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### **Open Source Content Management System**

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### **Print-on-Demand**

*Lulu.com*

*<http://stores.lulu.com/nomorepotlucks>*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### EDITORIAL

*Mél Hogan*

4–5

### SARAH MAPLE GIVES FEMINISM A MAKE-OVER

*Sarah Maple | Dayna McLeod*

7–17

### THE DOCTOR IS IN: ANN CVETKOVICH

*Ann Cvetkovich | Tracy Tidgwell*

18–29

### TRANS-CULTURE IN THE (WHITE) CITY. TAKING A PASS ON A QUEER NEIGHBOURHOOD.

*Bobby Noble*

29–37

### LA SUPER TORTILLERA: AN INTERVIEW WITH AWILDA RODRIGUEZ LORA

*Awilda Rodriguez Lora | Indri Pasaribu*

38–42

### AN INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA HAMMER

*Barbara Hammer | Marie-Claire MacPhee*

43–49

### THE AMBULANT FLIPBOOK MUSEUM (SOME OF) THE VIDEOS OF KIM KIELHOFNER

*Kim Kielhofner | Anne Golden*

50–53

### LET GO OF MY EGO, DANIEL MACIVOR

*Daniel MacIvor | Sasha*

54–60

### STEALING NASREEN

*Farzana Doctor*

61–66

### WHO WOULD YOU RATHER SLEEP WITH?

*Nicholas Little*

67–71

### TOM DE PÉKIN OU LA D'HÉTÉRIOSEXUALISATION

*Mathilde Géromin*

72–78

### BUTCH NUMBER 46

*Elisha Lim*

78–79

### ARIELLE + FUGUE

*Karine Silverwoman*

80–84

### JESS DOBKIN'S SOCIAL MIRROR BALL

*Dykes on Mykes*

85–86

### WHAT IS FUNNY?

*Lex Vaughn*

87

## EDITORIAL

Ego.

Every month Dayna and I rack our little brains to come up with themes. Ego is just one of those words that irritates and inspires, provokes, and makes you roll your eyes. We like that kind of thing at NMP.

Ego is about many things. But it's mainly about you.

It's about your self-awareness, your self-analysis, your self-reflection and your right to self-identity. It's about unique patterns and special characteristics. It's about your alter ego, ("the other I"), the second self, your persona within your person, your inner animals, you aliases. It's about roll-playing and fantasies. It's about all you double agents, too. And pseudonyms, secret identities, and of course, the superheroes among you.

It's obvious now that ego and provocation go hand in hand. Ego is our deep dark animal in/ side--our identity--and our attempt to make it make sense to other people. To make people see what we see, and beyond seeing, to make them acknowledge, if not believe, that we know who and what we are.

I had the great pleasure of seeing Bobby Noble present last year in Toronto. Issue 3 holds his reflections about the impacts and outcome of the talk. Identity provokes.

From Ego to Id (or, the I), Ann Cvetkovich and Tracy Tidgwell let us in on their conversation

about the potential of a collective queer ego, trauma and depression, drag and diva performance, go-go dancing, 1970s feminist practices of consciousness, queering the archive and alternative histories. And there's more. Way more. I'm so fucking happy about this piece, personally.

Awilda Rodriguez, the producer of 'Still Black', interviewed by Indri Pasaribu, states: "I am mostly inspired by life's queer moments and how they move/shape our identity." In particular, Rodriguez saw the importance of creating a film that focuses on black transmen.

"Ah, Ego. Makes a great fuel but a shitty engine" says Daniel Maclvor, one of Canada's greatest living theatre artists. Contributor and interviewer par excellence, Sasha, speaks with the wonderful Maclvor about personal growth, the purpose of theatre, and the comforts of "queer".

"Who Would You Rather Sleep With?" This is the question NMP's newest regular contributor, the wonderful Nicholas Little, brings to the table. As an outreach worker with gay men, Little ponders the politics of disclosure and rejection in relation to HIV campaign slogan targeting HIV-guys.

We have fiction this month, too. Farzana Doctor lets us in on a bit of her amazing novel Stealing Nasreen and Karine Silverwoman offers up a poem and a short story. You won't be satisfied with this -I promise—you will have to buy the book or beg them for more. More. More.

NMP editors continue to rock the gay world. Someday M-C is going to have interviewed all the great lesbians and queer ladies and butch-

es in the universe. We're so happy to feature the beautiful and legendary Barbara Hammer in issue 3. Mathilde devient théoricienne avec son concept D'HÉTÉRIOSEXUALISATION : elle explore le monde de l'artiste Français, Tom de Pékin. Dayna continues to curate incredible video artists and guest writers; this month we welcome Kim Kielhofner and local legend and Artistic Director of Groupe Intervention Video, Anne Golden.

Dayna also interviewed our cover artist. She writes: "Sarah Maple is provocative." She may be light hearted but she is not for the weak of heart. Her works explores the so-called contradictions between "being a good Muslim" and fitting in to western world, the ongoing conflict and struggles of culture and identity. Her work is also deeply feminist in style and content, though what kind of feminism she calls on is for you to decide and debate here. I'm thrilled about the cover image, because like the theme for this month, it winds up you right up.

What is Funny? Lex Vaughn is funny. "The Toronto people: They no like spontaneous funny." See for yourself.

Jess Dobkin is one of Canada's best performance artists. Everyone agrees. And if you've ever met her, you might even say she's one of the smartest and nicest people you know. Judge for yourself: listen to her artist talk and DoM interview with--you guessed it--Dayna McLeod!

I love our NMP team. It's growing. We now welcome Fabien Rose and Nicholas Little to the NMP love affair.

Remember to comment a lot (contributors love that!) (and don't be afraid of the skill testing

question - it's a spam filter), and as always, dear readers, we are committed to bringing forward a challenging and sexy magazine bimonthly.

*Mél Hogan*



## SARAH MAPLE GIVES FEMINISM A MAKE-OVER

*Sarah Maple | Dayna McLeod*

*Sarah Maple is controversial.*

*Exploring identity politics and trying to figure out just exactly what it means to be a young female Muslim in a Western society, Maple's work has stirred London's Muslim and Islamic communities to protest, outrage and violence. Windows and doors at the SaLon Gallery in west London were smashed during Maple's solo exhibition, "This Artist Blows" in the fall of 2008, a not so subtle critique of her paintings that featured a veiled woman holding a pig, a self-portrait of the artist in a T-shirt with "I love jihad on the front, and a veiled Muslim woman wearing a badge that says, "I love orgasms". A rising star in the art world, I talked with Maple about her photography and painting practice, controversy, Kate Moss and the new realities of re-branding feminism.*

## **You have a big exhibition in London right now, and you're coming to Toronto...**

Yes. I had the exhibition in London in October and that went on for a month and now I'm making new work and I've got the group show at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and then I've got one in New York in October/November.

## **Given that you use yourself as a subject in your paintings and photographs, how do you see yourself as subject within your work? Are you the "every woman" for your generation?**

I kind of use myself in my work to sort of benefit an idea. In a lot of the pieces, it doesn't matter that it's me or not, if you know what I mean. Some it does and some it doesn't. And for each picture, I take on a persona as well, I show different parts of me.

## **Like the portrait with Kate Moss's breast! Do you have a fan relationship to Kate Moss?**

Yes. It sort of started off like I didn't really like her that much, and I use that image and then I grew to love her, and so now I love her. I love and hate her.

## **What inspires you? How do pop culture figures and symbols factor in your work?**

I'm inspired by loads of things all around me all the time, but I suppose I am influenced totally by the media because it's obviously a celebrity culture and media is every where you go, and so that's going to filter into my work and also if



I kind of connect with one in a particular way, I can use them to kind of expel a particular idea. The Amy Winehouse piece, it's called, "Love is a Losing Game" which is on her t-shirt, and I was feeling quite romantic when I made that piece. I used Amy.

**You've got such an incredible body of work, both painting and photography, and all of these images speak cross-culturally, but as a woman, you really touch on issues that I gravitate towards and that excite me as a viewer. You've really given feminism a make-over. You're approaching feminist themes from a fresh and invigorating perspective- not the stereotypical, old-school negative man-hating, dusty, stereotype of feminism that can sometimes be our feminist heritage. How do you see yourself as a feminist, especially in relationship to the controversy that has surrounded your work? Are you recognized in the street because you use yourself as a subject? How do you deal with it all?**

At the moment, I'm trying to figure out what feminism means to me. I'm trying to do a lot of reading and figure out what it is because I've kind of been influenced by the idea of post-feminism and thinking women can choose to stay at home or women can show their bodies if they want in a particular way. I've got a friend who is a really big feminist, and she was saying how she thought that we've gone back and we're not moving forward anymore, and we've only been feminists for 30 years or so. It's only been around that long, and I think we've got a long way to go with it and we're kind of back tracking and we want to move forward, so I'm kind

of looking at that kind of thing in my work as well. And also, there aren't many strong women out there, and I want to, you know, do it for the girls.

**To open up a conversation? Because for me, that's really what your work does. It has infused the feminist debate with sass and attitude that some would attribute to "post-feminism". Personally, I don't go for or believe in "post-feminism"- show me the post patriarchy, and we'll talk post feminism. But the same issues that were central to feminism 30 years ago are relevant today- pornography, sex-workers rights. Within the feminist community, we're still divided. How does humour and comedy play with your search for a feminist identity?**

I think that although these are all very serious issues, I take everything kind of a light-hearted way and that influences my work a lot. I do enjoy comedy as well as an art. And I think that it's just a great tool as well to get points across. I love it when like, there's a witty or a clever joke and somebody kind of thinks, "Ahhh!" like they get what you're trying to say through wit. I really like that. That's when I feel I've done something well when I feel something of a little joke in there. Takes you a little while to get it, kind of thing.

**You use a lot of text that is incredibly effective. How much time do you spend on slogans and copy?**

Sometimes a slogan will pop into my head and I write lots of things down. I've always got my sketchbook that's all full of slogans and things



that I've made note of. But I'm trying not to use text. I use text so much, and I'm trying not to use it, but it seems to be popping up in everything I'm doing. I just love using text, and I love hiding text in the piece as well. Like I really like the one of Tony Blair. It's one of my favorite ones cause I found that t-shirt with John Cleese on it and, "Don't mention the war". I thought that one was great! I really love the t-shirt, I have it at home. It'd be great to have Tony wearing it.

**You use and refer to a lot of British celebrities in your work like Tony Blair, John Cleese, Amy Winehouse and Kate Moss and capitalize on that infamous humour that is dry British wit. Do you feel an affinity to these celebrities as a Brit? Is there nationalism going on here as well for you?**

I think so because I think that over here in Britain, we're kind of scared to say that we're patriotic. It's like if you say that you're patriotic, you're saying that you're a racist or something. You can't be proud of, um... actually, I just went on someone's facebook page and they had written, "Stop ask-



SARAH MAPLE.

ing me to join, 'I'm proud to be British' groups. I'm not a racist" or something. It doesn't mean that you're racist, you know, if you're patriotic, does it? I just think we should be more proud of where we come from, really.

**Speaking of where you come from, in your artist's statement, you question what it means to be a young, female Muslim in a western society. So, what does it mean?**

I'm still kind of exploring it. Because the work comes from all of my thoughts growing up and trying to find a healthy balance between being a good Muslim and also fitting into western culture and society and kind of questioning if you can be a good Muslim if you're western as well because the two really contradict each other, and I think there's a lot of misunderstanding, a lot of people not understanding each other, and conflict, and I suppose I'm still trying to figure out what kind of Muslim I am. My work's all a journey, I suppose.

**Looking back at the exhibition that you had in the fall with the threats and the violence against the gallery and your work, how did that experience impact you on a personal level? How are you surviving your day to day? Are you recognized in the streets?**

I'm only kind of recognized through arts circles and things. Occasionally someone will say, "Oh are you that artist?" and this kind of thing, but it's not like I walk down the street and people point me out or anything. But I also think it's because in my pictures, I'm nothing like what I am in the everyday. When the whole thing hap-

pened, I was kind of worried and walking around with my head down, but it's okay. It's died down a lot so I'm not so worried about it. Apart from the facebook group, the Anti-Sarah Maple Facebook group which has 400 members now.

**Wow! Has that controversy affected your work and your practice?**

It's impacted me personally. It's made me re-think how I view my religion and my fellow Muslims so society, but that whole experience will impact on my work, but it doesn't mean that I 'm going to shy away from controversy. My experience will obviously feed into what I do next.

**Are you going to do some paintings about this nasty Facebook group?**

Ya! I love some of the quotes, though. Somebody said something like, "What she needs is some Islamic cock".

**There you go- it writes itself.**

It's a great slogan. I'll have to write that one down.

**You talk about identity-Muslim identity, feminist identity, pop culture identity-as a rising art star, is that identity really exciting?**

Ya, it is really exciting and all of the interest in my work is amazing and something that I never expected. I just love the work being recognized and when people say they enjoy it and find it funny is really good. I also embrace the negative stuff as well.

**I'd love to hear your thoughts on what happens when criticism, controversy and outrage becomes twisted. For example, according to an online critic, your painted self-portrait with the piglet featured you 'suckling the pig', which insinuates sexualized intentions and is intended to inflame an audience who would already be agitated by your representation of Musiim culture.**

**But this type of critique makes me wonder a) if the critic has even seen the painting because you are clearly holding the piglet, not breastfeeding it, and b) why this hysteria is taken to a level meant to do the most damage as it communicates the original speaker's worst fears and perhaps, deepest desires.**

**How do you contend with this type of criticism that is coming out of the Muslim community specifically?**

At the time, it was infuriating that people were just jumping to an assumption and also, I did a radio show, and people were calling in who hadn't even seen it and were criticizing it, and I thought, you can't speak to me about this painting unless you've seen it cause it's completely different. When you see it in person, it's not confrontational or aggressive at all and people took it like I was taking the piss out of religion and that wasn't at all what it meant. And people were just completely misunderstanding what I'm trying to say. And I think people choose to be offended, if you know what I mean. They don't even want to see the positive in it. It was almost like one person picked up on it as well, and it spread and suddenly everyone was talk-

ing about it and not giving it a chance, I think. It's viral criticism that goes beyond the work.

**Your painting and your photography have such a strong narrative, and your politic and questioning is apparent about systems of religion, misogyny, feminism, racism and celebrity that seem to define your ethical position. You're intentions as an artist are not malicious.**

**Do you see your work existing in relation to some kind of moral context?**

About what you said about it not being malicious, that's exactly how I want it to look. I want it playful and light-hearted and questioning, kind of like, poking people, if you know what I mean. Just kind of make people question a bit. It's not meant to be malicious at all.

**How has the critique of being offensive to Muslim culture impacted your ethics as an artist?**

Well, especially after the whole thing happened, I felt really, really frustrated because somebody might have a go at me for doing this, then it just makes me so angry when I think, 'who are they to judge me?' My intention is not malicious at all, I'm just making a point about religion. I think if you're strong in your faith you should be able to question it. It doesn't mean that you're necessarily disrespecting it. The one thing that really got to me that people should judge so much, and when you're a Muslim, if you're in the public eye, all of the other Muslims will judge you just because you're Muslim, and they're kind of like, "Oh, they're a bad Muslim!"





Islam is  
the new  
Black.

SARAHMAPLE.

And I hate that judging element and that's what kind of got to me the most, I think.

**You're both a painter and a photographer. On a purely formal level, how do you make those decisions? When is it a painting, when is it a photograph?**

I just think about what would be more appropriate. Like some of the images, I just think that would make a beautiful painting and other times I think it would have much more impact if it was a photograph of me. It depends on how I gauge it. At the moment, I'm doing a painting of myself in just like bra and pants, another feminist one, and again, I thought this is more appropriate. I can't explain how I come up with the reason, I just know in my head what's right and what's appropriate.

**In terms of the painting process, is it a very meditative experience? Do you, "go somewhere else?"**

Ya, I mean, I do feel like I want to be secluded and on my own and I shut myself away. It's very not a lonely experience, but kind of something that I feel I need to go into myself.

**What's the new work like?**

It's still got loads of text in cause I love my text. I've done some more photography and I'm going to start doing some videos as well. I'm really excited about doing that. That will be in the next couple of months.

*Sarah Maple was born in 1985 and grew up in Sussex, where she lives today. She did her BA in Fine Art at Kingston University and in October 2007, won '4 New Sensations', a new art prize for graduates, voted by the public online, organised by Channel 4 and The Saatchi Gallery. Much of her inspiration originated from her being brought up as a Muslim, with parents of mixed religious and cultural backgrounds. Understandably, issues of identity are of huge interest to her.*

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*Dayna McLeod is a writer, video and performance artist. She has traveled extensively with her performance work, and her videos have played from London Ontario to London England- across Europe, North America, South America, Asia and a few times on TV. She co-hosts Dykes on Mykes in Montreal, and conceived and coordinates <http://52pickupvideos.com> - a video site whose participants make one video a week for an entire year.*

*All artwork/copyright: Sarah Maple*



## THE DOCTOR IS IN: ANN CVETKOVICH

*Ann Cvetkovich | Tracy Tidgwell*

*The doctor is in! Ann Cvetkovich is an intellectual visionary. Raised in both Toronto and Vancouver, she left Canada for the US in 1976 to study literature and philosophy. Since the late eighties she's been a Canadian transplant living and working in Austin, Texas, but finds many reasons to keep looking back. A literature maven by trade, her interest in alternative histories has given rise to her recent interdisciplinary work with archives. She has an incredible ability to bring together academics, art, activism, and experiences of everyday life. I met Ann nearly a decade ago while we were both working at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. And while we've had many amazing heart to hearts over the years, it was a real pleasure to ask her some questions about her life and work for this issue of NMP. We recently sat down together through a live video-conference to talk about archives, egos, and how interconnected we all really are.*

**I know you as an incredibly playful person in your personal life. And since this issue of NMP is all about ego, I am wondering if you might talk about the fun of disguises and alter egos for you?**

I definitely like disguises. I'm not sure I would call them alter egos, but it's interesting to be invited to think about them in that way. I think of disguise as related to costume. For a disguise to become an alter ego, one has to take on a character and that often involves speaking in that character and not just being dressed in a certain way. I do like to wear costumes, and go-go dancing has given me a chance to do that. I also see costume as connected to various kinds of femme and high femme identities. In the past I've had alter egos that are more masculine, so disguise has been a way of crossing gender. But these days, for the most part, I would say that my alter egos tend to be more feminine ones. It's a nice way to explore different parts of the self.

**Maybe we should back track a little here. What is ego when we're thinking about feminist and queer approaches?**

First of all, ego gets a bit of a critique from feminism. The development of the ego can be less important to feminists than the development of the collective. So what is the relation between the individual ego and the collective? And does the ego disappear when it becomes part of a larger community?

I'm someone who tends to want to suppress ego in favour of the larger community. Also, when I hear the word ego I also think about Freud and the concepts of the ego and the id. One of the things I learned when I was studying Freud was

that those terms are translated somewhat awkwardly from the German into the Latin terms that we use in English, the ego and id. The original German is *das ich* "the I" and I quite like translating it as "the I" rather than ego because it seems to lead away from assumptions that the "I" is big. So *das ich* is just me, or who I am.

Another way I think about the connection between ego and I is through Kundalini yoga. One of the big mantras in Kundalini yoga is *Sat Nam*. *Sat* means truth and *Nam* means identity and *Sat Nam* sometimes gets translated as "truth is my identity." *Nam* would be somewhat like ego or *ich* or I. But what's beautiful about *Sat Nam* as a concept is that who we are as individuals is composed of the vastness of truth of all being out there in the world. So it's a really lovely way of seeing that you make your identity in relation to the larger universe. I feel like it's a version of ego that isn't about the big individual ego. It's more about a self that is connected to others.

One of the nice things about the concept of alter egos is that it understands identities to be multiple – that we have many different selves inside of us. Maybe by virtue of all of the people we're connected to and also because of all of the different parts of our being that we manifest. There isn't one self, there are many.

**Do all academics have big egos?**

(Lots of laughter). Well, as a feminist I'm constantly striving to figure out how we can have a version of academia that's not about big egos. I think about principles of feminist pedagogy, or what people sometimes call student-centered learning, where the teacher thinks of herself

more as a facilitator of other people's work rather than saying this is who I am and this is what I think and this is the truth. It's more about making it possible for you to find your truth, or your identity, to go back to that notion of Sat Nam.

**Do you think there could be something like a collective queer ego? What would that look like or be like?**

I love the idea of there being a collective queer ego. To me this means many different egos all sloshing around together. Hopefully that involves multiplicity that strengthens everybody. There could be conflict – egos could clash but that would be a great thing rather than a destructive thing. My idea of the collective queer ego would be something like the multiple selves we spoke about earlier. It's like Walt Whitman's "I contain multitudes."

There is room for everybody to be their own queer selves and for the collective to be stronger and more vibrant as a result. It's important to have the clashing because we don't want a model of the collective where everybody is the same, or where people are suppressing themselves in order to be part of the collective. The utopian model is that there is room for everybody to be their big drag-queen selves (Laughter).

**Sounds like a great model for developing alter egos.**

**I've always admired your interdisciplinary approach and how you are able to make connections between so many ways of looking at the world and the**

**self. It seems as though both Kundalini and interdisciplinarity acknowledge that the inside and outside worlds are so entwined.**

It's interesting to think about Kundalini as connected to interdisciplinarity. That's so cool, because interdisciplinary work is work that doesn't see itself as having one home. The analogy we could make with separate disciplines is that you have to be rooted firmly in one area in order to have an identity as scholar, whereas interdisciplinary work suggests that you want to make connections to lots of different things and different kinds of people. Sometimes I see myself as a real bridge-builder in that I'm excited by work in so many different areas and want to bring it all together. But sometimes that makes for something that can seem rather scattered or less coherent than work that comes out of a deep familiarity with a single discipline. Right now I'm struggling with the ways that interdisciplinary work can sometimes be seen as more superficial because it's so broad and yet, one of my big interests in interdisciplinary work as someone whose training has been in literature and humanities is that I want to connect these disciplines that are often seen as softer or fuzzier to science and to other fields that carry more cultural weight and authority in the world. I want to make connection, for example, with psychiatrists because I write about trauma and depression and psychiatrists are often seen as the ones who have the greatest expertise over the psyche -- or the ego, to return to that concept.

I'm interested in stories, testimonies, and oral histories as another approach to the ego -- how the story of the self can do work in the world and be used to make social change. I'd like to

infuse the medical and legal worlds with the really beautiful creative stories that we get from literature, culture, and the arts.

**Let's go back to something you mentioned earlier about costumes and disguises. You mentioned your go-go dancing. Will you say more about that?**

I feel like I'm able to do different kinds of thinking and being and living through dancing. Go-go dancing provides an important counterpoint to the life of writing and thinking because it is a way of thinking through the body (which is a feminist concept) that's wordless, that's performative, that's physical and that feels very easy. It's one of those places where the self emerges as something that doesn't operate through the conscious mind. Dancing is a place where I can just be a self through the movement of the body. It feels very easy, fun, and natural for me to move around in the world in that way.

Go-go dancing also connected with traditions of drag and diva performance. In an earlier life, I was involved in theatre, and I was really into playing big, flamboyant female characters. In the theatrical world, there was an opportunity to be a big ego in a way that I don't necessarily feel comfortable with in the rest of my life. Go-go dancing also allows me to go to that place of flamboyance and outrageousness and being a big person in the world. Mostly through female versions of bigness, which have become most compelling to me in terms of gender performance. Queen like – forms of femininity that can be problematic like bitchy or toppy or over the top.

I enjoy exploring these alter egos. One feminist project is for women to claim big ego for them-

selves. Through my alter egos and disguises, I get to occupy big female ego space.[1]

**That's so fun. Do you think that you also do that through your work?**

I like to think of my work as a way of exploring and enabling my creativity and that of others. It is an encounter with the self (or the ego). It is a way that I make space for myself to explore my interests and the things I want to make happen in the world. Cultivating that work of the self in order to be able to go out into the world and do stuff. We need to craft and empower ourselves in order to do that. There is a kind of ego building work that goes on in my writing, which is my creative practice. I also want that to facilitate the same activity in others.

Since I tend to have an ambivalent feelings about the term ego, I think it might be important to talk about being raised Catholic, and Canadian. You know people say that Americans have big egos compared to Canadians (laughter). Think about the term self-effacement – getting rid of the I or the ego – and ask who is self-effacing. My sense of Catholic traditions is that there's often an emphasis on putting the self in the service of others, as opposed to, say, a Protestantism that emphasizes the individual and individual identity.

Catholics have a tendency to operate more with the collective in mind. There are forms of self-effacement that are very good, that are about having humility and an awareness of others. But of course self-effacement can be bad as well.

Some of my work has to do with trying to figure out when it's important to claim self and not be self-effacing in a damaging way.

It's interesting to see our conversation here as an attempt to rethink ego so that it doesn't necessarily carry that negative connotation of the exclusion of others. What is the mechanism through which we have "I" in dialogue with others? How does the "I" form through others in way that leaves space for self to develop as well?

**I think you do that. Knowing you as a friend as well as through your work, I admire the ways in which you invite relationships between self and what's outside of it, or connected to it. It reminds me again of collaborative models of feminism and your interdisciplinary approach. You acknowledge a real sense of interconnectedness.**

I get that feeling on the dance floor too. You know, moving around together, being together without necessarily having a conversation.

**Yeah, that's a perfect example. On the dance floor there can be a deep connection to others but still it's much about being in the physical body and the self.**

Go-go dancing for me is an extension of that. There's an element of individual spectacle but I also feel part of the collective performance.

**You've been archiving stories of queer life, art and culture for decades. How did you come to the feelings part of the project?**

My interest in feelings began with 1970s feminist practices of consciousness raising and also with that giant mantra that 'the personal is po-

litical'. I continued to be interested in what kind of work can happen in the world by virtue of people sharing their feelings in public (laughter). It's a big "I" project, right? And sometimes there's the feeling that "ok, that's a little too much ego when all those stories are being shared."

I'm interested in the genre of memoir, which I see as an important forum for public feelings, which is one of the areas I've been working on. Memoir is connected to forms of oral history and testimony. And memoir has been a very important genre for feminists, not exclusively so, but certainly the contemporary fascination for memoir has, as one of its sources, a feminist desire to allow other voices to be present, heard and felt in the world. It asks, as a basic premise, what it means to tell one's story, as a way of bringing the self or the I into existence.

In my current work I've been playing a lot with memoir, and with what it means to interpret one's story. Rather than write one big life story, I'm interested in many stories and in the way that the smallest incident can be the vehicle for a story that tells us something about self and the culture we come from. Memoir can be a way that we constantly make up new stories about who we are and try to convey them to the world.

My interest in consciousness raising, in memoir, in what happens when stories of people's feelings get placed in the public sphere, has created all kinds of questions about what kinds of knowledge are being communicated in public life. Maybe that's why the dance floor is a good metaphor, because something is being conveyed there that isn't at the level of story. Trying to capture the life of feelings can be

quite an interesting and difficult process. This is where we come to the idea of the archive as ephemeral. In trying to capture felt and lived experience, and the crazy lives that some of us lead in our subcultural worlds, there are all kinds of interesting dilemmas and possibilities. I remain fascinated by the challenge of trying to document those things and the importance of doing so in order to bring into public view parts of experience that haven't always made it into the public domain. If they were there, they could be the source for new kinds of thinking and for new kinds of communities.

### **Will you say more on the importance of archiving?**

Well, I'm interested in alternative histories. I'm also interested in the ways that we access history in order to help us move forward into the future. I'm aware of the ways in which so many different kinds of histories are lost, whether it's the histories of lesbians and same sex relationships, or historical traumas that aren't adequately brought to the table in national public discussions. Examples of that would be the stories of genocide and indigenous cultures, the history of slavery and African Diaspora. There are all of these important histories that haunt contemporary life. I want us to tell those stories because I think they make a difference to how we operate in the world today. We need a lot of creative projects in order to do that.

Right now, I'm really interested in collaborations between artists and archives. A lot of times archives get stuffed away in a museum or in a library, and there's amazing material there, but it can be information overload to try to access it. There is also a lot of felt experience that's not in the archive in any kind of tangible

way. So I've been thinking a lot about how artists can work with archives and how they can produce, exhibit, and display archives in order to create alternative histories and in order to do public relations for things that need be out there in the world. Archives are important.

### **Do you see that there is a beginning to a queer archive?**

Queer archives are everywhere, especially if you aren't just looking for same sex relations or GLBT identities. If you think about queering the archive then many different kinds of things become archival. Of course some of my inspiration for that idea comes from the knowledge that queer and LGBT histories have been lost or inadequately told or not well collected in any kind of official archive.

You know, I was a literary person, I was never really much of a history person and often history didn't make a lot of sense to me. It seemed like a lot of details and dates that I couldn't make sense of. I remember seeing the film "Before Stonewall" and being fascinated by the idea that GLBT identities had a history and that there had been these important shifts within the twentieth century. And that these histories had been going on all around me but I hadn't known about them. I grew up in Toronto as a kid, and there were all these amazing organizations and events going on but I didn't really know about them even though they might have been happening right down the street from me.

**Yes, part of the process of growing up and connecting to your self is also about connecting to the past and getting to know your history.**

Absolutely. That would be another example of the self as part of a collective. Asking questions like, who are my people? And what stories have I been told and not told, and what stories do I need to be told? I think memoir and the question of ego and identity can be about getting people to understand and connect with the histories that might help them to come to a sense of self. I always want history to be accessible to people in way that's empowering, in a way that sees history as more than something made by these giant figures 'out there.'

I want people to make the connection that their own lives are history too. You can make history and you are already making history inside your everyday life, if you approach it with the attitude that you are important. Again, this connects to the concept of the ego and also to yoga. I'm interested in traditions that say everybody is important, everybody can make a difference. So whatever work we can do to build egos in that way, I'm all for. Some of my work on the archives of feelings is motivated by this desire to show the historical significance of everyday people and of everyday life.

(Yeah, that's really important to me, I hope we can get that in there).

### **Let's talk about Mél's questions and the digital possibilities of archiving.**

I'm very interested in this. For example, one of my favourite archives right now is the ACT-UP Oral History Project which is available online ([www.actuporalhistory.org](http://www.actuporalhistory.org)) and includes both audio and video transcripts.

It makes the archival material so much more accessible. And there are new digital archiving

projects in libraries that are going to bring to people all kinds of material that has not previously been available. I think there are a lot of possibilities for popular archives and more grassroots kinds of archives to be made more accessible through digital work.

Another great genre of memoir is digital story telling, which is a way that people can put together, pretty rapidly with video technology, oral histories accompanied by photographs and other visual materials. They combine story and visual archives.

Digital media offers a place where people can make a detailed account of self present in the public sphere. I think we at a crazy cross roads right now, where there's so much out there. It's a bit unwieldy figuring out how to marshal all of those stories such that they do public work. But I think they have the potential to create new communities. Think about the zine tradition. It's been so important for expressions of self. The zine is very much a DIY genre that says my feelings and my life count and I'm going to make a something out of it. Those same sensibilities are at play with digital genres as well, like blogs and Facebook pages.

The question of new digital communities is a complicated one. The answer always has to be that we can't know for sure whether they're good or bad. Digital technologies get used in all kinds of ways. Sometimes, they can seem to be crowding out more subcultural, alternative, or independent voices. There's a danger that mass media forces will ultimately dominate YouTube and other digital technologies, but I think the potential is always there for them to be used for alternative and independent purposes as well.

## **What about the concern for the ephemerality of digital archives?**

It's up to us to both find ways to capture the ephemeral and to translate the ephemeral into more lasting or more meaningful forms. That's why I'm interested in the crossroads between artists and archives because I think artists have really great strategies for taking ephemeral archives and being able to make something with them that can represent communities and facilitate communication across or within communities, and help activate new identities and new communities.

## **What's it like being a Canadian transplant? What do you miss about Canada? Will you ever come back to us?**

Yeah, I really want to. I miss Canada. I think it goes back to our discussion of history and the joke we were making earlier about Americans having big egos and Canadians not having an ego or being more self-effacing than Americans or the cliché about Canadians being on a constant quest for a national identity.

One of the reasons that I left Canada when I was so young was that I had this sense that alternative culture was happening in the US. This was mistaken, because in fact all kinds of exciting things were happening in Canada, but because they weren't represented globally, I couldn't see them, even though they were happening right around me. One of the things that keeps me coming back to Canada, in addition to my family and my friends, is that I'm really interested to see how, for example, the immigrant cultures that I grew up with in Toronto have morphed and transformed over time. I'm also really interested in public attention to in-

digenous culture, like land claims and the Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and how different efforts to create historical memory and a national imaginary are playing themselves out in Canada and how that compares with similar kinds of work in the US. Those comparative projects are increasingly sending me back and forth across the border.

## **What are you working on these days?**

I'm working on a bunch of things. I'm trying to finish a little book about depression. It is an effort to try to think about depression in ways that are not medicalized -- that don't just see it as a biochemical disorder or disease that needs to be treated by drugs but instead see it as a way of feeling that makes sense in the world that we live in that produces lots of forms of hopelessness. I want to try to think about productive ways of telling the many stories of what depresses us and how we can come up with strategies for making ourselves feel less hopeless.

I've been incorporating into that project some memoir material, particularly about my own struggles with writing and with academic work when I was in graduate school and finishing my first book and first being a professor. I think there are a lot of things that are very hard about those processes and I wanted to try to write about them and to start a conversation that would make things easier for people. I've also been wanting to document the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. I've been writing about it for a long time and I'm eager to get it out there because Michigan is so precious to me.

It's an archive project that I want to be a part of.

I've been discovering that I really like to write about artists whose work I love.

### **Who inspires you right now?**

Well, Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* is a book I've written about and want to continue to work on. It's a book about archives and also an amazing memoir since it tells a queer family history that turns out to be of great historical value. Another book I love that I've been writing about is Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt*, which is a historical novel about Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas and their Indochinese cook. It uses archival material from Alice B. Toklas' cookbook and turns it into an imaginary queer history.

I also just wrote a piece about photographers who use archives and who make archives through photography. It's about Tammy Rae Carland's project called *An Archive of Feelings* in which she photographed a bunch of objects that had archival significance to her, including the stuff she got from her mother when her mother died. And it's also about Zoe Leonard's project called *Analogue* which is a series of photographs that documents store fronts on the Lower East Side of New York City in order to preserve a world that is increasingly vanishing – the world of small businesses and local cultures and immigrant cultures that are being taken over by gentrification.

A lot of people are doing really interesting work to preserve worlds out that are disappearing or drowned out by mass culture. It can be an honour and a pleasure to write about and make connections with artists whose work interests me.

And of course, Allyson Mitchell is another one

who I've been writing about and whose work I adore so much. She and I have done various events together over the last month, and it's been really fun to get to think along side of her about making art and making community.

### **Speaking of Allyson and making community, I want to ask you if you like potlucks and do you have a signature potluck dish?**

I do like potlucks, for obvious reasons at this point, because I like the idea of a collective event where everybody contributes something, and the whole thing is bigger and better as a result. I know sometimes potlucks can be seen as a bit of hodgepodge or a dyke cliché but I like them.

I don't necessarily have a signature dish because I like to be more whimsical. Sometimes I'm lazy and I have to figure out what can I bring to the potluck that I don't have to prepare (laughs).

### **What's that look like?**

It could be cookies or bread and cheese. I try and avoid bringing the hummous (laughter).

### **Do you like hummous?**

I do love hummous but it's such a potluck cliché. Though I sometimes will serve hummous at my own potlucks - I think that's ok. But I'm not sure I could bring hummous to somebody else's potluck.

I also like to bring something fresh and green because that's often missing at a potluck -- like greens beans or roasted asparagus or some

steamed chard. Just one simple, single, thing. That way people can have a little green on their plates to go with the beige.

There's another thing I want to say about potlucks. Gretchen and I often have parties where in addition to asking people to bring food, we ask them to bring something to contribute to the salon part of the potluck, like a performance or something like that. So the potluck concept applies not just to the food but also to the activity of the gathering. I love potlucks and I don't want to live in a world with no more potlucks.

We just had a Deep Lez Potluck Brunch in Austin, taking off from the Deep Lez concept that's been developed by Allyson [Mitchell], and it was so beautiful. We served really good breakfast tacos. Allyson had never had them before – she didn't even know what they were. It really felt like we were creating a little Canada/Texas cultural exchange. I like hosting a potluck brunch and make a big dish that will feed everybody in a pinch. Someone else brought quiche and a lot of people did bring salads and fresh vegetables. It was surprising that there were almost no carbs -- there was no bread stuff, until our friend Rachael brought these crazy cornbread things that she made with just cornmeal and water. They looked like cornmeal hockey pucks and they turned out to taste really good.

### **Hockey night in Austin! (lots of laughter)**

Yeah, cornbread hockey night in Austin.

**Your work uncovers a lot of your personal stuff and also deals with some of the darker, or less easy parts of personal life, like trauma and depression. It's really brave, courageous and amaz-**

**ing that you do this. As someone who bridges the personal and political on so many levels, do you ever feel like a bit of a trailblazer?**

I love that you asked me this question. A student once asked me a similar question when I was doing a guest visit to women's studies class and it made me cry because I never really thought of myself as being courageous or a trailblazer. I was just trying to do the stuff that interested me. And that's also why I do the work that I do. It never feels like I am making a decision to explore the darker side of life, it just feels like that's what I'm drawn to do in order to understand the things that mean the most to me. I think this connects to the idea of ego in that we sometimes don't really see the things that we're doing and the importance that they have. It's so important to recognize the significance of what we do, the courage and the trail blazing that it takes. To have a bigger ego as a way of expanding the work that we do in the world and remembering that we are important to other people and that we touch them. And I want to thank you for even thinking about me for this project because I feel really honoured by that and the way it gives me a chance to think about what I do and share it with other people.

**I'm so happy that you were into it Ann. Thank you.**

*[1] See Cvetkovich's essay "White Boots and Combat Boots. My Life as a Lesbian Go-Go Dancer" in Jane Desmond's book, Dancing Desires.*

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*Tracy Tidgwell has big feelings and loves to express them. She is a writer, photographer, and a semi-retired performance artist. A former member of the fat activist and performance collective *Pretty Porky and Pissed Off*, she continues to explore culture through ideas of feminism, sexuality, the body, and creativity. She is about to graduate from Acadia University with a BA in sociology, sixteen years after she began.*

*Ann Cvetkovich is her hero.*

*(Photo by Lukas Blakk)*



**TRANS-CULTURE IN THE (WHITE) CITY.  
TAKING A PASS ON A QUEER NEIGHBOURHOOD.**

*Bobby Noble*

*In memory of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.*

To say in the twenty-first century that culture, gender and space shape each other is to risk the banal. But what happens to such banalities when the genders are transed, the spaces white, and the culture, as a result, virtually incoherent? Many trans scholars working in a North American trans-studies context tend to agree that, more or less, the terms FtM, genderqueer, trannyfag, transsexual or even just trans have circulated over the last decade as politicized and contentious terms. Such contention – indeed, one might even describe the contention as a new border war – continue to be part of the Toronto gay and lesbian cultural infrastructure. One such border war occurred at a recent symposium programmed through the 2008 Inside-Out: The Toronto Lesbian and Gay Film and Video festival, when trans collided with a homonormativity that articulated whiteness all at exactly the same moment. These border wars, occurring inside a well-known, large urban gay and lesbian film festival, signal the simultaneity of the relations between gendered embodiment, sex play, and racialization inside homonormative communities, neighbourhoods and venues for cultural production. Such moments, along with others inside supposedly queer neighbourhood spaces in Toronto – for instance, the exclusions of and moral panic over queer FtMs from gay men’s bathhouses and sex parties – are evidence of what Rinaldo Walcott has called the “next queer wars,” battles against “gay and lesbian fundamentalism” that have built the limits of inclusion and, in some cases, respectability, through the measured articulation of bio-political and racialized discourses of belonging and membership. In his short piece/interview “The Next Queer Wars,” Walcott quite astutely anticipates these public controversies, outlining

them as battles against such fundamentalisms (as I track them here through indices of fundamentalism: queer infrastructures such as film and video festivals, bathhouses, Pride activities, festivals, etc.), which have been built through a practice of heavily policed member inclusions/exclusions, of regulation grounded in a kind of siege mentality justified through a recourse of disenfranchisement. With Walcott, I want to chart a series of questions emerging from these civil wars over which bodies stay in spaces and which are evicted. Such evictions – accidental, deliberate or some combination of both – are telling of these strange tensions and convergences that tunnel under the surface of self-evident spaces, like a supposedly ‘queer’ neighbourhood and its cultural infrastructure.

On 18 May, 2008, I was a panelist on a symposium called Queer Here, Queer Now, programmed through Inside Out: Toronto’s Gay and Lesbian Film and Video Festival and designed to raise a series of questions about what, if anything, queer references in the current moment. As the only trans panelist invited to participate in this very important public forum, I will say that the goals of the symposium were indeed met, albeit in profoundly strange and troubling ways. I was on a panel called ‘The Fighters’ with two filmmakers, and I presented

a short talk on a Morty Diamond docuporn film called Trans Entities: The Nasty Love of Papi and Wil (2007). Produced and directed by the same trans-filmmaker who produced Tran-yFags (2003), Trans Entities details the sex politics and play of two of the most interesting transpeople to appear in recent film – Wil and Papi – two non-operative, FtM folks of colour from NYC. Morty Diamond’s previous film, Tran-yFags, was an instant success and documents a growing sub-culture within the “T” of the re-

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***EQUALLY TRUE IS THIS: IF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURES ORGANIZED AROUND A LOGIC OF GENDER SEGREGATION – SPACES LIKE BATHHOUSES, FILM FESTIVALS AND OTHER SOCIO-POLITICAL SITES – ARE CENTRAL TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILIZATION OF IDENTITY-BASED POLITICS, THEN WHAT HAPPENS TO SUCH SELF-EVIDENT CONSTRUCTIONS OF IDENTITY WHEN THEY ARE CHALLENGED BY TRANSED BODIES?***

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ally cumbersome LG-BTTQI: FtM and genderqueer tranny fags, female to male transsexual and transgendered men who locate their desires “after” transition within the spectrum of gay masculinities. Diamond’s work is interesting not only for its depictions of social and sexual bodies, but also for the way those bodies are located in historical geographies that have been naturalized into contemporary social space. In many ways, then, it is the proximity of those bodies to

these social mappings and organization of city spaces (infrastructures of communities and neighbourhoods like bathhouses, bars, dances, social events and so on) that queer both the sexual orientation and the genders of those trans bodies found inside of them, not the essentiality of those bodies themselves as identified by genitals.

This precise set of anxieties – what kinds of genitals one has, what one likes to do with such complex bodies, with whom, and in what configuration of attraction, gender, sex acts and contexts – had already exploded at least once in the previous summer in Toronto around FtM bodies and gay men’s bathhouses. Such gay spaces in Toronto have moved in more fundamentalist and gender panicked directions when trying to navigate the challenges posed by transed bodies. Equally true is this: if community infrastructures organized around a logic of gender segregation – spaces like bathhouses, film festivals and other socio-political sites – are central to the development and mobilization of identity-based politics, then what happens to such self-evident constructions of identity when they are challenged by transed bodies? Are such civil wars the inevitable outcome? What do these civil wars tell us about the fundamentalist logics underwriting politics, especially when those logics become panicked? Recent queer media in Toronto have given a bit of coverage to what can be identified as these new border wars. The incommensurateness of trans bodies and gender-specific sex spaces first emerges in controversies surrounding Toronto’s ‘Pussy Palace,’ the women and trans people’s bathhouse. But border wars over trans bodies in gay men’s spaces are even more recent. In Toronto, FtM’s and gay men’s sex spaces emerge in queer media through a story written by Toronto-based tranny-fag-activist J. Wallace. In his Xtra! column, “Sizing him up. On Sacred Ground. Trans men stake their place at the baths,” Wallace details both his experiences already passing inside gay bathhouses and the larger, community-based response to such presences (2002). Like those earlier pieces detailing the incoherence of the Pussy Palace, Wallace similarly notes complex tensions in his subject position

inside the club, as viewed from the vantage point of an FtM trans person. In the absence of a conventionally defined penis, FtMs might well pass as the men they are in every other capacity including in many sexual capacities. Wallace details the way that he is able to pass through the door, able to pass even at the end of ‘slurp ramp’ while giving an anonymous blow job. But knowledge of the complexities of Wallace’s subject position puts him at risk within fundamentalist gender economies that can materialize only binarized notions of sex, and might react through the violence of a gender-panic to complex forms of embodiment.

Entrance policies over admission into such spaces, in 2002, were triangulated through a very ironic version of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” At a community session between bio-gay men and trans men about the inclusion of trans men into gay spaces, the owner of the bath maps out a non-negotiated agreement whereby FtMs who can pass will be allowed through the door. But once inside, a genital-panicked policy is set into place: “He also tells us that we’d be thrown out if we were to have man-on-man sex with our tits and front hole exposed to other patrons.” In this recounting, it is hard not to hear Walcott’s earlier acknowledgement that “There was no way that middle-class white folk were gonna keep their kids outside the doors forever. There’s no way. The rights movement is a way of bringing them back in, especially at a time when capitalism is in crisis.” So, on the one hand, in this 2002 moment that saw trans men partially welcomed into queer space, we see, on the other hand, evidence of a profound failure. Even though the inclusion of trans men signaled an equally partial transformation of queer neighbourhood space, trans men still cannot access queer men’s sex cultures as

transsexual men. Access is granted as long as the embodied hegemonic fiction of phallic masculinity is preserved.

By the summer of 2007, fundamentalist entrenchments around space in Toronto seemed to have set in quite deeply. The local queer press continued to track these conflicts in part thanks to the work accomplished by guys like Wallace. Controversies continued to brew over the presence of gay FtM tranny guys in gay sex and BDSM cultural space; only now, what was previously a gender/genital panic has transformed into panicked policy. Many of the same spaces enforce entrance at the door with a more aggressive policy than “don’t ask, don’t tell.” Where the presence of trans men was previously an open secret, by 2007 the policy governing entrance into the play space is “show your dick at the door,” even in cases where government-issued legal identification marks the subject as male. In short, no dick, no party (Xtra! July 2007). Even more troubling is the unasked question lurking throughout such imperatives of self-policing around ‘safety’ in same-sex space: security at what cost? There may well have been a time when it was significant to build imagined communities around a rhetoric of shared coherence. But if we are paying attention not only to queer communities and neighbourhoods, but also to waves of fundamentalism occurring nationally and internationally, we should know by now that sameness, coherence and security require the quite aggressive minimalization and eradication of differences within a category like masculinity – as Wallace has indicated – in the name of ensuring the right to have ‘safe space’ in the first place. Wallace has detailed some of these questions and how they might well have shaped an imagined queer nation: how big does a dick need to be to count as

a dick? Do guys with smaller dicks avoid such spaces because of the harm done by such a policy? Are such practices producing and then normalizing standards of sameness (the hottest guys are the guys with the biggest dicks?) that are no different than heteronormative beliefs about masculinity, which such spaces are supposedly built against? Where is queer desire in that equation? Where are queer bodies?

Moreover, at what point do policies and practices like dick at the door or the lesbian version – dick slammed in the door – or the national version – produce the right paperwork at the proverbial national doors or leave – begin to enforce normalizing coherence and sameness? The Women’s bathhouse in Toronto has been dealing with these issues since their very first bathhouse. Despite well-documented limitations, many lesbian communities have been challenged and have been challenging themselves about the presence of trans men and women inside lesbian, queer, and butch-femme communities for so long now that these border wars almost seem cliché, even as there still remains work to be done to combat transphobia (as many “women-only” Pride parties and rhetoric continue to demonstrate). As Walcott has already indicated, such homonormative fundamentalisms are another way of talking about community-building based on heavily policed and normative boundaries of belonging, inclusion and membership. If he is right that, “ ... the real movement of queer radicalism in the next five years or so will be when we can all close our eyes and the queers that we imagine are queers of colour, are trans people, and so forth,” on what terms can a queer politic and space be imagined if not the essentialized body? Can we imagine trans dick outside of the context of fundamentalist and essentializing

ways of conceptualizing space and the bodies that such spaces signify?

There can be no better way to map the effects of such panicked homonormativities than by describing one recent skirmish in the border wars that occurred in the summer of 2007, when yet another group of trans men and friends attempted to enter a Toronto gay bathhouse. The venue in question was the site of a trans inclusive bathhouse party, hosted by Toronto's queer-art-performance-filmmaking-activist-artist troupe called Kids on TV. Like all of their events, the Kids on TV show/performance on June 14, 2007 was trans-inclusive/all genders welcome, even though it was being held in – and so staffed – by the nontrans-inclusive venue. (In other words, the regular practice of the space is that it is not one that trans men can access as trans men; they can access the space if they pass and play as biological men only.) According to one FtM who attempted to enter the space, staff working the door distributed locker keys and information differently depending upon how literate their reading practices were and how well subjects at the door passed as conventional-looking men. While several FtM's were given access keys to the men's locker room and play spaces, another FtM was given a key to the designated "women's locker room" and blocked access by staff to "men only" play spaces. When the practice was challenged that night, staff stumbled through incoherent responses, calling the FtMs "ladies," indicating that they did not know what to do with "you people" and questioning self-identifications with hostile statements like "Are you sure you are not a lady?". The FtM subject to these comments in particular told me that after leaving these and other battles at the door, he sat outside on the street crying in frustration from the entire experience. He then indicated:

"This was the same night of the Pussy Palace. In fact, the [men's bathhouse] is on the same block as the one Pussy Palace was in that night and I could see it from where I was sitting. I sat on the curb, crying after such an awful night, during Pride, looking back and forth between [the men's bathhouse] and the Pussy Palace, completely cut out of both."

Word circulated about the eviction of FtMs from the men's bathhouse, and in response, a small group of local activists (none of whom actually attended the event) attempted to organize a "Dyke Day Action" against the bathhouse – an action unsolicited, unwelcomed and opposed by the FtMs in question. The protest was to follow immediately on the heels of the Dyke Day March where interested "allies" would end the Dyke March by descending on the bathhouse. This action was opposed by the FtMs in question, in part because of the dangerous connotations of "Dyke Day Action," language that would, in the end, simply reinforce the transphobic argument that FtMs trying to enter the space were just "women pretending to be men." The trans men involved in the incident asked the organizers of the protest not to move forward with their plans, a request that went unheeded. In the series of emails and notices advertising the "Dyke Day Action," the protest organizers represented its intentions as a protest designed to "take over the space and throw a wrench in the gears of transviolent ... 'business as usual' in the gayborhood." In fact, nothing could better illustrate the binarized sex logic of homonormativity: here, the unsolicited 'remedy' for the transphobia of the men's bathhouse seemed indistinguishable from the original eviction itself. Both remained bound by a singular homonormative logic which, in this case, folds trans back into 'dyke' as a protest against the fold-

ing of trans into either 'women' or 'gay'. Such logics – operating through the language of disenfranchisement – must have looked very odd when experienced from the curb.

Again, similar civil wars playing out on the bodies of such sons of the movements occurred during the Inside Out/VTape symposium of May 2008 (Noble, 2006). The trans film under discussion that day – *Trans Entities* – sought to document those bodies virtually unimaginable inside of gay and lesbian visual economies and spaces. Located in a different urban landscape from Toronto – that of New York – *Trans Entities* is structured around three sex scenes, punctuated by interviews where Wil and Papi frame their lives, bodies, desires, and sex play. In addition to the three sex scenes, we watch as the camera follows Wil and Papi through another large urban city-scape on the subway, in second hand clothing stores shopping for 'props', in some performance spaces and so on. Both are people of colour; both are non-operative (that is, they identify as transgendered but have opted not to have surgeries or take hormones at the time the film was made); and both identify as transed although they do not take up the language of 'trans' sexuality or transgenderedness directly. They coin the term "trans entity" to materialize differently inscribed trans bodies, those which move through social and discursive territories outside of binary sexes; these bodies get flagged in the process of "self-making" as one way to refuse the overdetermined gender and clinical diagnoses of Gender Identity Disorder. Both characters detail the failure of language to materialize their bodies given that, as FtMs of colour, even the languages of transsexual/transgender as self-hailing descriptors fail because they are languages deeply encoded as white. These are bodies whose intelligibility re-

quires nuance, complexity, sophistication, political tenacity and ultimately, a desire to trouble a passion for ignorance in the first place.

After setting-up and screening a carefully selected clip from the film and presenting a brief analysis, my fellow panelist, a white American lesbian filmmaker, immediately pre-empted any and all discussion with the following statement: "I don't see anything other than two butch dykes when I look at this clip. To me, they are women. That's all I see". Needless to say, pandemonium broke out for the duration of the session, as trans-literate folks in the audience – again, tellingly, two dykes of colour – challenged the transphobia and were answered by an unbridled and violent racism: from an audience member they were told to "just shut up". That such hostilities occurred so publicly could

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### ***ARE TRANS BODIES TO HOMONORMATIVITY WHAT GAY AND LESBIAN BODIES ARE TO HETERONORMATIVITY?***

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be explained as a failure of the chair who moderated. But such explanations all too easily circumvent the complex borderlands, bodies and political stakes predictably converging in these homonormative public spaces, even if the complexities are willfully disavowed. The entire symposium rightfully sought to complicate and repoliticize queer aesthetics, festivals and knowledges across an entire circuit of cultural production (that is, production itself, distribution, reception, etc.), but clearly did so with an audience not quite ready for the questions raised. That is, coming some twenty years after

what is often hailed as the birth of queer theory and queer activism, the early 1990s, the panel and discussions which followed seemed to lament the unanticipated consequences of those very changes that the early 1990s queer politic set in motion.

Throughout the symposium event and since then, I remain transfixed by a number of questions for which answers now seem quite self-evident: Is this the measure of success for the Queer Nation? Is this stabilized neighbourhood and infrastructure the very indicator of success that queer activists of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s worked so hard to accomplish? In this current moment of the symposium, for example, made up of audience members and artists who were quite profoundly shaped by the queer 1990s, including myself: are we the future of our own queer past? And if so, why do we seem not to notice that so much time has gone by, bringing with it a very different social and political landscape? Are trans bodies to homonormativity what gay and lesbian bodies are to heteronormativity? Why did this gay and lesbian contingent at the symposium, under-representative as it might have been, seemed to be stunned to find itself on the other side of Other?

At the same time, it refused to see anything other than what has always already been necessary for gay and lesbian movements and communities to do their work: a seemingly essentialized stabilization of sex as the ground of same-sex orientations, identities, politics, neighbourhoods, infrastructures and so on. Such a response marks the consolidation of a hegemonic homonormativity, unconsciously quite incredulous at its own unknowing reproduction and naturalization of a very unqueer sense of

time and space. To frame this differently: What happens when an incoherently sexed, destabilized and indeed, trans sexed body finds itself in the midst of definitively gay and lesbian demarcated space, such as a “gay and lesbian” film and video festival? The answer: a hostile, violent and very ironic eviction of the strange, the queer, the irreducibly different. The white lesbian filmmaker’s assertion that she does not ‘see anything’ actually means that she ‘cannot see anything other than that which must always already be true’. Otherwise, how might it be possible to know the real queers (ie: gay and lesbian folks with stabilized sexes) from the not queer or not queer anymore and so worthy of eviction? Who gets to decide?

And what of that racialized queer unconscious and its discontents? I chose my clip from *Trans Entities* very carefully. As indicated already, *Trans Entities* is a complexly layered text. It is a mixed genre film (combining both documentary with porn), which details the lives of trans people who already challenge trans culture and practice itself. The clip that I screen already maps complexity onto the argument that Wil and Papi make about the dominant practices of whiteness inside trans-spaces, and it does so through consensual BDSM play between Wil and Papi, and a third partner, Chris, a white deaf butch. BDSM can all too often be read as just “kink”, or as a kinky “alternative lifestyle”, without a critical or deconstructive edge. Theorists of BDSM disagree – and I think rightfully so – by suggesting instead that BDSM is what we might think of as an economy of conversion – not where non-practitioners are converted to the practice – but where the massive cultural and everyday social facts and geographies of power are converted, exchanged and inverted against their normative technologies. Instead,

these massive social facts are played backward, outside of linear sequencing or normative narratives of progress: pain to pleasure, man to woman, adult to baby, unreason to delirium. Moreover, it certainly cannot be missed that BDSM borrows its scenes (bedrooms, kitchens, dungeons, convents, prisons and empire) and their décor, props, and costumery (bonds, chains, ropes, blindfolds) from the everyday cultures of power. Such forms of power play could thus be characterized as the sexual re-organization of social risk, not to a libertarian end but as a stubborn reiteration of what remains disavowed sexually in the everyday.

These are named quite beautifully by Papì as consensual ‘race play’, evoking that ongoing, traumatic and ineradicable memory of empire and white supremacy that remains a ‘massive everyday fact’. Race play is analyzed in the build-up to the scene by Wil, Papì and Chris, as, at the very least, a-colonial – that is, not outside of but tenaciously about the non-disputable existence of the colonial and the racialized, and the way that these systems authorize the fetishized consumption of bodies of colour. Racialized forms of sexuality are certainly not new, and racialized sexual violence – or sexualized racisms – have long been part of the technologies of white supremacy and colonialism. Significantly, such ‘play’ in *Trans Entities*, by Papì and Wil and Chris, functions a little differently in indexing the degree to which queer and trans symbolic spaces are still bound up in the economies of white supremacy, empire building and colonialism. What has emerged as a ‘queer’ space over the last 15 years is one that is locatable within the very precise coordinates revealed at the symposium, those of whiteness and the essentialized sexed body. Attempting to locate Wil, Papì and Chris on any maps of de-

sire requires an entirely different logic of mapping. What the trans body does (and did in the symposium) – by the mere fact of its existence – is enact an unwitting discursive wound on the way that what passes as queer is, at the same time, as white as what passes as the cissexual and heteronormative.

And this was precisely what I wanted to out through my choice of visuals at the symposium. The second scene of *Trans Entities* in particular depicts race play, and this was the scene I screened at the symposium. Race play in this scene is organized around the depiction of whiteness that frames Chris’s body as a consensually degraded and ‘used’ body. The productive perversions depicted in this scene position those degradations very carefully. But Chris is also hearing impaired, and this is not without significance. On the one hand, what Chris puts into play through discussion is the obviousness of white supremacy from the position of an insider-outsider. In an interview, which comes just before the sexplay scene, Chris clearly names white supremacy as a massive cultural fact that is obvious to anyone who wants to discern its operations. For Chris, such critical anti-racist articulations have occurred also as result of being outside of white hearing culture in the first place. But on the other hand, Chris interrupts the very ironic mutedness that whiteness depends upon by communicating such articulations in a language – sign-language – quite literally outside of the racist grammars of white talk. Chris signs during actual filming but the film also translates all text – post-production – through a voice-over narrative, in order to ensure that the meaning is clear to those who cannot read sign-language. The interruptions of business-as-usual here are layered and complex: Chris speaks through the white

body what most white bodies cannot know or articulate in the languages available to such racialized (white) subjectivities in the first place. But at the same time, Chris occupies a critical white subject position that is not – and cannot be – exclusively self-defining. What’s at stake in these coordinates of whiteness is the way in which they are repositioned against the logic of the maps of white supremacy. To a certain extent, the subaltern does speak by rendering to whiteness a servicing/bottoming functionality not defined on its own terms, by returning a consensually debasing and perverse sexual gaze, one that traffics in the exchange of critical whiteness to hail the pleasures of a differently racialized viewing subject.

For the players, and potentially for audience members, this moment is one where hegemonic whiteness is degraded, devalued, and converted into something else. The sexual ‘script’ is very telling: Chris bottoms for both Wil and Papi. Wil, who is running the sexual scene, asks Papi: “do you want to get sucked by nothingness?” When Papi answers “yes sir”, Wil then gives him permission to straddle Chris’s face. The ‘nothingness’ is not so much Chris directly but what Chris represents, that is, whiteness, rendered speechless, vacuous, degraded on terms not its own and taking pleasure in its own symbolic debasement. In a very limited sense of the term, ‘to degrade’ means to lower something in rank or grade; in a more complex sense, we have a consensual masochistic, self-effacing politic of race shame used as a sexual prop of race play. Such a practice of whiteness is very much unbecoming – that is, ‘unsuitable and/or very much not conforming with accepted attitudes or behavior’ – and certainly, inappropriate – that is, no longer appropriating and in fact, staged to be apropos, or ‘appropriate in a

particular situation’. Such a strike on whiteness – indeed, of whiteness – can only be calibrated by its effect at the symposium. Recall the dismissal: “I don’t see anything other than two butch dykes ...”, which is indicative of a reading practice equally troubled by race play and gender play simultaneously: there were three racialized bodies – not just two transgendered bodies – in the scene in the first place.

Looking back on the event now, the race play depicted in the video caused as much trouble to the supposed colour-blindness of the GLBTQ audience as did the trans bodies. These simultaneous articulations of trouble outed the white homonormativities of this queer neighbourhood, despite its own fantasies to the contrary. The lesson: whiteness is the currency with which such homonormativities pass through the culture of their own making. A shared fantasy of an “LGBTTIQ” community and subject, which not only transcends geography, time, place but also its own embeddedness in history is still, as demonstrated at the symposium and through the bathhouse wars, a fantasy bound within fundamentalist gender economies and power in very dangerous ways. What James Baldwin wrote in 1965 remains as true today as it did more than 50 years ago: white people remain “impaled on their history like a butterfly on a pin”.

*Bobby Noble is white transman, teaching in gender and sexuality studies at York University (Toronto). He works through cultural studies approaches on twentieth century constructions of sex, sexuality, bodies, race, gender, especially masculinities, as well as transgender and transsexual identities in culture and social movements.*

## **LA SUPER TORTILLERA: AN INTERVIEW WITH AWILDA RODRIGUEZ LORA**

*Awilda Rodriguez Lora | Indri Pasaribu*

*On February 24, 2009, Agitate Ottawa ([www.agitate.wordpress.com](http://www.agitate.wordpress.com)) – a queer indigenous women and women of colour collective in Ottawa – and Divergence Movie Night (<http://divergencemovienight.com/>) co-presented the film ‘Still Black’ as part of a Black History Month celebration. Indri Pasaribu, an Agitate collective member, got the opportunity to have a conversation with Awilda Rodriguez, the producer of ‘Still Black’ and a multi-talented artist, about her involvement with the making of ‘Still Black’ and her present and future work.*

### **Let’s start with who you are and how you would describe yourself.**

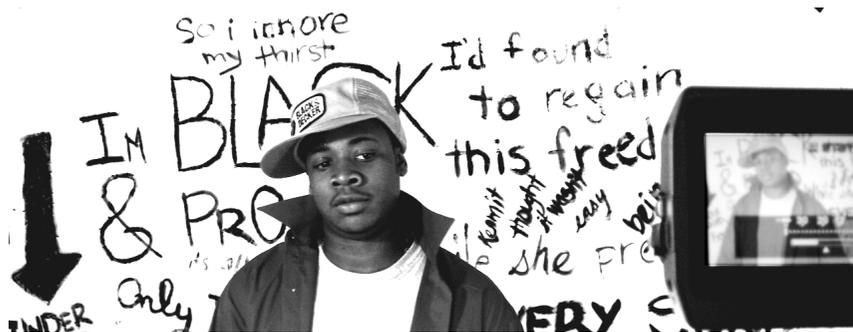
I am a lover who creates and performs art, as a quest to better knowing myself and the things around all of us. I am mostly inspired by life’s queer moments and how they move/shape our identity. It is sometimes difficult to describe myself because I am constantly learning new things about me and I love it.

### **Can you tell us about your work ‘I wanted to be a cheerleader but my cuntry didn’t have’?**

In 2002 in NYC I had just finished my B.A. from Hunter College, and it was around this time that I really started to think about where I came from and who I wanted to be. At the time, I was collaborating with dancers who were also living in NYC and were away from their homelands. Because of that, they were going through the shit that I was dealing with. So it got me thinking about the reasons why we choose to leave home and how living in voluntary exile can shape and transform your identity. It wasn’t

until 6 years later in Chicago that I developed and performed the solo as part of Links Hall's Charged Bodies Mentorship Program with Tim Miller.

'I wanted to...' is a multimedia solo performance about the emotional and physical experiences I had after leaving my homeland, Puerto Rico, and moving to the United States. I explore my identity as a queer woman, my place in the world, and how I have arrived at the moment in time that I am at. The movement in the piece is based on the strained relationship I have with my parents, and the energy we are all putting



into cultivating and nurturing our growth. It is also a recognition and celebration of my body and my sexuality. I am in the process of touring an excerpt of the piece, and I continue to seek funding to premiere the full evening performance in 2010.

**You are the producer of 'Still Black'. What are your roles as a producer in the making of 'Still Black'?**

I consider the role of the producer as one who is there to help the director achieve their vision. Kortney Ryan Ziegler, Director of 'Still Black: a

portrait of black transmen,' shared their vision with me and I was so inspired by not only their passion, but also by their beautiful portfolio of work. I am such a fan of KRZ's work. So, I was ready to help and make 'Still Black' happen.

The role of an independent producer that works in a self-funded project is multifaceted. They do everything from being a PA for the Director to cooking lunch for the crew. I wore many hats during the production of the film. I really enjoyed the role of producer, because I find it to be a very creative role and it is beautiful to see how everything manifests itself as part of

your work and dedication. I am very excited to continue producing work with Kortney Ryan Ziegler (Blackstarmedia.org) and other artists. It is in my nature to make things happen.

**How did the project come about / come to your attention?**

It came from a sofa conversation with Kortney. They shared with me the idea and reason for why they were interested in making a film about black transmen. Kortney had been developing the project for almost two years prior to meeting me. I told Kortney, "Let's not wait anymore and do it!" And that was how we started. A year later we finished our first feature-length experimental documentary.

I also understood the importance of creating a film that focuses on black transmen. In the past few years there has been a trend of trans films, but as most of us may know, they are mainly

focused on the experiences of white transmen, leaving transmen of color as an afterthought. Because of this, it was important for both the director and myself to create a film that would place black transmen at the center of the film.

**The people you chose to be the subjects in the documentary are both poignant and quite diverse, in terms of their age, experiences, and their relationships with both their gender and sexuality. How did you choose the people you have in the documentary?**

We made a call for subjects on listservs and bulletin boards around Chicago. Because of limited funding, we originally wanted to only have men that lived in the Chicago area, but as we started receiving inquiries from all around the U.S., we then decided to open the call to black transmen living outside of Chicago. We then had phone interviews with them to get to know each other better. We wanted to represent a diverse voice of men and luckily, those were the type of men that answered our casting call! We are so thankful to all the men that share their stories with us, and a special thanks to Louis, Carl, Kylar, Ethan, Jay and Nicholas for being part of the film and being their awesome selves.

**One Agitate member thought that one of the things that stuck with her after watching the documentary was when Louis Mitchell spoke about how choosing to become a man is his choice and his choice alone, and those were never the choices of his friends and family, so when he transitioned, he understood that it would take time for them to adjust to the choices that he makes,**

**and how he can't force them to adjust instantly, because it's a journey they have to take on their own. For myself, I was struck with the vibrant personality of Jay Welch. What would you say is the one thing that really stayed with you after watching the documentary?**

I was the interviewer, so I must say that the one thing that really stayed with me is how they were so comfortable and open to share their stories with us. I really appreciate the fact that they trusted us and were so honest. They inspired me to really investigate and recognize who I was and to always be myself where ever I am. But you did ask me about who really stayed with me after viewing the documentary. I will say Ethan 'cause I, too, have a love for tattoos and piercings, and it was great to connect with someone else who appreciates the spirituality involved in tattoos and piercing. I love tattoos and I can't wait to get more.

**What were the hardships/challenges that you had to face in making 'Still Black'?**

Of course not enough money can always be a challenge. But we took the challenge and thought creatively as to how can we make this film happen without all the fancy film equipment, and we made it work. Something that was, and continues to be, a challenge is time. Both the director and myself are graduate students, and managing both our school and production life can sometimes be stressful and tiresome.

**Considering of all the awards that this documentary has garnered, you must**

**have received positive feedback from the viewers. How do people from different communities receive this film? And what are their reactions that surprise you the most?**

I really love being in the room while the screening is happening, 'cause I love to hear and feel people's reactions and I love being surprised by how they react to different sections in the film. But what I really enjoy is how these men inspire people.

And it's really great that all different shapes of identities are being inspired through this film to really be who they want to be and to celebrate their individuality.

**Talking about your other work, I know that you are quite an accomplished dancer and visual artist. What do you find to be fulfilling as a dancer that is quite different from your work with film?**

Dance is growth and movement. How we navigate space and time is with our bodies, and even though creating visual art has been truly a powerful tool for me, I express my vision through the kinetic experience of dance. It is continuously dynamic, even when you are still, and I love it.

I also come from a Puerto Rican hippie family that loves to dance, hug and kiss, and our bodies are always flowing together. Dance for me comes from within and the experience is personal, and the function of movement is to communicate that thing that is internal to make external.

That is why I started exploring experimental video performance. The form allows me to combine my two loves: dance and visual art.

**One queer Canadian artist I like is Rosalie Favell, a Métis artist. One of her photography works is of her transforming into Xena. She talked about how she found a hero in Xena, but that as she grew older, she realized she could be her own hero, and did so by making her very own Xena costume. If you could be any superhero, who would it be and why?**

I would be La Super Tortillera. I'd fly around with my multicolored super apron and whenever I



see someone worrying too much about what people think of them, I'd throw a tortilla at their faces. My magic tortillas would make them rec-

ognize that who they are is beautiful, and fuck what people think.

### **Can you tell us about anything that we could look forward to seeing from you?**

Well I just finished editing an experimental video performance for the School of Art Institute in Chicago, and I would love to continue collaborating with all kinds of artists to continue making cultural productions that show our multiplicity of people. I am also currently in NY collaborating with Baraka de Soleil and the collective D Underbelly in a new dance/performance piece titled S'kin Deep that will be presented in May at the Dixon Place in NYC.

I am always making art no matter where I am. I draw and write in my journal everyday because it is my performance space where I can be naked and discover myself. I also have a website and blog where I publish my work and collaborations all the time, so definitely check it out at: [laperformera.org](http://laperformera.org).

And of course I want to continue collaborating artistically with my partner, my lover, the amazing filmmaker Kortney Ryan Ziegler, because they always inspire me and challenge me to make more and more amore and more art. Gracias mi amor.

*Awilda Rodriguez Lora is a performance artist, producer, activist, yogi, improviser, lover and traveler. She was born in Veracruz, Mexico and raised in Puerto Rico. She has been producing, creating and performing her own work for almost 10 years. For her, the development of performance art is a personal therapy session where she constantly challenges and celebrates her body, identity, sexuality and gender. Rodriguez Lora understands the importance of artistic collaboration and has made it a point to collaborate with other artists that are committed to producing art that ignite progressive dialogues around race, gender and sexuality. She has had the opportunity to work with artists from New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Puerto Rico producing work with Kortney Ryan Ziegler, Baraka de Soleil, Nequi Gonzalez, Darrell Jones and Tim Miller. She is currently the Executive Producer for the award-winning experimental documentary "STILL BLACK: a portrait of black transmen" and is also touring her new solo piece titled "i wanted to be a cheerleader but my cuntry didn't have it." For more aventuras visit [laperformera.org](http://laperformera.org)*

*Indri Pasaribu is a queer currently living in Ottawa, Canada. She is also a community educator, having done work for such organizations as Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Sierra Youth Coalition, and Agitate, a collective for queer Indigenous women and women of colour in Ottawa. Her main influences are Prince, Homi Bhabha, David Bowie, and mythological character Puss-in-boots*

## AN INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA HAMMER

Barbara Hammer | Marie-Claire MacPhee

*Barbara Hammer is a lesbian feminist filmmaker who has been producing experimental and documentary films since 1969. The following is a conversation between NMP and Barbara Hammer in early April 2009. You can learn more about her incredible life and work from her website: <http://barbarahammer.com/> and from her forthcoming (March 2010) book: HAMMER! Making Movies Out of Sex and Life.*

### **Congratulations on the awards that you have recently received for your latest film, *A Horse is Not a Metaphor*.**

Thank you! It has won 3 awards.

It most recently won Jurors awards at the Ann Arbor Film Festival, and at the Black Maria Film Festival and the big award was the Teddy award at the Berlin Film Festival for the best LGBT short film. That one came with a statue, a chunk of money, and a lot of press.

### **That must feel good...**

Oh, I feel really good about the film, whether it got a prize or not, I really like it.

### **Can you tell me a bit about it?**

I guess you could call it a personal experimental documentary. It traces eight chemotherapy sessions that I underwent for ovarian cancer stage 3. And it comes out of those very difficult therapies to a remission of hope and wonder as I ride a horse galloping through the hill locks of Wyoming.



**Was that a really challenging film for you to make?**

No, it was for two days, but then I got over seeing myself ill on the screen, and I just saw it as a movie. But the first few days were hard.

**You are often your own subject aren't you?**

I have been my own subject. One of my goals was to put a lesbian on camera - on film - in the 20th century and now into the 21st, because when I began, there weren't any that I could find. Part of my research and my filmmaking has been to find those who have gone before me and to make films about them. But the other hand has been working on depicting my life as a young sexual promiscuous dyke and now as kind of a steady, married, committed older lesbian woman. And I have always approached these subjects with a feminist politic whereby I have been out front about my gender and my sexual preference.

**Was that hard to do when you started out in the late 1960s?**

No, it was never hard for me. To make the films wasn't hard, and to come out wasn't either. It was a little hard with my mother, partly because she was dying at the time, and partly because of the influence she had over me. But, she actually died before I made my first 16mm film.

I found celebrating women's bodies to be the right thing to do. It was very easy for me; I wasn't trained or brought up in any religion, I didn't have any moral compunctions to hide the body, so it was easy to celebrate this newfound sexuality. Later when I tried to get jobs, I think

it hindered me, but in my own making of the work, there was never a problem.

**Has that has changed over time? You've been making films for 40 years and during that time there have been some major changes, especially in the lesbian and queer communities.**

**Have these changes affected your work?**

Oh yes, I like to keep up with what is happening and the whole question of fluidity of gender have been very interesting to me, and I subscribe to it as well. I continue to read theory, such as Bidy Martin and Judith Butler. Some of it strikes a chord as something that I've felt for a long time, and other times, there's a revelation with an idea. For example, Bidy Martin says, "I is a lesbian couple". In other words, can you be a lesbian and not be in a couple? So that's a very interesting question to ponder. And Monique Wittig says: "I am not a woman", because woman, as a category, did not define her, she says, "I am a runaway" (from that category). So that was another life changing thought that I heard. So I feel lucky to be to, and to continue to be able to experience life intellectually, emotionally and sensually.

**Would you say that the transformation in the GLBT and queer communities towards a broader understanding of gender fluidity is one of the more significant shifts that you have witnessed?**

Yes, I think it is the most significant shift after the coming out period of the 1970s that really put lesbians, as a gender classification, on

the map. Because before then, I was 30 years old and I didn't even know what a lesbian was. So it had to happen in the 1970s; a lot of us couldn't make choices without language. And then, I think the AIDS crisis in the LGBT community had a huge impact and from there, we grew into the queer community, rather than the LGBT community. And now, we see the fluidity of movement from gender preference to sexual and biological change. The freedom to choose your body as well as your sexual preference is profound. So actually there are four things there, maybe one for every ten years.

**Your early work focused on uncovering lesbian history and discussing lesbian identity and desire. It seems like there has been a considerable shift in your work in the last decade to move beyond that, to look at other marginalized communities.**

**Was this intentional?**

Yes. It was intentional because I got bored with the earlier subject, or I had followed it as far as I could see my interest in it. So to look at other communities in South Africa, or the diving women in South Korea, or the woman resistors in Southern France. This was new material for me and it meant new research, new ideas, and new undertakings, rather than continuing with lesbian identity and representation.

**Do you think that your work has uncovered a lot of histories that have not been made available to the public?**

Yes, definitely. Right now, we are preparing stills for my book and we just went through Al-

ice Austen's stills, she was a photographer in the 1890s in Staten Island and was a lesbian. My assistant is helping me – she's a young photographer – and has been saying "Oh, these are great, these are wonderful, I've never seen these, who was she?" And the same thing with Hannah Höch from the 1930s in Berlin, she was a Dada collagist, who was living with a woman for many years. So yes, my work is all about uncovering those who did go before me, who – when I went to school – were never mentioned.

**Through your work, you have created a lesbian cultural history, and some might say that by uncovering all of these invisible histories, your work in and of itself is an archive.**

That's really interesting to think of it that way. Because I'm sitting here talking to you, and I'm looking at about 15 boxes – all marked by decade – where I've catalogued my work starting in the 1960s and ending now, as well as two boxes of journals. And I have my own archive, because I have kept every scrape of paper that has my name on it, every review, criticism, letter or flier, or something that called me names, everything. And that is going to go to a university and will be available as an archive. So there will be an archive within an archive, which is very interesting because I never thought about it that way, but you're right, it is. I have a Meta archive, in my archive.

**So you're a collector?**

Well, I collect if I have a project in mind. If I'm working with Nitrate Kisses and I want to put Willa Cather in my film because she was a lesbian and nobody knows it, and she's a famous American writer and she had her letters burnt

before she died and all those kinds of horrible historic details that we know about, then I go to Red Cloud Nebraska where her archive is, and where she lived, and I don't know what I'm going to find, I have an appointment to meet the curator and I go in and I select photos, and I Xerox material that I can read later and I go to her home and I take a tour of it and I film as I go, and on the way driving in, I see some old deserted houses falling apart and I film them. And I just gather whatever I can.

Then I come back and I have other material from around the world, and I memorize my data so I understand every image that I have, and I work as a collagist in my montage and I reach for an image or a thought or a subject and I put it on my editing bench and I have an intuition of what should follow it, and I reach for that, and often it works, and sometimes it doesn't work, and then it goes back, and I reach for something else. But I work through having the database in my mind and then trusting my intuition, so it's a lot like sculpting.

### **That's a very involved process.**

Oh, it's a lot of fun, because it's all new material. You never know what you're going to do exactly. I hate working with a script, well, I don't hate it; it's just less exciting.

**Given the importance of the archive as both theme and method in your work, what are your thoughts about making full video available freely on the web as opposed to just clips of it?**

**Do you think that such open access can complete the archive - especially for the**

### **largely invisible and undocumented lesbian history?**

What a great question. Just today, my assistant wanted to take photos of photos that I have, but I told her I can't give her permission because they came from an archive I had to pay to use in my film and I don't have the right to freely put them up on the web.

And then you take somebody like me, and I'm living off of the proceeds of my films and videos so I prefer somebody to buy a DVD of my work, rather than take my source material and work with it. Plus even the time to get my own work into 2 and 3 minute sections for the video so that people can go to the website and see what a little section of it looks like...that takes so much time. And I can't imagine going through and taking out the old film research and the old photos and then going to the archives that they came from to get permission to use it in another format. I asked and received written permission for use of such material for each film and specified how it was going to be used, so I can't republish those images in a book unless they have been used in a film and the photo in the book reflects that it is a still from my film. So it's more complicated, then a simple, "yes, we should have an open access", but it's very exciting to think about the possibilities.

**By consulting archives for your work, you do bump into barriers in terms of access and permissions?**

No, not really. I think that the thing to do is to get out there and do it. I think a lot of people assume that there are difficulties. But what are the difficulties that I've encountered? At one archive, I heard that the owners of the archive

were destroying the lesbian material there. I heard that from the lesbian curator of the archive who was taking the material home at night and then bringing it back everyday, because she said things were disappearing. Now, I don't know if that was true or not, but when I went to this particular archive, I couldn't say that I was doing lesbian research.

The same with Claude Cahun on Jersey Isle; now, they've published their own book on Claude Cahun with a series of articles by photography critics, and she's now out as a lesbian, but when I was doing my research, a student that I know who had been there doing research told me "don't use the L word" so I never did when I was at that archive. But now, it's a known fact that she's a lesbian, so things can change quickly within a period of two to three to four years. It depends on who has the ownership of the archive and what they want to protect.

I have to make sure that everyone has access to my archive. And I have to make sure that when I sign it over – or probably sell it – that there will be a clause in the statement, indicating that the LGBT community should know where this archive has gone and they should be welcomed as guests to this archive.

**When I met you at the Lesbian Herstory Archives 35th Anniversary in New York, you mentioned that you rode your motorcycle down the west coast of the states to Guatemala. What was the trip in honor of?**

What was it in honour of? It was me running away from too many lovers! It was in honor of my independence! And in honor of me doing something brave and strong by myself. I had a leather riding suit that zipped up from my an-

kle to my chin with a red stripe down the arm. I has a 750cc white BMW with a big gas tank that I could strap my map onto, and I had two satchels behind me so I could carry everything I needed. In Mexico I would drive about 200 miles a day and then I was exhausted – I don't think I had a windshield on that trip – but I would find a hotel complex that had an inner courtyard so it would always be locked inside overnight. It worked beautifully. I even visited my very first lesbian lover on that trip.

**Can you tell me about your upcoming book, *HAMMER! Making Movies Out of Sex and Life*?**

It's going to be so wonderful. It progresses by decade. You have the introduction and then the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. There is an introduction to each decade and then they are made up of both published and unpublished materials from my archive.

It begins with part of a fabulous novel that I wrote in 1970 when I was living in a cabin on a river that had no electricity, and I had an old typewriter and I wrote 4 pages everyday, and when I was done I would go down to the river or hike or do whatever I wanted to. And then it moves into the 1980s and then the 1990s and finally the 2000s into my struggle with mortality and coming to the end of a life and dealing with illness and commitment as well. So it's a broad collection of material that I hope will be an inspiration for young lesbian artists. I sort of see it as "Letters to a Young Poet" that Rilke wrote. Sort of a guidebook, but not really, because everybody will go their own way, but just something to give inspiration to say, somebody else has done it, somebody else hoed this row, I can do it too.

## **Do you think you could have written this book at any other time?**

No. After *Cancer*, the first thing I wanted to do was to get my film archive in order and then to get my paper archives in order. After I did that, the editor at the Feminist Press contacted me and said it this book perfect for her. Because I had everything in order, it was a very smooth process.

## **When will it be out?**

March 2010. And it will come out in conjunction with a Retrospective at the MOMA in New York and at the Reina Sofía in Madrid, the Tate Modern in London, and I hope a museum or cinemathèque in Paris.

*Barbara Hammer was born on May 15, 1939 in Hollywood, California. She is a visual artist working primarily in film and video and has made over 80 works in a career that spans over 30 years. She is considered a pioneer of queer cinema. Her experimental films of the 1970's often dealt with taboo subjects such as menstruation, female orgasm and lesbian sexuality. In the 80's she used optical printing to explore perception and the fragility of 16mm film life itself. Her documentaries tell the stories of marginalized peoples who have been hidden from history and are often essay films that are multi-leveled and engage audiences viscerally and intellectually with the goal of activating them to make social change.*

*Hammer's experimental documentary film on cancer and hope, *A Horse Is Not A Metaphor*, which she premiered in June, 2008 at the 32nd Frameline International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival in San Francisco and February, 2009 at DocFortnight at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. It won the Teddy Award for Best Short Film at the 2009 Berlinale and Second Prize at the Black Maria Film Festival. It was selected for Punta de Vista Film Festival, Torino Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, International Women's Film Festival Dortmund/Koln, and Festival de Films des Femmes Creteil among others.*

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*Image taken during the making of : *A Horse Is Not A Metaphor**

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**THE AMBULANT FLIPBOOK MUSEUM  
(SOME OF) THE VIDEOS OF  
KIM KIELHOFNER**

*Kim Kielhofner | Anne Golden*

When I stayed home sick as a kid, I used to watch a long departed show on television called Matinee. It was broadcast on CFCF 12 and was hosted by Joe Van, a man who sported the most astonishing handlebar mustache. At the time, we had a black and white TV and no remote control. Matinee presented movies I really loved but that were often way over my head, including Hamlet with Laurence Olivier.

My childhood sick day viewing habits lead me to misremember two classic movies. In fact, I conflated the two films for a long time, making a peculiar hybrid movie that existed only for me. Both films, Jezebel and The Little Foxes, starred Bette Davis and were directed by the same man, William Wyler. Jezebel was released in 1938 and was about a headstrong southern belle in the 1850's. The Little Foxes was released in 1941. It was also about the south and took place in a large mansion, but was set in the early 1900's. Until I went to film school and saw The Little Foxes in its entirety, I thought the two movies were one and the same. I probably listened to Joe Van's introductions to the movies, and then fell asleep halfway through one or

the other. In my movie, Bette Davis wears an inappropriate red dress to a cotillion (Jezebel) and later an enormous hat with birds on it (The Little Foxes). I thought this 'film' was about eccentric garment choices. This anecdote belongs to what I call 'viewer-induced-plot-mishaps' and it came back to me because of Kim Kielhofner.

I would like to consider just a few of the many videos made by Kim Kielhofner.

### **Snap Shot (2008)**

'So I saw this movie the other day on TV' begins the narration of Snap Shot, a video by Kim Kielhofner. Her video shook loose my memory (shared above) of having invented one peculiar and incoherent film out of two classical Hollywood narratives. I think Snap Shot resonates because I suspect many of us have had a Jezebel/Little Foxes viewing moment in which we shred up odd bits of pop culture and reassemble them into our own mash-up narratives. Kim Kielhofner drops us in the middle of a narrative by taking us with her as she ruminates about a film she has viewed. We discover that her initial reading of the film has been flawed, that she, too, has suffered a viewer-induced-plot-mishap.

At times, the link between image and narration in Snap Shot is maintained. For example, an illustration of a man in a hardware store is repeated when Kielhofner corrects herself concerning the profession of the main character in the movie. Occasionally the links between text and image are literal and at other times general. Kielhofner plays on this expectation, teasing out witty combinations (the word 'spent' soon brings an image of six shiny pennies) and

less literal amalgamations (the word 'mean' is matched to the shot of a broken window.) When we learn that the main female character has died, we are shown flowers. Other image/text pairings are more evocative. When we near the end of Snap Shot, Kim states that the journal of the girl in the film is blank. There are no images to match this declaration or, rather, all is black. Some of these pairings serve as anchors because they offer fixed meaning amidst a flood of information. The narrator of Snap Shot is Kielhofner herself. She gives an accomplished vocal performance, offering a perfect mix of tentative and assured.

Snap Shot is made up of still images with three exceptions: two shots of a figure ice-skating and one shot of a glass filled with something that looks like beer (or ginger ale). The first image of the ice skater gliding breaks up the torrent of still shots depicting people, rooms, food, objects, just to list a few. The narrator informs us that she thought the film would be 'a movie going through the moments of a life'. It is this phrase we hear as the moving skater breaks away from the surge of still images.

An idea emerges from my experience of the collage of images and from my Jezebel/Little Foxes mishap: perhaps I am reading Snap Shot wrong, too, and sculpting my readings into a narrative that is more my own than the artists'. I think of Kielhofner's work as offering glimpses into her personal image bank. She serves the function of curator for her archive of images but does not generally impose meaning. Ultimately, I am a flawed viewer enjoying direct references (death=flowers), less direct ones (narration: 'he made it all up'/image: church nave) and processing the overall impact of images and voice.

## **Madonna Swimming (2007)**

If Snap Shot is a deft text/image precision piece, Madonna Swimming is a textless experimental meditation on the pop star with a thousand names and personas. Most of us know at least a little something about Madonna. In the video, we can just make out vague images of Madonna from her films and music videos. We know that she has made movies and that most of these have been decidedly terrible (Body of Evidence, anyone?) Kim Kielhofner presents us with a super saturated, mediated Madonna unconfined by the strict tenets of her own bad movie narratives. Film has not been a good medium to/for Madonna, but she is free to swim in video. Kielhofner concentrates on the video membrane where images of Madonna waver and seem to dissolve or even break apart. With no story to guide us, I imagine that this Madonna is finally having some fun, drifting through the video, unfixed, barely recognizable and out of reach. Experimental-video-Madonna usurps the several other personas in the pop star's lexicon. She becomes the imMaterial Girl floating in and out of focus in Kielhofner's video.

## **Hail the Failure of Urban Planning (2007)**

The stuttering quality of rapidly changing images is featured in another video. Hail the Failure of Urban Planning does not include narration, but does incorporate written text. 'Maintain a self-alienating spirit', reads one cryptic and ironic entry.

The video begins with images taken from a train. Soon after, we are awash in descriptions that are blurry and grainy. There are no characters, but there are recurring identifiable people.

Once again, there is a standout shot to which we must give some consideration because it is so unlike the other images in the video. It is a street scene in black and white. There is a slight zoom as passersby cross the street. Is this place significant? Is it earmarked for some gentrification? No answers here, but it seems key because it ends the video with camera movement and also slows down the barrage of information. Like the skater in Snap Shot, the shot stands out because of movement. The singular use of movement is noticeable. The focus may be on the fact of the movement, not the description of it.

## **As the world goes by my window with Thurston and Kim (2007)**

As the world goes by my window with Thurston and Kim includes footage of a Sonic Youth performance. It begins with slow mo images of Thurston Moore, and then progresses to a barrage of quick images – shots from a train window, images of a woman with a dog, images of Kielhofner. There is a difference between the way Moore and Kim Gordon are shot and presented and the ways in which other shots are treated. The musicians are showcased in slow motion and the shots of them are continuous. We have time to see them, take in the surroundings, and study their gestures. However, other kinds of shots flicker by. Kielhofner is working at a fast pace, offering images that we barely register but which still contribute to an overall impression. Her videos are like stories being displayed on the far edges of our retinas, fleeting and elusive but meaningful and weighty. At some point, I stop trying to shoehorn her videos into my own narrative readings. This space is one in which reminiscences/activities are represented by a barrage of images flashing briefly. Does

the performance by Sonic Youth anchor these images? Or engender them? It is like watching a compendium, a flipbook narrative. While we are shown an astonishing amount of images, one of the ideas I am left with after watching some of Kielhofner's videos is that there is an infinite number of photographs.

Kim Kielhofner's work triggers a cumulative effect in the growing impression of wavering uncertainty. While there are image-anchors represented by recurring depictions of key people (herself and others) and of objects (trains, food, street scenes), there is also the sense of a kaleidoscopic array washing over us. An image is held for a short time and is replaced, briefly, by another. Each of her images is significant, but the fact of their replacement/vanishing is perhaps more so.

### **See the video here:**

<http://nomorepotlucks.org/article/ego/ambulant-flip-book-museum-some-videos-kim-kielhofner>

*Kim Kielhofner is a multi-disciplinary artist working in Montreal, Quebec. While her work spans a multitude of media, she is known for her small-scale drawings, video works, and books. Her recent projects include playing in a fictional noise band called Gelding Express and an immersive video installation in the form of a giant wood box. She is currently working on a video about Alsatian immigrants turned train robbers.*

*Anne Golden is Artistic Director of Groupe Intervention Video, an artist-run distribution, exhibition and production centre for videos directed by women. She is an independent curator and writer whose programs include Horizontal Holds/Vertical Views: Recent Canadian Art Video (Musée National du Québec, 2001) and Seuil/Thresholds (Edges Festival, Victoria, 2006). Golden has made 12 videos since 1991. Among these are Fat Chance (1994), Big Girl Town (1998), Somme (2005) and From The Archives Of Vidéo Populaire (2007).*

*(Images: Kim Kielhofner frame grabs)*

## LET GO OF MY EGO, DANIEL MACIVOR

Daniel MacIvor | Sasha

*Daniel MacIvor is one of Canada's greatest living theatre artists. Empathic yet razor-sharp, his devotion to theatre as a transformative act can be summed up in an entry to his blog (<http://danielmacivor.com/wordpress/>) praising a recent performance of Joan MacLeod's "Another Home Invasion: "It's relaxing to be in the presence of commitment and rigor." As a practicing Shambhala Buddhist and someone passionately involved in nearly all aspects of the creation of his work, MacIvor lives and breathes these two qualities. NMP spoke to the prolific playwright and performer as he was submitting rewrites of a new work called Communion and going into rehearsals for the Toronto remount of his play: A Beautiful View.*

**When told that the theme of the current No More Potlucks was Ego, you quickly responded, "I have a lot to say about that bastard." Please tell me what you meant by that. In other words, when you hear the word ego, what or whom does it conjure up in your mind?**

Ah, Ego. Makes a great fuel but a shitty engine. It took me a long time to come to terms with how I could use ego without ego using me. Ego is that "more, now, again" thing that wants to suck the life out of today in an effort to get to tomorrow for more "more, now, again." On one level Ego is like an entity we carry on our backs with its teeth sunk into our jugular. It is happy to kill us so it can keep living – it is so caught up with itself it doesn't realize that once we're

dead it's dead too. On the other hand Ego is the thing that makes us stand up and speak up; the thing that convinces us that what we have to say is worth finding a stage for. Without Ego we would be happy to commune with nature and evolve; Ego places the human above nature – so the struggle is to let Ego feed us and to manipulate the energy it gives us and use it to commune with one another and still maintain evolving as the point. Which is difficult because to really evolve, is to lose Ego.

**You are entrenched in two practices that are preoccupied with the ego: Shambhala Buddhism and theatre. Tell me how the concept of ego in Buddhism informs your work as an actor and how the concept of ego in theatre informs your practice in as a Buddhist. Or do these things intersect at all?**

Yes, I think they interact greatly. The Buddhist practice asks that we release Ego – to live in a “letting” way not a “wanting” way. Ego is all about want. And in the theatre the first question that any director or playwright or actor or dramaturge asks about a character is “what do they want?” Ego is the oxygen in the world of theatre. Even as an audience we participate in theatre in order to see ourselves represented somehow – this is in part our Ego looking for reflections of itself. There is a battle in these two ways of thinking. But if one recognizes the power of theatre to expose Ego – to make us face it and its desire to control us – we can use that recognition, that insight, as a way to control Ego.

**Your characters often present as self-centered and acerbic but there is nearly**

**always a great epiphany, a great gentleness, towards humanity at the end of your shows. Aside from the fact that it's always nice to have an audience leave content, what's that all about?**

Someone once said that the purpose of theatre is to prepare us for death and I believe that to be true. I think most of us, for the most part, live our lives in a self-centered (and depending on our sense of humour) acerbic way. That way of living is, as you noted, is represented in my characters. In my plays the moment of epiphany is represented by death – either in the immediate world of the character or by the death of the character itself. And it is my belief that moving to the end – to death as it were – is where a human finds the most profound contentment and we become truly gentle – about who we have been and what we have done. In my plays I try and make a mirror of the human experience – the experience of life as I imagine it to be – and that includes death as a vital part of the living experience.

**Anger is a vital emotion in your work, whether you're throwing chairs, high kicking around, leaping up and yelling or sitting at group therapy bitterly dishing. Why is this emotion so dear to you as a creator?**

Anger is easy. Anger is fear. Fear is everywhere.

**Where are you most truly yourself? Or, are there a few places where you feel perfectly at ease? Of course, this implies that being yourself makes you comfortable or that you even enjoy being com-**



**fortable. Perhaps this is wrong, and if it is, please elaborate.**

It has concerned me for some time that I feel most truly myself on stage in front of a group of people in the midst of a performance – where I am supposedly being “someone else.” I disagree that the object of acting is to become a character who is not “me.” I think the best acting happens when we expose our true selves. The concern is this nagging sense that perhaps I should be able to find this “at ease” feeling in a forest or at a dinner with friends. I’m working on it.

**When did the performance bug hit you?**

Alone in my room, age 10. Me and a mirror.

**Female actors have said that you write female characters beautifully. The same has been said of Daniel Clowes, who wrote Ghost World. The implication ostensibly being that this requires a special sensitivity. This seems an oversimplification and suggests that men are less vulnerable than women. Do you require a radical attitude shift when you write from and for a female perspective?**

No. The voices come as they come. I am currently working on a trilogy in which each of the plays has three characters and all of the characters are women. This was not premeditated. In fact it wasn’t until after the idea had formed that I realized that all the characters were female. On one level I think this has to do with the fact that I was raised in a world of women: my mother, my “auntie,” my grandmother, my

sister – these were the people I bonded with from the start – it was female behaviour I was observing intimately from the beginning. As a dramatist I don’t think this is a question of vulnerability or sensitivity but generally I think that women are more complex psychologically and at the same time aware of their complexity. A female character is a rich canvass.

**As an openly gay male performer, you are rather unique in that your work rarely ever reflects your sexuality nor are you pigeonholed in other roles. This seems like a feat: to be an openly gay man yet to play a pantheon of diverse male characters. How’d you manage that one?**

Again I think that’s simply a reflection of who I am as a person. I’m much more comfortable with the label “queer” over “gay.” There is an inclusiveness in “queerness” that is lacking in the “gay” idea. My struggle and my journey seems to be about inclusiveness. “Gay” feels male while “Queer” feels human. My queerness allows me access to all humanity. First I’m a human. Well first I’m a Cape Bretoner but next I’m a human.

**Interesting, that you identify first and foremost as a Cape Bretoner. Why?**

I guess my mentioning it is, in part, humour and in part a need to hang on to some identity. Just as in a room full of gay men I feel not so much “gay,” in a room full of Cape Bretoners I might feel not so much “Cape Bretoner.” It’s something easy to “be,” but of course identity is attachment and you know what they say about attachment. On another level in terms of

“be-ing,” I do feel like it defines me better than most titles; in fact it encompasses many: storyteller, dark sense of humour, flirt, has-liked-a-party, service oriented narcissist with low self esteem, etc.

**What is the worst thing that has ever happened to you and have you learned anything positive from it?**

I guess the worst thing that ever happened to me was a few years ago when I decided that I had to step away from my career and have a “real life.” I thought that I should become a person who didn’t build his life around pretending and making stuff up. In becoming that new person I made a lot of decisions that affected other people’s lives and created a bit of a shit storm (see my new solo show “This Is What Happens Next”). What did I learn? Well, in “real life” everybody’s pretending and making stuff up all the time they’re just not aware of it – or won’t admit it.

**What do you enjoy most about being a performer and theatre creator?**

I have the extreme privilege of working with people I love.

**Are there artists you like as much as many people like Daniel MacIvor and how does their work impact yours?**

Early on it was Warhol and his scene. There was something about the way he created a world and a life that was absolutely the same thing as his art. Later it was companies like “The Wooster Group” where one felt they were connected to one another and the work in a famil-

ial way – but they weren’t exploiting their lives in the way I came to feel Warhol was. Once I came to Toronto it was “The Augusta Company” (Daniel Brooks, Don McKellar and Tracy Wright) who were doing a version of what the Woosters were doing but with that deliciously acerbic yet heartfelt tone of theirs. I also think about people like Robert Wilson and Robert Lepage where there’s a “my life is my art” feeling but with rigorous minimalism. These days it’s pretty much anyone who manages to make good art and not be an asshole.

**Can you describe what it feels like to have such a positive reception to your work and how does this reception impact it, if at all?**

It’s nice to have people say nice things, so I guess it’s nice. It makes it easier to keep working when you feel that kind of support. But I don’t feel ownership over the work. My job is to observe and file and mine my own experience in order to deliver some kind of message of being and hope – or something. By not owning the work my Ego isn’t overfed.

**It’s hard to ask a theatre creator what an average day looks like because every aspect of creation is different any given point. Writing is different from workshopping is different from rehearsing is different from mounting the production. What is your favourite part of this process or are there several at every stage?**

There are many wonderful parts. At times I love the relationship with the keyboard—just me and it—a pure communion. And like I said, be-

ing on stage in front of an audience in the midst of something – both fully in and out of control – is transforming and affirming. And in the rehearsal room as the writer/director with a group of actors and at one point all of us so lost and then later all so on the same page – there’s no feeling like it. And all of those things speak to a kind of communion. So I guess the best part is the communion with something other than myself.

**What personality traits do you find most challenging in yourself?**

I am judgmental, self-centered, impatient and demanding. And, hard on myself.

**In 2006 you folded da da kamera, no doubt a difficult decision considering the success and familiarity of this company. Do you believe that challenging wellbeing is a vital function generally?**

Yes. Folding the company was a good thing to do for reasons I didn’t realize at the time. (See above: “the worst thing that ever happened to me”) I am happier now that I’m not a “company.” I like the freelance life although I’m busier than I thought possible.

One should always leave the party while it’s still fun.

**I have a cheesy plaque from the Value Village on my wall that says, “With God, Nothing is Impossible.” I have this to remind myself that this is precisely the problem with so much religion: that nothing is impossible, when actually, some things really are, and that’s fine.**

**It reminds me of the lovely wordplay in your quote, “Nothing is enough” from A Beautiful View. Nothing and ego: discuss.**

Oooh that’s good, and it takes a full twenty seconds to really land. Yes, yes. Nothing is the object. The monotheistic God idea can’t allow that. Precisely. Ego hates Nothing because Ego needs us to believe in the possibility of everything which is the core of “want.” In the boxing match between Ego and Nothing, Ego exhausts itself swinging and swinging and never landing a punch. Ding.

Freud springs to mind when we discuss the ego and his structural model of the psyche (thanks Wikipedia!) went something like this: the Id acts as a pleasure principle: if not compelled by reality it seeks immediate enjoyment. It is focused on selfishness and instant self-gratification. The Ego acts according to the reality principle. It seeks to please the Id’s drive in realistic ways that will benefit in the long term rather than bringing grief.

The Super-ego aims for perfection. It comprises that organized part of the personality structure, mainly but not entirely unconscious, that includes the individual’s ego ideals, spiritual goals, and the psychic agency (commonly called ‘conscience’) that criticizes and prohibits his or her drives, fantasies, feelings, and actions.

**Although all of these traits generally work in conjunction with one another, which one do you feel best describes your fundamental persona?**

**Are you the child wrestling with the adult**

**or the adult wrestling with the child or the even-tempered one in between?**

The child is looking at the adult who is looking off elsewhere and the child is saying to the adult “What the hell are you looking at, give me a hand over here I’m a fucking CHILD!” In Freudian terms I’m more connected to the Super-ego – I’m neither the child nor the adult. I’m the distance between them. I’m the child’s appeal to the adult and the adult’s obliviousness to the child. But as I said before, I’m working on it.

**Let us know what you are currently working on so we can plug the shit out of it.**

The remount of “A Beautiful View” runs at Tarragon through May starring Caroline Gillis and Tracy Wright. Cinemateque is having a retrospective of my film work at the AGO May 23-28. In the 2009/10 theatre season I have two plays in Toronto: “Communion” at Tarragon and the new solo with Daniel Brooks, “This Is What Happens Next” at Canadian Stage.

*Daniel is originally from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia and currently lives in Toronto. From 1987 to 2007 he was artistic director of da da kamera, a respected international touring company that brought his work to Australia, Israel, Europe, the UK, and extensively throughout Canada and the United States. Daniel has been the recipient of numerous awards including a GLAAD Award and a Village Voice Obie Award in 2002 for his play In On It at New York’s PS 122, the 2006 Governor General’s Literary Award for his collection of plays I Still Love You, and the 2008 Elinore and Lou Siminovitch Prize for Theatre. He is currently writer-in-residence at Tarragon Theatre and is one of the founders of Halifax’s The Distinct Theatre Society. Check out his weblog at [www.danielmacivor.com](http://www.danielmacivor.com)*

*Sasha is a sex columnist whose work has appeared in Canadian weeklies for over 14 years. She is also the co-artistic director of the Scandelles, a multi-disciplinary performance group from Toronto. [www.thescandelles.com](http://www.thescandelles.com) [www.eyeweekly.com/fun/lovebites](http://www.eyeweekly.com/fun/lovebites)*

*(Photo by Daniel MacIvor)*

## STEALING NASREEN

Farzana Doctor

*[Nasreen's ex-girlfriend, Connie, will be dropping by to pick up her passport and a few other items she left behind when she packed up and left a few months earlier. Since the break-up, Nasreen and Connie have not had much civil contact...]*

*(Inanna Publications, 2007)*

Nasreen checks her watch and sees that it is already five p.m. Connie will be at her place in three hours. She finishes up, tucks her work into her desk and looks out the window, observing that the evening sky is already darkening, the effect of the season changing and the days shortening.

She exits out the back doors of the Institute and onto College Street, which is already crowded with other nine-to-fivers on their way home. She hurries toward the streetcar, overflowing with passengers. A few people, pressed against the doors, struggle for better footing. She thinks she will walk one stop, and then the next one, until she decides to power-walk all the way home, hoping that the exercise will burn up some of the restlessness coursing through her.

Quickening her pace, her eyes dart at the store windows she passes: computer equipment at discount prices, greasy diners, a health food store. She strides by a sex shop, does a double take, startled to see a scantily dressed woman waving to her. The woman is window-dressing, a live mannequin wearing a red French maid's outfit. Two prepubescent boys walk by, giggling and nudging one another with skinny elbows. Nasreen waves back at the woman who smiles and pouts out her lips at her, and the gesture leaves Nasreen unexpectedly flushed. She continues her brisk pace but glances over her

shoulder again to catch another eyeful of cleavage and bare inner thigh.

She's home by six o'clock, relieved that it is still early enough to prepare herself for Connie's arrival. Although she agreed on principle with her friend Asha's recommendation to ask a friend over during Connie's visit, she has chosen, more or less, to ignore the advice. Nasreen does not want an audience for whatever could happen between her and Connie, nor does she feel that she needs a witness. Not that she has anything specific planned. She's been too confused to organize a plan of action in advance; instead, she is hoping for the best. She is aware that this is not the best of strategies, and that perhaps she should have called a friend and made sure she wasn't alone with her ex-girlfriend.

First, Nasreen tidies up the living room. She unwedges the tv remote from between the couch cushions and places it on top of the television. She wants to erase any evidence of the nightly sitcoms, game shows, and talk tv programs that have been keeping her company since Connie left. Then, she opens her desk drawer and finds Connie's passport. There is also a university transcript, old bank statements, and an envelope from a credit card company that arrived three weeks earlier. She puts all the papers, except for the transcript, into a large envelope. She wants something of Connie's to keep, something that may require a future visit. Who knows, she thinks smugly, maybe Connie will want to do a Master's degree someday. She places the neatly folded transcript back into the desk drawer, beneath some other papers, and sets the envelope on the coffee table.

She notices a thin layer of dust coating the wooden surface and gets a rag from the kitch-

en to wipe it off. She hates dusting. That was Connie's job when she lived here and Nasreen can't remember the last time she dusted, or polished, or shined anything. She finds a second cloth and some furniture polish and gets to work dusting every surface in the living room: the bookcases, television stand, end tables, stereo, and even the picture frames on the wall. Id, Nasreen's cat, watches her intently for a few moments and then saunters away, no longer interested. When she is finished, Nasreen opens the window wide to clear the air so that Connie won't detect the fresh furniture polish fumes. There should be no evidence of the visit's preparation; Nasreen wants to appear as informal and unstirred about Connie's arrival as she imagines Connie to be. Will my performance be at all convincing, she wonders. And then, how pathetic am I?

Next, Nasreen goes to the bedroom and switches on the light. She looks at the messy, unmade bed and the mound of clothes strewn upon it. There is a pile of clean, unfolded laundry in a chair and an unsteady stack of books beside the bed. Nasreen sorts the clothes, hanging the clean ones in the closet, filling her hamper with dirty laundry. She piles the books on the white Ikea bookshelf beside the window. She surveys the bed and tries to calculate how long ago she last changed the sheets. Two weeks? Three? She tears the sheets off and then makes the bed with a set of her favourite red percale. Finally, she moves the blue dolphin vibrator, left sitting on the side table from its last use a few days ago, back into the bedside table's top drawer.

She empties the garbage in the bathroom, gives the vanity a quick swipe and puts out fresh towels. Nasreen looks at her watch. Seven-ten. She

pulls the vinyl shower curtain across the tub to hide its brown ring of grime; there's no time to clean up. She washes her face and brushes her hair, then reapplies her lipstick. She looks into the bathroom mirror, checking herself, looking for anything on her face that would reveal her emotional state. She surveys the small pimple just beginning to surface on her chin, the shadows under her eyes, the one or two grey hairs that have sprung up near her temples. Mona pointed them out the week before, telling Nasreen that they contrasted nicely against her black hair. Nasreen wonders if she should pull them out. In the end, she decides against it. Perhaps it is good that she has matured a little since the breakup, she thinks.

She backs up from the mirror and scans her body. She feels fat today. She pinches the loose flesh on her arms and around her waist. She wonders if she has gained weight since she last saw Connie. She changes into a loose fitting green blouse that holds up her heavy breasts well. Then she squirts some perfume into her cleavage. She takes one last look at herself and recites the positive self-talk she has trained herself to say each day, the one gem of good advice she picked up from her first therapist years ago, "Yes, you are a beautiful woman." Today, she's not quite sure if she believes the affirmation, but she knows it is worth saying regardless.

Maybe one day I will believe this self-inflicted brainwashing. Whatever.

She turns off the bathroom light and sees Id watching her in the hallway. He mews loudly at her. Nasreen picks up the overweight cat and cuddles him, happy for his attention and diversion.

"Is that a meow of love, or are you just hungry again?"

At five minutes to eight, there is a knock at the door. Nasreen opens it and there Connie stands, holding a small plant in her hands. A peace offering.

"Hi Nasreen. Here, this is for you. It's a Christmas cactus. It's easy to look after. And it should flower soon." Nasreen takes the plant, looks at the small, tight red buds and then steps back.

"Come in." Connie does, and Nasreen closes the door behind her. She sets the plant down on the coffee table. "Thanks. It's nice," she says blandly, unsure if bland is what she wants to sound like.

"It's almost impossible to kill. Just water it a couple of times a month and it should be ok." Connie stands awkwardly, shifting her weight from one foot to the other. "Everything kind of looks the same."

"Yeah, it is," Nasreen says woodenly. How is it that this woman who was once her lover is now like an alien to her? "I guess it must be weird being back here."

"A little. Oh, there's Id." Connie sits down on the couch, puts out her hand to the cat, coaxing him closer. Id circles Connie's ankles seductively and Connie strokes his back. Nasreen watches their easy familiarity with a lump in her throat, and sits down on the couch too.

"Do you want some tea? Do you want to stay a little while, or you in a hurry?" Nasreen wants to offer Connie an exit strategy, or perhaps a way out for herself. Door Number One, she leaves

with her envelope and the world returns to normal again. Door Number Two, she stays, and we talk. About what?

“Sure, if that’s all right with you. I can stay a little while. I mean, I wasn’t sure if you would be open to that after the last time we saw each other.” Connie looks uneasily at Nasreen. “You know, at Tango’s.”

“Yeah, well, I’m not sure what I’m open to, but a pot of tea would be ok.” She says, bristling for what feels like no good reason. She walks away to the kitchen and puts the kettle on. Id remains in the living room with Connie, basking treacherously in her attentions. Nasreen takes down a small blue teapot from the cupboard and puts in two bags of peppermint, the way she has done many times before. She doesn’t have to ask Connie what kind of tea she wants. Nasreen stands at the counter, closes her eyes a moment, pressing her eyelids together. Numb. No, sad. It feels sad and strange. I should be angry, she tells herself. She reviews her mental inventory of things she hates about Connie, the injuries she will never forgive, the wounds inflicted that she doesn’t know how to heal. She remembers the quiet nights when Connie came home late, too late, the many little lies that made a fiction out of their relationship. The kettle whistles at full blast and Nasreen opens her eyes again.

“Do you need any help in there?”

“No, the tea’s ready. Just a sec.” Unnerved, she pours the boiling water into the teapot and carries the mugs and pot to the living room on a small wooden tray. Id lounges in Connie’s lap. Nasreen sits down beside them, a couple of feet away. “It will take a minute to steep.”

“Id seems the same as usual. And you’re looking well, too.”

“Thanks, you too.” And Nasreen means it. She looks shyly at Connie’s muscular arms, bulging slightly out of a tight navy blue t-shirt. She registers her flat stomach, her short, spiky blond hair, her languid amber eyes ringed with dark brown lashes. Nasreen can easily imagine her naked, her small breasts, the angles in her collarbone, ribs, hips. Their sex life had been the easy part of their relationship, even close to the end. Lesbian Bed Death did not even come close to looming over them as it had with other couples Nasreen knew. She and Connie folded easily into each other and Nasreen wonders if Connie is the same with other women, or if it had been something special between the two of them.

“So, you’re going to New York?”

“Yeah, it’s a short trip. I start a new job in two weeks, so I wanted to go somewhere before I have to build up vacation time again.”

“A new job? Really? You’re not at Starbucks anymore?”

“I’m still there for another few days. I got a better paying job with Coffee Love. I will be doing more or less the same kind of work for them, you know, PR, some advertising.”

“Coffee Love? Connie, there are huge boycotts against them.” Nasreen can’t wait to tell her friend Mona, the protest’s main organizer, about this.

“They’re not as bad as other companies. I did some research.” Connie reaches for the pot and

# ਸਟੇਵਲਿੰਗ



# ਨਵਸ਼ਰੇਣ

*a novel by Farzana Doctor*

IN ANNA POETRY AND FICTION SERIES

pours them each a cup. Id jumps to the floor.

"I don't know about that." While they were a couple, they had often disagreed about politics. They had also learned how to avoid arguing about politics. "Well, I hope it works out for you there."

Connie follows Nasreen's lead out of the contentious subject to other topics: Nasreen's job; gossip about some of their friends in common and Nasreen's plans to go to India with her father.

"I'm glad to hear that you are taking a vacation this year too. How long has it been since you went anywhere?"

"Probably not since we went to New York."

"That was a couple of years ago. I liked that trip. Do you remember that neat restaurant we went to, in Soho? They had amazing mussels."

"And grilled shrimp. I do remember. We sat on the patio for hours." Nasreen allows herself to enjoy the moment. Since the break-up, she hasn't given herself permission to tread into the fleeting warmth of Good Connie Memories. Nasreen observes Connie reaching for her hand, senses Connie's warm fingers intertwining with her own, feels Connie's thumb pressing lightly into her wrist.

"Listen, I'm really sorry for the way things turned out. If I could go back and do things differently, I would. I didn't mean to hurt you, Nas. I mean it, I'm sorry. I hope you'll be able to forgive me some day."

Nasreen looks into the dark irises of Connie's

eyes and sees in there a well of hope. She means it. Her own dark eyes become wet. Connie takes the mug from Nasreen's hand. Her vision blurred by tears, Nasreen doesn't see what comes next. She feels strong arms pulling her, hot breath on her neck and then soft lips on her cheek, forehead, and mouth. Nasreen becomes uprooted, Connie the gale force wind snatching her up. Caught in this tornado, there is only motion now, the force of legs and arms, the crush of eager lips and hungry mouths, the whoosh of clothing being unzipped, unbuttoned and discarded. Nasreen struggles to hold on. By the time she opens her eyes again, Connie is kissing her from somewhere above, and Nasreen is flat on her back, her hands gripping Connie's hips tightly. Her brain registers that things are too far gone for her to bother stopping now, so she runs her greedy hands over Connie's back and pulls her weight down onto her, whispering teasing, bawdy words into Connie's receptive ear.

Id watches them from the pile of still-warm clothes on the living room floor.

*Farzana Doctor is a Toronto-based author and social worker. Her novel, Stealing Nasreen (Inanna, 2007) has received critical acclaim from the Globe and Mail, Quill and Quire, and NOW Magazine. She has had her poetry, reviews, short stories and creative non-fiction published in a variety of publications. She has also co-written a manual for therapists and was part of the video collective that produced the documentary, "Rewriting the Script". She is completing revisions on her second novel, New Skin (working title). Find out more about her at [www.farzanadoctor.com](http://www.farzanadoctor.com)*

## WHO WOULD YOU RATHER SLEEP WITH?

*Nicholas Little*

When Ontario's campaign against HIV stigma within the gay community came out last fall, some men (mostly HIV- men, but some poz guys too) reacted negatively to the campaign slogan: If you were rejected every time you disclosed, would you?

While delivering campaign materials to one of the local gay bars a few months back, the bartender cornered me and said, "I don't like that message." When I asked him why, he said, "Well, what is it saying? That it's okay for poz guys not to disclose? Are they trying to excuse non-disclosure because rejection hurts so bad?"

These questions weren't always easy to answer, and this campaign really stretched my thinking as a result. As an outreach worker with gay men, I was meant to be able to answer questions just like these.

I actually like the slogan because it is provocative and probably accounts for much of the attention that this campaign received. The success of HIV prevention campaigns aren't measured in terms of the number of viewers reached, but rather in the appreciable ways they improve people's lives, thereby leading to reduced HIV transmission rates. But you have to get people paying attention to, thinking about and discussing your message if it's going to have any impact. A controversial slogan helped make this happen.

I think folks who disliked the campaign slogan felt most uncomfortable when they read it as being aimed at HIV+ men. The campaign is, in fact, targeting HIV- guys. It isn't saying, "Hey poz guys, sick of negative assholes treating you like shit each time you stick your neck out and

disclose your status? Well then just don't bother!" Rather, it's saying, "Hey negative guys! (or perhaps: Hey guys who think you are negative!...) We know the vast majority of you would very much like to remain HIV- and that's a worthy goal. But a lot of you are trying to remain negative by keeping HIV+ men as far away from you as possible. And science shows that that strategy just doesn't work. So let's rethink things a little."

When I'd suggest this reasoning to guys uncomfortable with the campaign slogan, the next question that typically followed was, "I don't get it. How does HIV stigma actually put HIV- guys at higher risk for HIV?" Here's what the campaign website says:

It is estimated that 17% of men who have sex with men in Ontario are HIV-positive. In Ottawa, it is about 11%. In Toronto, it is nearly one quarter. About 30% of HIV-positive men who have sex with men in Ontario do not know they have HIV.

Discriminating against guys with HIV doesn't make you safer. HIV stigma and discrimination contribute to a culture of silence in which gay men find it challenging to talk about their HIV status or HIV in general.

Because [guys aren't talking], some gay men make silent assumptions about the HIV status of their sexual partners based on beliefs they hold about who has HIV or how someone with HIV looks or where someone with HIV has sex.

When we make incorrect assumptions about the HIV status of the other guy in order to have unprotected sex and prevent HIV transmission, we can end up having unprotected sex with a

guy whose HIV status is different than our own. This is when HIV transmission can occur.

Other guys would read the campaign slogan and then ask, "So what, now you want me to have sex with HIV+ guys just so they don't suffer rejection?" Obviously, the answer is no. All men, positive or negative, are entitled to sleep with whomever they like according to whatever criteria they see fit.

But that question also belies an inaccurate view of the gay male community in cities like Ottawa. If 11% of Ottawa gay guys are HIV+ and 30% of them don't know it, you are already sleeping with HIV+ men. If you hook up online, if you cruise at the bars and leave with a cute stranger or your regular fuck buddy, if you occasionally frequent the baths to see who's there, if you fool around with that cute dude on your gay volleyball team, if you recently bagged that hot guy you volunteer with on Thursday afternoons - you sleep with men whose HIV status is different than your own.

And that's totally fine. It just lays bare how important it is to employ harm reduction methods for anal sex. Yes, condoms are obviously the most effective of these methods. But sometimes the "always wear a condom!" mantra can blind us to other important ways to reduce the risk of anal sex:

- Don't ask if he's "clean." Ask when he was last tested and what the result was. Better yet, if you want to know those details about him, start by offering him that info about yourself;
- Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). STIs make HIV-positive men more infectious and HIV-negative men more vulnerable to infection;
- Use lots of lube. Tons of lube. Lube reduces friction,

which reduces the number of micro-tears in the sensitive tissue in your ass. Tears are an entryway to the blood stream;

- If you know you are positive, there is less risk of infecting your partner if you bottom.
- The lining of the ass is delicate and can be damaged easily. Let your top know how hard you want to ride him once you've had a chance to relax the muscles in your butt. And remember that condom-less sex after fisting or rough toy-play is especially high risk;
- It's safer to pull out before cumming. Pull out right before and watch your load spray all over his back. Or tell him how you want him to blow his load in your face;
- The longer and harder the fuck, the bigger the risk;
- Try to avoid poppers when barebacking. They dilate blood vessels in the rectum, increasing blood exposure while you fuck;
- Don't douche right before or right after bottoming;
- Get vaccinated for Hepatitis A and B;

If you're going to bareback, you don't have to do it with everyone. For dudes who like the intimacy of not using condoms, get that rush with one regular guy you trust and with whom you have open communication. Use protection with the rest.

Here's what's forgotten by a lot of gay men I talk to: if I'm an HIV- guy at the start of 2009 and end up HIV+ by the end of the year, I will most likely be infected by a guy exactly like me... One who thinks he is HIV- and who is trying not to become HIV+ even though he already is. And then if I don't go get tested for another 18 months, I too will be infecting other guys despite telling them I'm negative and that there's nothing to worry about. Until the vast majority of Ottawa and Ontario gay guys are going for frequent HIV

tests (whether they think they need to or not), trying to push positive guys away and stick to the supposed negative guys will not keep you safe. In fact, the very men who take more sexual risks may also be the ones least interested in getting tested.

Why? What is fueling this dangerous feedback loop that results in more and more gay men living with HIV? The causes are multiple and complex, but two stand out in the current Canadian context. The first, stigma, is tackled head-on by this recent Ontario campaign. The more prejudice and bias that exists against people living with HIV, the greater the stakes in going for a test and learning you are positive – especially if you know you've been taking risks.

The second factor is both borne of and exacerbates the first: more and more Canadians are being sent to prison for not disclosing their HIV+ status before sex, whether or not their partner is infected as a result. Shocking cases like the first-degree murder conviction of Johnson Aziga, an HIV+ man who knowingly exposed eleven women to the virus, elicit strong reactions. Most people agree that such acts of willful harm against others deserve redress.

But once the media frenzy settles, we must acknowledge that these cases are as rare as they are abhorrent. The vast majority of HIV+ people go to excessive lengths to protect all of their sexual partners, the first among them being regular medical care to keep their viral load undetectable. Careless media reporting on non-disclosure stories, such as Margaret Wente's recent Globe and Mail cover story, leads to an escalation in stigma against all HIV+ individuals instead of just the anomalies like Aziga. It also means that gay men now risk not only social

stigma but also possible criminalization should they learn their status. Our urge for (and obsession with) punitive retribution, therefore, only creates barriers to more men getting tested without any discernible public health dividend or guarantee to negative folk that their status is any more secure that it previously was.

Bill Ryan , a Montreal-based HIV researcher, educator and activist, writes:

*While all men, positive and negative, have a responsibility to practice prevention, there is an added responsibility to knowing that you are positive and the ethical responsibility to do no harm to another. Of course, the way this is handled in prevention campaigns, media messages and among us plays, positively or negatively, into the necessary promotion of being tested and knowing your status. Handling this issue wrongly will only discourage people from being tested.*

To me, the fact that this campaign slogan provokes controversy is evidence that Ontario gay guys are out of touch with what's actually going on in their bars, baths and beds in 2009. Despite their assumptions, they don't actually know who is positive or who is negative and they don't know how many of their friends and lovers fall into each category. They don't know about viral load and its effect on transmission and they don't realize that 5 to 6% of guys they sleep with who say they're HIV- are actually HIV+ but don't know it yet.

The current challenge for outreach workers like me is to bring gay men up to speed with the reality of HIV in Canada in 2009. It is a reality spelled out succinctly by Elizabeth Pisani, epidemiologist and author of last year's critical

look at HIV prevention strategies, "The Wisdom of Whores ":

The fear attached to sex with positives is deeply misplaced. People who know they are positive in Canada get pretty adequate care — they are highly likely to have controlled viral loads and to be not all that infectious. The people who are most likely to be infectious are precisely those who don't know their status and who are increasingly unlikely to want to find out. Therefore, disclosure is a red herring when it comes to staying negative. If people know they are infected, they are relatively safe to sleep with - whether or not they tell you about it.

With or without condoms (I choose with, but it'd be no different without): I would rather have anal sex with an HIV+ man whose viral load is undetectable than I would with a man who tells me he is negative, sleeps with a few guys each year, every so often fucks without condoms but hasn't been tested for quite some time.

And you?

*Nicholas Little is an Anglo-Albertan who decamped to Montreal sometime in the late nineties "to learn French and be gay". He now lives in Ottawa, Ontario, where he is an HIV outreach worker in bathhouses, bars and online chat rooms. In 2008 Nicholas helped found POWER (Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau Work Educate and Resist), an organization of current and former sex workers advocating for recognition of their labour, Charter and human rights. In September 2008, POWER organised the first ever rally for sex worker rights on Parliament Hill. You can follow Nicholas' blog at <http://ickaprick.blogspot.com>*



HIVstigma.com

GMSH

If you were rejected  
every time you disclosed,  
would you?

377

 Astral Media

# **TOM DE PÉKIN OU LA D'HÉTÉRIOSEXUALISATION**

*Mathilde Géromin*

Des Tom, il y en a des tonnes, mais il existe en France un Tom de Pékin  
Tom de Pékin n'est pas de Pékin  
Tom de Pékin n'est pas un tomboy  
Tom de Pékin est presque un Tom Sawyer  
Tom de Pékin est très proche de Tom of Finland

Tom de Pékin

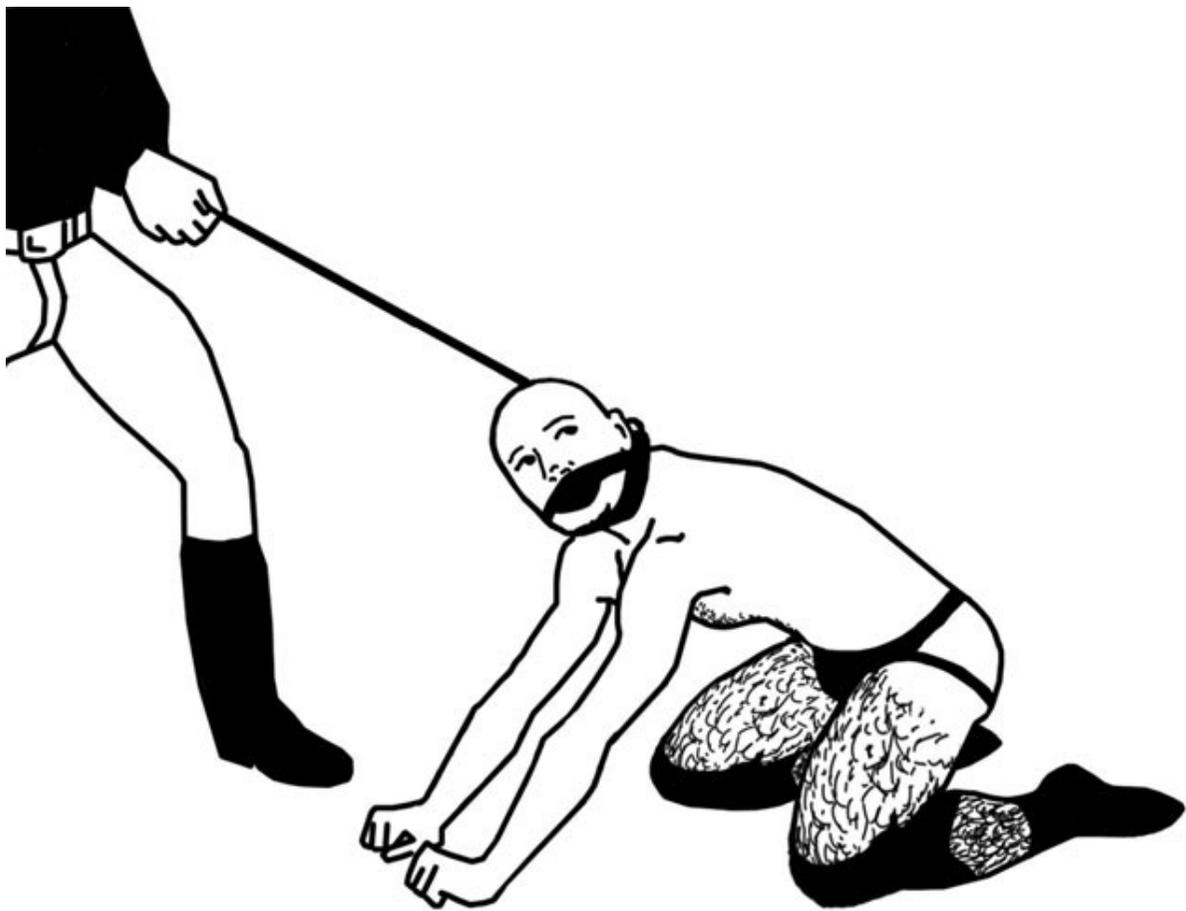
Qui est Tom de Pékin ?

Né dans les années 1990 au détour d'une rue escarpée de Montmartre habitée par quelques travestis rescapés des nuits de Pigalle (ancien quartier chaud de Paris), entre la librairie Buchladen et un atelier de sérigraphie. Après quelques voyages en Chine et la découverte des illustrations de boîtes d'allumettes chinoises, c'est dans les années 2000 que Tom de Pékin naît dans le regard des autres.

Un martyr de la révolution chinoise transpercé par un gode : naissance en 2000 du style Tom de Pékin. © Tom de Pékin

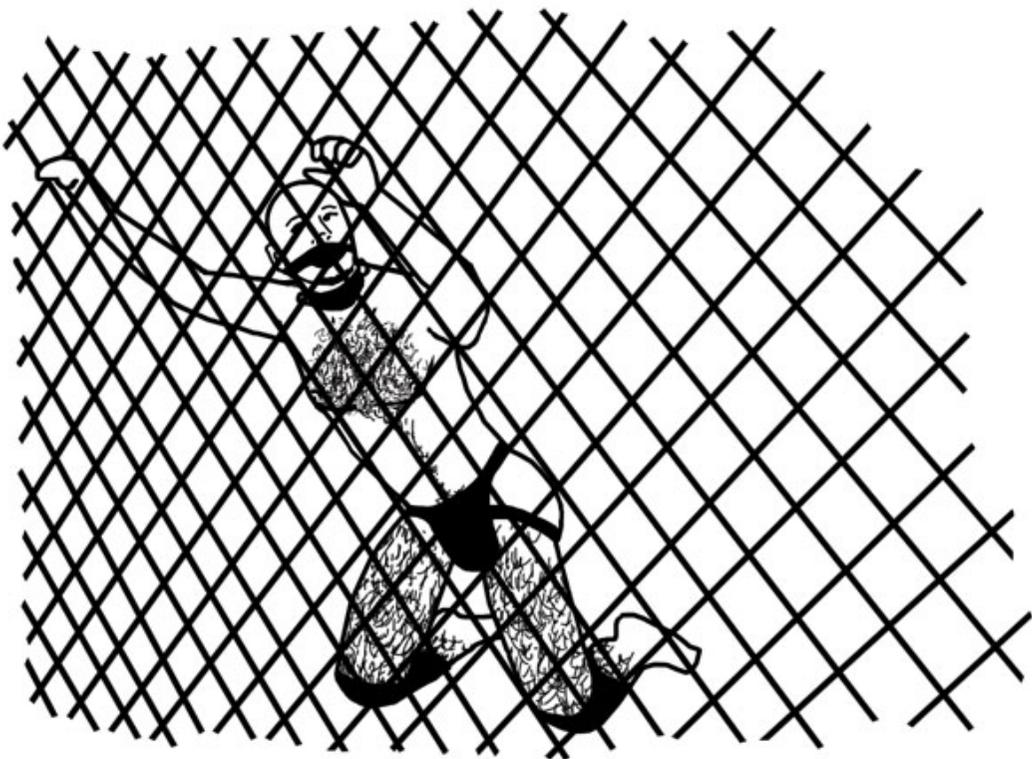
C'est après un dernier voyage en Chine et pour dire au revoir à son projet de livres graphiques (imprimés de façon traditionnelle dans les imprimeries d'État chinoises) que Rêve au cul (pour révolution culturelle) dévoila au grand public les premiers pas de Tom de Pékin. Un ouvrage d'illustrations plein de bites et d'images de propagande chinoise détournées. Imaginez les armes des révolutionnaires remplacées par des bites et des godes (gode étant l'abrégié de godemiché, mot français pour dildo).

Depuis, Tom de Pékin grandit et continue à s'exprimer. Ses médiums : le dessin, la vidéo,









la performance (avec tout de même une prédilection pour les crayons de couleur).

Ses œuvres sont montrées dans tous les milieux, de la galerie d'art contemporain à la boutique de tatouage, en passant par les journaux. On le retrouve dans les plus grands festivals de films gais aux plus underground des manifestations queers. Sa pratique est transgenre et garde toujours comme thème de fond le sexe ludique. Car oui, Tom de Pékin utilise le sexe comme arme de riposte contre les idées enfermantes.

De la culture pop de masse, il retiendra l'imagerie percutante pour mieux détourner les idéologies. Prendre un motif, le répéter, le décontextualiser, le répéter encore. Le principe n'est pas nouveau, mais il est efficace. Tom occupe ainsi tous les pans de la culture populaire : politique (les révolutionnaires chinois, les drapeaux nationaux), tourisme (la série Tom de Savoie), sport (pongistes, catcheurs, sumos, footballeurs...), musique (Elvis), cinéma (Laurel et Hardy, les Marx Brothers).

Tom de Pékin travaille avant tout à révéler l'invisible caché sous les voiles du réel hétéroformaté. Il fait son deleuzien.

Il crée comme une « déterritorialisation » de l'hétérosexualité, d'où mon invention farfelue de la D'HÉTÉRIOSEXUALISATION.

En effet, en appliquant à des situations son regard plus sexuellement implicite, et en accentuant l'ambiance homo-érotique déjà présente dans la réalité, comme dans les sports ou la guerre, il fait siens ces territoires détenus habituellement par la majorité, qui est toujours ou presque hétérosexuelle. Il renverse notre regard

et, par le biais de l'humour et de la dérision, nous propose sa vision du monde. Les sports deviennent de véritables activités sexuelles, du SPORN en quelque sorte. La guerre n'est qu'une quête de forces sexuelles où les miliciens et les résistants s'enlacent pour échanger des coups de queue plutôt que des coups de feu.

## Communauté queer

Tom de Pékin, comme Tom of Finland, aime croquer les hommes entre eux, mais contrairement à Finland, l'art de Pékin traite aussi et surtout de la communauté queer et de ses enjeux. Engagé dans cette communauté depuis longtemps, il agit comme un véritable héraut de l'idée de free yourself, sois toi-même et porte-le haut et fort.

Pour Tom, la vraie question est le doute et la remise en question du fonctionnement de notre société et des étiquettes imposées sur tout ou presque.

Et pour arriver au doute, quoi de mieux que la propagande séductrice inspirée des images de la révolution chinoise et soviétique.

Tom travaille à partir de son quotidien. Et autour de lui, ses amis sont de tous les sexes et de tous les genres, ils ont des envies et des histoires différentes qui font naître des désirs de messages rassembleurs.

## Propaganda

Comme sur cette photo de 2006 par l'artiste Kael T Block où il utilise le même dispositif qu'un parti politique dans ses campagnes d'affichage, afin de traquer les idées sous-jacentes fascisantes pour les dénaturer et les

rendre ridicules.  
PD, il l'affiche de toutes les couleurs.

En gros sur un drapeau comme fond d'image pour mieux faire référence à son propos politique toujours là, sous-jacent.

PD (pour pédé) contre FN pour Front national, le parti d'extrême-droite français.

Un homme nu (l'auteur lui-même) cagoulé déposé comme une offrande, avec la gaule noire entre les jambes, gode de plastique, pour mieux mettre à mal le culte de la virilité masculine.

PD oui, mais pas que, car c'est certainement le plus lesbro (lesbian's brother) de tous les PD.

Des films d'animation de lesbiennes qui parlent de cul, de godes et de fist fucking. Un nouveau slogan pour lesbienne décoincée du cul : « Gode save the gouine. »

L'enculade comme unité mondiale (la terre entière partage cet orifice), la révolution par le trou du cul comme le prônait entre autres Beatriz Preciado dans son Manifeste contra-sexuel. Jeux de mots, décalage, tout est bon pour faire la révolution sexuelle et changer les mentalités, si habituées aux petites boîtes bien pensantes.

Présentement, Tom de Pékin s'attèle à un spectacle cabaret présenté lors du off festival du Printemps de Bourges en France, où il se met en scène sous les traits d'un chien soumis avec muselière.

Il nous a gracieusement envoyé les dessins pour le spécial EGO.

« Je pense me réaliser dans une communauté

transpédégouine ouverte plus proche d'une folie camp que d'une volonté queer à tendance radicale flic. »

Un livre vient de sortir : véritable manifeste à brandir, regroupant une centaine d'illustrations issues de son parcours entre 2000 et 2008.  
[http://www.septembre-editions.com/livres/tom\\_de\\_peekin\\_monographie.html](http://www.septembre-editions.com/livres/tom_de_peekin_monographie.html)

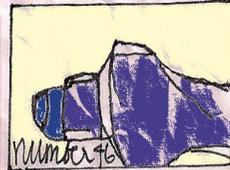
<http://www.youtube.com/user/tomdepeekin>  
<http://www.myspace.com/tomdepeekin>

*Mathilde Géromin est contributrice à NMP. Son travail porte sur le corps dans sa représentation ou son senti, essentiellement en traitant des genres et l'image de la femme. Toujours avec humour pour prendre une distance nécessaire, toujours en musique pour sentir les corps vivants en mouvement rythmique. C'est un jeu de montage, un jeu de point de vue. Une mise en avant du quotidien évident et trop souvent invisible. Née en France Lamathilde vit et travaille à Montréal, elle fait partie du collectif de performances les WWKA, et est une membre très active de la scène des arts visuels de Montréal.*

(Images: Tom de Pékin)

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*Elisha came out so late. When she was 26 she dumped her fiance and moved to Berlin, which started a sharp learning curve including lesbian squat houses, queer trailer parks, transgender pride parades and an Ethical Slut reading group. She has since played in Drag King circuits from Berlin to Jerusalem, illustrated for queer zines in London and Vienna and runs a tribute night in Toronto called Lesbian Blues from the Thirties. She draws a comic strip called 100 Butches about Butch-gazing, which has been featured in lesbian magazines in Australia, England, Austria and the U.S. You can check out more of her beautiful comics here: <http://www.qpoccomics.blogspot.com/>*



The other day my friend Afiah gave me a novel theory. She said "You know what, if you put anyone in front of a mirror, they turn into a butch."

"What?" I said, picturing some kind of magic spell I had to learn.

"Think about it," she said. "What do people do in the mirror? They stand there pouting, right? They look at themselves and brood in total silence. Everybody does it, everybody's a thirty-second butch in the mirror. They get all quiet and stoic, and make faces like 'hey baby are you lonesome tonight?'"

"It might be the kind of thing you only see when you're really intimate with someone," she continued. "or when they're your roommate, because it's a private thing to do. Like my ex, she's adorable. She wouldn't really call herself a butch. She's androgynous, maybe genderqueer. But there were these moments when I always thought, woah, there's that inner butch, and it was usually when she was brushing her teeth.

"It's because she was facing a mirror! She'd stand there quietly, and watch herself from the side, and then suddenly she'd raise one eyebrow, and maybe touch up her fringe. Do you see what I'm getting at? It was hot man." Then she changed the topic a little.

"I'm so gay you know. I'm a butch who likes butches." She looked at me seriously. "Is that weird?"

"Yeah," I said. "I don't hear about that a lot. It must be hard to get a date." Which she punched me for, seeing as I'm the same way.



## ARIELLE

*Karine Silverwoman*

I felt very queer at my cousin's Orthodox Jewish wedding, even though I wasn't with a partner and most people did not know I was gay. I shouldn't have underestimated the power of gossip - especially amongst my people. Word travels fast when it wants to. Oy.

I felt queer for many reasons. First of all, the women dressed in their fanciest shmata- low backless dresses that nice Jewish girls shouldn't wear. I guess the orthodox Jews got modern and nobody told me -especially my mother who made sure to tell me a hundred times not to show any skin. So my family showed up, the Communist Atheist outcasts dressed up like covered Jews from the shtetl, while the rest are dressed like Julia-Roberts-in-Pretty-Woman-at-a-bar-mitzvah. Why am I dressed like a frum while these women look ready for a Saturday night out on Richmond Street? Not that I'm complaining. The little dresses, pronounced lip-gloss, and open bar are fine distractions from feeling deeply out of place. Everything about this atmosphere felt new and I tried my best to stay grounded. I noticed, high heels clicking on wooden floors; high ceilings with torah scriptures; and stained glass reflecting off Jewish women's perfectly ironed straightened hair. Nothing compares to the feeling experienced by a dirty femme at an Orthodox Jewish wedding. It's an experience that I would and wouldn't recommend. My brother nudged me saying:

"Lots of hot women here".  
Mmmmm hmmm."

My eye candy for the night is Arielle, my cousin's wife flown in from the holy land of Palestine. Not only do I feel excessively queer as I focus on the way her black silk dress hugs her thighs and her purple scarf matches the shim-

mer on her eyes, but I also feel like a terrible feminist as she ruins my fantasies every time she speaks. She spews her love of Israel (blah blah blah) over the loud chatter of excited heterosexuals while I imagine feeding her challah with honey whilst performing the most pleasurable sins. I eye the spots I want to touch with my mouth, trying to look engaged and nod to her orgasmic way of describing Israel. If she knew my politics she would choke on her matza ball. If only she knew I wanted to shut her Zionist rhetoric up by laying her down and unraveling her. If only she knew that I would fall to my knees for her like a prayer, that I would feast on her like a piece of kosher wedding cake.

I'm sure she didn't know I'm gay. Perhaps gossip didn't travel as fast across oceans and checkpoints. If she knew I was, she wouldn't have grabbed my hands and my hips to dance the horah. She wouldn't have eagerly twirled me around to the klezmer band, laughing, squealing and throwing wine in the air.

This is all too much. In some ways I have never felt this queer in my life. I may as well be wrapped in the pride flag or hiding under the table. But in others ways I feel like I am at a gay bar as some Orthodox traditions have certainly remained the same. The men and women dance separately at different corners of the hall. I look over and there's a moshpit of rabbis on one end dancing wildly, tears streaming down their eyes into their long beards. Have you ever seen rabbis breakdancing, spinning, high off the sanctity of marriage? I have. The women are just as rowdy and have all taken off their high heels and are throwing them to the side. They are glowing, free as birds flying south, jumping up and down without a care in the world, eyeliner smudged, sweat stains and

flesh being waved around like a flag in the wind. I am at the sidelines clutching my drink. I feel like a gay voyeur and I want to take pictures to bring home to 'my people'. It's as if I am one of those spectators at the pride parade holding a water gun and a digital camera eager to see the gay people passing. Instead I am an awkward anthropologist Margaret Mead-type, tipsy absorbing the gayness of this parade of heterosexual orthodoxy.

There was such wild pure happiness that permeated this setting. Happiness so thick and strong like the song of a shofar. Bubbies and Zaidies beamed with pride, with relief that they survived and their children and their children's children are bright reminders that they had survived. There was so much happiness here wrapped up in songs, in traditions that had been sung and told and played out for thousands of years. I could see my Grandma. She was weeping privately in the corner and, for a brief moment, I saw her smile for the first time.

This is a wild exuberant soccer match, but with Montreal Jews who can't hold their liquor taking to the pitch. Everyone is banging on their glasses excited to make a toast, and I can't help but feel jealous. I can't help but feel like a loner. I can't help but feel like a gay cliché. I feel a yearning, somewhat painful, insatiable hunger. I too want my love celebrated. I too want the possibility of rabbis circling around me with their macho sensual séance while my family holds me up on a chair alongside my striking wife. I don't even believe in marriage for god's sake, but for some reason, at this moment, I have never wanted it so bad in my life. No drink can water down this heaviness. No re-applying of lipgloss or calling a friend can soften this feeling, this ache in my throat. Behind my crude criticism and my crass

comments on the sidelines, I am searching the crowd for someone to soften my macho femme bravado. There is nothing more painful than a reminder that my grandmother will never toast me with a spoon at a synagogue. I will never be rushed by my cousins with an abundance of mazel tovs. So I, like many queers, remain on the sidelines, in a quiet longing corner clutching on to my drink.

My green eyes search the room for solace as the klezmer band plays another set loudly. And there she is. Arielle is dancing in the middle, moving as if no one is watching. She has already lost an earring, her silk dress is creased and I think I am staring. There is nothing I want more than to envelop my fingers around her thick black Jewish hair. I am fixated on her dress strap that has fallen down to expose her bare shoulder and her naked neck. I am anxiously blushing and wet. She looks over and catches my eye. I'm convinced she can see my thoughts and I quickly try to hide them by looking down at my heels while attempt-

ing to garner a butch stance. "Goddamn Arielle, you have me weak in the knees." I head to the bathroom and hope that there is a cold shower in this synagogue for moments like these. There isn't. I freeze like a deer in the headlights when I enter the bathroom. There are ten women sitting in a row in front of mirrors fixing each other's wigs! Orthodox women with backless dresses and shaved heads, I almost faint. I forgot that they wear wigs! This is sooo gay! I take a deep breath and try to act normal as I tiptoe to the stall. In the stall I am safe. Sitting on the toilet, but not actually going to the bath-

room, I text message my best friend, saying:

"Hi, I feel like a raging homosexual in this holy heterosexual sanctuary."

She immediately responds with "but are there any distractions?" and I immediately reply with "yes just one, and her name is Arielle".

I pull myself together and as I'm coming out, there is Arielle. She is standing directly in front of me. I can smell the Manichevitz on her breath and yes, I want to devour her and open her like a scared script. "Hi" she says standing so close to me. Her neck seems more naked than 5 minutes ago. I am a pathetic pushover dopey dyke watered down by the scent and endless skin of her. "Hello" I reply as I try to figure out if she too is wearing a wig. "Can you help undo my dress?" she says mysteriously. I am suddenly

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***I AM FIXATED ON HER DRESS STRAP THAT HAS FALLEN DOWN TO EXPOSE HER BARE SHOULDER AND HER NAKED NECK.***

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the shyest and most excited lesbian you have ever seen. I am every season of the LWord on fast-forward and I am ready to bless this synagogue with a mitzvah. Honestly, and most seriously, in my entire life I have never had such a cacophony of sinful thoughts breaking waves in me. If I wasn't a Jew I would be taking the next taxi to confession. Arielle, standing patient under the dimmed light looked like Queen Vashti, so beautiful like an alter. Seriously, I tell you there was nothing else to do! So, I put one hand on the buttons of her dress. And yes, I did what any proper lesbian would do. I slowly, steadily, slid the other hand down her thigh softly, but fast enough to let her know that I know what I'm doing and I've done this before. No lesbian I know hasn't had at least one drunken moment in a bathroom stall. But no lesbian I know has

attempted to do this with their cousin's Orthodox Jewish wife. Arielle takes my hand, slides it down her chest and lets out a sigh. My hands have now taken over and there is no going back. In the heat of the moment, every lesbian has ten hands. I turn her around, grab her hair and place our faces close to each other. Our lips are the sanctity of lust. Goddamn her nipples are hard, her silk dress is mine and her legs have opened. Her mysterious shaved head and her back arched, ready and holy. She breathes deeply, and so do I, because from where I am about to go, this will definitely – definitely - be the last family function that I'm invited to. I can't think about repercussions; I am in the Dead Sea - and floating.

*Karine Silverwoman is an artist, counselor and community activist. Her art focuses on poetry, short stories, video making and dancing. She has worked with Nightwood Theatre and performed her poetry at different events in Toronto such as Mayworks festival and at 'Granny Boots'. Her short video, 'Hello, My Name is Herman' won "best-liked video audience award, and received an honorable mention for jury selected best short videos at the Toronto Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. 'Hello, My Name Is Herman' was short listed for the Iris Prize in Wales and has screened in over thirty festivals around the world such the New York, Berlin, San Francisco, Australia and Mexico. She currently works as a youth counselor for the Queer Youth Digital Arts Project through the Inside Out Gay and Lesbian Film festival and for Supporting Our Youth as the Pink Ink facilitator, a creative writing group for queer youth. She is also currently taking her degree in social work at Ryerson University. Email: [ksilverwoman@hotmail.com](mailto:ksilverwoman@hotmail.com)*

## FUGUE

Your chest is a single piece of  
unleavened bread waiting to rise

I see you, sipping instant coffee,  
81-years-old still looking over your shoulder,

checking to see if they're coming for you;  
every person a hidden landmine,

every shadow the longing of 1945.  
There is nothing more holy

than the stance of a woman who has survived,  
clutches onto her purse as if it holds

the storylines of ancestors evaporated  
in gas chambers. Your mascara has been

running since I met you, no movement of  
yours  
is impulsive, no day does not harbor

the confines of routine. You can sip  
your coffee, sit still and watch Days Of Our  
Lives

so many winters spent cuddled up

with the TV turned loud, eating fruit  
in bed, and still you look over

your shoulder, ask me why I told the stranger  
that I'm Jewish. Still you feel it necessary to  
store

apple juice twenty years old in the basement,  
just in case; keep your money in a sock

by the bookshelf under the stairs. Still, you look  
at us all like we are strangers in an abandoned  
house

that you don't want to enter. Your past  
is your perfume and we are drenched it.

all day and nobody would notice, Grandma.  
Nobody would come to your door with a knock

No blonde haired and blue eyed suits will  
line you up and make you crawl like a dog,

make you still like a tombstone.  
You've been hiding for years and

no one is looking for you. Still,  
this is when I know that they have won,

when so much time has passed,

## JESS DOBKIN'S SOCIAL MIRROR BALL

*Dykes on Mykes*

Jess Dobkin is one of Canada's best performance artists. She uses her body as a vehicle for her work to confront audiences with a raw, frank vulnerability and sincerity that will take your breath away and have you holding your heart. Jess playfully constructs performative environments and situations that challenge her audience to question social and cultural mores underscored with risk and taboo. She creates an intimate relationship with her audience to guide us through a shared experience that takes us through the looking glass of the social mirror.

Jess presented two pieces at this year's Edgy Women Festival in Montreal that were absolutely brilliant. She also gave an insightful talk about her work and creative process at La Centrale which is featured here as an edited audio file.

In her talk, Jess takes us through her artistic process and practice and presents examples of





her work which include, The Lactation Station, a piece where audiences are invited to taste samples of pasteurized human breast milk donated by six lactating new mothers, Fee for Service, a piece where audiences of one are invited to have a pencil sharpened by the artist's vagina dentata for a nominal fee, Attending, a piece in which the artist is stationed as a full-service washroom attendant in women's public washrooms, on duty to attend to the needs of women using the facilities, Everything I've Got, a performance that offers the collection of the artist's creative ideas in an intimate examination of artistic process and how work gets made that reflects on the question of what happens to work that doesn't get produced due to lacking time, support, or resources, and the urgency to get ideas out into the world.

The second half of this audio file also includes an interview with Jess that aired on Dykes on Mykes where she describes the work she performed at the Festival including Mirror Ball, a stunning piece where Jess performs as a functional human mirror ball, exploring physical and psychological vulnerabilities, limitations and boundaries.

**Listen to the audio files here:**

<http://nomorepotlucks.org/article/ego/jessdobkin%E2%80%99s-social-mirror-ball>

*Jess Dobkin's performances, artist's talks and workshops are presented at museums, galleries, theatres and universities internationally. She creates innovative live and video solo performances, as well as multiple artist productions.*

[www.jessdobkin.com](http://www.jessdobkin.com)  
(Photos by David Hawe)

## WHAT IS FUNNY?

*Lex Vaughn*

I regularly seek the attention of others who I can make laugh; familiar and stranger alike. However, living in Toronto can be hard on a comic's constitution. The Toronto people: They no like spontaneous funny. They no like to make sounds of happiness. Sometimes I feel as if I have to have a long, serious talk with myself about how hard I have to shake these fuckers for a laugh. This is what that looks like.



### **See video here:**

<http://nomorepotlucks.org/article/ego/what-funny>

*Lex Vaughn is a multi-disciplinarian artist and ex-pat based in Toronto. For three years, she toured over 500 shows with The Second City, and has tooled her low brow humor in countless venues throughout the city, for some money and no money. In addition, Lex is an character-based installation artist, mounting Peanut Brittle and WEZY, at Katharine Mulherin Contemporary Art Projects, and has been invited for a residency with the same character at the AKA Gallery in Saskatoon (2009/10). She was part of the calendar project JD's Lesbian Utopia, in 2005, that culminated in a show at Deitch Gallery in NYC. As a drummer, Lex has performed, recorded, and toured extensively with musical groups such as Sir Clement, Hank, The Hidden Cameras, Lesbians on Ecstasy, Final Fantasy, and Two Pack Fer Sure. Lex also won Best Short at the 2002 Inside Out Gay and Lesbian Film Festival Film, choreographed a dance piece for the prestigious Toronto Dance in May 2007, and played Pee-wee Herman in the Pee-wee Herman Picture Show in '08. Currently she is obsessing over her ventriloquist act, "Graham and Diane" that has been offending hundreds, if not several hundreds.*