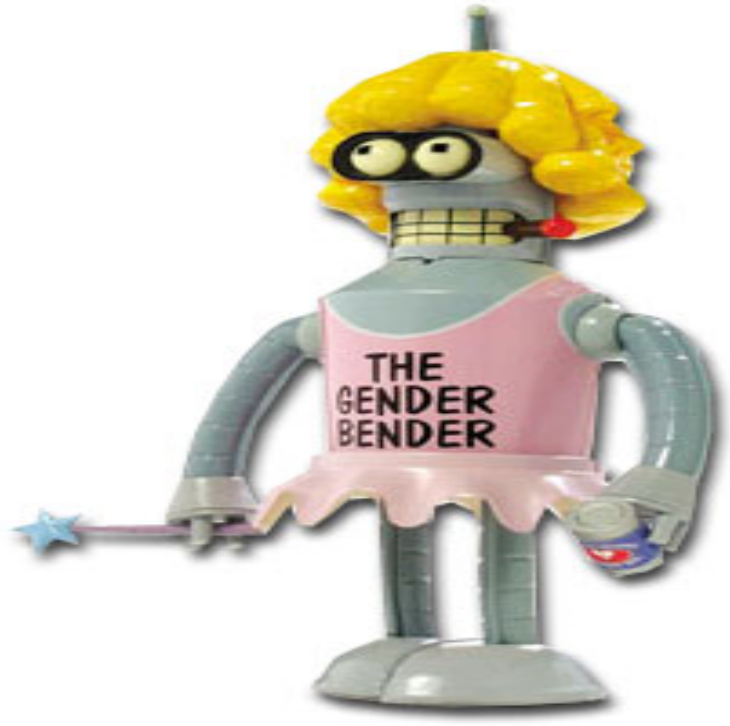


Fig. 10.

[6] *Futurama*'s Gender Bender was quickly discovered by the American toy industry. On a marketing page on the internet, the doll can be purchased for $27.95 The caption describes the toy, in a mixture of irony and serious appeal to *Futurama* fans, as "that pink clad princess of the ring, that tin terror in a tutu, that gladiator with the golden curls - The Gender Bender! The robot you love to hate is ready for some action! Gender Bender comes packed in a matching pink and blue box and even has a matching wand. You can't resist his charm!" See http://www.emerchandise.com/product/COFTR0004/s.M2kYsUGK.

Conclusion: Burning Bridges

35 The genre of science fiction offers consumers an ambivalent image of identity. Whereas some texts are exaggerated or comical, others make a genuine attempt to re-fashion the ideological patterns of Western thinking. In any case, there is more than just one function to this diverse genre: Neither is it meant for entertainment purposes alone, nor is its single goal self-empowerment, or even subversion. Even the more "progressive" science-fiction texts are often based on an ambiguous premise: While pointing to the possibility of fundamental changes in society, they are also loaded with concessions to hegemonic culture, often culminating in a hidden affirmation of existing structures. This applies in particular to the processes of gendering, disgendering and regendering in utopian fiction. It is left up to the audiences who consume these texts if the search for a gender-free space can continue on a more pragmatic level or if it remains an illusion. As Treut's film *Gendernauts*, among others, has suggested, there are numerous structural analogies between utopian fiction and social reality - analogies which can be instrumentalized and "acted out" by citizens and consumers (no matter of transsexual, multisexual, or metrosexual) every day. The postmodern individual is especially inclined to make use of such connections in order to break out of the perceived ghetto of social constraints and find self-affirmation. In the age of expressive individualism[7], such attempts have to be radical and uncompromising in nature. The affinity of authorship and utopianism is at the heart of such creative operations. Marge Piercy's science-fiction novel *He, She, and It* (1991) offers a remarkable vision of a collective boundary subversion in the near future. Set in the mid-21st century in a place called Norika (actually the former North America - now a contaminated wasteland permeated by huge environmental domes), the novel encourages us to make use of existing structures of thought and organization to fundamentally change the path of progress. In the final passages of her tale, Piercy draws a connection between the act of creating science fiction and the manufacturing of cyborgs described in the book: Both the author herself and the characters participate in a "strange and instructive journey" (446), the outcome being not clear yet.

38 The astronaut is a crucial figure for a discussion of postmodern subjectivity. Like the cyborg, he/she seems to resist stable inscriptions, being endowed with a sense of autonomy

[7] Winfried Fluck uses this term to describe the fundamental transformations in values that occurred in postmodern societies between the mid 60s and the late 70s. "The culture of expressive individualism," Fluck explains, "is not primarily concerned with a social rise to respectability but with the possibility of self-realization" ("Cultures" 216). Marked by the desire to find gratification and self-empowerment at almost any cost, expressive individualism implies components of radical behaviour as well as a tendency to "outradicalize" others. In its willingness to "burn bridges" and break new ground, the astronautic subject stands in the tradition of expressive individualism, participating in a virtual contest over the most innovative and most satisfying modes of self-fulfillment.

that detaches his/her body from patterns bound to a certain time or location. The astronaut is clearly marked as a creature of future times, an inhabitant of territories not yet discovered. Unlike the nomad who, in Braidotti's phrase, "blurs boundaries without burning bridges," the astronaut *does* burn bridges. The astronautic subject is not only a mythological explorer of new terrains; moreover, he/she is a composite creature, meandering between both genders and traveling between the realms of social practice and utopia. Most importantly, the concept evokes a figuration of overcoming the traditional dualisms of mind and space. As astronautic subjects, we are courageous enough to enter new spheres and independent enough to develop alternative forms of thinking - even at the risk of sometimes losing our sense of orientation.

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Into the Room and Out of the Closet: (Homo)Sexuality and Commodification in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*

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Abstract:
David, the narrator protagonist of Baldwin's Giovanni's Room, is teetering on the brink of yielding to his homosexuality when, as an American tourist in the Paris of the fifties, he meets the tragic Italian immigrant, Giovanni. The circle of acquaintances that the raconteur frequents spins to propel him to one location that would challenge his self-representation: Giovanni's room - the metonym of his newly appropriated sexual identity. Once David enters Giovanni's dilapidated room, he virtually enters a realm of no return, a social inferno, yet also a heaven and haven of unrepressed sexuality. When the protagonist leaves his lover's lair, he escapes the closet he has inhabited, consciously or not, for most of his life and accepts the truth of his sexuality. Furthermore, "the closet" objectified, Giovanni's room stands not only for the recognition of David's homosexual identity, but also for the social and political oppression that comes with it, being that the closet, as theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick evinces, "is the defining structure for gay oppression in this century" (71).

1 David, the narrator protagonist of Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, is teetering on the brink of yielding to his homosexuality when, as an American tourist in the Paris of the fifties, he meets the tragic Italian immigrant, Giovanni. The circle of acquaintances that the raconteur frequents spins to propel him to one location that would challenge his self-representation: Giovanni's room - the metonym of his newly appropriated sexual identity. Once David enters Giovanni's dilapidated room, he virtually enters a realm of no return, a social inferno (who else but an Italian could have been a better guide through the gates outside which one leaves any hope?), yet also a heaven and haven of unrepressed sexuality. When the protagonist leaves his lover's lair, he escapes the closet he has inhabited, consciously or not, for most of his life and accepts the truth of his sexuality. As such, Giovanni's chaotic room is the one threshold to David's surrender to his homosexuality longings, "with everything in [him] screaming *No*! yet the sum of [him] sigh[ing] *Yes*" (64). Furthermore, "the closet" objectified, Giovanni's room stands not only for the recognition of David's homosexual identity, but also for the social and political oppression that comes with it, being that the closet, as theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick evinces, "is the defining structure for gay oppression in this century" (71).

2 The narrative by which *Giovanni's Room* unfolds is in actuality David's stream of consciousness prompted by his former lover's (Giovanni) imprisonment and execution as punishment for having killed his employer - a word invested with double connotation in Baldwin's novel. David reconstructs and ponders over this violent act for which he arguably

feels responsible, as he believes himself to be the catalyst which has lead to his lover's self-destruction. His tale vacillates between two interwoven time frames, one which refers to the narrative present and the other which is actually a mixture of recollections and reenactments that situate the raconteur and his reader in relation to the past. Always already, his account poses the usual question of the storyteller's reliability and invites skepticism. David's lack of interest in a beautified self-representation, however, argues for his sincerity and hence, for his relative commitment to the truth.[1] The narrator suggests, through the first image of the novel - a depiction of his self-reflection in the window - to reproduce accurately, photographically even, the events that create his story. David's focus is not as much on the tragedy of his former lover, as it is on the introspection of his own sexual coming of age, his self portrait in the window's glass. Ultimately, the narrative is the Bildungsroman of David's homosexuality, the one occurrence from which the entire tale, thus the drama, irrupts and gives meaning to his existence. The life that David must decipher for himself aligns essentially along and beyond the threshold of Giovanni's room and hence his getting out of the closet, an understanding that the narrator acquires in retrospective: "I understood why Giovanni had wanted me and had brought me to his retreat. I was to destroy this room and give to Giovanni a new and better life. This life could only be my own, which, in order to transform Giovanni's, must first become a part of Giovanni's room" (88). The nest that David share with his lover is his classroom of sexual initiation; it represents the avenue that separates ignorance from knowledge in lieu of sexuality. Referring to texts similar in nature with *Giovanni's Room*,[2] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains in *Epistemology of the Closet* that

> [t]he subject - the thematics - of knowledge and ignorance themselves, of innocence and initiations, of secrecy and disclosure, become not contingently, but integrally infused with one particular object of cognition: no longer sexuality as a whole [as envisioned by Foucault's *History of Sexuality, Volume I*], but even more specifically, now, the homosexual topic. (74)

Baldwin's narrative is in fact an exploration of the homosexuality in its complexity, highlighting the landmarks of one's struggling with one's own sexual identity, from mental self investigation to physical initiation, from the denial of homosexual self identification to ultimately surrendering and embracing it.

3 As part of David's vacillation regarding his admitting to his homosexual identity, his

[1] Baldwin's discreet dedication on the publisher's page, "FOR LUCIEN I am the man who suffered, I suffered, I was there. -Whitman," suggests a certain identification of the author with his character or at least with his characters' turmoil. This et in Arcadia ego, opens the possibility for Giovanni's Room to be an account of a rather meta-fictional than fictional nature.

[2] The two texts on which Sedgwick focuses are Herman Melville's *Billy Bud* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The similarity to which I refer consists of stories essentially revolving around the themes of homoerotic desire, formation of sexual identity, etc.

flashbacked acquiescence that, "[t]he beast which Giovanni has awakened in [him] would never go to sleep again" (84), testifies for a homosexuality which is complicated by the preference for promiscuity, or sordidness, rather than for a stable relationship. The raconteur's "beast" is not in fact his homosexuality, but this predilection towards wantonness - a drive which urges him towards a commodification of his sexuality, either as a payer or, more likely, as a buyer. David anticipates the outcome of this drive when he wonders, "[...] one day I would not be with Giovanni anymore. And would I then, like all the others, find myself turning and following all kinds of boys down God knows what dark avenue, into what dark place?" (84). Indeed, towards the end of the narrative, David performs the very acts with which he was concerned during the time of his affair with Giovanni, and even earlier, after his brief homosexual affair with young Joey. The later sexual encounter with the sailor (of a commercial nature or not - the author is not explicit) embodies David's "beast." Yet at this point it is hard to tell whether the protagonist performs (in Judith Butler's definition[3]) a role he himself prophesized, thereby hurrying to fulfill his own prediction. I argue that under the excuse that, "I was very drunk" (162), David rushes headfirst into the mire he loathed in others but which he considers his inevitable end. There is no other apparent reason why he should resort to casual, squalid sex with strangers, regardless of his drunkenness, while still in the prime of his youth and physical appeal. Nevertheless, he could already be wholeheartedly down the path of the promiscuity that he has once seen in Jacques and Guillaume and has also foreseen, in the "beast," for himself. The room in which Giovanni invited David, in actuality interrupts the centrifugal "constant motion" which has distanced him from his homosexuality. Giovanni's room represents the very locus of "something which shamed and frightened [David]," but which he has always desired although not allowing in his life (20). In his own words,

> I think now that if I had had any intimation that the self I was going to find would turn out to be only the same self from which I had spent so much time in flight, I would have stayed at home. But, again, I think I knew, at the very bottom of my heart, exactly what I was doing when I took the boat to France. (21)

The raconteur's thus conveys the struggle within himself to self identify as a heterosexual, a battle which he knows he is bound to lose to homosexuality and to which, admittedly, he is rather eager to surrender. Although cloaked in discourse of silence at first, the homosexual desire (and homosexual acts) that the protagonist experiences posits him inside the closet. Eve

[3] I refer here to Butler's definition of performativity as "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (2) in *Bodies that Matter*. Appropriately, David performs the role that reiterates a certain model ("norm," paradoxically) he saw (and detested) in Guillaume and Jacques, "citing" their behavior, thus reproducing, *difference* considered, the archetype of the male pimp/male prostitute.Thus, David reproduces a mannerism that he has earlier observed in others.

Kosofsky Sedgwick asserts in "Axiomatic" that "'[c]losetedness' itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of silence - not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularly by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it" (69). By the same token, David's "closetedness" reveals itself as a significant silence when he exchanges letters with his father, with his fiancée, Hella, and altogether with anyone who is outside the queer circle he inhabits in Paris. Nevertheless, once the narrator accepts his sexual identity after passing through Giovanni's room, he is able to "get out of the closet" and appropriate the counter-discourse in relation to what Sedgwick called the discourse "that surrounds and differentially constitutes it."

4 David's story, that of an American in Paris, records happenings in a time and space which attempt to clarify his sexuality, explicate his identity and, possibly, his reasons. The narrator's life revolves around one landmark of paramount importance, Giovanni's room, while tying his existence with markers of lesser importance, such as Hella (his fragile anchor in heterosexuality), Jacques (David's queer acquaintance), the American past and the Parisian present. The protagonist, in evoking or recreating episodes from his Parisian life, hints to certain determinism; there is always someone who predicts or reads his future in his body, or there is David himself, exercising the right and power of the narrator, who claims premonition. In David's recollection, the queer circle had the perception of his sexual identity even before he admits it to himself, from the overly made up "fairy" in Guillaume's bar, who sees David's "fire" and predicts that he "will be very unhappy" (40), to Jacques, who prophesizes that "this is a very important day for you" (54). All this explicit inevitability, which the narrator flaunts, serves as an implicit disclaimer meant to assuage his sense of guilt in regards to both his contribution to his Giovanni's downfall, but also to his succumbing to homoerotic desire.[4] The reenactments that are intertwined with David's recollections display as much the omniscience and the simulated omnipresence of the raconteur, as well as they testify - again - for disguised determinism. When David recreates the episodes of the confrontation between Giovanni and Guillaume and the ensuing murder, or scenes from Giovanni's imprisonment and later his execution, he implies that there is only this way that these occurrences unfurl, that they were determined to happen, hence predictable.

5 A number of people contribute to David's self-identification (and self-representation) as a homosexual; nonetheless, it is Giovanni who performs the function of a mentor more than

[4] Guilt is indeed a recurrent theme in the narrative, although at times David emphasizes his immunity to it; "It would help if I were able to feel guilty. But the end of innocence is also the end of guilt," he claims (112). David, I argue, uses the self-creating subjectivity of the Nietzschean disclaimer: "thus I willed" in his "eternal recurrence" of Giovanni's room.

any other character with whom the teller interacts and not necessarily due to the sexual nature of their relationship. Donald H. Mengay, in his critique of Giovanni's Room, sees the "difference [which] surfaces [in the novel] as the culprit of psychic and social dis-ease" (59). He explains his assertion by employing an analysis of the "identificatory nexus gender/race/sexuality in both David and Giovanni" (60), which leads to the characters' position as metonymic for those of a WASP American vs. the "black/gay/male" (60). The critic evinces that Baldwin, from the position of the African American writer, constructed Giovanni's race dimension according to historical reality which recalls "American slavery, the repoliticized African-American identity of the 1950s, and an African genealogy"(60).[5] Consequently, Mengay sees the failed relationship between David and Giovanni as stemming from the irreconcilable positions the two characters represent in terms of race. As such, Giovanni's room stands for the messy, dirty realm of the colonial and racial other; hence, in David's "bourgeois racism" (Mengay 62), it needs "cleaning (read whitening and/or normalizing)" (idem). Though focused on the racial signifier, Mengay identifies the trope which "also critiques structures of alterity in the gay subculture that reduce individuals to commodity status" (61). He further contends that "[t]his representation of trade in human bodies, both black and homosexual, of objectification and bestialization, persists too in reference to Giovanni as 'valuable racehorse'" (61). Though valid and credible enough, Mengay's critique does not cover the entire spectrum of difference between David and Giovanni that works both towards their being united and also separated in the end. I have my concerns in regards to the two characters' implied racial divide. Baldwin, although most likely apprehensive about issues of representations of his own race and racial oppression, nevertheless equally succeeds in creating a credible and authentic enough argument for xenophobia in France in the fifties; obviously a result of his first hand observation of the phenomenon.[6] At a time when Italy was struggling with poverty, social and political reorganization, the Italian immigrant was all but welcome in the richer France. Also, tolerant - up to a point - towards people with "*les goûts particuliers*" (Baldwin 150), the French prove not as tolerant when this peculiar taste is complicated by a foreign nationality and citizenship.

[5] Mengay supports his claim evoking David's characterization of Giovanni as "insolent and dark and leonine," by which "he links him metonymically with all three cultural spheres," in other words, proud, black and of African origin (60). The critic further demonstrates this analogy when he cites instances in the novel sending back to slave auctions, such as David linking the atmosphere in Guillaume's bar with a slave market, when remarking that Giovanni could win any "bidder," should he keep his posture of "arrogance on the auction block," etc. (Mengay 61).

[6] James Baldwin spent almost ten years in Europe, especially France, between1948-1957 before he returned to New York and got involved in the Civil Rights Movement. The writer chose to spend most of the remainder of his life, after 1968, in France. In 1986, the French government made him a commander of the Legion of Honor, France's highest civilian award. He died at his home, at St. Paul de Vence, in France, on November 30, 1987, at the age of 63.

In fact, the xenophobic discourse employed in the journals concerning Giovanni's crime, is intent on picturing him as monstrous, an echo of the colonial discourse defined by Homi Bhabha:

> The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction… Disciplinary power is exercised through indirection on the basis of knowledge of the subject-races as 'abnormal.'(154-5)

"Tainted" by his nationality and his precarious economical and political status, Giovanni is always already the degenerate "other," who comes to infect the virtuous native population with his lack of morality and decorum. Guillaume, his "victim," equally, is purged of any sins and elevated to the status of a martyr by the same xenophobic discourse, simply because he happens to be French.

6 Taking on Judith Butler, who "contest[s] that sexual difference is more primary or more fundamentally than other kinds of differences, including racial difference" (181), I intend to explore further the function and dialectics of difference in establishing one's identity - sexuality included. Correspondingly, ethnic, class, and age differences - among others - in which the protagonist is involved or which he witnesses work towards constructing his self awareness and ultimately, self-identification. David learns that working in juxtaposition with the "dangerous" other, even "a disgusting old fairy" (150) like Guillaume becomes "fantastically entangled with French history, French honor, and French glory, and very nearly became, indeed, a symbol of French manhood" (150) in the xenophobic media, when compared with the worthless, drug addicted Italian criminal. The play on ethnical difference leads towards deconstructing a certain hierarchy of importance in regards to the characters' identities. Accordingly, French nationality precedes, if not veils, whatever deviance from the (sexual and ethical) norm Guillaume demonstrates throughout his life. In the same line of reasoning, David acts not only as the WASP American opposed to the gay black male in Mengay's reading, but also as the representative of the arrogant, rich (although simulated), nonchalant American against the proud but poor Italian. The ethnic difference generates, as far as Giovanni is concerned, magnetism ("I knew that Giovanni had been attracted to me partly because of it [the "common quality" shared by all Americans]" (89), David recalls), but also spawns repulsion towards the arrogant indifference of the stereotypical American tourist always wearing an "empty smile" (138). David, in his turn, is as attracted by his lover's Italian beauty as he is exasperated with his dramatic nature ("Italians are theatrical" (132), in his assertion) and his muddled, dirty appearance, which is insulting his own tidy background.

7 In reifying his claim to masculinity, David reads the dynamics of difference to his disadvantage when interacting with Giovanni, for whom he does not want to perform the role of a feminized partner. At this point the protagonist is still self identifying as a "normal," heterosexual man who, once again, tasted - but not acknowledged - the existence of a closeted homosexual within himself. He is not yet ready to yield to a homosexual identity; he has not, in his words, "found himself" (21). Moreover, David's "beast" is constantly in need of reestablishing its masculine active role and rejecting the passive, housewife - like position with which, he believes, Giovanni would be likely to invest him:

> You want to go out and be the big laborer and bring home the money, and want me to stay here and wash the dishes and cook the food and clean this miserable closet of a room and kiss you when you come in through that door and lie with you at night and be your little *girl*. (142)

Still in the process of initiation, David identifies the homosexual relationship with gender normative bias, as superimposed on the gender roles assumed by heterosexual couples. Hence, if Giovanni is the provider, David fears that he would be necessarily the domesticated partner, the housekeeper. In the economy of Giovanni's room, Giovanni would represent the masculine while David automatically assumes he should perform the feminine.

8 However, throughout his remembrance, David belabors his masculine status, "[b]ut I am not a housewife - men never can be housewives" (88). If Giovanni challenges David's claim to masculinity to a certain extent, Jacques, and even Guillaume, dismantle and provoke in their own ways David's sexual identity. Jacques is the first to look in disbelief at David's trumpeted relationship with Hella, David's "fiancée." If the protagonist himself deems his heterosexuality, or bisexuality at most, as real, Jacques calls David's buried homosexuality to finally reveal itself: "[c]ome out, come out, wherever you are!" (57). The aging American businessman is not only the herald of David's secreted sexual orientation, but, in the same dialectics of difference, is the representative of the "dirty old men" who "at least […] could *pay*" (49) in opposition to the alluring young male who offers himself for money. Jacques (just as Guillaume) is the homosexual who needs to buy sex; he is the embodiment of the decrepit "fairy" whose only chance for a relationship depends on his purchasing power. In the economy of sex, he is a payer; although not yet selling himself, in the same economy David (and Giovanni, too) is the commodity who gets paid for sexual "service". David, in the pre-Giovanni phase of his life already starts performing - or simulating, rather - the position of a kept Ganymede, "pretending that Jacques and I were friends […] forcing Jacques, on pain of humiliation, to pretend this" (28). Moreover, David does not carryout the charade only for the audience in Guillaume's gay bar, but to tease Jacques, too, "I pretended not to see, although I

exploited it, the lust not quite sleeping in his bright, bitter eyes and, by means of the rough, male candor with which I conveyed to him the case was hopeless, I compelled him, endlessly, to hope" (28). Nevertheless, the dynamics of difference has a fragile equilibrium as it is time sensitive. In fact, both Jacques and Guillaume are also the crystal ball in which David predicts his future once his "beast" has been released in Giovanni's room.[7]

9 David's position towards women is not less complicated than it is towards men. The narrator, admittedly, is intent on a stable, "normal" relationship with a woman, but only as a result of social pressure. Whenever he feels too endangered by his affair with Giovanni, the narrator turns almost desperately to Hella or casual heterosexual sex to reestablish a traditionally masculine identity he feels to be threatened in Giovanni's company (room): "[m]y real fear was buried and was driving me to Montparnasse. I wanted to find a girl, any girl at all" (95). Sue, the wealthy American girl with whom David has a "one night stand," is for David in painful contrast with Giovanni's sexual appeal on their first encounter, when the narrator recalls he could "do anything but moan" (64). She is "[d]isquietingly fluid - fluid without being able to flow" (99); a creature whom he despises, not for her body or herself, but for what she stands for: the other sex which he now finds bland, if not downright repulsive. If bisexuality has worked for David up to a point, after passing through Giovanni's room and submitting to homoerotic desire, the sexual allure of the female body fades increasingly only to turn into utter disgust. The feminine body, even Hella's, becomes devoid of any magnetism: "It seemed to happen all at once - I suppose that only means that it had been happening for a long time. I trace it to something as fleeting as the tips of her breast lightly touching my forearm as she leaned over me to serve my supper. I felt my flesh recoil" (158). From this point on, bisexuality is no longer a desirable option for David, regardless of his longing for a "normal," family life.

10 In his resistance to homosexuality, David's rationale is as much related to social appropriateness - to have children and watch his woman put his children to bed (104) - as it is linked to his intimate panic, "I wanted to be […] with my manhood unquestioned" (idem). Being that he fails with the former, he is likely to believe in the failure of the latter as well when he confesses, "What a long way, I thought, I've come - to be destroyed!" (104). Despite the appearance of a more fixed identity that David exhibits at the end (and the beginning) of his narrative, we are bound to give credit to Butler's take on the changeable nature of identity

[7] In fact, Giovanni himself equates David with the likes of Jacques and Guillaume when he sardonically recalls his stillborn son: "It was a little boy, it would have been a wonderful, strong man, perhaps even the kind of man *you* and Jacques and Guillaume and all your disgusting band of fairies spend all your years and nights looking for, and dreaming of…" (140).

and thus appreciate the narrator's complexity in all its protean nature:

> What remains outside [the] subject set outside by the act of foreclosure[8] which founds the subject, persists as a kind of defining negativity. The subject is, as a result, never coherent and never self-identical precisely because it is founded and, indeed, continually refounded, through a set of defining foreclosures and repressions that constitute the discontinuity and incompletion of the subject. (190)

11 In negotiating between the private and the public, the narrator's quest for his sexual identity and stability, problematic as it proves, must be thus understood not only in relationship with the others, but also in relationship with himself. In order to comprehend the morphing sexuality that the raconteur experienced throughout the narrative, we have to acquiescence the protagonist's deconstruction in the Derridian sense: the *I* of the narrator differs and defers from the *I* of the David who has an affair with Giovanni, or the *I* of the David who engages in promiscuous sex with sailors. Surely, the trace is visible all throughout David's avatars; his homosexuality is briefly entertained, then repressed, denied, later indulged - yet under the pretense of bisexuality - to be fully surrendered to in the end. In other words, as critic Donald E. Hall assesses, the text is "about the tension between fixity and fluidity in sexuality" (156), more than its being exclusively an exploration of a case of repressed homosexuality. In Tzvetan Todorov's definition, David's story has left a state of (relative) equilibrium, passing through disruptive stages, to achieve a new state of (altered) equilibrium that is here to stay.[9] As such, it is difficult to say whether the narrator finds a stable, fixed identity, sexually speaking; however, after wanderings and hesitations, David, I argue, has reached the stage he anticipated at the beginning of his narrative - confession, an equilibrium that, unless other rooms are in store, is bound to last.

[8] Butler, citing Slavoj Žižek, elucidates that "the 'subject' is produced in language by the act of foreclosure (*Verwerfung*). What is refused or repudiated in the formation of the subject continues to determine that subject" (190).

[9] Todorov, in *Theories of the Symbol*, theorizes that the canonical story has five elements: a state of equilibrium, one of disruption of that equilibrium, a state of recognition, another which constitutes the action to restore and, finally, the new state of equilibrium, the disrupted or altered equilibrium.

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"In the dark camp," Or: Straight with a (Pastoral) Twist: American Western Masculinity in *Brokeback Mountain*

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Abstract:
Tracing both the fascination and the discomfort that tend to engulf a mainstream audience confronted with "Brokeback Mountain," this article contends that the major source of controversy concerning both the short story and the movie resides in a yet unacknowledged generic crisis rather than in the scarcely innovative postulation of a gay American Western masculinity as such. In a line of reasoning that explores the potentials of generic camp, this crisis is shown to result from a subversion of the Western itself whose conventions have been infiltrated and thoroughly undermined by the sentimental homoeroticism of an altogether different genre, the pastoral elegy. In "Brokeback Mountain," then, this camp invasion of normative generic traditions eventually culminates in the polarisation of two dissimilar stereotypes of masculinity, namely that of the anti-sentimental American Western cowboy, Ennis del Mare, and that of the sentimental pastoral shepherd, Jack Twist.

1 And if you can't stand it, you have got to fix it. A chief misjudgement concerning "Brokeback Mountain",[1] both the short story and the movie, probably lies in the widespread preconception that the queering of the cowboy in the American Western tradition is unanimously considered an unprecedented subversion. In fact, this tradition has long been invaded by gay characters, both subtly homoerotic or overtly camp.[2] Thus, both the fascination as well as the discomfort that engulf a mainstream, predominantly heteronormative, audience confronted with "Brokeback Mountain" must reside in some yet unacknowledged generic crisis. Suppose then: What if this generic crisis results from the undermining force of a totally different tradition? What if the American Western tradition and its model masculinities merely serve as stand-ins that in due course turn out to be insufficiently equipped to completely reduce, and thus tame, the emotional impact of a more overtly homoerotic, and therefore much more patrolled genre? In other words, what if "Brokeback Mountain" first and foremost requires to be understood as a pastoral elegy? Evidently, this generic viewpoint will do better justice to the short story both in terms of its bucolic settings as well as its examination of the dynamics of love and loss. Furthermore, in

[1] Quotations from "Brokeback Mountain", the short story, are taken from Proulx's collection *Close Range. Wyoming Stories*. Quotations from the film, respectively the screenplay, will be indicated by a note referring to all the screenwriters, Proulx, McMurtry and Ossana.

[2] Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet*, for example, discusses the American Western masculinity of late-1960s buddy films, in particular *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), arguing that their depiction of the cowboy permanently "calls into question the innocence of this ultimate masculine ideal" (81), even to the degree of an implanted fear, a homosexual panic, whose angst-ridden anticipations predict the erasure of the "difference between the cowboy hero and the faggot on Forty-second Street" (ibid.). More recently, the masculinity of the cowboy has developed into a camp cliché, especially in queer movies such as *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994).

contrast to other rigorously homosocial genres, such as the American Western but also the seafaring tradition, the pastoral elegy is generically predetermined to suggest a homoerotic subtext, or connotation, exactly because the intimacy between men within this genre is so exceptionally intense that homosocial and homosexual bonding become virtually indistinguishable. By evoking the pastoral tradition, "Brokeback Mountain" testifies to much more than just a homosexual presence in the realm of straight American Western masculinity: It invests this masculinity with both a subversive sexuality and a generic sentimentality, thus exposing what Judith Butler calls "a foreclosure of possibility which produces a domain of homosexuality understood as unlivable passion and ungrievable loss" (135). In other words, the pastoral elegy forces the American Western tradition to admit to the fact that not only is there a homosexual attachment but it is both livable and grievable. This admittance turns out to be indispensable, for it enables us to further examine the short story's sentimental investment. And this examination is all the more necessary, since the sentimental investment within both the short story and the movie is by no means unambiguous. In fact, it polarises the positions of the increasingly gay-identified sentimentality of a pastoral shepherd, Jack Twist, and the tenaciously straight-identified anti-sentimentality of an American Western cowboy, Ennis del Mar.

2 Alluding to a traditional triangular structure, the short story creates two dichotomous spheres, the pastoral space containing the homosexual bond between Ennis and Jack, and the urban space containing the heterosexual bond between Ennis and Alma, or respectively, between Jack and Lureen. In accordance with generic conventions, the pastoral space offers the resources of sublime nature, thus forming a locus amoenus that eventually culminates in the idea of a present-day arcadia not yet ruined by the inevitable experience of loss. And still, even in the very beginning the delineation of the pastoral space is provided with the undertones of doom:

> During the day Ennis looked across a great gulf and sometimes saw Jack, a small dot moving across a high meadow as an insect moves across a tablecloth; Jack, in his dark camp, saw Ennis as night fire, a red spark on the huge black mass of mountain. (Proulx 256-257)

Plotwise, this passage already anticipates the future estrangement of Ennis and Jack with both its portentous reference to the "great gulf" between them and its mutually telling comparisons. More significantly, however, the allusion to the "dark camp" contains a double entendre that discloses the pastoral idyll to be literary, indeed fictitious. After all, many contemporary representations of the pastoral genre include strategies of camp that playfully evoke an

artificial refuge ultimately unavailable to everyone, including both cowboys and shepherds.[3]

3 These representations deliberately play with the wilful confusion of the literal and the literary, thus aiming to extract what Eve Sedgwick calls a "surplus beauty" ("Paranoid" 150) from the camp tendency to take the allegory for real. Following Sedgwick, pastoral camp can be seen to pursue precisely this, the mobilisation of reparative resources:

> The desire of a reparative impulse […] is additive and accretive. Its fear, a realistic one, is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self. To view camp as, among other things, the communal, historically dense exploration of a variety of reparative practices is to do better justice to many of t he defining elements of classic camp performances […]. (ibid. 149-150).

In "Brokeback Mountain," the awareness of the discrepancy between the allegory and reality is deceptively foreclosed from the start. Both the short story and the movie initially evoke the misleading notion that these two spaces, the sphere of the allegory and the sphere of reality, may indeed be co-existent. Paradoxically, reality even seems to surpass the pastoral promise, offering sexual pleasures whose fulfilment would certainly transgress the strictly patrolled limits of the pastoral. And thus, it is somewhat delightfully camp to learn that after their first sexual encounter both Ennis and Jack "knew how it would go for the rest of the summer, sheep be damned" (Proulx 260). Simultaneously, however, the compatibility between allegory and reality is acutely threatened by a rapid intensification of the mechanisms of homosocial order, whose omnipresence is made manifest both physically, in the policing gaze of Joe Aguirre, and psychologically, in Ennis' disturbing account of the literal castration, and brutal murder, of an elderly gay man presumably conducted by Ennis' father.

4 In fact, these two examples of homosocial policing accurately illustrate the twofold threat occurring with a lack of awareness concerning the discrepancy between reality and allegory, because in "Brokeback Mountain" the literal unpredictably intrudes on the literary and the literary uncannily turns into the literal. Consequently, the resources of pastoral camp undergo an increasingly depressing revaluation, both in terms of a reparative quest for a palimpsest romance whose tenor becomes gradually more melancholy and forlorn and in

[3] The link between camp and the pastoral genre has already been put forward by Susan Sontag in her famous "Notes on Camp," first published in 1964. Although Sontag initially argues that "nothing in nature can be campy […]. Rural camp is still man-made, and most campy objects are urban" (55), she nevertheless admits to the fact that "they [campy objects] have a serenity - or a naïveté - which is equivalent of pastoral." (ibid.). Thus, Sontag herself proposes a commonality between camp objects and the pastoral genre that eventually puts her first claim about the absence of camp in nature into perspective. In other words, even though nature, according to Sontag, is essentially un-camp, its representations, including the literary representations of the pastoral genre, may well be marked by the extravagances of this particular mode of perception. More recently, depictions of pastoral camp can be observed in the works of authors such as Alan Hollinghurst, whose AIDS-elegies make vast use of camp in order to simultaneously claim and question traditional routes to grief.

terms of a paranoid alertness towards discovery and disclosure whose impact eventually initiates the intra-generic fall of the pastoral elegy - with all its dynamics of love and loss now looming over Ennis and Jack like a dim self-fulfilling prophecy. Positioned between these two forces, reparation and paranoia, Proulx's use of pastoral camp indeed grows dark.[4] In contrast to other contemporary representations of pastoral camp, then, "Brokeback Mountain" illustrates how the characters' incapacity to deal with the incoherence between the literal and the literary denies them the comforting potential of pastoral camp to the uncanny degree that the pastoral elegy is suddenly reinvested with an outwardly uncamp, in fact dead-serious, and thus all the more dangerously melodramatic, (anti-) sentimentality whose impact is especially noxious, since it exposes and intensifies the increasing divergence of two very different masculinities and their conflicting tendencies towards both paranoia and reparation.

5 Ennis' initiation into paranoid processes has been thoroughly accomplished right from the start, beginning with a Freudian landmark, the fear of castration, that is already inherently connoted in his conspicuously abbreviated first name. Bluntly spoken, then, not only does the initial addition of a voiced plosive produce a far more common first name, namely (D)ennis, but furthermore, one might just as well imagine another preceding initial, a voiceless plosive, whose omission eventually suggests that castration has already occurred, especially since the emasculating effect of this very omission results in an audible remainder that comes precariously close, phonetically, to /einəs/. Easily the most traumatic incidence of a literary, indeed metaphorical, fear suddenly turning literal in "Brokeback Mountain," the internalised threat of castration looms over Ennis ever since his father took him to see the corpse of Earl, an elderly gay man, whose violated body apparently had been on display for quite a long time as an affirmation of the Symbolic order and as a rite of passage for boys to visit on their route to proper manhood. Unsurprisingly, this dire socialisation turns out to have been perversely successful, for when Ennis reveals his traumatic experience to Jack the night of their reunion, his paranoia instantly stirs up the policing presence of the Father, literally his father:

> "I was what, nine years old and they found Earl dead in a irrigation ditch. They'd took a tire iron to him, spurred him up, drug him around by his dick until it pulled off, just bloody pulp. What the tire iron done looked like pieces a burned tomatoes all over

[4] Sedgwick distinguishes between two camp practices, a reparative imagination that aims at amelioration and the healing of traumatic damage as well as a paranoid imagination that aims at the anticipation and disclosure of the workings of heteronormativity, including its classified gender performances. By using the term "dark camp," I suggest a continuity of these two forces, reparation and paranoia, albeit with regards to a different, a previous, Sedgwickean distinction, namely that between the sentimental and the anti-sentimental. "Dark camp," as applied in "Brokeback Mountain," thus marks a sinister variation of the original distinction, for it eventually depicts both a reparative sentimentality whose struggle for amelioration gives way to constant dissatisfaction and frustration and a paranoid anti-sentimentality whose gender performances, in this case that of the American Western masculinity, no longer anticipate the heteronormative workings in society in order to subvert and disclose them, but indeed in order not to be disclosed by them.

> him, nose tore down from skiddin on gravel." "You seen this?" "Dad made sure I seen it. Took me to see it. Me and K.E. Dad laughed about it. Hell, for all I know he done the job. If he was alive and was to put his head in that door right now you bet he'd go get his tire iron." (Proulx 268)

In the course of the short story, it becomes increasingly apparent that Ennis' subjection to the law of the father, the Symbolic order, is indeed too profound to be completely cast off. In fact, the conflict that results from his feelings for Jack on the one hand, and his persistent need to sustain a straight-identified self-conception on the other hand, in time builds up an escalating psychic structure that drives him further and further into the bottomless pit of paranoia. Many references in the story comment on this development.

6 However, probably no passage is more adequate to illustrate his paranoid condition than this excerpt from the screenplay of the film, written by Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana. The scene depicts one of the later reunions of Jack and Ennis on Brokeback Mountain. Ennis wonders:

> ENNIS You ever get the feelin', I don't know, when you're in town, and someone looks at you, suspicious … like he knows. And then you get out on the pavement, and everyone, looking at you, and maybe they all know too? (Proulx, McMurtry, and Ossana 71)

Ennis thus learns to perceive his environment through the lenses of paranoia. Permanently on his guard against the threats of discovery and disclosure, he exhausts himself in anticipation without ever realising that paranoia can never offer adequate protection against discovery and disclosure, not only because the paranoid condition may well turn out to inflict a more crucial and self-destructive damage on him than any exterior menace possibly could, but also because even the most exhaustive sense of anticipation must sooner or later fail to defend his open secret. Discovery and disclosure may lurk behind the most trifling object such as a handwritten note on a fishing rod. The vicious crux of paranoia, of course, lies in the fact that its failure inevitably leads to its headlong intensification, rather than to the reconsideration of paranoid practices themselves. Within this uncannily twisted logic, therefore, it is always the paranoid who fails, never paranoia itself. The sad climax of this development can be observed in Ennis' perception of Jack's death. Whereas the movie version of this event introduces a moment of ambiguity by including the snapshot of a gay bashing scene, the short story essentially depicts it as an affirmation of Ennis' paranoia. Learning about the accident, Ennis' instinctive reaction is unambiguous: "No, he thought, they got him with the tire iron" (Proulx 277). Prior to any other affective response, paranoia reinforces a subjection to the law of the father, a behaviour that is doubly evident when this subjection is later repeated in the presence of another father figure, John C. Twist, who denies Ennis the right to grieve over his lost

lover, even at the expense of thwarting the last will of his own son.

7 Still, however sad his condition, on must not blind oneself to the fact that Ennis' paranoia and his incapability to forsake a straight-identified self-image simultaneously lead him to perform exactly those mechanisms of homosocial policing that shape the sources of his own suffering. In fact, Ennis' will to submission steadily results in ever more hostile, and violent, expressions of heterosexual self-pity and homophobic anti-sentimentality. As a straight-identified cowboy whose same-sex desire exemplifies an endemic crisis of American Western masculinity itself, Ennis indeed turns out to be a prototype of contemporary attributions of (anti-) sentimentality. As Eve Sedgwick has pointed out, the category of the sentimental is subject to permanent transition "from its origins when it circulated free among genders, through the feminocentric Victorian version, to the twentieth-century one with its complex and distinctive relation to the male body" (*Epistemology* 150). Penetrating present discourses on masculinity, the impact of sentimentality turns out to be inescapably paradoxical, for it characterises and questions straight masculinity at the same time. As a result, the relation between heterosexual masculinity and sentimentality has become one of excessive denial, or anti-sentimentality, whose violent shadow projections - despite being utterly sentimental themselves - are directed against two traditional stereotypes of sentimental ascription, namely women and gay men. Sedgwick consequently identifies the most urgent dilemma in the fact

> that since anti-sentimentality itself becomes, in its structure, the very engine and expression of modern sentimental relations, to enter into the discourse of sentimentality at any point or with any purpose is almost inevitably to be caught up in a momentum of essentially scapegoating attribution […]. It would hardly be surprising if gay men, like all women, were a main target of [these] scapegoating projections - viciously sentimental attributions of a vitiated sentimentality. (*Epistemology* 154/145)

The victims of Ennis' sentimental battle for anti-sentimentality are thus easily made out. First, his treatment of Alma, his wife, testifies to "the astonishing proportion of male violence done on separate wives, ex-wives, and ex-girlfriends [which] seems sanctioned and guided as much as reflected by the flood of books and movies in which such violence seems an expression not of the macho personality but of the maudlin." (ibid., 145). In fact, Alma's suffering at times appears to be shamefully neglected in both the short story and the movie, whose significant examinations of homosociality nevertheless tend to repeat the homosocial exclusion of women.

8 It is up to the reader, respectively the viewer, to imagine what her account of the story would look like, even though we do get a pretty good idea of her increasing desolation when Ennis corners his ex-wife in the kitchen of her new partner Bill:

> "Don't lie, don't try to fool me, Ennis. I know what it means. Jack Twist? Jack Nasty. You and him -" She'd overstepped his line. He seized her wrist; tears sprang and rolled [whose?!], a dish clattered. "Shut up," he said. "Mind your own business. You don't know nothin about it." "I'm going to yell for Bill." "You fuckin go right ahead. Go on and fuckin yell. I'll make him eat the fuckin floor and you too." (Proulx 271)

Judging from the above, one is indeed inclined to wonder whose tears spring and roll in this scenario, the tears of the ex-wife, or perchance, as Sedgwick puts it, "[t]he sacred tears of the heterosexual man" (*Epistemology* 145)? We do not know. We do know, however, that in the movie Ennis' frantic fits of rage often tend to be accompanied by silent sobbing, especially in the scene that marks his last meeting with Jack in their rapidly disintegrating pastoral sanctuary.

9 Secondly, then, the increasingly gay-identified Jack becomes the target of Ennis' shadow projections, especially since Ennis considers the melancholy sexual adventures of his lover both a narcissistic insult and a homosocial transgression. The covert conflict, long seething underneath, suddenly surfaces during what has by now become a pastoral routine rather than a pastoral pleasure, and develops into a final showdown, to borrow from the language of the American Western tradition, between Ennis' paranoid anti-sentimentality and Jack's reparative sentimentality. Learning about Jack's Mexican escapades, Ennis' need to sustain a straight-identified self-image produces a homophobic scapegoating of sentimentality whose force exceeds everything that has already come to pass. His fury grows out of control, as the following passage evidently demonstrates:

> "You been a Mexico, Jack?" Mexico was the place. He'd heard. He was cutting the fence now, trespassing in the shoot-em zone. "Hell yes, I been. Where's the fuckin problem?" Braced for it all these years and here it came, late and unexpected. "I got a say this to you one time, Jack, and I ain't foolin. What I don't know," said Ennis, "all them things I don't know could get you killed if I should come to know them." (Proulx 275)

This threat marks the final surge of anti-sentimentality before its predictable, and inexorable, collapse. And despite all the soothing and calming that he will later offer his shattered lover, Jack immediately knows how to respond to it. In fact, his melancholy reply responds to more than just a verbal threat. It responds to a pseudo-liberal attitude assumed by heteronormative readers, or cinemagoers, who suppose themselves non-judgmental and unbiased, while being over-involved in the allegedly heroic impact of the all-masculine battle against sentimentality. It responds to a frequently unnoticed form of bias that considers a sexual attachment between men a welcome narrative variation, and an emotional attachment between them an unmanly, somewhat pathetic, shamelessness. At last, it responds to an American Western masculinity whose generic performance of anti-sentimentality falsely claims to have completely reduced,

and thus erased, the ultimately irreducible impact of homoerotic sentimentality associated with the masculinity of the pastoral elegy.

10 Jack's poignant and touching response to the tenaciously straight-identified Ennis culminates in a plain assertion: "I wish I knew how to quit you!" (Proulx 276). And without doubt, this wish is exemplary of a more extensive resistance against a heteronormative regime Jack himself can never entirely dissociate from. On a superficial glance, Jack is thus forced to lead two lives: Inwardly, he assumes a palimpsest existence that safeguards the homoerotic sentimentality associated with the pastoral shepherd, and outwardly, he takes up a surface existence that displays the heteronormative anti-sentimentality indicative of the American Western cowboy. However, at a closer look one may well detect that the relation between inward and outward existence, between palimpsest and surface, is constantly destabilised, indeed tellingly twisted, by a number of dissident interventions. And as we will soon realise, their spontaneous and impulsive rebuffs of heteronormativity do not primarily protect his feelings for Ennis as such, but indeed the fragile resources of his reparative sentimentality in general and, consequently, their autonomy from heteronormative infiltration. Put simply, he defends his sentimental view of Ennis both against the compulsory regime of heteronormativity and, as a consequence, even against Ennis himself.

11 Returning to imminent father figures, one can easily observe that Jack's socialisation differs immensely from Ennis', especially in terms of a noticeable absence of paternal influence. Jack points out that "his father had been a pretty well known bullrider years back but kept all his secrets to himself, never gave Jack a word of advice […]" (Proulx 258). This remark subsequently receives a sexual connotation by Ennis who puns on a double entendre when he indicates that "the kind of riding that interested him lasted longer than eight seconds and had some point to it" (ibid.). Misleadingly parenthetical, this anecdote alludes to two significant preconditions that make all the difference for Jack: First, his autonomy from the Father, literally his father, enables him to resist, at times even to exploit and subvert, the regime of the Symbolic order; and secondly, he grows up in the presence of a masculine, however altogether non-paranoid, sentimentality, implicitly sexual, whose secrecy is protected not so much against discovery and disclosure, but against an outside disenchantment that threatens to absorb and infiltrate the sphere of private detachment. At this point, one can already anticipate that the structure of Jack's open secret will diverge vastly from the paranoid-ridden closet internalised by Ennis. Jack, then, learns how to resist the demands of substitute father figures such as Joe Aguirre, whose working instructions concerning the herding of the flock he boycotts instantaneously, and L.D. Newsome, his

father-in-law, whose unrestrained outbursts of patriarchal despotism, as the movie unmistakably shows, are at length successfully countered by Jack's disobedience. From the very onset he is identified as a trouble-maker, an unpredictable source of irritation, to the unhindered progress of patriarchy in the Newsome household, a fact which in due course empowers him to subvert and exploit its heteronormative foundations:

> "Listen. I'm thinking, tell you what, if you and me had a little ranch together, little cow and calf operation, your horses, it'd be some sweet life. […] I got it figured, got this plan, Ennis, how we can do it, you and me. Lureen's old man, you bet he'd give me a bunch if I'd get lost. Already more or less said it-" (Proulx 268)

Jack is thus willing to dissociate himself from the compulsions of a heteronormative matrix. He would perform an act of detachment, a desertion. Faced with the problem of the naysayer, he even realises that the act of saying no, as lately proclaimed by Lee Edelman[5], for example, will easily fall short of a scope of action that goes beyond a performative gesture of rejection, if it fails to designate a space outside heteronormativity.

12 Within his sentimental imagination, the space outside is, of course, the pastoral idyll. Unaware of the discrepancy between the literary and the literal, Jack is thus relentlessly moving towards dark camp. As a consequence, he initially appears to follow an escalating psychic structure as self-destructive as Ennis', since his reparative sentimentality leads him to pursue the myth of an original compatibility between allegory and reality, even as the gap between them grows, steadily and inexorably. And indeed, Jack is to pass all the traditional stages of pastoral-elegiac suffering on his route to permanent frustration and death, thus satisfying an obligatory Freudian register including, among others, the loss of the love object, the pursuit of substitutions, however deficient, and the refusal to retract from a libidinal attachment to the degree of its incorporation, as implied in the touching picture of the two shirts: Ennis' shirt "stolen by Jack and hidden […] inside Jack's own shirt, the pair like two

[5] In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Lee Edelman creates the latest specimen of nay-saying, the *sinthomo*sexual, whose independent death-driven existence eventually "forsakes all causes, all social action, all responsibility for a better tomorrow or for the perfection of social forms" (101), performing against them an "act of repudiating the social, of stepping, *of trying to step* beyond the future and the snare of images keeping us always in its thrall." (ibid.; emphasis added). Rhetorically impressive and insightful in its condemnation of futurism, Edelman nevertheless fails to designate a space where "no future" can be realised, even lived, with the exception, of course, of its paradoxical fulfilment in literal death. *Sinthomo*sexuality, then, is itself a performative gesture, an enduring attempt to step out of heteronormativity, never realised, and thus certainly no less illusory, or naïve, than any other form of escapism. The sinthomosexual's claim to the death drive, not unlike the shepherd's claim to the pastoral idyll, imagines a social outside, both literarily detached, and nevertheless literally uninhabitable. Indeed both, the *sinthomo*sexual and the shepherd, may have been looking for answers in all the wrong places, for if there is no social space outside the heteronormative matrix, no homosexual space prior to homosociality, then the impact of this disastrous social formation may perhaps best be alleviated by a psychic investment, deliberately and intentionally artificial, of beauty, theatricality, and even sentimentality, that knowingly disrupts this social formation from within, temporarily and locally. Camp, however, is a precondition of this investment. And thus, the *sinthomo*sexual and the shepherd both seriously claim what they might as well playfully subvert, namely the death drive and the pastoral elegy.

skins, one inside the other, two in one" (Proulx 281). Sedgwick comments on these stereotypical depictions of gay sentimentality, pointing out that although "a very specific association of gay male sexuality with tragic early death is recent, […] the structure of its articulation is densely grounded in centuries of homoerotic and homophobic intertextuality" (*Epistemology* 144). She sustains her view in an extensive footnote that refers, among others, "to Virgilian shepherds, […] to elegiac poetry by Milton, Tennyson, Whitman, and Housman, as well as to the Necrology of Vito Russo's Celluloid Closet" (ibid.). Her argument thus exemplifies the omnipresence of a mode of perception, a visibility, that ultimately counters the effort to foreclose and denounce homosexuality as an unliveable passion, and an ungrieveable loss, exactly because "the underpinnings here have long been in place for both a gay sentimentality and […] a sentimental appropriation by the large culture of male homosexuality as spectacle" (ibid.). One might as well say, therefore, that to the degree that "Brokeback Mountain" evokes and reiterates the gay sentimental tradition of the pastoral elegy with both its homoerotic as well as homophobic undertones, this tradition is reinscribed, inerasably and irreducibly, into the normative masculinity of the American Western tradition. And thus, whereas Ennis' paranoid anti-sentimentality fails to shelter him from discovery and disclosure, a failure that is made manifest in the last uncanny incident of a literary threat turning literal, namely a closet whose open-secret structure has long been penetrated both by his ex-wife and the Twist family, Jack's reparative sentimentality succeeds in safeguarding a detachment whose aloof privacy, prior to secrecy, escapes an intrusion of the heteronormative regime.

13 The endings of both the short story and its adaptation affirm the unresolved incompatibility between the masculinity of the American Western on the one hand, and that of the pastoral elegy on the other. In the closing scene we watch Ennis uttering the portentous performative "Jack, I swear -" (Proulx 283). This speech act has often been viewed as a substitute wedding vow, especially by cinemagoers who have immediately before been informed of the wedding of Ennis' daughter, Alma junior. If this interpretation is accurate, its implications however must be set straight, for they tend to be absorbed in the melodramatic emotionalism of the ending. Ennis, despite his alleged catharsis, still attempts to sanction his feelings for Jack with an echo that alludes to the rituals of heteronormativity. And it is because of this compromised attempt that the narrative voice reacts with a nonconformist, indeed a periperformative[6], speech act, whose dissidence once again rejects the

[6] In "Around the Performative: Periperformative Vicinities in Nineteenth-Century Narrative," Sedgwick uses the periperformative to counter the Althusserian concept of interpellation, arguing that "to disinterpellate from a

heteronormative absorption of pastoral detachment, for Jack, we are unmistakably reminded of, "had never asked him to swear anything and was himself not the swearing kind" (Proulx 283). In the end, "Brokeback Mountain" thus displays two different keys of camp: dark in terms of plot, since its characters cannot evade the generic part assigned to them by two divergent masculinities, the American Western and the pastoral one; and subversive as well as ameliorating in terms of genre itself, since it is precisely the strict performance of these parts that finally undermines the masculinity of the American Western tradition and invests it with a subversive homoeroticism with regards to both sexuality and sentimentality. And thus, it is the short story itself, rather than its characters Ennis and Jack, that ultimately "moved the herd to new pasture, shifted the camp" (Proulx 258) right towards the very heart of heteronormativity.

performative scene will usually require, not another explicit performative nor simply the negative of one, but the nonce, referential act of the periperformative" (70).

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Places and Spaces: The Public Sphere and Privacy in Lina Wertmüller's *Love and Anarchy*

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Abstract:
Making use of scenic and literary techniques, that is, means of strong intermedial, calculated cinematic construction, Lina Wertmüller's film Love and Anarchy succeeds in bringing the private-public binarism into play in a way which oscillates between the two poles. Wertmüller subverts the traditional demarcation of the private and public, which has long served as an instrument of power in patriarchal societies, and mounts a discursive challenge to the pre-defined division of the spheres of public and private.

1 Political and theoretical discussions regarding the spheres of the public and private are an almost classical topos in feminist academic debate. Challenging the binary opposition between privacy and public space, revisionist feminist thinkers have sought to expose the qualified dependency of the political-institutional public sphere on the private sphere, which it regulates but from which it is nonetheless excluded, and to decry the mechanisms of power and domination associated with the division between the two spheres.

2 In conjunction with other scenic and literary techniques, that is, means of strong intermedial, calculated cinematic construction, Lina Wertmüller's film *Love and Anarchy*[1] succeeds in bringing the private-public binarism into play in a way which oscillates between the two poles. Wertmüller subverts the traditional demarcation of the private and public, which has long served as an instrument of power in patriarchal societies, and mounts a discursive challenge to the pre-defined division of the spheres of public and private.

3 Lina Wertmüller's female protagonists, archaic and lusty, and characterized by a Southern temperament and élan vital, seem to evade every attempt to subject the film to a political reading. However, to claim that the film were characterized by an absence of the

[1] The film begins with its main character Tonino (Giancarlo Giannini) at a turning point in his life, the execution of an older relative for political subversion. After viewing the body on display in what would otherwise by an idyllic rural setting, Tonino is inspired to take over what he perceives as his relative's mission, he assassination of Benito Mussolini. Tonino goes to Rome and links up with his anarchist contact, a highly sought after call girl named Salomè (another Wertmüller regular Mariangela Melato), her brothel is popular with the Fascists and Mussolini's head of security, an arrogant blow-hard named Spatoletti (Eros Pagni), is especially fond of Salomè. Tonino and young call girl Tripolina (Lina Polito) soon fall in love which serves to greatly complicate his mission. Tonino does the madam a favor, and, in exchange, Tripolina gets two days off to spend with him. We soon learn that Tripolina returns his love, and the tragic stage is set. Knowing full well that the assassination attempt, successful or not, will surely mean his death, Tonino is suddenly gripped by fear. When all he had at stake was a quiet life on the farm, he was glad to give it up for a chance at changing the quality of life for his peasant countrymen. But now, having tasted the happiness love can afford, can Tonino really carry through with this suicidal act? Can he truly give up his life for a belief he once thought was worth dying? How will this love affair, Salomè's political will, and the assassination plans play out? (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0070061/; 29/12/06)

political and fails to openly discuss ideology is to ignore that it employs aesthetics as a means of expressing the political. Addressing the issue of space in totalitarianism, the film's pictures thus explore the superimposition of the public sphere by a private world of imagination, of which Hannah Arendt conceived as a history of demise of the public sphere, in relation to space and intimacy.

4 Influenced by Seyla Benhabib's criticism of Hannah Arendt I shall interpret Lina Wertmüller's film Love and Anarchy - unique in its new treatment of the borders between private and public - as a play on Hannah Arendt's concept of agonal and narrative action. What, according to Benhabib, should become compulsory exercise for feminists can be gainfully related to the film Love and Anarchy. I will pay particular attention to the correlation between the 'history of demise' and space and the public sphere.

5 In her reading of Hannah Arendt, Benhabib develops a conception of the public sphere which highlights the dependence of gender division on the separation of the public and private spheres. In this conception, space is understood as providing the opportunity for action which becomes politically significant, that is, as a location of empowerment and of common action through speaking and conviction.

The Binarism of the Public Sphere and Privacy

6 Writing from the perspective of gender studies, Seyla Benhabib challenges the binarism of the public sphere and privacy. In the liberal state, the differentiation between public and private spheres serves to consign women to the private sphere, which is equated with norms, values and non-generalisable interests (questions of the good life and morality) declared as unalterable and excluded from a legal debate.

7 According to Benhabib, in the modern tradition of political thought privacy encompasses three large areas. Firstly, the sphere of the moral and religious conscience. Thus, questions of the meaning of life, the highest good, and principles of life, were transferred to the private sphere as matters of personal conscience and weltanschauung. Secondly, economic freedom was designated as a private matter in a process which Hannah Arendt terms "the rise of the social." With the rise of national markets and increasing capitalization, this attribution to the sphere of the private generated the doctrine of the non-intervention of the state into the free market economy. The third area of the private which Benhabib identifies is that of the intimate sphere, which encompasses for her the area of home keeping, the existential needs of life, sexuality, and reproduction. According to Hannah Arendt, modern times are marked by a restriction of the private sphere, which in antiquity comprised the household, trade, and the

family, to that of intimacy. The latter term denotes for Arendt negatively the confinement to a dictated unity of interest amongst unequal members (that of a family represented by its patriarch), and positively - in that it stands for the absence of the political and the discursive negotiation of opinions - a comprehensive process of personality development.

8 Broadly formulated: What is at stake with the abolition of the absolutist state and the rise of the male-oriented bourgeoisie, is the autonomy of the religious and political spheres. With the women's movement in the 19th century and its continuation in the 20th century, women's suffrage and the massive entry of women into the labor market, the relationship between the public sphere and privacy changed. Benhabib maintains however, that this objective alteration remains suppressed by contemporary morality and political theory. She argues that the binarity of law and morality is maintained and runs parallel to the social distinction made between public and private. Thus, the state doctrine of the protection of the intimate sphere has prevented justice between the sexes because the gender-specific division in work and family life was never subjected to a public-legal debate. Under this cover, Benhabib claims, the gender-specific role division and the suppression and exclusion of women continues:

> [C]ontemporary normative moral and political theory, Habermas's discourse ethics not excluded, has been 'gender-blind', that is, these theories have ignored the issue of 'difference', the difference in the experiences of male versus female subjects in all domains of life. Second, power relations in the 'intimate sphere' have been treated as though they did not even exist. The idealizing lens of concepts like 'intimacy' does not allow one to see that women's work in the private sphere, like care for the young and the running of the household, has been unremunerated. Consequently, the rules governing the sexual division of labor in the family have been placed beyond the scope of justice. ("Public Space" 87)

Arendt's "rise of the social" is associated with conceptions of a demise of the political. Although Arendt is according to Benhabib, who labels her a "phenomenological essentialist," not part of a modern tradition, her ideas are nonetheless worth considering, and hence Benhabib suggests a revised, anti-essentalist reading of Arendt.

9 In the following, I will first turn my attention to Hannah Arendt, and then to Seyla Benhabib's deconstructive translation of her theory. Arendt explicitly reflected on totalitarianism and investigated the change which the public sphere undergoes in a totalitarian regime. This is highly suggestive in relation to an analysis of *Love and Anarchy*, which owes the distinctiveness of its architectonic and imaginative spaces not only to the historical epoch in which it is set, but is also a part of the histories of mentality, ideology and medial imagination. The following analysis moves between an Arendtian conception and Benhabib's reading of Arendt in order to understand the various dimensions of meaning of the places and

spaces presented in the film.

10 In the following section, Benhabib's ideal of narrative action will be contrasted with an interpretation of the film which illustrates the extent to which both Benhabib's and Arendt's model of action are at work in it. In this way, the analysis points not only towards a concomitance in the reading of Arendt - the Arendtian and the Benhabibian - but will also see, in contrast to Benhabib, both as being of equal validity. Thus, as a consequence of my interpretation of the film, I oppose Benhabib's criticism of Arendt - without, however, formulating a meta-theoretical criticism of Benhabib.

The Demise of the Public Sphere

11 Referring to Arendt as "a melancholic thinker of modernity",[2] Benhabib points out the extent to which Arendt's Vita Activa is determined by the main ideas of *Verfallsgeschichte*, *Begriffsgeschichte* and *Ursprungsphilosophie* (history of demise, concept history and philosophy of origins; German in the original), and emphasizes the discontinuation of the political history ideas in relation to modern societies. Benhabib suggests that Arendt's philosophical conception of the public sphere is modeled on the concept of the history of demise. The emergence of the social and the demise of the public area, which Arendt ascribes to the extension of economic self-interest, overlooks, thus Benhabib's critique, that the Arendtian ideal - the Greek *polis* - was founded upon the exclusion of fringe groups. It was however, to be regarded as a positive development and theoretically to be taken into account that these earlier fringe groups, for example women, had emancipated themselves from the ideal of political dominance, and had entered the public sphere.

12 In order to redeem Arendt, Benhabib places her not in the perspective of a 'history of demise' (*Verfallsgeschichte*), but suggests a different interpretation. Thus Benhabib, who characterizes Arendt as an anti-modernist, wants to use Arendt in order to argue against Arendt, and practice the deconstructive "art of making and subverting distinctions" (Benhabib, "Distinctions" 123). Benhabib constructs her intended anti-essentialist twist to Arendt by delimiting the Arendtian concept of agonal action against narrative action. Moreover, she uses the determinants in Arendt's works (*The Human Condition*; *The Origins of Totalitarianism*), in order to provide proof of narrative action. Benhabib succeeds in achieving this aim through the misaligned reading of the agonal concept of public space to the "associational view of pubic space." How does the history of demise of the public sphere and its most decadent location - the brothel - itself appear in Wertmüller's (sub)version?

[2] Thus the title of the German edition of Seyla Benhabib's book: *Hannah Arendt. Die melancholische Denkerin der Moderne*.

The Brothel as a Political Location

13 The film identifies Fascism as the failure of modernity, the collapse of a democratic public sphere. It is presented as the absence of a stable political order, made visible through the morally illegitimate anti-public brothel, itself tolerated by the bourgeoisie, which stands outside of the public sphere. The brothel becomes the setting of a political dispute and shows a counter-public which is politically unestablished, institutionally unanchored and incapable of either action or discourse. This becomes especially clear during the film's final sequences: Tonino's running amok, his arrest by the Carabinieri and his murder by Spatoletti. As the prostitutes rush from the brothel into the daylight in their working clothes, only to be cowed and pushed back like sheep by the machine-gun wielding Carabinieri, they bring the brothel's relegation to the sphere of the underground and the underworld glaringly into view. The aesthetics of this scene of poetic, dramatic, absurd forcefulness emotionally overwhelms all comprehension by aesthetics. The location of the political action, its figures (the loving prostitutes) become incommensurable with political action.

14 Accordingly, Giesenfeld observes:

> Entirely naïve and located entirely within the conventions of the melodramatic genre (the title can be taken quite literally), politics and love, heroism and the family idyll, even duty and proclivity in the classical sense all collide. *Yet neither the insecure, naïve peasant Tonino - verbalizing as if though reciting an empty, anachronistic creed on the one hand, driven more by the (personal) desire for revenge and the thirst for public fame - nor the brothel girls - forward, vulgar, sympathetically disillusioned, and always intent on their material advantage - are hardly suitable figures to personify agents in a personal-moral conflict*. Tonino succeeds in making a heroic exit, but in an almost farcical manner, going berserk and running amok. Only the myrmidons of the fascist regime provide the consecrated martyrdom. (my translation; emphasis added)

In that this film critique pictures the brothel as an apolitical sphere and attributes incomprehensible motivations to the prostitutes, it conceives of the prostitutes as incapable of political action as a result of their egoism.[3] Giesenfeld's reading of the prostitutes as clichéd figures makes explicit what is only implied in Wertmüller's poetical image of incommensurability: the disparateness of the brothel and the political, and of the prostitutes and political action. Thus in Wertmüller's film the brothel proves itself to be very much a location of the counter-public. The conclusion, Tonino's murder and the endangerment of the

[3] See Hübner, Irene: *Protest in Spitzenhöschen: Huren wehren sich; von der klassischen Hetäre zum postmodernen Bodygirl*. Frankfurt a. M.: Brandes und Appel, 1988. For the greatest part, the "Protest in bodices" was understood as a illusory rebellion which valued the individual feeling of power of the prostitutes, the situative dominance in the transaction of punters, lower than the structural inferiority of these sex professionals, who were earlier easy to make out legally and in analyses of society were always associated with patriarchy. These termini emerge in the concluding evaluation of the study, which decides the power question in favor of the punters, in opposition to the requests of the prostitutes wishes.

prostitutes, relativizes this particular discourse of the counter-public, in which anarchy, bourgeoisie and fascism are in negotiation with each other.

15 Every prostitute in the brothel represents a different type of woman: the Garçonne, the sporty woman (a *novum* in the 1920s), Salomè as a Mae West vamp, the trollop, a figure of Klimtish sensuality, and many other medially inspired, identifiable female types from previous decades. These anachronistic images can be read as a representation of the exterior in the interior, as a reflex of the "becoming public" of women. In the locked-away interior of the brothel, this appears as a framing of the new freedoms, which despite their ultra-modern appearance are relational images, superimposed with the male erotic projections which they serve. Yet they are also, albeit not exclusively, expression of a new understanding of women.

16 The group of prostitutes functions as a constant rebellion against decency and morality - it is a group without privacy or intimacy. The brothel is the location of the subversive privacy of the state. Expressed differently: a state-regulated public site of sexuality becomes the location of public intimacy. Despite the public dimension of the brothel, it and the sexuality lived in it is assigned firmly to the area of privacy and is not dealt with as a public matter in the liberal state. The brothel, in both the liberal as well as the fascist state, is state regulated, and in as much is a public matter, but is omitted from public discourse. Servants of the state and fascists are its best customers but this connection has to remain a secret.[4] The differentiation of public/private binarism forms a strange alliance with a dichotomy of a displaced connection between secret and absent. The bourgeois public is absent, as a watching group, irrelevant for the political events of the country; the brothel is partially public ('men only'), but secret. The brothel is the tolerated, necessary sub-public space; the anarchic, illegal non-public public sphere. The bourgeois public sphere, as far as it exists, maintains its friendly façade, yet remains silent in the face of injustice and contradictions. The sharp division of the sexes, their location, their scope for action and the options open to them, shows that a discursive bourgeois order cannot develop. The spheres do not come into contact, the sexes do not mix: there is no commonality between them.

17 Does the close of the film negate the brothel as a location of action? Does it discredit its power of discourse to reveal the citizens of Rome, passively watching the activities of the fascists? Does the story (the narration) yield to history (the historical events; the victory of the fascists in Italy)? Was the brothel as an open space of interaction only a fiction?

[4] There are multiple scenes in the film which make this clear. Thus, referring to the body of the person who died of a heart attack, which has to be removed secretly from the brothel, the brothel madam makes clear that she has excellent contacts to those in power, but that these must remain secret.

18 As my analysis of the brothel in *Love and Anarchy* has demonstrated, space is understood in Benhabib's reading of Arendt as an opportunity for nascent politically significant action. It is a location of empowerment, characterized by common action. Here, political action can be initiated by those standing outside society, even by prostitutes, who, according to the stereotype are ready to come to an arrangement with every form of power; are bereft of all political or idealistic conviction; are corrupt, seek a livable life and are still the corrupted and corruptible. Thus, the "associational model" comprises those Arendtian determinants isolated by Benhabib, which can be applied to modern democracy or which are penetrated by modern thoughts of communitizing.

19 Space in totalitarianism, which is one of the themes of Arendt's discussion, and for which an altered interpretative perspective emerges through the concept of narrative action, opens up different ways of reading the film *Love and Anarchy*. Totalitarian tyranny in contrast, resembles a desert: it knows no spatiality. Experience of tyranny is comparable to that of the desert traveler. "Under conditions of tyranny, one moves in an unknown, vast, open space, where the will of the tyrant occasionally befalls one like the sandstorm overtaking the desert traveler. Totalitarianism has no spatial topology: it is like an iron band, compressing people increasingly together until they are formed into one"[5] (Benhabib, "Public Space" 69). Although fascism has spatial preferences - the reference to antiquity, monumental architecture projecting power - these spaces are non-locations, invisible, empty of people, dysfunctional, unreal, as they fail to include the social classes in any panoply of common values. In her staging of outside locations, Wertmüller succeeds strikingly in grasping the space of totalitarianism aesthetically.

The Exterior: Rural Italy and Rome by Night

20 The interior spaces [e.g. the brothel, H.W.] - as if they wanted to follow Wertmüller's typical filming style, the half and complete total with close-ups (especially the eyes) - alternate with excursions into the outside world: the trip to Sabaudia (Salomè, Spatoletti, Tonino und Tripolina), the Felliniesque jaunt of the party big-whig Spatoletti and Tonino's tramping through the deserted, nocturnal Rome. (Spagnoletti 123; my translation)

21 A motorbike-ride to the countryside brings the four day-trippers Spatoletti, Tonino, Salomè and Tripolina to a newly built church, around which the proud Spatoletti leads his guests. Images of non-locatable places float before the camera, which has taken the view of the four characters, to show the progress of the four through time and space, to a passage, a

[5] Here, Benhabib refers to Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarism*.

cross-over, a transformation of Italy. Later, Tonino returns to this place alone, whereupon we are presented with pictures stylized according to the purity of De Chirico paintings. The altered aesthetic dimension of the pictures when seen from Tonino's subjective[6] make Spatoletti's prime example of modern architecture and art appear not as modern art, but rather as a surreal production. Deserted, this location shows not greatness, but rather emptiness; we are conscious not of pathos but a feeling of being "off-stage." We are not aware of its functionality, but rather a sense of departedness is thrust upon us. Not life, but an unreal appearance dominates. The outside locations are a reflection of the nothingness which Tonino feels, and represent the negation of real space. This is however not the Arendtian continuation of the total re-personalization, which sees "emotion pictures" even in architecture, but rather a sharpening of the view which releases the societal sense. This sharpening of the view allows us to sense that the hierarchical order imposed on man's life by fascism falls short of it.

22 A scene no less pictorially composed and stylized is Tonino and Spatoletti's nocturnal drive over the Piazza del Campidoglio. Accompanied by Tonino, the leader of Mussolini's Secret Service circles the statue of Marcus Aurelius placed at the center of the Piazza on his motorbike. Spatoletti pays reverence to Marcus Aurelius, and anchors his claim to dominance in the history of antiquity, until the *Duce* himself has become a historical foundation myth. Tonino parries this legitimation of power with an almost Brechtian, inverse parable, the basic statement of which is that feeding does not always come before morality. The lousy tyke, kicked and oppressed, who one day does not yield to his appetite but, driven by desperation, bites his oppressor to death, is used by Tonino as an image for his own anarchic deed. This arouses no understanding in Spatoletti, his subsequent tormentor: he beats Tonino to death. The upright, courageously fighting opposition in the sense of a political resistance movement against fascism, thus the peasant, corresponds to the morality of the rich. The poor are left only with the act of surprise and desperation. The size and extent of the imperial roman construction is contrasted imaginarily to the cramped and restricted nature of a sub-proletarian scenario.

23 In *Love and Anarchy*, power structures are personalized to the highest degree. In fact, they carry human traits: amongst others, they appear cruel and double-minded. Thus, the political credo penetrates human relationships, determines them, even though it exists independently of them. In its political failure and personal despair, Tonino's running amok is such a manifestation of the momentary collapse of the division between public and private.

[6] The subjective refers to the camera view from the perspective of a film figure.

24 Even if one might argue that the film depicts prostitution as a falsification of intimacy, it cannot be denied that the prostitutes Salomè and Tripolina partake in the ideal intimacy which Arendt calls for. Although this true intimacy proves to prevent the political act (the assassination attempt), nevertheless, the knowledge of the reality of power structures functions as a guideline of political action. Salomè and Tonino were part of the resistance and would continue to be so if this were possible. In the preparation of the assassination and in its failure, the intention of the political act confirms itself *ex negativo*. Tonino's running amok shows that he is not satisfied with private happiness and love.

25 If Arendt's argument cites the decline of the public sphere on the one hand, and the weakening of feelings through the abandonment of social ties in relationships on the other, Salomè's and Tripolina's love for Tonino, evident in their feelings of responsibility and their caring nature, is a social love which could function as guarantee for a public sphere. In facism and capitalism, Wertmüller seems to suggest, the brothel challenges the division of private and public by positing love and anarchy against it.

Arendt's Vision of Agonal Action

26 In the agonal concept, the public realm is bound to public spaces in which not only moral and political actions can be staged (a function also fulfilled by fascist squares), but which are peopled and first must be endowed with meaning. "According to the 'agonistic' view, the public realm represents the space of appearances in which moral and political greatness, heroism and pre-eminence are revealed, displayed and shared with others. This is a competitive space, in which one competes for recognition, precedence and acclaim; ultimately it is the space in which one seeks a guarantee against the futility and the transience of all things human" (Benhabib, "Public Space" 69).

27 If we relate these considerations to Wertmüller's film and its conception of place, the brothel must logically be regarded as the place of a perverted conception of such public space. Here there are people, there is life. Yet this place is scarcely a guarantee against the "transience of everything human," but becomes for Tonino the last, deadly refuge, in which the fleetingness and nothingness of individual life is ultimately revealed. The retrospective aesthetic of the female characters in their "whores dance" thus could be said to foreground only to a *Fin de Siècle* decadence, a stereotypical image of city prostitution, but could be said to carry the aesthetic of the morbid; relative duration, or even immortality, is perverted by extinction in death. This impression is very clearly emphasized by historical costumes, gestures and the antiquated music. Were one of the habitués not to say "*buongiorno*

prostituti," and were the brothel madam not to swear so drastically, one would believe the story line sometimes to be completely sunk in the realms of museology.

28 The contrast of the interior and the exterior, the symbolization of principles through the locations, the criss-crossing of their significance-laden dichotomies is highlighted clearly by Giesenfeld:

> The brothel appears as a human alternative (already spatially, with its somewhat dusty nooks and crannies of cosiness) to the architecture of fascism (which is brought demonstratively into play with an excursion to the location which Mussolini is to visit). This contrast includes on the one hand rural village nature and on the other, the exemplary Piazza del Campidoglio as a reference to renaissance rationalism and architecture built to impress. Yet the brothel is also - as with the extension of Rome - seen as a metaphor for the co-existence of both tendencies: both an idyllic refuge and nest of resistance, as well as the place of authoritarian repression by the boss and the exploitation through the (fascist) customers. Similarly, the film differentiates between a "romantic" and "anarchic" narrative technique; the one an anti-mimetic and escapist and the other realistic and historical (Marcus). (my translation)

Inside the brothel, even if closed to the public, lives a women's community which constitutes an alternative public sphere to the bourgeois public sphere. If those engaged in the dispute over the political were to glance even cursorily at the bourgeois public sphere, they would not see the allegedly private ethical dispute about morality, about ideals. It is only in the most private and intimate area of relationships represented by the brothel that arguments about ideals and political strategies take place.

29 In contrast, Tonino's outside meetings with Spatoletti take place at non-places, which either have no exterior (the brothel) or are deserted. Empty architectures, leaden with history, function as exhibition pieces for self-chosen references to the past or the present. Spatoletti knows the owner of the rural inn, but its dancing customers are neither familiar with the extra-civic nature of the prostitutes nor do they have any notion of the political terror and violent rule of the fascist Spatelotti. The two unequal pairs Salomè-Spatoletti and Tripolina-Tonino play innocent: spectacle does not belong in their life. It is an exceptional setting: they make use of a stage rendering the inhabitants of the bourgeoisie public sphere of rural Italy into extras who do not know the game being played. It is at this place, which does not bear any continuity to the life of the protagonists, that Tripolina's love for Tonino begins.

The Space of Appearances and Public Space

30 According to the agonal concept, the public area is a space of appearances bound to places in which morality, political stature etc. can manifest themselves, and through which the public space is being first produced. In opposition to this, Arendt's work introduces, according

to Benhabib, an additional space of action which is not bound to any place, namely, the space created by the good intent of a (male) group meeting to discuss the correctness or falsity of a matter, and which is a topos of classical democracy. Thus,

the 'associational' view of public space suggests that such a space emerges whenever and wherever, in Arendt's words, 'men act together in concert.' In this model, public space is the space 'where freedom can appear'. It is not a space in any topographical or institutional sense. (Benhabib, "Public Space" 69)[7]

31 Benhabib's attempt to redeem the "anti-modernist"[8] Arendt consists initially of a differentiation of Arendt's undifferentiated concept of space. Thus Benhabib distinguishes between the space of appearances and public space in order to assign both types of space a type of action. Doing so enables Benhabib to accentuate narrative action, the model favored by her, through its classification under the less discredited and more widely-conceived space of appearances.

> It has been rarely noticed that Arendt frequently runs together the phenomenological concept of "the space of appearances" with the institutional concept of the "public space." The two models of action discussed above correspond to this further dichotomy in that the agonal type of action presupposes a public space in which it can appear to others and be shared with others; narrative action, however, although it also needs a "space of appearances," does not need this to be a public space, accessible to all. Action, immersed in everyday web or narratives, can occur in the private-intimate realms as well. (Benhabib, "Distinctions" 126-127)

32 Benhabib supplements Arendt's terminology by introducing the model of narrative action. She elucidates that "*narrative action*, in Arendt's theory, is action embedded in a 'web of relationships and enacted stories.' This 'web of relationships and enacted stories' combines the constative as well as the expressive dimensions of speech acts […]" ("Distinctions" 125). In *Love and Anarchy*, it is possible to recognize both an agonal as well as a narrative model of action provided we do not focus exclusively on the film's narrativity and allocate the narrative model of action on this basis. Thus, focusing on the film's characters allows us to identify their actions as either agonally intended or narratively-guided.

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[7] Benhabib notes: "Hannah Arendt's persistent denial of the 'women's issue', and her inability to link together the exclusion of women from politics and this agonistic and male-dominated conception of public space, is astounding. The 'absence' of women as collective political actors in Arendt's theory - in which only individuals like Rosa Luxemburg are present - is a difficult question, but to begin thinking about this means first challenging the private/public split in her thought as this corresponds to the traditional separation of spheres between the sexes (men = public life; women = private sphere)." (Benhabib, "Public Sphere" 93)

[8] This represents one line of reception of Arendt (see Kallscheuer).

33

> All action is narratively constitued, and some action may attain an agonal dimension. Action is agonal when it embodies or lets 'shine forth' a principle or a virtue like justice, generosity, wisdom, and kindness, or when it expresses a passion, an emotion in its quintessential form, like Achills` wrath, King Lear`s despair, Hamlet`s indecision, Billy Budd`s mute rage, or the anonymous evil of the Holocaust. (Benhabib, "Distinctions" 129-130)

Is Tonino's running amok an agonal action, comparable with Achilles' wrath or the despair of the old Lear? It is apparent that agonal action need not always correspond with great, good, and noble action. Yet does an action which is largely the result of an error, and which is not based on a conscious decision, possess a political - even if emotionally displaced - dimension at all.

34 Tonino's failure - his tragic death in tragi-comic circumstances - is a failure resulting from his inability to resolve the conflict between the agonal and narrative model of action. His original aim was the single-handed murder of Mussolini in order to avenge his friend, without ideological motivation or involvement in the resistance movement. Thus, his motivation corresponds to that of the wrathful Achilles, and contrasts with that of Salomè. Tonino is not only ideologically unbound; he is without any connection to the *resistenza*. Although an address leads him to Salomè in the brothel, he is without any support, and has no logistical back up or assistance in the planning of the strike. Tonino's planning of the assassination attempt is an expressive action or -in Benhabib's terminology - an agonal action (albeit a very naïve piece of agonal action). "Expressive action, on the other hand, allows for the self-actualization or the self-realisation of the person, and its norms are the recognition and confirmation of the uniqueness of the self and its capacities by others. (D'Entrèves qtd. in Benhabib, "Distinctions" 124). D'Entrèves further specifies this agonal or heroic model of politics: "When the emphasis falls on the expressive model of action, politics is viewed as the performance of noble deeds by outstanding individuals" (qtd. in Benhabib, "Distinctions" 124-125).

35 In essence, Tonino's action is expressive action, a disclosure of the identity of a person and the manifestation of the inner-self. This particularly evident after his identification with the louse-ridden, afflicted tyke in the parable by which he counters Spatoletti's historical myth. Yet Tonino is no classical hero performing a noble deed; much rather he is a mournful hero who - even before the assassination attempt - is denied the attention and affirmation of others, namely, Tripolina and Salomè. Even though they appreciate him as a person, as a lover, and recognize his unprejudiced humanity, which - because he does not share the

oppressive and exclusionary classification of prostitutes - motivates him to love a prostitute, they do not recognize his individual revolt, that is, its political dimension. They are unable to perceive his unarticulated sense of justice. The prostitute's expectations relate to a classical image of heroism, based on actions which are unambiguously agonal, which Tonino cannot live up to. Thus, Tonino's self does not express itself in his murderous calculations, as is expected, but in his largely emotional rebellion. This expressivity of the self is not acknowledged, and this one reason why his assassination attempt fails. This is a misconception of Tonino's inner nature in a manner almost suggestive of a lack of knowledge of human nature, a lack of humanism in the prostitutes. The self-realization of the person is thus not a furious lunge for freedom, but a running amok.

6 While Tripolina follows the narrative model of action, Salomè is unable to decide between the agonal and the narrative model of action. However, in a dialogue - a situation, in which claims to validity are raised and negotiated in speech acts (whose validity Tripolina disavows) - she opts for the model of narrative action and against the agonal. In contrast, Tonino continues to inhabit both Arendtian political models and ultimately founders on his indecision. Spatoletti adheres to the agonal model of action; for him there is no irritation resulting from communication. The dialogue during the torture scene reveals that for him Tonino also followed the agonal model in the classical sense, and that he sought to perform a heroic deed. He tortures him in order to learn a clearly definable political motivation as well as the names of possible accomplices. Tonino's death is sealed when it becomes apparent that it was the narrative model of action which lead to the assassination plan. Tripolina's and Salomè's decision to prevent Tonino's deed is due to a rational act of communicative action, during which Tripolina is characterized by her adherence to the narrative model of action while the figure of Salomè is characterized by communicative action in the sense of Habermas.

37 The nervous, stuttering, mostly silent peasant thus finds himself torn between an unarticulated agonal concept of action and an unacknowledged narrative one. However, eloquence and the degree of verbalization do not serve as a criterion for differentiation between the figures in the film. The difference which does emerge is that between the simple expression of a self-image and the successful accommodation amongst conversation partners based upon claims to validity raised in speech acts. An expression of Tonino's self-image appears when he explains why he agreed to discard the corpse on the forum, and becomes especially clear in the altercation between Tonino and Salomè as to the reasoning behind the assassination attempt.

38 Salomè discourses, providing justifications for the assassination attempt which appear justified by the personal experience of injustice, and legitimized by social and historical experience, and which are designed to make her action and attitude plausible. The firework display of speech and objection in the argument with Tonino facilitates her efforts to rationalize the decisions which she had made in her life. Tonino's non-verbalization stands in contrast to Salomè; running amok is Tonino's most dramatic expression of his speechlessness. The stuttering, effeminate man from the countryside canalizes his inarticulacy into a wild scream as he is pursued by the police officers.

39 Arendt, who placed great emphasis on the "linguistic structure of human action," makes clear that human action requires a linguistic agency, a narrative presentation, in order to "be identified, described, and recognized for what it is only through a narrative account. Both the doer of the deeds and the teller of stories must be able to say in speech what it is that they are doing" (Benhabib, "Rethinking" 199). However, the film figure Tonino lacks the imperative of communicative action. His incommunicativeness fails to create a common world, even a space of appearances.

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Liz Conor: *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004

By Birte Christ, University of Freiburg, Germany

1 Contrary to what the catchy title of her study may suggest, Liz Conor in *The Spectacular Modern Woman* argues for a reconsideration of women's increased public visibility in the 1920s which does not relegate women to the object position of the "spectacle," but probes into the ways in which visibility invests women with a "newly emerged subject position" (16) that is based on modern woman's new agency to "execut[e] [...] [her] visual effects and status" (2). Her term for this new formation of feminine subjectivity, produced by the "visual conditions of modernity" (2), is the "Modern Appearing Woman." To buttress and structure her argument, Conor extends Butler's notion of the "scene" of linguistic performativity to the modern visual scene and proposes "that in a cultural field that privileges the visual, the visual itself might become privileged in repetitive signifying acts that constitute gendered identity." (6) Hence, her study is divided into six chapters that focus each on women "appearing" in one modern visual "scene." As "[i]mages of women were increasingly homogenous" (30) due to the technologized and commodified visual field, she focuses on visual "types" within these scenes: "The City Girl in the Metropolitan Scene," "The Screen-Struck Girl in the Cinematic Scene," "The Mannequin in the Commodity Scene," "The Beauty Contestant in the Photographic Scene," "The 'Primitive' Woman in the Late Colonial Scene," and "The Flapper in the Heterosexual Leisure Scene." Through the term "appearing" she effectively describes a new, and ambivalent, practice of the female self and investigates whether and how this new female subject position may challenge the gendered subject/object and spectator/spectacle divide.

2 Conor evidently sympathizes with 1920s women who intentionally "managed" their looks and tried to conform to certain types of standardized beauty. However, the greatest achievement of her study is that she does not jump to straightforwardly award those women with agency. Rather, she maintains the ambivalence of the "appearing woman" as objectified spectacle and as agent of her own identity, and carefully moves back and forth between visibility's two-fold potential. While Conor's rhetorical insistence on the "ambivalent uses," "contradictory meanings," (255) or the "complexity" (256) of female "appearing" can become a little repetitive at times, I find her manoeuvring argument more convincing than arguments that claim to be about ambivalence, but in the end cannot resist to bend into one direction.

3 In each chapter, Conor details first the material conditions and technologies that

enabled women to become "visible" in a specific scene at all, and in a second step shows which technologies, beauty standards, regimens and methods of self-scrutiny and comparison were available to women to make themselves "appear modern" or appear as a modern "type." The chapter on the "Beauty Contestant," for example, includes an analysis of the interplay between the emergence of mass circulation dailies - dependent upon the technological innovation of the rotary press - , the introduction of half-tone block necessary for the reproduction of photographs, the commercial need for reader participation and identification with a daily, and the concomitant burgeoning of beauty contests. This analysis of the material conditions is followed by a survey of the verbal and visual presentation of contestants, readers' responses and judgements, expected beauty norms and their developments during the 1920s, as well as women's attitude towards their own identity as a contestant. One of the study's merits, which also makes for its great readability, is that Conor pays very close attention to her varied material - from popular movies to fashion ads to letters to the editor - but always manages to tie her results closely back to her larger argument. The same is true for her somewhat eclectic use of theoretical concepts from Althusser to Irigaray: she introduces them quickly when she needs them, but does not overload her text with theoretical lingo.

4 Conor claims that the formation of modernity's visual economy is a "global phenomenon" and that the "Modern Girl" was "the first cultural figure to travel along the multi-directional flows of transnational capital" (7). Her study itself is an exercise in globalizing cultural studies and de-centering it from its strong base in and focus on the US and Great Britain: published through Indiana University Press and with no mention or "justification" of a specific local origin of the material used, the study may lead the complacent Western reader on to believe that s/he is dealing with a US or British 1920s context. Instead, Conor takes all her material from Australian popular periodicals and draws frequent comparisons to studies on US and British contexts - and thus silently reminds us that the recent transnational turn in cultural studies should not encourage US and British scholars to subsume other cultural discourses under their own, but instead means to radically destabilize the centers and peripheries of scholarly inquiry.

5 While *The Spectacular Modern Woman* is an original and thoroughly researched contribution to our understanding of the emergence of Western ocularcentric culture and its consequences for female subject formation, some points of criticism should be noted. Conor opens her "Introduction" by relating the story of the Australian actress Lotus Thompson who "went to Hollywood to pursue a film career [. . .] [H]er legs were filmed and attributed to other actresses. In a poignant and desperate protest against her treatment within these new

conditions of women's public visibility, Thompson poured acid over her legs" (1). Conor argues that Thompson's "desire was not to become *invisible*, but rather to achieve mass visibility within contemporary terms of fame," because Thompson could secure better roles due to "the notoriety resulting from her acid protest" (3).My concern here is that because her book is about the ways in which women, *within* the confines of beauty standards and *within* circumscribed technologies to make their bodies visible, may assume some form of agency -it is not particularly useful to open the text with the only example of what could be read as a violent protest against female spectacularization, beauty standards, and the commodification of the female body. In addition, the case of Thompson also shows that, perversely, the only way for women to de-objectify themselves may have been self-mutilation or even -annihilation. Secondly and more importantly however, Conor's reading of the Thompson case is symptomatic of her lack of consideration of women who did not conform to modern beauty standards for reasons other than their age, financial status, bodily condition or inability to learn the necessary "techniques." For Conor, women could use their public and publicly controlled visibility as part of the formation of their subjectivity, or could fail to do so - but she grants them no agency to consciously situate themselves outside the ocularcentric logic of what Conor calls "modernity," which is, I would argue, what Thompson tried to achieve through her acid protest.

6 Conor's tendency to ignore the possibility of other ways of subject formation becomes most problematic in her chapter on "The 'Primitive' Woman": "Aboriginal women," she writes, "neither occupied the space of the commodity spectacle nor were able to performatively enact a consumerist subjectivity." (184) Because the "Primitive" Woman cannot appear as a modern type, and does - to the eye of the white, modern beholder - not intentionally manage her appearance, she remains pure object or spectacle in Conor's account, with no subjectivity of her own. The very last paragraph at least takes note of an aboriginal women's dance company, the "Merry Singers and Dancers of Cummeragunga," who in their shows conformed to "modern techniques of appearing" (208). Again, however, Conor does not allow for a third subject position of women towards their own visibility - and thus virtually denies aboriginal women any agency at all in the "modern scene."

7 This myopia in Conor's argument results from one major weakness in the theoretical set-up of her study: a homogenous, one-dimensional, naïve concept of "modernity." Everything and everyone in the 1920s, according to Conor, must be "modern" - if not, she or it must be described as "old-fashioned" and as a failure to adapt to "modernity." While she sometimes mentions critical positions toward women's visibility, such as "social purity

movements" (230), she assumes that these are external to women's subjectivities, and that they are not part of modernity. Conor's concept of modernity certainly does not seem to be one of a multiplicity of new and conflicting cultural formations in the 1920s - however, Conor is silent on her definition of "modernity" and "modern," apart from the casual statement that her "book relies on a definition of modernity that emphasizes the alteration of human perception" (14). Given the expansive scholarship on meanings and configurations of the "modern," the "modernist," and "modernity," Conor would have been well advised to reflect on this issue which is central to her study. In addition, her argument's implication that there is no agency that can operate outside the confines of what she terms "modern visibility" could have been avoided. Despite these shortcomings, Conor's study substantially contributes to the field of cultural and gender studies through its profound analysis of the interrelatedness of gendered visibility and subjectivity in the 1920.

Nancy Copeland: *Staging Gender in Behn and Centlivre: Women's Comedy and the Theatre*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004

By Miriam Wallraven, University of Tübingen, Germany

1 During the last decades, women writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century have almost made it into the canon: particularly thanks to second-wave feminist influences in academia and promoted by the rise of gender studies within literary and cultural studies, authors such as Margaret Cavendish, Aphra Behn, Susanna Centlivre, or Mary Pix have been rediscovered, reread and revalued. Critics have long passed the stage when the dialogue in Margaret Cavendish's play *Bell in Campo* (1662) represented general opinion: "Why may not a lady write a good play? - No, for a woman's wit is too weak and too conceited to write a play."[1] Plays by women dramatists are read in seminars and discussed in term papers and at conferences. However, most approaches still focus only on the texts themselves when they pose the question of feminist, anti-feminist or conservative attitudes towards gender roles and thus we still only *read* the play and the numerous studies on how such a play can be read. Nancy Copeland, however, goes beyond the dramatic texts themselves and in *Staging Gender in Behn and Centlivre* explores issues of intertextuality and intertheatricality in comedies by Behn and Centlivre: by tracing the adaptations made possible by a vast web of recurrent dramatic motifs, and by dealing with the performance history of each of the plays, the study illuminates what is lost by neglecting the *performance* aspect of a play. The various productions, alterations, adaptations shed light on changing cultural contexts and especially the plays' engagement with shifting ideas of gender roles and appropriate behaviour for men and women. By focusing 'only' on four plays - Behn's *The Rover* (1677) and *The Luckey Chance* (1686), Centlivre's *The Busie Body* (1709) and *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714) - and of course on their many precursors and subsequent adaptations, this book seeks to offer detailed analyses and thus provides the reader with a wealth of information concerning the theatrical history of each play - a history that most readers will not be aware of.

2 The author's decision to focus on Behn and Centlivre is not only intended as a tribute to the success of these dramatists during their lifetime, but is also motivated by the dichotomy that has been established between Behn and Centlivre in recent years: Behn as the first woman writer to earn her living by her pen and to take on what was perceived as a feminist

[1] Cavendish, Margaret. *Bell in Campo & The Sociable Companions*. Ed. Alexandra G. Bennett. Peterborough: Broadview, 2002. 29.

point of view has been contrasted with the allegedly conservative Centlivre, who very early understood the changing taste (both in drama and in gender roles) of the eighteenth century.

3 The first chapter of *Staging Gender in Behn and Centlivre*, entitled "Gender and 'Intertheatricality'", provides the reader with a very basic introduction to changing gender/sex models. In accord with the title of her study, Copeland's analysis proceeds along the lines of gender. The diachronic approach to theatrical productions and the changing gender roles conveyed by them certainly constitutes the greatest asset of the study, because "[the comedies] were first staged during a time of dramatically changing gender roles and their lengthy production histories subsequently placed them in dialogue with radically different ideas of appropriate and permissible behaviour for both women and men" (1). In order to validate these claims, Copeland resorts to expected sources, such as Laqueur's *Making Sex*, which centres on the gradual replacement of the one-sex model by the two-sex model in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth century, and to Barker-Benfield's *The Culture of Sensibility*, a work that reveals the competing forms of masculinity during the same time period. Thus, Copeland makes clear that "[of] particular relevance to this study are the redefinition of concepts of masculine and feminine behaviour and the concomitant production of homosexuality as a distinct category" (2).

4 After thematising the problematic stances of self-gendering of the two women playwrights in epilogues and dedications, the study reads the specific plays by Behn and Centlivre in their theatrical contexts. Although I am not sure if the term "intertheatricality" (10) proves to be as useful in this context as Copeland claims, what the study intends - and clearly achieves - by utilising this term is to complement the close reading of the plays with an analysis of the "implied production" (10) inscribed in the texts, comprising the use of theatrical resources, such as the cast of the actors, the architecture of the stage, of properties and costume, and also the use of genre. As to the latter, the conventions of Spanish comedy (foreign setting, episodic structure and an emphasis on action, the honour code as central motif, night scenes with mistaken identities) are explored in detail, because they serve as a backbone of most of the comedies under discussion.

5 While Chapter Two interprets Aphra Behn's *The Rover* compared to its source-play - namely, Thomas Killigrew's *Thomaso*, which is mentioned in almost every edition of *The Rover*, but rarely referred to in more detail - and also deals with *The Second Part of The Rover* (1681) and its 'Fantastick Wit', Chapter Three traces the transformation of the characters, particularly in regard to gender roles, as well as of the plot in later times. The play's popularity can thus not only be recognised by the great number of performances, but

also for example by its inspiration to Delarivière Manley's *The Lost Lover*, which is partially indebted to Behn's play for the two central characters. The gender ideology promulgated by Addison and Steele after the turn of the century becomes evident by comparing Manley's passive - and in the play successful - female characters to Behn's active and self-confident women characters. Moreover, Copeland analyses the casting history of *The Rover*, which gives information about the focus of different performances - the performance of the prostitute Angellica by the famous and in 1709 already 'mature' actress Elizabeth Barry, for example, indicates a focus on Angellica's serious and tragic role, while the performance of Blunt by a comic star shifts the attention to the farcical subplot of *The Rover*.

6 Chapter Four revolves around the production history of Behn's *The Luckey Chance*. Whereas the play was not very successful in its time, it nevertheless enjoyed an eighteenth-century afterlife in adaptations by two later women playwrights: in Eliza Heywood's *A Wife to Be Lett* (1723) and in Hannah Cowley's *A School For Greybeards* (1786). Copeland convincingly shows how "[they] each took different components of Behn's play as their raw materials and reworked them into plots that eliminated consummated adultery" (67). Again, the adaptations contain and convey the gender ideology of the eighteenth century that assigns fundamental differences to women and men.

7 Susanna Centlivre's *The Busie Body* is analysed in Chapter Five. Its great success made it a stock play until the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The character of the "busie body" Marplot of course takes on a central status. He is, however, not only the driving force of the action through his misguided attempts to assist the lovers, which actually repeatedly mar their intrigues and plans, but he is also a gender misfit. His complete disinterest in women, his female-connotated gossiping and his "effeminate" cowardice are evidence for his deviation from "normative genteel masculinity" (109). The study very comprehensively analyses the long theatrical history of this comedy, as well as of the second part *Mar-plot* (1710).

8 Chapter Six deals with Centlivre's *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret* and places it into a larger theatrical context by comparing it to two antecedents, Centlivre's own *The Perplex'd Lovers* and Ravenscroft's *The Wrangling Lovers*, and then works out *The Wonder*'s place in the repertoire. Again, the cast of actors produced varying foci and interpretations of the play, starting with Garrick as Felix, which very much influenced subsequent productions. Tracing the staging history of the play also reveals a growing conformity to fixed gender roles. Whereas *The Wonder* challenges assumptions about gendered behaviour with a heroine who has been understood as proto-feminist up to the early nineteenth century, it "ended its

mainstream performance career as an emphatic staging of polarized gender roles" (155).

9 The study, although continuously stimulating, keeps the best for last: the final chapter extends the intertheatricality of the plays, which has already been analysed in the form of sequels, adaptations, acting editions, and reviews, into the twentieth century by focusing on productions staged mainly between 1984 and 1994. The influence of the by then established "Aphra-myth" (Behn as democratic, feminist and timeless) on the productions of Behn's plays is revealed, as well as the importance of the concept of the "Restoration style" that prevailed among critics and in the theatre in the last two decades of the twentieth century. This made productions of Centlivre's comedies very problematic, since they did not correspond to the expectations of "sexy, romping 'fun'" (164).

10 In her conclusion, Copeland positions her results within theories of citation expounded by Derrida and Butler. Especially Butler's development of the concept of citation in *Gender Trouble* can be applied to production history:

> It illuminates the process by which characters are constituted through performance, often, as we have seen, with different outcomes that those suggested in the 'implied productions' in the original texts. At the same time, it helps to articulate the process by which gender performances onstage contribute to the constitution of gender roles within the broader culture. (184)

With its differentiated synchronic and diachronic analyses, *Staging Gender in Behn and Centlivre* thus present a welcome and stimulating contribution that finally takes seriously the performance aspect of both gender and drama.

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