

QUEERABLE SPACES: HOMOSEXUALITIES AND HOMOPHOBIAS
IN CONTEMPORARY FILM

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to read contemporary films as symptoms of the societies they are made in, mainly contemporary Western societies, which I argue to be subtly but intensely homophobic.

Films imagine/represent their own subject matter in terms of symbolic, encoded scenes. The decoding for the films I chose occurs through a use of very specific, heavily coded *spaces* as visualisable shorthand for a complex of homophobic reactions. Filmic texts do not have to have denotative non-heterosexual elements to be termed 'queer'. These texts become queer often in their reception by non-heterosexual audiences. In 'queering' these spaces and films, I extensively make use of tools of social geography, film studies and cultural studies

The films I chose are not random choices, but they include certain themes that I believe to reflect the subtle homophobia in our societies. In the first chapter, Geographies of Cruising, I analyze the representation of streets and the leading character's cruising on the streets in *Eyes Wide Shut* (Stanley Kubrick, 1999). The second chapter, Geographies of Effeminacy, concentrates on the denial of space to non-masculine men exemplified in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999). In the third chapter, Geographies of Exclusion, the representation of a cellar in *Mystic River* (Clint Eastwood, 2003) serves to display the links between paedophilia and homosexuality. The fourth and final chapter, Geographies of Abuse and Rape, is an exercise on "out of placeness" and examines the connections made between male/male rape and homosexuality in *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead* (Mike Hodges, 2003). The last chapter is an extended reading of *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005), in which the tension between closed spaces and wild spaces leads to a discussion of contemporary representation of homosexuality and a summary of the chapters.

INTRODUCTION

As soon as it was understood that same sex passion between men was not only the immoral desire of the sodomite but a significant part of some men's personalities,¹ it became either *closeted*, relegated to a silent space that guarantees no place in history, or it was mapped onto the court room, prison, and execution chart as documented in the works of Randolph Trumbach (1998), Gerdt Hekma (1989) and Rictor Norton (1997) among others. In the Western world, the homosexual man has been blackmailed and/or imprisoned (the most famous early example being that of Oscar Wilde) for at least a century.

When homosexuality first became visible in film, it was nearly as quickly abjected and closeted, with the result that not only the actual homosexual man but also his representation have been punished. In *Screened Out: Playing Gay in Hollywood from Edison to Stonewall* (2003), Richard Barrios decodes film characters' gayness from as early as 1910, at the beginning of film-making. Barrios argues that these codes were understood by certain people and were unreadable by others. But the sympathy for such characters faded away and in 1934, with the introduction of new censorship regulations in the U.S.A., known as the Motion Picture Production Code, "[s]o many things vanished from film . . . : women's navels, occupied double beds, getting away with murder without being punished, any sense of a bedroom as something other than a sleep chamber, drug use, the attractiveness of lawlessness, and, essentially, being an out gay man or lesbian" (10). This regime resulted only in making these veiled codes subtler, a dynamic that was further strengthened in the 1950s when censorship codes were tightened.

Today, gay people are by and large neither imprisoned nor tortured; legal discrimination against gay people has lessened and the understanding of homosexuality as a disease has lost some ground (albeit mostly in 'Western' societies and bearing in mind some possible exceptions).² In mainstream film there is no formal censorship of gay representations comparable to that of the 1950s. While homophobia is not legally prohibited in our culture, it is challenged more and more often: a homophobic law is revisited, a homophobe is

¹ According to Foucault, homosexuality was 'invented' by the medical sciences in 1870 (1978, 43). Although the exact date is an over-simplification, and challenged by Randolph Trumbach (1998), it is widely accepted that the date should be sometime between the late 18th and mid 19th century.

² For example, the right to adopt by gay parents is a considerably novel discussion: "Moreover, legislatures and courts that understand homosexuality as an illness are much more likely, for example, to prohibit homosexuals from being adoptive or foster parents, for fear the children will 'catch' it" (Goldstein 1997, 403).

exposed, and a homophobic film is protested. It is important to note that gay men's lives have changed drastically since the 1970s, by which point homosexuality had become decriminalized in most Western societies, while gay marriage and adoption by gay couples have become the recent common issues. In parallel, the representation of gay men in film has changed drastically; in contrast to the limited representations in a number of films from earlier eras, we have now come to see gay men in film as common characters. B. Ruby Rich coined the term "new queer cinema" in the early 90s for a movement that provided a new, self-made visibility for gay men and women.³ Some gay-themed films, like *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993) and *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005), have even been very successful at generating box office revenue.

I suggest that although there have been significant changes in gay men's lives and in heterosexual culture since the Stonewall riots, homophobic discourses about gay people continue, even though one of the major sources of homophobia, AIDS, is no longer identified as a gay disease.⁴ As Fuss affirms, in the binary system, it is impossible to think about things without their opposites (1991). We have not yet created a system without dichotomies, though we have acknowledged the other side of the opposition. In such a system, homophobic films continue to be made. However, it should be noted that nowadays there is rarely a consensus on whether a film offers a homophobic representation of gay men or not (although groups like GLAAD [Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation] and many websites written by gay men or reviewers offer their picks every year).⁵

In this dissertation, I argue that homophobia is enacted by the anxieties around 'correct' or 'proper' performance of masculinity in contemporary film. As discussions of homosexuality have become so common in Western (Anglo-American) discourse, I argue that it is not possible to read any text from our culture without providing a critical analysis of the possible homosexualities within these texts; homosexuality, homophobia and heterosexism may be read into almost any document of our culture (see also Sedgwick

³ These films were nearly always independent gay and lesbian films made mainly by and for gay people.

⁴ Gordon Brent Ingram et al. aptly note, "[t]he metaphor of homosexuality rather than homophobia as a kind of pollution still dominates a majority of the world's cities and towns" (1997c, 91).

⁵ These different opinions prove that not only the films, but also the audiences have changed. Certain films and the gay characters they present, for example the infamous film *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980), which the famous gay film critic Vito Russo described as "[h]omophobic in spirit and in fact" (1981, 236) and which was protested during its production and its release by many gay men, is often watched by gay men as entertainment today.

1990; Warner 1993). Some films evoke (homo)sexual meanings for certain audiences, although they do not necessarily present any homosexual characters nor are they about homosexuality and my interest lies in such films. In the absence of openly gay characters in the films I study, I argue that it is significant to decode the gendered/sexualized spaces represented in these films as these spaces serve as a visualisable shorthand for a complex set of homophobic reactions within the filmic text. The characters are queered through their actions in these spaces. Harrison notes that, “[a] place is generally a space with something added – social meaning, convention, cultural understandings about role, function and nature and so on” (1996).⁶ Space becomes place through the meanings imposed by the subjects within it; thus, places are cultural texts. Fullilove argues that “places – the buildings, neighbourhoods, cities, nations – are not simply bricks and mortar that provide us shelter... each of these places becomes imbued with sounds, smells, noises, and feelings of those moments and how we lived them” (quoted in Kelly 2005, 359). In films, the use of cinematography, editing, and mise-en-scène are only some of the aspects that transforms spaces into places and imbue them with such effects.

Throughout the dissertation, I interpret and decode these films through a queer lens. Every chapter is structured around a motif and a related space. Each chapter focuses on a practice or motif – namely, paedophilia, male rape, effeminacy and cruising – that contributes to the abjection of gay men in the cultural unconscious. Our prior knowledge of these issues and the spaces in which they occur sometimes alters our reading of these films. Canonical films have taught us that in a prison film we have to expect rape to take place; when we see a cellar in a film, we know that a child is about to be raped; when we see an effeminate gay man on a street we expect him to be beaten. I try to understand how the relationship between the real (world) and the reel (filmic) world is shaped, conceptualised, and understood, and through my readings of the films I attempt to display how a queer knowledge about these issues – whether personal, interpretive or scholarly – may change some audiences’ reading of a film entirely.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The introductory chapter outlines the theoretical framework and the structure of the dissertation. Each chapter proceeds by focusing on a

⁶ At this point, it is essential to note that I will not be differentiating between the uses of “space” and “place” through the dissertation as in film/cultural studies, and even in social geography, these terms are often used interchangeably.

main film in order to analyze a motif combined with a certain space. The themes I have chosen for each chapter – cruising, effeminacy, paedophilia, pederasty, male-male rape – correspond with sites of instability in heterosexual masculinity. The spaces in the chapters are sexualized/gendered spaces that serve to queer the characters that occupy these spaces. The analysis of the main film is followed by a shorter analysis of a secondary film, which offers a different approach to the motif and space, usually from a more queer or homophobic angle. Together the two films help flesh out the uncomfortable zones of homosexuality/homosociality for culture at large. All films present characters who perform masculinity ‘inadequately’ and are victims of homophobic assault. These characters are ‘queerable’ characters, because through their actions in *these* spaces, the sexually ambiguous or heterosexually unstable characters are queered.

Chapter I concentrates on cruising as its motif and the representation of streets in *Eyes Wide Shut* (Stanley Kubrick, 1999). At first, this film appears to be devoid of homosexuality. In my close reading of the film, however, I concentrate on the repeated shots of Dr. Harford walking in the streets by himself. I extend the meaning constructed by these scenes to the entire film by discussing Dr. Harford’s inability to have sex with women and his (the character’s) resemblance to Tom Cruise (the actor), which confirms both the character’s and Cruise’s “closetedness” through use of diegetic and extra-diegetic information. I conclude that some audiences will inevitably read homosexuality into this film and into its characters/actors, although the film does not openly support such a reading. It is the unavoidable extra-diegetic information that suggests Dr. Harford is not a flâneur, nor is he rambling, but rather is cruising.

Chapter II explores the effeminophobia of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999). With the help of literature about effeminacy (and, when relevant, masculinity), I seek to understand what audiences may understand as effeminacy, and how this is applicable to the transformations of gender and sexual identity that Ripley undergoes. As part of its encoding of such identity transformations, this highly symbolic film offers a number of spaces to be read closely. These spaces include a colourful beach, the privacy of a room in a character’s (Dickie’s) house, and the hollow space of the mirror image. However, in my analysis of the film I note that the most important aspect of this film is that, as a non-masculine man, Tom Ripley does not have the right to occupy *any* space; that

is why he has to keep moving. In fact, throughout the film Ripley travels from one city to another, is shown in different vehicles, and ends up in a boat, not knowing where to go. Although it could be said that Minghella aims to portray a closeted gay man in this film, I conclude that this film is not essentially about a gay man committing murders because of his closetedness, but rather about a psychotic killer who is confused about his gender.

In Chapter III, the motif is paedophilia. Here, I explore the representation of the cellar in *Mystic River* (Clint Eastwood, 2003) so as to make visible the obvious but often unseen transformation of “under the ground” into underground/illegal spaces in film. I begin the chapter by briefly surveying the literature about paedophilia, and considering how paedophilia intersects with homophobia in real life, before applying this knowledge to the film. I expand my discussion of a scene where a boy is raped in a cellar by employing Mary Douglas’s notion of “pollution” and drawing on the extra-diegetic information circling around director Clint Eastwood and actors Tim Robbins and Sean Penn. I conclude the chapter by emphasizing that the film is not anti-paedophilic as it claims; rather, as some audiences will notice, it is deeply homophobic.

Chapter IV continues the previous chapter by extending the concern with paedophilia to the forbidden zone of adult male/male rape. The focus of the chapter is an all-male space, a garage, which turns out, like the act, to be non-representable. Male/male rape, as I describe it in my survey of the literature, is wrongly but often referred to as homosexual rape, although neither the victim nor the rapist is usually a homosexual man. In his portrayal of male/male rape in *I’ll Sleep When I’m Dead* (2003), director Mike Hodges consciously tries to distance himself from a homophobic representation of male/male rape, in contrast to Clint Eastwood’s representation of rape in *Mystic River*. He limits the rape to a few seconds in which we hardly understand the space in which the rape takes place. I examine this scene in relation to the literature about actual male/male rape, the characters in the film, and the actors playing these characters, namely Clive Owen and Jonathan Rhys-Meyers. In my conclusion, I argue that *I’ll Sleep When I’m Dead* cannot fulfil its aim to represent this act as male/male, not homosexual, rape and the film’s insistence that none of its characters is homosexual or bisexual is itself a homophobic construction.

Finally, in the last chapter, I provide an analysis of *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005) and argue that the film portrays a strict sex and love dichotomy in its attempts to create a hygienic world for mainstream (heterosexual) audiences. Unlike its plot suggests, the film appears to be more about contemporary homosexuality than about same-sex desire in rural Wyoming of the 1960s.

Theoretical Background in Film and Cultural Studies, and Social Geography

As Ellis Hanson has written, film theory has a relatively long history and a highly sophisticated critical language (1999, 3). Especially David Bordwell's approach (1985; Bordwell and Thompson 2001), has been influential in my understanding of filmic codes and readings of filmic texts. In various texts, but especially in *Film Art: An Introduction* (first published in 1979), Bordwell and Thompson use a cognitivist approach to comprehend the meanings a film generates. Peterson explains that "cognitive film theory has primarily addressed the viewer's basic comprehension, as opposed to the interpretation of hidden meanings" (116). Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation, Bordwell's study of various elements of film-making, including but not limited to elements of sound, cinematography, editing and mise-en-scène, are relevant and significant.

However, it is important to note the insufficiency of early film studies in terms of gay film theories. The amount of work is minimal, apart from Richard Dyer (1977) and Robin Wood's (1977) works, the discipline is limited to two books: Parker Tyler's *Screening the Sexes*, which, in Anneke Smelik's words, is "a camp classic that makes curious reading because of its delirious language [and] streak of misogyny" (133), and the more influential Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (1981). In his then groundbreaking work, Russo argued that if films were to represent 'real' (masculine) gay men, these 'positive' images would create tolerant audiences. Although his character-based criticism is limited in terms of both methodology and analysis, Russo is right to point out that the images of gay men have often been negative in film until recently; Hanson describes these representations "as vampiric: as sexually exotic, alien, unnatural, oral, anal, compulsive, violent, protean, polymorphic, polyvocal, polysemous, invisible, soulless, transient, superhumanly mobile, infectious, murderous, suicidal, and a threat to wife, children, home, and phallus" (1999, 325).

Especially from the mid-90s, the writings of queer academics (including Harry Benshoff, Richard Dyer, Alexander Doty, Paul Burstyn) whose work was informed by cultural studies changed how we looked at films that have queer or non-straight elements. In contrast to cognitive film theory's emphasis on filmic text, a cultural studies approach is more interested in the processes by which a film is produced and received. Cultural studies sees films as cultural products/artefacts, and takes into account both the processes that take place as the text is being formed (Graeme Turner, 2002) and the various, often resistant, readings that are read into the film by specific audiences (Staiger 1992; Mayne 1993; Turner 2002). These meanings may come from the audience's own experiences or from extra-diegetic information, which is any information arising from knowledge gained outside of what is happening on the screen, such as about the stars or the director or the genre.⁷ My interest lies not only in the individual texts but also in the production and reception of these texts, as these texts convey ideological messages about the authors and the culture that have produced them.

In *The Culture of Queers*, Richard Dyer writes: "Queer theory is especially interested in manifestations of male-male sexual attraction where you wouldn't expect to find it, where it's been diverted or repressed or else obliquely expressed or unknowingly sublimated, but it does not focus on these to separate them from queerness and nor does it buy into the notion of an erotic that is distinguishable from a sexual" (2002, 4). Nikki Sullivan proposes the use of "queer" as a verb as it is more effective than using it as an adjective: "To queer is to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimize, to camp up" (2003, vi). Freeman ascribes to the term queer something that "at once . . . make[s] its most pleasurable aspects gorgeously excessive, even to the point of causing its institutional work to fail, and . . . operate[s] against its most oppressive political results" (2002, xv). Mainstream readings are regularly heteronormative, even if not all heterosexual people read the texts in the same way. Heteronormativity means "quite simply, that heterosexuality is the norm. It means that everyone and everything is judged from the perspective of straight. . . It does not, of course, mean that everyone is straight" (Chamber 2003). Heteronormative reading is naturalized to such an extent that most gay men and women see the same thing as

⁷ Dyer provides an amazing model for cultural and queer studies researchers in his study of famous stars in *Heavenly Bodies* (2004). For example, in the chapter about Judy Garland, he describes how she becomes a gay male icon (only gay male, not lesbian) although she is naturally neither a gay man nor a gay woman nor does she play gay characters. Yet, there is something queer about her that makes gay men identify with her.

most heterosexual men and women when they look at these spaces. Thus, my reading of these films and the spaces represented in these films is positioned as a resistant reading to something that is deeply naturalized.

Reading (homo)sexuality into heteronormative texts can also be described as queering these texts. As Doty pointedly asserts, “the text . . . does not have to have obvious (so called ‘denotative’) non-straight elements to be termed ‘queer’; it just needs to have gathered about it a number of non-straight cultural readings” (2000b, 148). Doty rejects the notion that a heterosexual reading is self-evident, so that reading queerness into a text produces a secondary reading; he claims that all of these readings sit beside each other. When straight audiences say “don’t take Bette Davis from us”, Doty explains that before this he had not “thought of gay culture – or gay cultural studies – as taking anything away from anyone. Nor had I wanted to believe that anyone apart from white, straight patriarchal types would think that stars and texts were commodities to be owned by one group of cultural readers or another” (2000, 53). Thus, queering a text is not constructing a ‘secondary’ reading to a heteronormative text; rather, it is looking at the text from a queer position instead of the heteronormative position we have been taught to employ in our reading of cultural texts.

In the films I study throughout this dissertation, the queer texts I observe come about from the representation of particular spaces in the filmic text. The spaces that interest me are public, common spaces that are nonetheless queerable by certain events, characterization and stylization. The representation of these spaces is important because a representation is not a ‘true’ depiction of a space, but rather a construction of it. As I will discuss further, films construct meanings about the spaces gay men frequent, and in the process also construct meanings about these men. Most people watch films without reading books on sexual history; therefore their most significant experience with gay places will be the representation, which is going to have some effect on how they perceive these issues.

At this particular historical point, representations are even more important because Western societies are image-bound societies. TV, theatres, home theatre systems and DVDs expose us every day to numerous images in feature films, documentaries, cartoons, music videos, commercials etc. Baudrillard (1988) argues that contemporary society knows itself only through the reflections from the camera’s eye. Similarly, Hopkins asks, “does the hyper real

become a model for reality?” (1994, 61). Along with many geographers, we can claim that film, which is not really a geographical location itself, is deployed “as a mimetic of the real world” (Creswell and Dixon 2002, 1). So the images of gay men we see, and the effect of these images, are significant to our understanding of them. As Denzin remarks, “representations of the real have become stand-ins for actual, lived experiences” (1991, ix). Likewise, it could be argued that representations of gay men have become stand-ins for the actual, lived experiences of gay men, and are thus deserving of close scrutiny in relation to their political effects.

Although I do not do empirical research in terms of the reception of these films, my readings are informed by such research. Similarly, when I critically review a film, I take reviewers to stand in for and reflect possible audience responses. Cowie notes that although reviews “are personal responses . . . they are also a representation of the film to the public, and a placing of it for another audience, for the readers of that journal or newspaper” (1988, 105). In other words, they both construct and reflect audiences; they are audiences themselves, but they also are makers of audiences. The reviews I examine often do not discuss the homosexual/queer elements in the film of my study. Moreover, in this information age audiences have multiple access to films. Through DVDs the films are watched again and again, paused, pirated, clipped and made into collages on websites like www.youtube.com; films are discussed in blogs, web pages, online discussion boards etc.; the extra features on DVDs load up the audience with information that they would hardly have been able to access before, while through web media it is very easy to access reviews of a certain film in hundreds of magazines, journals and websites as well as information about the directors and actors. I do not systematically study all of this information, which is both an impossible and an irrelevant task; however, this dissertation takes into account some of these sources when it is related to my critique.

These readings, above anything else, are informed by my own investments. Thus I read these films as a queer man, with the education and experiences I have had since I realized I desire other men. That life history inevitably informs my interpretations, yet this ‘view from somewhere’ is consistent with my overall approach. I further adopt a queer cultural studies approach, in which much information I use comes from outside the text of the film. The focus of my exploration is provided by tools from film studies, cultural studies, queer

studies, social geography, and queer geography. Recently, a multi-disciplinary approach has been common amongst film studies, cultural studies and queer studies, and I will discuss the relation of geography's to these disciplines in further detail.

Social Geography and Queer Spaces

Queer interest in geography has generally been an interest in real, lived spaces, not their representations in film. As I will discuss below, queer geographers look at real spaces and geographers interested in film mostly look at the representations of real spaces in film. How other scholars have looked at such spaces has extensively informed my readings, mainly because, to my knowledge, there is no specific literature discussing queer studies, film studies and social geography at the same time.⁸

In the *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick famously states that an “understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition” (1990, 1). Extending her argument we should note that the same applies to studies that do not incorporate the history of the spaces and places men have patronized. Every place in which men have been and are together has to be investigated for references to open and closeted homosexuality, homoeroticism, and homosociality. Foucault remarked, “[s]pace itself has a history” (1986, 22). So not only men but also the spaces they patronize have histories, whether they are courtrooms, the streets, or public toilets. In fact, the histories of sexual identity and of space have intermingled with each other; thus, every time we think of (gay) men, we have to think *where* they are, as extensively as *what* they do and *when* they do it. Foucault himself argued that unlike the nineteenth century, which was obsessed with time/history, the twentieth century has been obsessed with spaces, which therefore requires greater critical attention (1986).⁹

⁸ In collections like *Film Studies: Critical Approaches* (Hill 2000), which are devoted to films studies' interaction with other disciplines, Geography and Film is not considered, since there is either not enough material to make a chapter or film scholars are unaware of (or ignore) geographers' attempts to engage with film theory.

⁹ We can also note Foucault's own obsession with various spaces in his epochal works, such as the space of the asylum, prisons, the clinic, or in his own terms, the “geography of haunted places” (1967, 57).

To understand the meaning of “spaces of men”, we must turn to social geography, which places a special emphasis on spatiality and gender. According to many social, cultural, and human geographers, *all* space is gendered.¹⁰ However, such an understanding of geography is fairly new. As Elder, Knopp and Nast noted in 2000, sexuality research in geography had been considered “out of place” until recently. Although some feminist geographers began to notice the gendering of space as early as 1984 (Massey and Allen), most of this work, concerned to demarcate the masculinism of orthodox geography, was written in the 1990s (Colomina 1992; McDowell 1999; Massey 1994; Rose 1993).¹¹

Similar to feminism, an interest in the geographies of gay and lesbian lives dates back to the early 1980s (Weightman 1980; McNee 1984). The concern of the early gay and lesbian geographers was to map gay ghettos and the effect of gay and lesbian lives on the city (Weightman 1980; Castells, 1983; Knopp 1987). This was an early step to placing gays and lesbians on the map, literally and figuratively, and thus displaying their spatial existence. There are still quite a number of studies that map gay men’s lives by studying gay ghettos (see Valentine 2001, 368).

Compared to gay and lesbian geography’s sociological approach, queer geography’s main characteristic is its interest in queer theories. It is possible to say that *Mapping Desire* (1995), a collection of essays edited by Bell and Valentine, marks the inauguration of queer geography. Queer social geography first and foremost questions the heterosexuality of all space. Think, for instance, of the many spaces and places where heterosexuals are allowed to show affection. As Heidi Nast points out, heterosexual affection is permitted because “heterosexuality is constructed as benign and/or asexual. . . . By benign I mean that heterosex’s normative public expressions are seen as innocent, natural or unremarkable” (1998, 192). Binnie affirms this: “Heterosexual space and heterosexual desire are all pervasive – just *there*. Heterosexual identity is ubiquitous and thereby *placeless*” (2001, 107). On the other hand, if male or female same-sex couples did a quarter of what heterosexual couples do on the streets, in the parks or by the beach, they would be (and sometimes are) disdained, beaten or even killed.

¹⁰ Although social, cultural and human geographies are different, the terms are often used interchangeably. The introductory books in these fields usually refer to the same books and authors in their description of geographies of gender.

¹¹ “On not excluding half of the human in Human Geography” was one of the first articles about geography’s masculinism (Monk and Hanson, 1982).

As Bell and Binnie observed in 1994, implicit in this discussion is that public or shared space is necessarily heterosexual; all other sexual expressions in space are marginalized, which brings me back to the queer analysis of texts. Just as the queer reading of the texts is not a necessarily secondary reading but a reading that we learn not to notice, so queering spaces is not necessarily a deviation from the 'normal' space but an acknowledgment of the different sexualities by which spaces are constructed and used. Bell and Binnie ask, "[w]hy privilege heterosexual space as 'real' and queer space as pretended, fake or copy?" (1994). For instance, a parking lot near a zoo that is frequented by gay men can also be read as a cruising space that is used as a car park facility by others during the day. A public toilet on an isolated beach used by gay men to have sex most of the time is perhaps more of a queer space than it is a toilet. Spaces can be queered and de-queered instantly. As Jean-Ulrick Desert notes, "queerness, at a few brief points and for some fleeting moments, dominates the (heterocentric) norm, the dominant social narrative of the landscape" (1997, 21). If we extend this idea, we can imagine other ways of queering and privatizing spaces: moments when two (or more) men look at each other lustfully with or without the realization of others either in real or reel life; places that resist heteronormativity on certain days such as gay/les/bi nights at straight bars (even straight people who go there may be thought as queer if they are that night); places that change their meaning when gay men enter, such as a beach or leisure park becoming a site of cruising and intercourse; and finally, the entirely queer space (at least conceptually) of some streets, neighbourhoods, and ghettos in big cities.

Massey's proposition that "places do not have single, unique 'identities'; they are full of internal conflicts" may provide an answer to this question (1994, 155). If we do not think of one identity as being prior to another, but rather as existing with the other identity according to who is performing in that space, then we can de-essentialize the heterosexual identities that are attributed to various spaces. This does not change the fact that when homophobic people have greater numbers or are stronger, they may come and disrupt a place that is generally known as queer (like a gay bar) or is queered for that moment (like two men having sex in the gym showers). Their disruption may be violent; they may beat, injure or even kill gay men.

Queer geographies draw on post-modern theories and also theories of performance, especially Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which suggests that discourse is the mode through which subjectivity is constructed (see Bell, Binnie et al., 1994; Aitken 1994; Duncan 1996; Valentine 1996). Queer theory in general questions a fixed sexual identity (Sedgwick 1990; Warner 1993). As Valentine explains, "just as social identities are no longer regarded as fixed categories but understood as multiple, contested and fluid, so too space is no longer understood as having particular, fixed characteristics" (2001, 4). Therefore, in this dissertation the spaces I elaborate on are not essentially gay or heterosexual spaces, but they momentarily gain such characteristics according to how and by whom they are occupied and performed; just like these spaces, the persons who occupy them assume identities in relation to the space they are in.

Geography and Film

Geography's interest in film dates back to 1994. Although a few significant books were published prior to this date about the relation of media and geography (Burgess and Gold 1985; Zonn 1990) and about media/films that have spatial concerns (Gold 1984), only Aitken and Zonn's *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle* (1994) shows significant interest in the relation of film and geography. Aitken and Zonn already lamented this disinterest in film in 1994, observing that, "[t]he way spaces are used and places are portrayed in film reflects prevailing cultural norms, ethical mores, societal structures, and ideologies" (5). Peckham adds that geographers "have yet to develop theoretically consistent approaches to the geographical dimension of the cinema" (Peckham 2004, 420).

In Aitken and Zonn's collection of essays, Jeff Hopkins introduces the distinction between "a geography in film", the world represented on screen, and "a geography of film", the meanings constructed through the experience of film (1994, 50). Similarly, Mark Shiel discusses the importance of the relationship between space and film in two separate ways:

Space in films – the space of the shot; the space of the narrative setting; the geographical relationship of various settings in sequence in a film; the mapping of a lived environment on film; and films in space – the shaping of lived urban spaces by cinema as a cultural practice; the spatial organization of its industry at the levels of production, distribution, and exhibition; the role of cinema in globalization. (2001, 5)

The geography of cinema “has tended to concentrate on the ways in which space and place are represented in individual films or within generic groups of films” (Peckham 2004, 420). Although the representations of various spaces are not identical to the real spaces, they are based on the idea of the real space. Thus, the representation of a place is a comment on reality; it aims to give back to society an image of its own self that is based on society, but at times far removed from it.

A space can be the protagonist of a film, but it is usually a secondary element. “Film began with a scattering of gesturing ghosts, of human bodies walking city streets, within the encompassing outlines of bridges, hotels and warehouses, under polluted industrial skies”, writes Barber in *Projected Cities: Cinema and Urban Space*, a meditation on the images of old European cities that sees the people in it as mere props (2002, 1). The concept of space-as-protagonist is valid at least in early city-as-protagonist films that are made in the silent film era and usually in Europe art-film documentaries, celebrating the city “with a limited admixture of staged or quasi-fictional elements” (Nowell-Smith 2001, 104). This literature about cities is not necessarily written from a geographic point of view, but because of its subject necessarily takes geography or space into consideration.

Most of the films I analyze are American films, products of a culture that is arguably the most visual culture. Swann claims, “many US cities now literally live off their appearances, exploiting their visual rather than their physical or human resources” (2001, 88). Baudrillard famously stated, “[t]he American city seems to have stepped right out of the movies. To grasp its secret, you should not, then, begin with the city and move inwards towards the screen; you should begin with the screen and move outside towards the city” (1988, 56). Today’s representations of American cities in film can be considered a continuation of the city-as-protagonist concept, perhaps best known from Walter Ruttmann’s 1927 film *Berlin, The Symphony of a Great City*. In discussing its imagery, Natter notes that the film became what audiences associate with old Berlin. Ironically, the film was criticized at the time for “simply mirroring the city” (Gaughan 2003, 42). The representation of spaces in film is very important because “once a place is entered into cinematic space, it has, as a condition of its being-viewed, the capacity to become a place of memory” (Natter 1994, 214).

Although Natter writes specifically about a city, I would tend to think that any place that has entered into cinematic space becomes a place of memory. However, the experience audiences encounter while watching the film will not be a real experience both because of technical and ideological reasons: the representations of spaces in film are neither neutral nor objective. The filmmakers sometimes prefer to shoot on location just to give the genuine effect of a certain place, like *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980), which was shot in real leather bars. Feature films usually try to limit our view of the space; the attention of the viewer is directed to the narrative. Except for the establishing shot, usually close to the beginning of each sequence, that shows the audience where we are (sometimes with a non-diegetic title like “San Francisco, 1979”), the camera usually shies away or blurs the space behind the characters. Not only the narrative, but also the colour, lights, and montage add to our understanding of space in the film. At the same, neither representation nor the experience of viewing is neutral. It is significant who represents and who watches the representations. Godfrey argues, “a director’s auteuristic vision, the circumstances of film production, and cultural preoccupations of the time inevitably filter and even distort empirical regional realities” (1993). That’s why there is no “liberated” space or geography in film like there is no innocent image; even if it is a documentary or the news on TV, it is biased. In the context of feature film, Jeff Hopkins point out, “[t]he cinematic landscape is not, consequently, a neutral place of entertainment or an objective documentation or mirror of the ‘real’, but an ideologically charged cultural creation whereby meanings of place and society are made, legitimised, contested, and obscured” (1994, 47). Similarly, in terms of sexuality, the spaces represented on screen are not neutral spaces, but as I will demonstrate in the following chapters, these are spaces that are often charged with homophobia.

CHAPTER I GEOGRAPHIES OF CRUISING

In this chapter, I will first discuss how the streets, the most public of all public spaces, are in fact gendered and sexualized spaces. Through my close reading of *Eyes Wide Shut* (Stanley Kubrick, 1999), I propose that the film's protagonist Bill Harford's continuous walking of the streets is an ambiguous gender performance that queers him, as this walk recalls a gay man's cruising. While the film's plot is ostensibly heterosexual, through such a reading I submit that the film has a significant subplot that queers its leading character. The second film I analyze, *Boogie Nights* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1997), works in direct contradiction to *Eyes Wide Shut*. Although the film revolves around its protagonist's gigantic penis and presents at least one effeminate gay character, I argue that it is a non-queer film because the filmic style employed significantly resists homosexual subplots.

Part I. Introduction

Think of a city and what comes to mind? Its streets (Jacobs 1961, 39).

The moment gay men became visible in film, they were in danger. In *The Celluloid Closet* (1981), Russo wrote about dozens of films made between the 60s and 80s in which the gay characters were sensationally beaten and murdered. According to the book and the documentary film that is based on the book (Rob Epstein, 1995), audiences often applauded the humiliation and destruction of these characters.

In homophobic literature, gay men sometimes supposedly call for their own death by cruising and looking for (public) sex, and this pattern has been reproduced in film. The canonical *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980) is exemplary in its representation of such danger. Friedkin's much protested film is about a serial killer in New York targeting gay men. Officer Steve Burns (Al Pacino) is sent undercover to the world of gay S&M bars in order to track down the killer. The audience, together with the detective, is shown (and taught?) the sub-cultural practices of cruising, public sex, hanky codes and fist-fucking in the film. Apart from one character, the gay characters in the film are stereotyped; for the majority of their screen time they hang out in the bars and Central Park and are fixated on unorthodox practices of sex. Naturally, they bring about their own murders by continuing to cruise although murders are taking place, and violence is depicted as a natural and expected outcome of cruising. None of these characters have depth, which also makes it difficult to

identify or sympathize with any of them or even mourn their deaths. More problematically, the film has an ambiguous ending, with a shot of Burns looking at himself in the mirror after the discovery of his gay neighbor's murder. This ending suggests that Burns may have committed the murder after being exposed to gay practices, including cruising, for an extended amount of time. Thus, homosexuality both victimizes and criminalizes several men in the film. Today, the film is often read as an entertaining and "fascinating if ridiculous glimpse into gay life . . . the film is now part of queer history and a testament to how a frightened Hollywood treated a disenfranchised minority" (Murray 1996, 393).

It should be noted as good news that gay men are no longer always beaten or killed in films. This kind of representation of gay men is undeniably on the decrease. If we concentrate on recent films to try to comprehend the contemporary representation of gay men, it becomes obvious that gay men meet such a fate mostly in queer films that critically represent homophobia. Violence as a result of cruising/public sex has been portrayed in Bruce LaBruce's *Hustler White* (1996), Zhang Yuan's *East Palace West Palace* (1996), Kutlug Ataman's *Lola and Bilidikid* (1999), Todd Verow's *Frisk* (1996), Greg Araki's *Mysterious Skin* (2004), and Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005).

Cruising

Walking is not the aimless act it first appears to be; when we walk we weave places together, we spatialize and make a map. Men walk through the city with mental maps; this walk is not a random walk and in the act of walking they write and rewrite the city as their space (de Certeau 1984). In a film, the audiences have the chance to experience the protagonist's walk, comprehend his/her map and maybe add their own histories onto this map. The routine and oblivious walk of a protagonist gains more meaning when the audiences gaze at it from a distance.

In theory, everyone has equal access to streets, as to other public spaces, but some groups (ethnicities, classes, sexes, genders) have 'more' access to such spaces and/or their experience of such spaces is different than others. Men have more access to the streets than women, especially at night. Therefore, apart from the figure of the prostitute, who almost by definition is a legitimate target for violence, most people who walk through the night-time streets, like the flâneur, the rambler or the cruiser, have been men (see Rendell 2000

and 2002 about the female flâneur and Cyprians). Only a select group of men could have the time to leisurely walk the streets; socio-economic class is one of the factors that determine who is on the streets. As Bridge summarizes, the streetwalker is “male, moneyed, non-working, fashion-conscious” (2004, 123). Walking the streets is not only a sexed, but also a gendered act. Mobility is a “critical aspect of masculinity and public urban identity”, writes Rendell (2002, 105). Masculinity gives a man the right to walk through commercial districts, but also dark side streets; thus, a certain gender performance is essential to walking through the streets safely.

The streets are full of adventures and for some they are dangerous, not only for women but also for men. Men are attacked by other men in the streets often not because they display affection to each other, but because they do not perform their gender correctly. When masculine men, whether queer or straight, walk the streets safely, streets promise many pleasures and adventures, including sexual adventures. Gilloch describes how Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin equated 19th century Paris with the flâneur: “The flâneur combines the pleasures and distractions of solitary walking in the metropolis with the intriguing possibilities of deciphering this environment” (2002, 45). The possibilities are not only fascinating but multiple. In De Certeau’s description, the streets are creative, innovative and adventurous (1984).

The streets are ambiguous and/or serve as a closet. Gay men have historically looked for sexual adventures in the streets by being open (to possible partners) and closeted (to others) at the same time. The term “cruising” describes the act of walking or driving around a locality in pursuit of a partner for (often quick and anonymous) sex. One not only cruises the streets; men also cruise at beaches, saunas, parks etc. The streets, however, are the most common and iconic space for cruising and for queer identity: “Appropriating the street, walking, looking and being looked at; these are fundamental aspects of the formation of queer consciousness,” says Bell (1998: 131); these aspects are very similar to the aspects that define the flâneur.¹²

¹² Chauncey explains that in the beginning of the century, most gay people did not have their own houses so a private space was not available. Therefore, the space of the street was actually a key geography for picking up other men (1994, 59). In *The Naked Civil Servant*, Crisp similarly describes that the streets and the squares were the key areas for homosexual men to gather and search for others (1997).

As White has it, “To be gay and cruise is perhaps an extension of the flâneur’s very essence, or at least its most successful application” (2001, 145). When cruising for a sexual partner, some codes are necessary to express one’s intentions; Edwards writes that “[c]ruising, like all sexual activity, requires codes, definitions and identities to communicate sexual access and sexual preference” (1994, 93). A queer man is either active in making his codes visible to others or the codes become visible without his intent (sometimes through his gender performance). In the former case, we can even call the individual queer man a performer, since he performs his sexuality in order to be visible. Gavin Brown draws attention to costumes: “Just as the way in which a man moves and holds his body plays an important function in the choreography of cruising, so too can the manner in which he is dressed. Men use ‘costume’ as a means of presenting their desires and manipulating those of others” (2004, 100). Cruising men may make themselves visible and may recognize other cruising men through what they wear.

As gay men lack any physical or phenotypical characteristics that define them as gay, they make themselves visible not necessarily through effeminate behaviour but often simply by looking and gazing at other men. “Gaydar” is a name for these usually non-verbal cultural signs, which make communication between queer men possible. Nicholas notes that “heterosexual people who participate in gay culture, or have high levels of gay cultural competency may also have access to Gaydar processes” (2004, 68). Indeed, the practice of such communication makes certain spaces inaccessible to non-queer men (for example, a restroom where some men are looking at each other), who comprehend the communication taking place and leave such places. Codes between men are necessary also because the streets are not designed for meeting other people; there are rarely places to sit, and standing or talking on a pavement is considered rude by walkers (see Certeau 1984). Streets are designed for walking and locomotion, but some men try to find sexual partners on the streets.

What is created by the possibility that some men, amongst the walkers, might be looking for sex is the ambiguity of men walking in the streets. The gender performance of a man is ambiguous as there is no clear set of behaviors that define masculinity, and similarly costumes may produce ambiguous meanings. Gaydar is ambiguous, so some heterosexual men set gaydars going, but some queer men do not notice other queer men. As a result, the

intent of the cruiser is ambiguous; one has to trail the walker to understand whether he is a gay man in his closet walking and creating a sexual map.

De Certeau underlines the element of secrecy in walking: “The user of the city picks out certain fragments of [the city] in order to actualize them in secret” (1984, 98). There is a personal freedom in walking, but also a degree of secrecy in it as the purpose of the walk is discrete. This secrecy also marks the fluidity of the flâneur and the gay cruiser. On the streets, the walker is visible (with a certain degree of anonymity), but his desires are invisible. Grube remarks that when two men walked off together in a street, “straight passers-by would be totally unaware that a connection had been made. Gay men and their activities were invisible” (1997, 132). When two men meet each other on the streets, often a connection that is invisible to most others on the street has been made. Cruising is both private and public. It is public in terms of the spaces in which it takes place, but it can be very private “in terms of the identities of the participants, their knowledge of each other, and the wider ‘public’ knowledge of the activities that go on in a particular setting” (Bell 1995, 306). Therefore, when men walk the public streets, their desires are undeclared; although they look spacious, the streets may well serve as closets (out in the open but invisible to others) for queer men. In this sense, cruising the streets may be liberating for men who do not identify as gay or bisexual and/or who prefer to be in the closet. Men walk the streets in secrecy and anonymity, but the shroud of this secrecy is lifted when we trail the walkers. As I argued at the beginning of this section, we can apply this information to the walk of the fictitious Dr. Harford in *Eyes Wide Shut* and also make use of filmic tools to analyze his walk.

Part II. Eyes Wide Shut

The protagonist of *Eyes Wide Shut* (hereafter referred to as EWS) is not a gay man, but his walking in the streets is so ambiguous that it puts him in danger as if he is a gay man. At the beginning of the film, Alice Harford (Nicole Kidman) confesses to her doctor husband, Bill Harford (Tom Cruise), that she had contemplated having an affair with a naval officer they met on vacation a year earlier. Further, she confesses that she was ready to leave him and their child just so that she could spend a night with the officer. After this revelation Bill Harford becomes obsessed with having a secret sexual encounter, and not only do several women attempt to fulfil his fantasy, but he also learns of the existence of a secret group that

practices orgies. Bill Harford begins to spend most of his time outside his house and often walks the streets with no apparent aim.

On the surface, EWS is a film about heterosexual desires and it was marketed as such. The teasers and trailers displayed the naked Kidman, looking like a figure in a Renaissance painting, and Tom Cruise in his underwear starting to kiss his wife. This scene is accompanied by Chris Isaak's sexually inviting lyrics to the aptly titled "Baby Did a Bad, Bad Thing". EWS was advertised as an erotic film and built expectations of full nudity and several sex scenes between the real-life husband and wife Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, who, in Pocock's words, as a couple were "the focus of erotic fantasies the world over" (2000).

The film overturns these audience expectations by not displaying heterosexual desire between the two actors (and between the husband and wife). In this 134-minute film, the sex scenes between the couple are limited to those that audiences have already seen in the teasers and trailers, and are placed in the first twenty minutes of the film. The film, rather, is about how Bill and Alice (or Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman) cannot have sex.¹³ Alice/Kidman is eroticised through her nudity only in the first sequence, which lasts just a few seconds. The next time we see her, she is wearing glasses, has no make-up on and is sitting on the toilet and drying herself under her gown with a wisp of toilet paper. Her de-eroticization continues in further scenes; the other times we see her she is either drunk, laughing and/or crying hysterically, checking her armpits to see if they are smelly, or is stoned and acting irritatingly.

EWS's narrative is driven by Bill Harford's desire to cheat on his wife with another woman. Throughout the film, he not only cannot have sex with his wife, but his desire to have sex with another woman never materializes. One of the first scenes in the film involves a party to which the couple are invited. In this party scene, two models literally push Bill Harford against a wall in the right corner of the screen. When they want to take him to a private room together, Harford hesitates and tries to stop them; by chance the

¹³ If EWS became unpopular for several reasons, this was one of them; the 'deceptive' campaigning made some viewers so angry they re-titled the film *Eyes Wide Shut* in discussion boards. "Old Stan Kubrick has a good old laff on us all with this pile of ARSE, even in death. Could anyone else have made a 20 minute script last 2.5 hours?" (anonymous, 2005).

owner of the house calls him to his room to take care of a prostitute who has overdosed on drugs. This is the first but not the only time Bill Harford will be unable to perform heterosexual sex because of an interruption.

When one of Bill Harford's patients dies, the man's daughter hysterically grabs Harford, starts to kiss him and declares her love for him. Just then the woman's fiancé arrives and Harford handily rushes out of the house. Later, he tries to have sex with a prostitute, but after an unexpected call from his wife he changes his mind. When he visits the prostitute again, she is not available and he ignores the advances of her flatmate, who is also a prostitute. When he learns about the orgy, he goes to rent a tuxedo from Rainbow Costume Rentals. The young daughter of the owner of the shop flirts with him, which makes Bill Harford anxious; furthermore, the next day when he goes back to the shop to bring back the costume, the owner implies by his gestures that Bill can have sex with his daughter if he pays. Bill Harford rejects the offer. During the orgy, Bill Harford watches many couples having sex, but just before he can go to a private area with one of the prostitutes/priestesses, he is asked to leave the orgy. Time after time, he tries to cheat on his wife or is offered sex by women. However, in every incident Bill Harford either rejects the offer or cannot fulfil his desire for one reason or another.

Women in EWS

In EWS, there are many women, nearly all of them beautiful. However, their role and beauty is de-emphasised in important respects, which is one of the ways the viewers' attention detours to subplots rather than the superficial heterosexual story EWS presents.

Most of the women in the film look alike, especially when they are in the nude: they are all either models or have the bodies of models. The recurrence of this image of the perfect female body, especially in the orgy sequence, which involves dozens of women with identical bodies, does not necessarily generate but rather destroys desire. The women, even Alice as a secondary character, do not have personalities; they are displayed and exhibited like mannequins. If they talk, their voices at first sound sexy (especially in the orgy sequence when women talk behind masks), but in their repetition their (including Alice's) voices start to sound monotonous and machine-like. In the orgy sequence these women

wear masks on their faces; it is not possible to differentiate between them.¹⁴ Nearly every woman looks the same in the film and this perfection looks artificial, if not unreal. The male objectification of women's bodies is re-enforced to such an extreme – with the multiplication of such bodies in the orgy scene and the repetition of the image of this ultra-sexualized female body throughout the film – that it becomes an explicitly ironic commentary on such images in other films.¹⁵

These women in EWS are also joined by their immobility, as statue or corpse; femininity recalls fatality in the film. Alice looks like a statue when she is naked; yet, if her body is as beautiful as a Greek goddess's, it also looks as lifeless as a statue or a figure in a painting. The metaphor of woman as a figure in a painting is literalized when Bill Harford is asked to treat the overdosed prostitute in the party. The woman lies entirely naked on a chair, with a painting of a nude woman carefully placed right above her. The woman is unconscious and her idealized body, which is at the edge of death, looks as unalive as the one in the painting. Another woman with an idealized body is one of Bill Harford's patients. She is sitting naked in Harford's consulting room and is genuinely sick, but she looks like the other female prostitutes we have already seen, so in her brief appearance it is not possible to grasp whether she is a different person. When Bill Harford is in his dead patient's house, his daughter starts to kiss him and she acts weirdly. She is in tears, hysterical, and conversing about death. Moreover, there is a dead body in the room; it is not possible to escape from bereavement in this house. The prostitute Bill Harford meets becomes infected with HIV before he can meet her again and is thus marked by death; HIV was more strongly associated with inevitable death when this film was made. The prostitute/priestess Bill Harford meets during the orgy dies after a possible drug overdose and is lying in the morgue when Harford sees her again.

¹⁴ Any pleasure in seeing these women naked is additionally destroyed in the American version of the film as figures blocking the view were added digitally to guarantee an R rating in the US. However, these additions can also make the scene more erotic for some audience members as the women's identicalness (and the intentionally artificial love-making of the actors) is less visible in the censored version.

¹⁵ In his article on the film, Hunter Vaughan defines the film as "the feminist film-theorist's dream-come-true" (2002). These female images may well be informed by the work of feminist artist Vanessa Beecroft, whose performances include numerous nude or near-nude models in high-fashion pieces and shoes, who stay motionless in chosen locations for hours without interaction with the audience. Beecroft's work is evidently influenced by theories about the male gaze.

Consequently, either through his unavailability or because of the women's association with illness/death Bill Harford can never cheat on his wife as he intends to. In fact, the film very carefully shies away from displaying heterosexual sex, if not altogether, then at least with Bill Harford in it. It is thus ironic that Bill Harford is presented as Mr. Available, with women from all walks of life wanting to be with him (also a girl and, later, a gay man). Although the film always offers an excuse for heterosexual desire not being fulfilled, Bill Harford's figurative impotence in environments of extreme sexualization is notable. After all these failed attempts to cheat on his wife, one wonders if Bill Harford really possesses such a desire. In fact, apart from the scenes that feature him walking in the streets looking for adventure(s), there is hardly any textual evidence that Harford really desires any of these women.

Homosexuality in EWS

The female characters of EWS are overlooked in the narrative, and there are a few scenes that more openly reference the homosexual subplot that I put forward. In the film, there are hardly any direct references to homosexuality. In an early scene, Bill Harford learns of the existence of a secret orgy from his pianist friend, Nick Nightingale. During their conversation, Nick gets a call from the organizers of the orgy and learns the password to enter the house. As he is writing the password down, a close-up of both men's hands, unnecessary in terms of content, is inserted. Bill Harford holds the paper for Nick and the men's fingers rhythmically touch each other's. In this close-up, for some audiences the focus will most likely not be on the password, which is a verbal code and did not have to be written down, but rather on the rhythm of the men's fingers touching and moving away from each other.

Before going to the orgy, Bill Harford goes to a costume-shop to buy a mask and tuxedo; the shop's name is "Rainbow" (Costume Rentals). This name's reference to homosexuality, especially at a store in a big, urban city in with high gay population, is obvious. Wearing costumes, wearing a mask, hiding your real self may refer to the state of being in the closet and a mask can be read as a materialization of the closet.

In the orgy scene, Bill Harford functions as a proxy for the viewer. This sequence lasts a lengthy sixteen minutes, and the audience watches various acts of heterosexual intercourse

as well as women prostitutes/priestesses enacting lesbian sex for the male guests watching them. In the orgy, there is only a single shot that includes a male same-sex couple, and this happens in a room that Harford does not see. The camera follows Nick being escorted out of the house; in this room the male same-sex couple is positioned in front of the other couples and Nick, which makes it impossible not to notice them. What is significant about this room is its romantic atmosphere, compared to the other rooms in which everyone is having sex. An orchestral version of “Strangers in The Night” accompanies the scene and all of the couples in the room keep dancing quietly. This is a room that Bill Harford does not see, but it is just next door to where he was.

One of the women informs Bill Harford that the others know he does not belong to the orgy, and he must leave immediately as he is in great danger. Harford ignores her, but in minutes he is ‘caught’ by the bouncers, who take him to the midst of the entire assembly. This sequence is about being found out and outed, which loosely and connotatively suggests being outed as a gay man. First, Bill Harford is asked to remove his mask to reveal who he is. When he takes off his mask, he is asked to remove all of his clothing. He apologizes and begs to be let off without undressing, as if there is something wrong with his body or particularly with his penis. All women and most men in the house are naked, but they have their masks; they have concealed their identities. However, Bill Harford is outed; without a mask everyone knows who he is. We never learn why, but Bill Harford obviously does not belong in this house and the rooms he has been to. It is obviously very wealthy men (and women) who take part in the orgies; Bill Harford both has a high status – at the beginning of the film, the party he is invited to is given by one of the participants of the orgy – and is quite rich. Since he is not invited to the orgy, and notoriously outed and thrown out once he is caught, his existence at the party indicates that for some other reason he is very threatening to the others.

After the orgy sequence, Bill Harford tries to find out what happened to Nick Nightingale and goes to his hotel. The desk clerk, played by bisexual actor Alan Cumming, flirts with him, but Harford does not notice the clerk’s advances.¹⁶ References to same-sex attraction in the film are subtle, but also highlighted – with a close-up of touching hands in the first

¹⁶ According to Taubin, “Cumming, who’s marvellously over the top (as are all Kubrick’s desk clerks), adds a nondiegetic level by playing the scene as if he can’t believe how lucky he is to be flirting with Tom Cruise” (Taubin 1999).

scene, and the careful positioning of the actors in same-sex orgy room in the latter, and Cumming's casting in the final – to grab certain audiences' attention and set off their gaydar.

Tom Cruise

Another factor that contributes to the homosexual plot in EWS is the casting of Tom Cruise for the role of Dr. Harford. Cruise is so perfectly cast in this role that, while analyzing the film, differentiating between the character Bill Harford and the actor Tom Cruise (like Alice and Nicole Kidman) becomes difficult.¹⁷ The 5 July 1999 issue of *Time* magazine featured Cruise and Kidman on the cover embracing in the nude, with the headline: "Cruise & Kidman Like You've Never Seen Them. Exclusive: Hollywood's top couple on *Eyes Wide Shut*." Many fans of the couple went to see the film for the real Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, but the film was also marketed to enhance these already existing expectations.¹⁸ Instead of watching the couple making love, however, the audiences meet two characters that are paralysed when it comes to making love, since the film is about a marriage in crisis because of the discontent of both the wife and the husband. Ironically, the couple divorced soon after the film was completed, which made audiences wonder whether the film was accurate about the actors' real dissatisfaction with each other.

This film is frequently shot from Bill Harford's point of view and Kidman has considerably less screen time than Cruise.¹⁹ The film, thus, is largely about Bill Harford/Tom Cruise, because the character of Alice is underdeveloped and we know very little about her. As a result, the film seems to offer more clues about Tom Cruise to those audiences who think that in this film the characters represent or are based on the actual actors: is Bill Harford exactly meant to represent the real Tom Cruise?

¹⁷ Jane Mills notes that Tom Cruise's performance in EWS has been acutely described as an actor out of his depth playing a man out of his depth (2001).

¹⁸ The stars added to this type of marketing through interviews. In an interview both actors admit to personalizing the characters' bedroom: "The apartment of the film's couple was modelled after one Kubrick once kept in Manhattan, but Kidman chose the books, the colour of the window shades, and even added the change Cruise always leaves by their bed at home. She populated it with her own things too, leaving her makeup in the bathroom, tossing her clothes on the floor. . . Cruise adds, "We even slept in the bed" (Booth 1999).

¹⁹ Chion explains that Kubrick is often not interested in developing his female characters, but adds that although Kidman's role is very short, she still "fills the first – and sadly the last – great role for a young woman in Kubrick's work" (2002, 27).

What Tom Cruise brings most to the character of Bill Harford is an enhanced feeling of closetedness. Although the actor has dated many women and married three of them, and although he has never played an openly gay character in film (and on the contrary mostly played masculine and heterosexual characters), Tom Cruise has constantly been rumoured to be gay. It has even been suggested that both in *Mission Impossible* (Brian De Palma, 1996) and in *Eyes Wide Shut* he needed coaching for love scenes (Hamm 2001, 17). Recently, an entire episode of the cartoon series South Park, entitled *Trapped in the Closet* (2005), was devoted to Cruise's closetedness. In the episode, the Tom Cruise character locks himself in a closet because his acting talent is not appreciated. During the episode, a number of celebrities, including the Nicole Kidman character, try to get him out of the closet. The Kidman character asks: "Don't you think this has gone on long enough? It's time for you to come out of the closet. You're not fooling anyone." Tom Cruise's association with queerness is interesting because other actors of his calibre, such as Brad Pitt or Orlando Bloom or even Heath Ledger (despite playing a gay man in *Brokeback Mountain* [Ang Lee, 2005]), are never subjects of such gossip. What is more attention-grabbing, however, is Cruise's extreme reaction to these rumours. He has won a \$100 million lawsuit against a gay porn star, Kyle Bradford, who claimed in an insignificant French magazine that he had had sex with Cruise (Vincent 2001, 120), and Cruise also unsuccessfully sued a journalist who claimed he was gay. Some other good-looking actors are sometimes rumoured to be gay, like Jake Gyllenhaal or Leonardo DiCaprio, but when they are, they do not react to it similarly; rather, they ignore or reject it. This extreme reaction to being tainted with homosexuality taints Cruise even further, at least for some of the public.

Cruise's social oddness may be one of the factors that add to his queerness. Cruise is a staunch follower of a new-age religion, Scientology, and his belief in the principles of this religion (or more precisely cult) caused his denunciation of psychology and psychiatry altogether in 2005. His belief in and support of Scientology as well as increasing eccentricity finally got him fired from Paramount studios in 2006, and the cancellation of his contract has arguably been the most remarkable such case since the fall of the studio system. The new-age religion of Scientology is more about science-fiction than religion/philosophy, and queerness and science-fiction often come as a package in films, for instance Greg Araki's *Nowhere* (1997) and *Mysterious Skin* (2004). In both films an

interest in aliens represents a fear of sex, particularly queer sex (see Benshoff 1997 and Jenkins 2004). These texts not only present queerness and homoerotic passion in disguised forms (like monsters), but an interest in fantastic texts has also been acknowledged as a queer interest, as these texts are often subtly, sometimes openly queer texts (Doty 1993, 15). Cruise's strong belief in a religion based on L. Ron Hubbard's science-fiction books is no doubt one of the factors that contributed to the perception of him as odd, and therefore, queer. This religion may contain some queerly coded figures of worship or practices that may be thought of as queer, but in Cruise's case what is queer is his interest in a potentially queer religion, when he is extremely offended by being labelled queer.

To my knowledge, Cruise has not ever played an openly gay character in film. In his filmography, *Interview with the Vampire* (Neil Jordan, 1994) has a significant place because this film enhances Cruise's queer image. The film is based on a novel by Anne Rice (1976), which spells out the homoeroticism that is a common feature of the genre. The film is about the love and hate relation between vampire Louis (Brad Pitt) and Lestat (Tom Cruise), who makes Louis a vampire by sucking his blood. Benshoff argues that "many gay fans considered Tom Cruise's acceptance of the role of Lestat more or less a coming-out declaration" (1997, 273) because of the novel's notoriety; however, in the film the homoerotic relation between the two vampires Lestat and Louis is toned down both because it is made for mainstream audiences and possibly because of the casting of such high-profile actors. Although the two men's closeness in the film, as well as Lestat's jealousy of Louis's close relation with another male vampire, Armand (Antonio Banderas), makes this film queer to some extent, this is not a film about gay men.

On the contrary, films that present Cruise as ultra-masculine (and presumably straight) characters may be thought of as more queer. This is dependent on the audience's take on masculinity. Since Stonewall, gay men became as masculine as – and sometimes more masculine than – heterosexual men, a fact that I will discuss further in the next chapter. According to Studlar, although Cruise frequently plays very masculine characters, his "cocky, self-assured, flaunting of masculinity" is not only associated with straight men, but also with gay men who could easily pass as straight men (2001, 175). There is quite an emphasis on Cruise's body in his public image, especially on his muscled, well-worked body. As masculinity by itself is not a testimony to heterosexuality, Cruise's hyper-

masculine image, which is often associated with contemporary gay men, sets gaydars going.

It's possible to further suggest that Cruise's seemingly heterosexual characters share homosocial and homoerotic bonds with other masculine and heterosexual male characters. Mark Simpson argues that "on the rare occasion" Cruise has appeared in films that are entirely based on heterosexual romance, such as *Far and Away* (Ron Howard, 1993), not only does he play passive male characters, but also his performances are less than convincing (1999, 150-1). In *A Few Good Men* (Rob Reiner, 1992) the Demi Moore character (Lt. Cdr. JoAnn Galloway) is, uncharacteristically, masculinized as a tough defence lawyer in military uniform whereas the Cruise character, Lt. J. G. Daniel Kaffee, is represented as weak and without determination until the end of the film. Although the two characters flirt, a romantic relationship never materializes. In *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986) the female character is in unisex naval uniform for most of the film and, although her name is Charlotte, everyone calls her Charlie (Kelly McGillis). According to Burston, from early on in the film the director's "valiant attempt to defend the frontiers for heterosexual viewing against the onslaught of homoerotica are already failing hopelessly" (1995, 128). This is a film about young fighter pilots and the film depicts its several male characters as erotic spectacle. The heterosexual love story forced into the film feels artificial to several audiences and the authentic eroticism is between Cruise's character Maverick and his rival Iceman (Val Kilmer). In *Magnolia* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999), Cruise plays a hyper-masculine self-help guru who claims he can get any woman in five seconds. The character is the author of *Seduce and Destroy* and his motto is "Respect the cock, tame the cunt". However, at no point in the film do we witness him having sex with a woman (although he talks about it) and at the end of the film we learn that he has been lying about his past experiences. Although his heterosexuality is not opposed in the film, through the exposure of his impotent masculinity, his sexual orientation is implicitly questioned.

EWS emerges as another one of Tom Cruise's coming-out movies. Studlar describes the fans' "fantasy of completely 'knowing' the star, of intensifying the impact of the cinematic signifier (the star) by discovering the truth behind the screen identity" (2001, 175). EWS is a film that is marketed as and believed by its fans to be really about its stars, which makes

the ambivalence about Bill Harford's sexuality even more relevant to the identity of the actor than in Cruise's previous films.

The Ambivalent Streets of EWS

Another methodology for addressing the homosexual subplot of EWS is to focus on the representation of the streets in the film. In EWS, there are numerous shots of Bill Harford walking through the streets of New York. While the first shot of the film is the famous shot from the trailer, Alice taking her dress off (in other words, suggestively dropping it for the audience), the shot that immediately follows features the city streets. The third shot reveals that the shot of the city streets is from Bill Harford's point of view at the window. When his wife is displaying her beautiful body, Harford is not looking at her but is watching the streets. Does he want to go out? Are the streets, or what the streets offer, more exciting than his wife?

These streets are ambivalent because they do not look like real New York streets. A number of reviewers were concerned by the film's representation of the New York of the 1980s/90s:

Now, by the 1970's, a simple perusal of the advertisements in a couple of well-known publications, featured especially on the newsstands of the New York streets through which we see the good doctor traveling, would have provided him with the opportunity to take part in any number of orgies a lot closer by and a lot less expensive. (Decter, 1999)

Nor was I convinced that Bill (surely a social climber) would drink canned Budweiser; that he would discover a Village jazz club with a tuxedoed headwaiter and a last set ending at midnight; that in present-day New York, he would find a cab driver named Joe who speaks English as a first language. (Klawans, 1999)

The film was indeed not shot in New York but in a studio in England. Amy Taubin attempts to understand what Kubrick had in mind when he was designing these streets:

The city that Kubrick creates is a collage of Schnitzler's Vienna, Nineties New York, and Kubrick's own post-World War II New York of jazz clubs, espresso houses, and rambling Upper West Side apartments where no one ever had enough cabinets to contain the clutter. (Taubin, 1999)

Thus, this city is a fantasy; it is how Kubrick imagined the city for his characters. As the reviewers note, Kubrick did not try to paint a realistic picture of the city; on the contrary, he makes the city look as dream-like as possible. The city's, and in general the film's, resemblance to dreams is obvious as EWS is based upon Arthur Schnitzler's 1926 novella *Traumnovelle* (*Dreamstory*), which is itself inspired by Sigmund Freud's writings on dreams. In terms of its style, the colours and the lighting of the film, especially in the night scenes, make the city look magical, with astonishing exposure and depth²⁰, and the use of filters enhances the feeling of surreality. The moody, Hitchcockian score adds to this feeling. Finally, the title probably refers to Bill Harford's dream-like state: he is awake, but his eyes are shut. It is as if the entire film story plays out in his unconscious/dreamworld.

It is not only the streets whose locality is ambivalent, but also the walker in these streets, who is ambivalent about why he is walking. As De Certeau famously states:

They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, Wandersmanner, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. . . It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. (1984, 93)

By walking the city and by walking these streets, one creates his/her own spatial story; in EWS Bill Harford creates a map of a fictional New York, which is full of sexual dangers. However, as de Certeau describes, the walker is not aware of the text he is writing or the map he is making; in fact, he is 'blind'. Although the walking looks like it is based on a coincidental and unthinking routine, the path he takes is actually based on his mental maps. Tonkiss defines mental maps as maps that are composed of a "mishmash of landmarks, personal haunts, good guesses and routine paths" (Tonkiss 2005, 128). Thus, the path Bill Harford takes is not arbitrary, as it looks to be at first glance, but one that is dictated by his unconscious as much as the wilful choices he makes when he is walking.

It is significant that the streets are represented as dangerous in EWS. EWS's streets are not safe havens; in a series of instances when Bill Harford walks these streets, he is attacked, followed by strangers and ends up in unsafe places. Fantasies haunt Bill Harford on the

²⁰ This effect is managed through a special technique called force-developing (Pizzello 1999, 34).

streets; after he learns that his wife is fantasizing about the naval officer she briefly saw in a hotel on their vacation, he starts to daydream about his wife and the officer having sex. Whilst Bill Harford is walking, he is continuously obsessed with and troubled by this fantasy. However, there is some ambivalence to Harford's continuous torment, since the event of his wife's infidelity has never really taken place. His continuous fantasizing about this incident makes it questionable whether he loathes or loves the idea of imagining his wife and the officer having sex. Fantasy is the *mise-en-scène* of desire; that is, Bill Harford's unsatisfied desires are staged in his fantasies and the audience has the bonus of watching him fantasizing. His fantasy also serves as wish fulfillment. Alice desired the officer and fantasized about him, but years ago. Harford re-creates this deceased fantasy in his own version and becomes obsessed with it. The fantasy is dynamic and played out like film, which displays its construction and direction rather than being a simple obsession.

As he repeats the fantasy, Harford does not create the same scene again and again; on the contrary every time he fantasizes, the storyline moves forward. In the first fantasies Alice is fully clothed and making love with the man (Plate I). Every time Harford starts fantasizing, the fantasy starts from a new point and Alice has fewer clothes on as the officer who is in his uniform undresses her. Later in the fantasy, the officer is also naked when they are having intercourse; the man's face is barely revealed in each fantasy, but via zoom-ins to the sexually content look on Alice's face, the audience's attention is taken to the extreme satisfaction he gives her by only using his hands and kisses. There is not a single shot without the officer in it and the fantasy unfolds as though Bill Harford were in the room and watching them. Is Bill Harford looking only at Alice? Is he looking at both of them? Or is he gazing only at the officer, a figure he has created for this fantasy? Whichever is the case, and whatever other explanations of the fantasy there may be, Bill Harford is watching the officer as much as he is watching Alice, if not more than her.



Plate I

We should also bear in mind that Harford's jealousy and curiosity about the naval officer's phallus initiates his cruising. From the filmic information given, we are not led to think Harford was cruising for adventures before his Alice confessed her fantasies about the naval officer. Harford and his wife seemingly have a sexless marriage. His relations with other women are limited to flirtations in the film. He is ashamed to take his clothes off in the orgy, in a way as if he lacks a penis. Throughout the film he continuously introduces himself as "Doctor Harford", mostly accompanied by a sudden display of his business card, which also signifies his frail self-confidence and his need for a title to sustain his presence. Watching the naval officer man with an astonishing penis (satisfying his wife sexually) and potency (his wife's desire to leave him for the sailor) causes both identification and desire for Harford; the two cannot be thought of as independent of each other. For many gay male spectators the naked Kidman does not incite desire, but the naval officer/sailor in uniform is historically one of the fantasy objects of gay male desire as the embodiment of masculinity. Looking at Harford, who starts looking for sexual adventures as soon as he fantasizes about a sailor with his wife, it is evident that something in this fantasy marks not the death but the initiation of sexual desire for him. Sedgwick has famously identified the "cultural system in which male-male desire became widely intelligible primarily by being routed through triangular relations involving a woman" (Sedgwick 1990, 15). Similarly, in the orgy Bill Harford does not watch women, but rather women and men engaging in sex. The orgy offers the first and only time we assume he may have sex with a woman, but just when they are about to go to a private room Harford is thrown out of the party. What turns him on, and

brings him closest to having sex with another woman, may be the possibility of watching men with other women.

Although his fantasies haunt Bill Harford when he is walking the streets, the most dangerous the streets get is when he is attacked by homophobic teen-agers who probably think he is gay (Plate II).²¹ As Harford is aimlessly walking in the streets, six young men first verbally abuse him, then one of them pushes him onto a car and Harford falls on the ground. He does not respond or run away; he silently looks at them at from a distance as they keep calling him “faggot”: “Hey, watch it you faggot!” They wish him a happy Christmas with a homophobic slur, “Merry Christmas, Mary!”; and they point behind them to an area where gay men obviously gather and cruise: “Your butt-brothers are back there!” The attack might also be considered as an attack on Dr. Harford’s social class. In his research about the use of verbal homophobic attack among college students, Armstrong explains that “the target is not suspected of being a homosexual. Rather, the usage is based on the linkage of some act or object to presumed attributes of homosexuals” (1997, 327). In Harford’s case, this attack can be considered as a gendered class issue. Harford’s costumes and behaviour, which are representative of his upper-class masculinity, are also similar to how non-heterosexual men act or dress. Bill Harford’s upper-class masculinity is put in question in this scene: is the man who dresses and acts like this a ‘real’ man? Even if the attack does not confirm Bill Harford’s homosexuality, it confirms that since he does not perform masculinity in a manner expected from heterosexuals, he is exposed to abuse like some non-masculine gay men.

²¹ There is actually a similar scene to this one in Schindler’s *Dreamstory*; young Nazis attack the Jewish protagonist of the novella in the streets of Vienna. This paralleling of the homophobic young white men to Nazis and the attacked man to a Jew is certainly no coincidence.



Plate II

Here it is useful to recall a verb that was popular in the 17th to 19th centuries: “rambling”. Rendell defines rambling as “a walk (formerly any excursion or journey) without any definite route or pleasure” (Rendell 1998, 76). Like Bill Harford’s walk, rambling is unrestrained, random and distracted. Rambling is the exploration of urban space only by men; it is an arena women do not have access to.²² The Rambler is often single, but in common with Bill Harford, he is a young, heterosexual and upper-class man of leisure, fashion and sport: “The urban Rambler articulates his masculinity through dress and language codes” (76). Although the verb means to “walk without any route”, a Rambler’s walk is a search specifically for pleasure: “The Rambler is a pleasure seeker, his aim is to titillate the uninitiated with glimpses of an unknown world of suspense and pleasure – heterosexual pleasure” (76). As illustrated with the examples above, for Bill Harford this (hetero)sexual pleasure never materializes. The heterosexual desire presented in the film is at best superficial, as Bill Harford does very little to turn the numerous options into reality. Consequently, the walk itself becomes a walk for a (sexual) desire that he himself does not know, which is maybe an unconscious desire that the homophobic boys sense. The urban text that he writes but cannot read may resemble rambling the streets, as in the 19th century, but in the contemporary era it looks as if he is cruising them like a gay man. It is viable to

²² The women encountered in the public spaces of the city are described as Cyprians, referring to the worshippers of Venus in Cyprus but it was associated with the lowest class of prostitute in the 18th and 19th centuries (Rendell 2002, 107).

suggest that Bill Harford (or Tom Cruise) does not ramble but *cruises* the streets throughout the film.

Bill Harford is also followed on the streets, because he was 'out of place' in the orgy and by trying to learn more about the orgy's participants he puts himself in a dangerous position. Since he is outed in the orgy its participants know who he is, unlike his complete ignorance of their identities. Then again even when he is not being followed, Harford still believes he is being trailed in a paranoid fashion. Since this fear of trailing starts after the homophobic attack, it causes a similar feeling and expectation of another attack. A man in a trench coat and hat follows Bill Harford and simply looks at him. In her article about how lesbians feel in the heterosexual streets, Valentine notes that gay women are not necessarily prone to violent attacks but "heterosexual looks of disapproval, whispers and stares are used to spread discomfort and make lesbians feel 'out of place' in everyday spaces" (1996, 149). The way Bill Harford is followed gives such a feeling of disapproval; the man who follows Harford keeps staring at him and makes him feel out of place and unsafe in a very public place. The feeling of adventure quickly transforms into a feeling of unsafety as both Harford and the viewers expects something dangerous to happen, like the homophobic attack of the teenagers, an expectation that causes Harford's rambling to resemble cruising even further.

The Closet

James Morrison aptly notes that Bill Harford "is gay-bashed in the street and cruised by a hotel clerk, but he doesn't respond to the former and doesn't notice the latter. The point is that, even in states of crisis, heterosexuality can achieve stability only by disavowing homosexuality so fully that its possibility can't even be acknowledged" (Morrison 2001). In the film, Harford's queer desire is so successfully closeted that it is quite difficult for him and for the audience to perceive it. Bill Harford apparently sends signals to the hotel clerk's gaydar, but he seems to be unaware of this situation. He cruises around the streets on which gay men may be cruising, but he is not exactly one of them. He is very close to same-sex couples in the orgy, but again not exactly in the same room. In EWS, the (supposed) closet doors are forced open through the homophobic attack: are the homophobic boys on the street forcing Bill Harford out of his closet? Or is there no closet to be shattered, but

imagined to be there by these boys because of Harford's unsuccessful gender performance, which may itself be a sign of his homosexuality?

Sedgwick defines the closet as a term "used to describe the denial, concealment, erasure, or ignorance of lesbians and gay men" (1990, 71). There is need for concealment in the context of heterosexual or shared spaces (like the streets), because explicitness would equate with inviting danger and violence. Because of this semi-openness, it is difficult to know who is in the closet, because when we think of the closet we think of "a space that is not open to just anybody" (Bachelard 1994, 78). Whereas some men are in the closet by choice, other men are simply not aware that they are in the closet and double their self by creating an other, a heterosexual, 'I'. This doubling of the self and creating another you, which is not what you are, is so comprehensive that it is not unreasonable to assume that neither Bill Harford nor some audience members comprehend where Harford's desire lies, and whether he created another, heterosexual Bill Harford supposedly happy in his relationship with his wife. This 'I' is so fragile that, just because of a simple fantasy, both the relationship and the successfully performed 'I' shatters. The film suggests that Harford is trying to be something that he is not in his attempts to enact a heterosexual rambler, but he will appear to be a gay cruiser to some audiences.

One other way to analyze the character is to suggest that he is very much aware of his closetedness. The closet is not necessarily something gay men are forced into because of homophobia, but can be something gay men choose to enter because they prefer not to be publicly homosexual. So gay men carry their closet because it renders them invisible; however, they may also be forced out of it. Building upon Sedgwick's notion of the closet, Halperin argues:

You can never be certain of the extent to which you have actually succeeded in keeping your homosexuality secret; after all, one effect of being in the closet is that you are precluded from knowing whether people are treating you as straight because you have managed to fool them and they do not suspect you of being gay, or whether they are treating you as straight because they are playing along with you and enjoying the epistemological privilege that your ignorance of their knowledge affords them. (1995, 34)

Halperin concentrates on the contradictions of secrecy. As I have proposed in the introduction, walkers of the street are always in an ambiguous position; the other walkers

can suspect they are queer because of their gender performance, costumes, gaydars etc., but there is always a degree of not knowing. The cruiser himself does not know how safe his secret is; did he manage to make his queerness and desires invisible or does everyone know but pretend not to know that he is walking for sexual adventures? Is he successfully in the closet or out in the open?

At this level, it is both the character Bill Harford and the star Tom Cruise who are inside and outside the closet. As Morrison puts it, “Tom Cruise being put cunningly through these spaces to make this point [that is, disavowing homosexuality] gives [the film] a prickly, vicarious kick” (2001). The character and the star fool some of the viewers, who take them to be unquestionably straight, but some other viewers enjoy watching what they perceive to be an explicitly queer character and star pretending to be a heterosexual man by embodying codes of masculinity, codes that many still associate with heterosexual men. The ambiguous ending of the film satisfies both the audience who perceives this character to be a heterosexual man, and the audience who notices the subplot and perceives this character as a queer, if not gay, character. At the end of the film, the heterosexual marriage is reconfirmed. After a long night in which Bill Harford confesses his adventures to his wife, the family goes Christmas shopping in the final scene. In the final shot of the film Alice says, “I do love you and you know there is something very important we need to do as soon as possible? . . . Fuck”. As Taubin acceptably points out, “Nothing that we’ve seen of this couple, Bill and Alice Harford (played by Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman), encourages the belief that it will be possible for them to follow the wife’s suggestion: that they go home and have a good fuck” (1999). Before Alice’s image dissolves into the black screen, the camera stays on Alice for a lengthy time. This is not a freeze-frame; Alice simply waits as she does not get a reply from Harford. This shot is so long that a lot of viewers will notice that it is not a confirmation of the couple’s relationship, but is emphasized merely to display its irony. In these seconds, most audiences will come to the conclusion that Taubin came to, that this “fuck” is a futile attempt to save their relationship or that there is no more “fuck” in this relationship, or worse, that Harford has found something dangerous but also adventurous through his ‘cruising’. If EWS were to show what happens after this scene, this could indeed be the scene in which we finally witness Harford having heterosexual sex, yet as the film ends here the ambivalence of Harford’s sexuality – hetero or homo, active or passive – remains. The viewers who read the subplot and imagine Dr. Harford and Tom

Cruise as identical may also feel their reading is confirmed by the extra-diegetic information that Kidman and Cruise's marriage ended soon after the completion of the film. EWS offers several readings to its viewers, and the gay subplot I analyzed is 'in the closet', and depends on the viewers' gaydar to be outed.

Part III. Boogie Nights

Boogie Nights (hereafter referred to as BN) is Paul Thomas Anderson's highly successful film from 1997.²³ In BN, Mark Wahlberg plays a young man (Eddie Adams) who is a high school dropout working at nightclubs as a waiter. However, Eddie has a gift that many others do not have: a 13-inch penis. Jack Horner (Burt Reynolds), a porn director who has an eye for pornographic talent, discovers Eddie and helps him in his transformation to Dirk Diggler, a successful heterosexual porn star.

BN is significant in its contrast to EWS; EWS offers a heterosexual plot to many of its viewers, but it also has a homosexual subtext that gives access to queer readings. In contrast, BN has the potential of becoming a queer film because of its core subject: this is a film essentially about the length and the girth of its male protagonist's penis. However, BN is reluctant to explore its queer subject matter as it refuses to examine its homosexual and possibly bisexual characters. Although the film has a gay character and a cruising scene, it is very difficult, or maybe impossible, to read a homosexual subplot in this film.

The film starts at a discotheque in San Fernando Valley in 1977. BN's interest in its leading character's penis is instant. As soon as Jack Horner enters the disco, he makes eye contact with Eddie, who points him to the kitchen with a subtle movement of his head. The first gay possibility of the film is its first disappointment; although the scene is shot as if Eddie is flirting with Jack, Jack has not a homosexual, but rather a professional interest in his penis. Eddie charges five dollars to show his penis and ten to masturbate, though no one is permitted to touch. Jack says, "I got a feeling beneath those jeans there's something wonderful just waiting to get out", but he does not make an attempt to see the penis. However, he does see Eddie's penis when the latter accepts Jack's professional offer that he have sex with Rollergirl (Heather Graham) in front of Jack at his house. Even in this event,

²³ The director was only twenty-six when he made this film, which gained him simultaneous critical and box-office success and granted him auteur status.

when Jack is sitting on a chair watching Eddie and Rollergirl have sex right in front of him, it is implied that he is watching for professional reasons rather than for pleasure. Before the couple starts to have sex, the camera cuts to a shot of Jack sitting on his chair watching them, but as there is no reverse shot we do not know what his focus is and where he gets his pleasure. Jack's characterization as strictly non-homosexual is confirmed by this scene.

In EWS, Dr. Harford is afraid to take his clothes off in an orgy, and even when he is with his wife his penis is hidden in underwear compared to his wife's full nudity. In BN, Eddie continuously displays his penis to himself and other characters. Several times in the film, Eddie/Dirk looks at his own penis and says he is blessed because of having such a penis. When Eddie goes home after meeting Jack and is taking his clothes off, a mid close-up of his pelvis exposes a big bulge to the audience, but the scene ends before he takes his underwear off. The viewers see not the penis, but rather Eddie's/Dirk's and others' reactions to the penis. When women see it, they react to it differently than men. For example, his girlfriend, whom Eddie has just had sex with, studies his penis for a long time and says that it is a beautiful penis. Later in the film, the Rollergirl, a porn starlet, looks hypnotized by the penis and starts sucking it instantly. A famous porn star, Amber (Julianne Moore), likes the penis so much that she breaks with convention and asks Dirk (not referred to as Eddie anymore) to come inside her, which causes the ejaculation shot to be missing from the scene.

The other men do not ignore the penis as Jack did, but either ask to watch it or see it while the porn movies are being shot and all of them respond to the penis in similar ways. For example, the Colonel, the financier of Jack's films, wants to see Eddie's "great big cock". When Eddie takes his penis out of his swimwear, the colonel is at a loss for words and his jaw drops. In his first shoot for his first film, the character played by Amber tells Eddie's character, Dirk, that it is important that she gets an idea of his size. When Eddie takes his penis out, the camera shows not the penis, but the reaction of the film crew. As the camera cuts to each member, the viewers see that heads turn, eyes open wide and jaws drop. The women in the film want the penis inside them, but the other men just look at it. It is apparently gigantic, but the acting of the men connotes jealousy and surprise (because of its size) rather than desire, except in the case of the homophobe who attacks Eddie.

This film about the porn industry is curiously lacking in sex scenes. The brief sex scenes are nearly always not for the pleasure of its participants, but for the porn films Jack is shooting and Dirk is acting in. In these scenes the nude bodies are hardly revealed, and the camera shows the audience's reaction rather than the sex act itself. These scenes do not intend to evoke the pleasures that actual pornography may give to its viewers. If porn gives its heterosexual male audience the chance to enjoy both male and female bodies without being suspected of homosexuality, then in BN both these scenes and the sight of Eddie/Dirk's penis is denied to the audiences, thereby refusing to satisfy some gay male audiences' curiosity and desire, and withholding closeted queer pleasures from its heterosexual male audience.

It is not a necessity plot-wise for BN to introduce a gay character. In this space of extreme sexuality, and to some extent of beauty and heterosexuality, Scotty, the boom operator in the crew, enters the narrative only to display his out-of-placeness. He is fat and ugly, is homosexual and cannot get sex (Plate III). The moment he meets Dirk, Scotty falls in love with him. More precisely, he is possibly the only character in the film who falls in love with Dirk before seeing (and maybe not even knowing about) his penis, and ends up as one of the few characters in the film to whom Dirk's penis is not specifically displayed.



Plate III

At first, Scotty just wants to be around Dirk and make friends with him, but he is often ignored by Dirk, who does not seem to even notice Scotty's interest. The first time Scotty sees Dirk, he is sitting by the pool at Jack's house and talking to his fellow actors. When Scotty sees Dirk, he takes his sunglasses off and studies Dirk from a distance. Later, when Dirk is swimming and repeatedly jumping into the pool, a slow motion shot is used to display how Dirk's every move hypnotizes Scotty. Later in the film, Scotty becomes more obsessed with Dirk. When Dirk buys a new red car, Scotty starts to wear red clothes. At the New Year's Eve party, a totally drunk Scotty invites Dirk to come and see his own new red car. Dirk's lack of interest in Scotty is clear; on the way to the car, he starts to talk to his other friends and forgets Scotty completely. Only after Scotty irritably reminds him that he is waiting for him does Dirk walk with him to see Scotty's new car, which is very similar to Dirk's car. Scotty also tells Dirk that, though the car was originally not red, he had it painted red, the colour of Dirk's car. In the midst of the conversation, Scotty suddenly starts to kiss Dirk. Dirk looks surprised but also disgusted. He pushes Scotty back and asks: "What the hell is the matter with you? Why did you do that Scotty?" Scotty replies: "You look at me some times". For the audience, there is no textual evidence that Dirk ever looked at him; it is Scotty who is always looking at Dirk. Although Scotty first apologizes, he tries kissing Dirk once again. Finally, Scotty ends up alone in his car crying and feeling angry with himself for what he has done. In the scenes that follow, Scotty is shown interacting with Dirk and the other male characters, but he is not with them in major incidents that take place. When he is shown with them, it is primarily to display his difference. For example, when all of the men buy identical shirts with big flowers on them, Scotty is the only one who cannot fit into one. When Dirk and Reed are trying to make an album, he serves no purpose other than simply displaying effeminate behaviour and being around Dirk all the time.

At the end of the film, although we learn the other supporting characters' individual stories, we learn nothing about Scotty. Throughout the narrative, this lack of information about Scotty is startling. It seems that Scotty's only function in the narrative is to be rejected by Dirk, although he is possibly the only person who falls in love with Dirk before he sees or hears about his penis. I would argue that the narrative makes use of this gay character so that the audiences cannot imagine the other characters as possibly being queer. None of the characters in the film are homophobic; Scotty is not insulted or beaten because of his sexual

orientation, and he is even let into the homosocial bonding between the other men to some extent. However, the other men are simply not interested in him. There is no filmic evidence to suggest that there is a (closeted) desire towards Scotty. As the only gay character in the movie, Scotty serves as a symbol of difference to assert the male characters', and especially Dirk's, heterosexuality. In BN, unlike EWS, there is no ambiguity about sexual orientations, as it is nearly impossible to doubt the heterosexuality of the other characters in their straightforward attitude to homosexual Scotty.²⁴

It is not only the use of the character Scotty that confirms the other male characters' heterosexuality; rather, the entire characterization in the film leaves aside the possibility of homosexuality or bisexuality. There are no scenes displaying or suggesting bisexuality or homosexuality in any of the men. Although they are heavily drugged most of the time as they are addicted to cocaine, this does not make them engage in sex with men nor with each other. In the porn films they are part of, there are pointedly no threesome scenes suggesting possible homoerotic pleasures between the male actors. Including Dirk, the male characters form close friendships, touch and dance with each other, and form strong homosocial bonds; however, there is never a homoerotic moment between any of these characters. Although they all see Dirk's penis and their amazement would be sufficient to develop homosexual subtexts, the other men do not look at Dirk like Scotty looks at him – the initial amazement disappears, as does the interest in the penis, once homosocial bonds are formed. The lack of point of view shots, lack of close-ups (such as the inserted close-up of men's fingers touching in EWS) and the acting style make it difficult to read any attraction between men. When the men are together, they are also significantly shown in camaraderie; the camera does not display suggestive point of view shots that would indicate homoerotic pleasures between them, but displays them together in establishing shots to emphasize their bond. For instance, when Dirk and two other male characters are sitting in an outdoor spa in the middle of the night, the camera makes use of wide and distant shots to show the characters first, and then, when it gets closer to the characters, refuses any point of view shots, in stark contrast to how Amber and Scotty look at Dirk. Any look between the

²⁴ According to Chuck Stephens, this is also a deviation from John Holmes's life, which inspired the Dirk Diggler character to a large extent. "Boogie Nights' deviation from John Holmes's career is especially palpable here: where Holmes worked every angle of the business, Diggler's grim foray into homosex is seen as aberrant, and prompts violent humiliation" (Stephens 1997).

'heterosexual' men is not de-emphasized so as not to become a 'gaze', but is simply ignored and remains unrepresented.

The film's only attempt at exploring homo/bisexual possibilities comes with a crude explanation. I have suggested that in EWS we can read Harford's rambling as 'cruising'. In BN, there is an actual scene that represents cruising for public sex. After many successful years in the porn business fuelled by drugs, Dirk comes to a stage where he can no longer maintain an erection because of the long-term effects of drugs. After an argument with Jack when he is high on drugs, he is also banned from the films Jack produces. When he desperately needs money to buy more drugs, he starts to cruise for prostitution. The scene starts with Dirk waiting in front of a building; soon, a van approaches and after a brief talk with the driver, Dirk gets into the car. The film 'forgets' to inform us whether this is the first, only or last time Dirk is cruising, and how Dirk knows this space, obviously a place where men pick up other men. The viewers know that before he became a famous porn actor, Dirk would show his penis to guys (possibly at least some of them gay) in exchange for money; however, it was implied that Dirk confined this activity to the club where he was working. The man who picks him up says that he is not gay, but he wants to watch Dirk masturbate. This falls in line with the twists created in the narrative to make sure that no man touches Dirk's penis. It will simply be unbelievable to many viewers that in his desperate need for money Dirk still restricts himself only to displaying his penis or masturbating when being watched, and the clientele on the streets are specifically looking for this and nothing else. This masturbation scene represents perhaps the only moment of open homosexual desire in the film. The close-ups on the client's face display how excited he is about watching Dirk's penis; he breathes heavily, his eyes are fixed on the penis, and his mouth slightly open. The scene implies that this man is a closeted homosexual. At this point, another van full of gay-bashers arrives and it turns out that the man in the car was one of the gay-bashers and together they beat Dirk. The scene is typical of mainstream films and depends on a crude and misleading understanding of homophobia: that homophobes are necessarily closeted homosexuals. There is potential in this scene to explore other men's interest in Dirk's penis and Dirk's interest in displaying his penis to men, as well as women, but as there are no other scenes of Dirk prostituting himself, this scene serves simply as a punishment of Dirk for engaging in prostitution with men. It is

also significant that the film imagines homosexuality either in a closeted and homophobic form, or as ugliness and failure, as represented in the character of Scotty.

Dirk's penis, the enigma of the film, is revealed to the audience only in the final shot. Going back to the porn industry, Dirk rehearses his scene in front of the mirror in the final scene. In the final shot, he takes his penis out of his pants, and a close-up of the penis ends the film. Before the homophobe attacks Dirk, he calls his penis a "donkey-dick", referring to its size, but also possibly to of its ugliness and lack of erection as a result of Dirk's drug use. The homophobe satisfies his homosexual impulses through looking, rather than doing, but even this pleasure is minimized or deferred, as for the audience. Dirk's (and the actor's) penis becomes the ultimate object of desire or at least object of curiosity for the diverse members of the audience, who are not even permitted to look at it. Yet the film's final shot satisfies, and probably destroys, most viewers' desires. Getting ready to shoot his next film, Dirk sits across from the mirror and talks to himself. As he starts repeating to himself that he is a big star, he stands up, his face disappears from the frame, and the 'real' star is about to be exposed. When he finally takes his heavy and long penis out of his pants, what is displayed to the audience is hardly a spectacle that is to-be-looked-at; in fact, "donkey-dick" is probably the best term that describes this flaccid and very unrealistic prosthetic penis. On another level, this is obviously not the star Mark Wahlberg's penis, which many of the film's viewers were expecting or hoping to see. This final shot, which undoubtedly frustrates most viewers, demonstrates that BN is determined deny even the slightest homoerotic pleasure to its viewers as firmly as it denies homo/bisexuality to its characters.

Part IV. Conclusion

I started this chapter by analyzing the politics of walking in the streets, and claimed that although it looks like anyone can have access to the streets, walking freely and safely at any time is actually an extravagance for many, i.e., racial/ethnic minorities, women, gay men and lesbians, and men who perform their gender in an 'unmasculine' way. My interest in this chapter lies in a certain type of walking, namely cruising the streets for (public) sex, which requires semi-openness so that the participants recognize each other, but the other people in the streets do not.

The main film of the chapter, EWS, is significant because the representation of streets and cruising in the film initiates a queer subplot for some of its viewers. In EWS, Dr. Harford ostensibly wants to cheat on his wife with another woman. EWS was regarded as a heterosexual film by most audience members on its reception, but it is telling that in the film women are not represented as desirable; rather they often recall repetition, monotony, illness and/or death. In his attempts to sleep with another woman, either because of his unavailability or because the women fall ill or die, Harford seems not be able to fulfill his desire.

I have suggested that this heterosexual desire is thus problematic. Although Harford's desire is apparently heterosexual, the film offers codes that suggest otherwise, like close-ups of men touching hands, Harford's being gay bashed because he is walking in the streets alone at night, and his adamant ignorance of gay men. The significant focus, however, is on Harford's fantasies, in which his wife has sex with a sailor, thus highlighting his desire to watch men and women together in the act of sexual intercourse both in the orgy and through these fantasies. Harford seems to be tortured by these fantasies, but the subplot suggests that he indeed enjoys them because he can watch a man without restraint if there is a woman involved. Last but not least, I have proposed that the casting of Tom Cruise as Dr. Harford will reinforce the homosexual subplot for some viewers.

In the final section, I have analyzed BN to suggest that it is not possible to 'queer' every film that represents cruising. As much as some audiences will enjoy the fact that the leading role is played by Mark Wahlberg, known as homophobic singer Marky Mark at the time this film was made, BN consciously resists queer readings and represents its protagonist as undoubtedly heterosexual. Where EWS allows for ambiguity, BN offers only straightforwardness. BN can imagine only clear-cut sexual identities in which homosexuality equals pain, closeted homosexuality equals criminality and divergence from heterosexuality deserves punishment. Finally, I have proposed that in these films both cruising and walking in the streets are represented as dangerous, and in this sense these films are direct expressions of the societies they are made in and for, in which cruising is linked to public sex, public sex to homosexuality, and homosexuality to danger.

CHAPTER II

GEOGRAPHIES OF EFFEMINACY

I start this chapter by discussing the meaning and connotations of effeminacy and providing a brief history of the effeminate men who have been denied access to public space because of the way they perform gender. I then examine Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999) in order to explore the denial of physical space to the film's protagonist, Tom Ripley, whose gender positioning and sexual orientation is ambiguous. The plot centers on Ripley's deception of everyone around him, and it is critical that Ripley's sociopathy is explained by his sexual deception. At the end of the chapter, I examine *The Mexican* (Gore Verbinski, 2001), a film that represents a gay male character whose gender performance is visibly masculine. I argue that the two films are in fact similar in their characterization, because the gay character in *The Mexican* is also represented as dishonest both in his behaviour and in his gender performance.

Part I. Introduction

In *The Celluloid Closet* Vito Russo notoriously claimed: "Nobody likes a sissy. That includes dykes, faggots and feminists of both sexes" (1981, 5). As debatable as it is, Russo's argument has some leverage. Effeminate men, gay or heterosexual, are undesired in our culture. Heterosexual men who perform gender in a way that is generally expected from women are often ridiculed and presumed to be closeted gay men.²⁵ Despite many gay men's rejection of effeminacy, the stereotype of gay men as effeminate continues to exist in the West and effeminacy is often thought to be explanatory of homosexuality or homosexuality of effeminacy. Gay men themselves are often critical of effeminate gay men and of the representation of gay men as effeminate (Russo being a famous proponent of the latter position). "The liberal and mostly assimilationist politics that dominated the post-Stonewall 1970s gay movement attempted to unbind homosexuality from effeminacy (in an attempt to align gay men with 'normal' masculinity, and, by extension 'normal' sexuality),"

²⁵ Cohen explains that the understanding of masculinity that persists in our contemporary culture has its roots in the concept of a middle-class 'manly man' that originated in England during the 1850s when organized sports were introduced into public and private schools. Cohen continues: "While this attention to athletics was undoubtedly aimed at conditioning adolescent male bodies and facilitating their transformation into healthy adult men, it was also designed to define a certain ideology of masculinity whose embodiment the middle-class boy was to become. This underlying project of defining male gender identity was an explicit aspect of organized school games from the very beginning of the pedagogical interest in the playing fields" (1992, 42). Jenkins adds that a boy's effeminacy was considered dangerous especially after 1945: "Effeminacy was a particular danger: the boy who failed to play sports today, or even played with dolls might become the lurking molester of ten or twenty years hence" (1998, 227).

says Bradley Boney, and adds, “real or perceived effeminacy has been shown to be the most common factor in the histories of adult gay men” (1996). As Boney notes, gay men’s rejection of effeminacy is a result of the post-Stonewall 1970s gay movement, although Chauncey points to earlier tensions.²⁶

Representations, of course, do not correlate directly to reality, nor is their reception by different audiences the same. However, most audiences (gay and straight) have learned to decode all effeminate men in films as homosexuals, although a lot of real gay men are not effeminate, and on the contrary prefer to be masculine. In the documentary version of *The Celluloid Closet* (Rob Epstein, 1995), Richard Dyer discusses a scene from Charlie Chaplin’s *Behind the Screen* and concludes that even when this film was made in 1916 the equation of male homosexuality with effeminacy was already “so firmly in place that a popular mainstream film could assume that the audience would know what that swishy [behaviour] was all about.” The book and film *Celluloid Closet* are correct in their observation that gay men have been stereotyped and represented in many ways in film, but predominant amongst these is as sissies, who are effeminate or unmasculine. This has held true from early gay films such as *Boys in the Band* (William Friedkin, 1970) to more recent ones such as *Birdcage* (Mike Nichols, 1996).

Russo finds this effeminate gay male image problematic and negative, not least because the representation of effeminate men has often been less than flattering. Effeminate men are often represented as girly, childish and funny, as in *Eyes Wide Shut* (Stanley Kubrick, 1999); as victims, as in *Braveheart* (Mel Gibson, 1995); as losers, as in *Boogie Nights* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1997); or as violent murderers, as in *Hannibal* (Ridley Scott, 2001). However, more recently queer scholars have discussed the complexity of the representation of gay and effeminate men, and often they do not find these representations to be uniformly homophobic or negative (nor do they believe all gay audiences did) (Dyer 1993, Dyer 2002, Barrios 2003, Benshoff 2005). It is significant that in the documentary film *The Celluloid Closet*, not all interviewees go along with the explanation of Russo’s position. For example

²⁶ At the beginning of the century there was great tension between two types of men with same-sex desires: the first type, probably the majority, as the successors of the effeminate men who may be considered the symbolic grandchildren of the mollies, were called the fairies/pansies at that specific period. Chauncey informs us that these men were usually socio-economically lower class men who wanted to have sex with very masculine heterosexual men (1994, 107). The second type was the non-effeminate man who desired other men, or, in other words the new homosexual man who was in the process of becoming.

Harvey Fierstein, himself a famous actor and the author of queer play *Torch Song Trilogy* (1988), pointedly assures the audience that he is a sissy himself and that he loves sissies, thereby exposing Russo's and *The Celluloid Closet*'s effeminophobia.

There are some familiar ways in which space is denied to gay men as actors in film, since gay characters are mostly played by renowned heterosexual actors. In terms of plot, such men are usually treated as secondary/supporting characters are frequently single (and therefore sexually inactive), as in *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004) and *Be Cool* (F. Gary Grey, 2005), and we learn little about these characters throughout the film.²⁷ In this chapter, however, I am interested in a more literal denial of space. Women, racial and sexual minorities, and poor people have historically been excluded from public spaces (Massey 1994, Bell 1995, Ingram 1997). Similarly, effeminate men have been excluded from public spaces with ease as they are visible, and public spaces have been and can be denied to effeminate men by harassing, bullying, and even imprisoning them, as such men are believed to disrupt social order and morality. I propose that in TMR, the protagonist, Tom Ripley, cannot claim space and have a room or a house of his own, nor can he live in one city, both because he is an 'unmasculine' man and because his sexual orientation is unclear. Unlike other chapters, in this chapter there is no fixed and well-defined space under investigation, as it is precisely this lack of a defined space that symbolizes the main character's homosexuality and effeminacy.

In addition, in this film a secondary motif is as significant as the first: effeminate gay men are considered untrustworthy for various reasons. Effeminacy is effectively a form of lying, because according to conservative essentialist approaches it is the male body that breeds masculine gender performance, and an effeminate man acts unnaturally; in a sense, he lies by acting in contrast to what his body is supposed to do.²⁸ Homosexuality, effeminacy and lying unexpectedly come together in many films, such as *Shattered Glass* (Billy Ray, 2003). The film is based on the true story of Stephen Glass, a young journalist who fabricated most of his articles published in *The New Republic* for three years (1995-1998). In the film, for no apparent reason, homosexuality is added to the plot and Stephen

²⁷ Obviously, not much has changed since Dyer wrote "Seen to be believed" in 1983 and criticized the gay characters' limited roles in a narrative, like being "a woman's gay male best friend" (1993, 22).

²⁸ On another level, gay men in the closet, especially the effeminate ones, lie continuously by performing as heterosexual men.

complains about “giving more reasons to people to think [I am] gay”. Since he is not an overly masculine man (but also not effeminate), it seems people who meet him think of him as gay. At the end of the film we learn that he is a pathological liar, but neither gay nor bisexual.

Similarly in TMR, sociopathy, dishonesty, criminality, and weak masculine gender performance come together with doubts about a character’s heterosexuality or his homo/bisexuality. By analysing TMR, I will attempt to articulate these bonds between homosexuality (sexual orientation), effeminacy (gender) and lying (behaviour/performance) as represented in the film. In some films these features become necessary components of the same person; much as an effeminate person cannot be thought as heterosexual, so a gay man cannot be thought of as honest. Sometimes, men who lie are thought of neither as masculine nor as heterosexual.

The Troubles with Effeminacy

What constitutes an effeminate man or an effeminate character? Effeminacy is repeatedly acknowledged as a signifier of homosexuality; hence we think of all effeminate men (and all effeminate male characters in film) as either open or latent/closeted gay men. Yet the trouble with effeminacy is precisely its definition; it is hardly possible to define effeminacy and an effeminate man as there is no single set of universal or ahistorical signifier of effeminacy.²⁹ However, “hegemonic definitions of masculinity receive their legitimacy from the marginalization of other forms of masculinity [which] are almost always characterized as more feminine” (Hoven 2005, 8).

Queer writers wrestled with effeminacy for a long time, since a lot of gay men, including many of these authors, have been perceived as or have identified as effeminate. Boney asks:

Is there a causal relationship between effeminacy and homosexuality? Or do some budding homosexual youths unconsciously produce a sissy body, even at a very

²⁹ The signs to communicate with other men are not, and have not always been, about utilizing a ‘feminine’ attribute, approach or dress codes, which was (and is) considered to make that person effeminate, sissy, pansy or queen. For example, around the 17th century Dutch men who desired other men put their hands on the hips and hit with the elbow against that of somebody who did the same thing (Meer quoted in Norton 1997, 251). Let me note that at that time in the Netherlands this sign was not considered effeminate at all; it was only a secret code. I have chosen this example among many examples to make my point, because of its ability to trouble what we understand as “effeminacy”: today the same action would be considered very effeminate or feminine. If effeminacy is vaguer than we think, then it is also impossible to grasp it. What is usually attacked as an effeminate manner may under different circumstances be seen as completely uneffeminate.

early age, by adopting ‘like a woman’ as the most accessible position from which to align their bodies with their homosexual impulses? Do proto-queer boys reflect their affectional desires by marking their bodies effeminate in some warped attempt at heterosexual conformity? (Boney, 1996)

Boney’s questions have no easy answers, and such questions have been answered differently by essentialists who suggest a strict link between effeminacy and homosexuality³⁰, and by social constructivists who think of effeminacy as a gender performance and often study effeminate behaviour in a historical context.³¹ When we read effeminacy and homosexuality as essentially identical, however, we lack the discursive tools to analyze a character that is as ambiguous as Tom Ripley. What I will problematize in my critique of the reviews of the film is this kind of conflated and over-simplified reading. In terms of the characters of TMR, although I attempt to explain what makes the characters effeminate, I also make use of the terms “unmasculine” and “non-masculine”, which I employ to describe how a certain character’s performance of masculinity may not be as explicit and effective as some other characters’. Explicit masculinity as something to be learned and performed has already been portrayed in films like *Tea and Sympathy* (Vincente Minnelli, 1956) and *The Prince of Tides* (Barbra Streisand, 1991). In both films, the “unmasculine” male characters are taught to walk and act like men.

The roots of “effeminate” come from *effeminatus* in classical Roman republican theory. According to Dowling, in the texts of classical republicanism, effeminacy has nothing to do “with femaleness in any modern sense but with an absence or privation of value” (1994, 8). Bristow adds that this perception “is bound so much into the understandings of the state that it is generally ungraspable to the modern mind which perceives effeminacy in primarily

³⁰ In their 19th and early 20th century renditions, discussions by sexologists of a hypothetical third gender state that effeminate gay men constitute a third sex (or gender). According to Krafft-Ebing a man can be so effeminate that he can even have feminine bodily characteristics like rounded hips. Randolph Trumbach asserts that “in all times and places there has been a minority of adult effeminate males . . . who were passive in sexual encounters with other males” (1997, 87).

³¹ For example, Grosz argues that different bodies are “produced in and through the cultural practices that men undertake,” and that some gay men allow a sort of “‘latent femininity’ to appear” that heterosexual men try to repress (1994, 200). Along similar lines, White suggests that “[i]n the past, feminization, at least to a small and symbolic degree, seemed a necessary initiation into gay life; we all thought we had to be a bit nelly (effeminate) in order to be truly gay” (1994, 76). At times homosexual men had to dye their hair, manicure their nails, and look at other men in a girly way so that these men understood that their effeminacy was a clear sign of homosexuality. These men are also likely to have performed effeminacy to display that they were the passive counterparts in sexual intercourse, as sexual partners often performed only active or passive roles. Indeed, if homosexual men were not effeminate, sometimes they were punished for it. In his discussion of the mollies, Sinfield informs us that all male prostitutes (mollies) were not necessarily effeminate (1994, 39). However, if they were not effeminate, they were beaten by the public when they were caught for disrupting the gender norms, namely by being an uneffeminate molly/ homosexual (Sinfield, 45).

gendered terms” (1995, 5). Dowling also argues that the figure of the effeminate male in these texts did not address “modern gender categories” but “a vanished archaic past in which the survival of a community was sustained in an almost metaphysical as well as wholly practical sense by the valor of its citizen soldiers” (6). In these contexts, effeminacy was a failure to fulfil one’s civic duty to the state as well as a failure of martial propensity and valour. In more contemporary contexts, the notion of failing the state disappears from the meaning of effeminacy. Nonetheless, if we bear in mind that “failing the state” was an act only a man could do, the link to “failing manhood” in the contemporary meaning of “effeminacy” is clear.

“Effeminacy,” says Alan Sinfield in his introduction to *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Movement*, is “a misogynist but powerful term” (1994, vii). To put it accurately, effeminacy, as described in the dictionary, is the state of having qualities or characteristics more often associated with women than men. This description sounds trouble-free until one searches for synonyms of effeminacy in the thesaurus: sissiness, womanishness, tenderness, and unmanliness.³² Effeminacy is a misogynist term because, according to these descriptions, the connotations of the word are all negative: they suggest that an effeminate man takes a woman’s allegedly essential and often ungraceful qualities (irrational, excessively emotional, vulnerable, etc.), which are inferior to the qualities of men and masculinity, onto himself. Thus, an effeminate man’s body somehow denies the masculinity it should by definition have and acts like something inferior.³³

Although it never had a positive use, in the Elizabethan/Shakespearean era (16th century) the term meant, “giving too much attention to women” and women sought after such men. Effeminacy as performance did not necessarily connote homosexuality until the Oscar Wilde trials (1895). Sinfield and others remind us that effeminacy was not always associated with homosexuality before the 20th century, which establishes that effeminacy’s

³² www.thesaurus.com, an internet thesaurus, is more creative than the paper-copy. It adds “chichi, chicken, cream puff, delicate, emasculate, epicene, faggy, fairy, flaming, foppish, fruity, gay, lily, limp wrist, mama’s boy, milksop, nancy, overnice, pansy, pantywaist, pretty boy, puss, sappy, sissified, soft, swish, twinkie, unvirile, weak, womanlike, womanly” to the synonyms. One should note the overlap between this list and the synonyms for male homosexuality. In fact, “gay” is already a part of this list.

³³ Here, I am only discussing Western cultures’ understanding of effeminacy. Same-sex passion, homosexuality, and effeminacy, as Gilbert Herdt discusses in *Same Sex, Different Cultures* (1998), are understood and treated differently in many other cultures. His examples include American-Indian berdache and Indian hijra (see Herdt 1998).

association with homosexuality is historically contingent (see Bristow 1995, Cohen 1992). Cohen similarly notes that in the Wildean era effeminacy made men a more attractive object of female desire, if only because of a perceived commonality of interests (1992, 136). Effeminacy was also associated with the upper-class or aristocracy, as exemplified in that period's terminology of "dandy" men (Sinfield 1994, vii). Dandies probably had to perform effeminacy to indicate their high-class status, just like Romans did. However, again according to Sinfield, the strongest link between effeminacy and homosexuality has been formed in the West exactly because of dandies. Cohen agrees: "The supplementing of 'aesthetic' effeminacy with connotations of male sexual desire for other men is, I would argue, one of the consequences of the newspaper representations of the Wilde trials" (136). Even in 1890 some critics wisely observed that "in every Dandy, it may be said, a woman lies more or less deeply buried" (quoted in Bristow 1995, 199). Cohen describes how Wilde was "often caricatured in contemporary journals as a languorous, long-haired lover of sunflowers or as an 'utterly' aestheticized utterer of epigrams, so that the representation of his large, lounging frame became an iconic disparagement of what was deemed to be male 'effeminacy'" (1992, 136). However, when Wilde was charged with indecency and sodomy, effeminacy and homosexuality became strongly associated over a very short period of time. Weeks points out that Wilde's trial "was a vital moment in the creation of male homosexual identity" (1991, 19). This trial also contributed to effeminacy as explanatory of homosexual orientation, an idea that still prevails.

In the context of contemporary culture, may well be thought of as effeminate for boys to avoid playing with other boys and boys' toys like cars or soldiers, but instead to play with girls, dress in feminine clothing, have long hair, or display stereotypically feminine body gestures. Adult men may be thought as effeminate if they practice cooking or sewing, use feminine body language, like putting hands on the hips, or even if they read a lot. Sometimes men who think they are masculine may be thought of as effeminate by others, which shows that it is not only one's own definition of effeminacy/masculinity but also others' definition of such terms that defines us. Since under the restrictive notions of the gender and sexual binary system, one can be classified only on one side of the binary, once a man is classified as effeminate, irrational, or emotional, it is hard for him to get out of this system and everything he does may be thought of as in alignment with his effeminacy.

Finally, as I mentioned before, the description of effeminacy is not ahistorical and this is also evident in filmic representations. Certain codes of effeminacy that were visible to 1920s audiences may be missing now, and what contemporary viewers see as an effeminate character in film may be unreadable to future audiences. In addition, in certain genres, for example costume dramas, even contemporary audiences do not read effeminacy essentially as a signifier of homosexuality.³⁴ However, as I will discuss at length below, although *The Talented Mr. Ripley* is a period piece, the film suggests that Ripley's gender performance, i.e., his non-masculinity, is a signifier of his sexual orientation and of his dishonest personality.

Part II. The Talented Mr. Ripley

In my analysis of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (hereafter referred to as TMR), I will first offer a brief synopsis of its complex plot, and then fill in the gaps throughout my analysis of the film. One of the reasons for the complexity of the plot arises from the fact that there are several significant characters in the film, and we watch the events unfold from the point of view of a protagonist who is a pathological liar.

In the first shot of the film a black frame masks the screen and the first frame displays only one of Ripley's eyes. The mask is erased slowly as the images reveal a broken mirror, and after this shot, bit-by-bit, the other pieces of Ripley's face are unmasked (Plate IV). The pieces of his face come together only when the accompanying song reaches the lyrics, "Branded with a mark of shame of Cain", a song about the Biblical first murderer, implying that Ripley may have murdered his own brother or at least that he has something akin to fratricide to be ashamed of.

³⁴ For example, in *Dangerous Liaisons* (Stephen Frears, 1988) Sébastien de Valmont's (John Malkovich) effeminate behaviour and make-up do not change the fact that he is a womaniser and audiences think his effeminacy as a performance necessary for his status rather than a sign of his closeted homosexuality.



PLATE IV

When the shot reconstitutes itself, Ripley is sitting by himself in a dark room, which is the cabin of a boat, as we will learn at the end of the film. This scene is followed by Ripley's flashbacks; the story that follows is his recollection of the events that took place. The notion of an "unreliable narrator" is certainly at play from this moment on. As the narrative will soon prove that Ripley lies continuously, a film made of Ripley's memories may include gaps that need to be filled and inconsistencies that need to be corrected.

At the beginning of the film, we assume Tom Ripley to be an innocent, masculine, and heterosexual man. As I discuss elsewhere in this dissertation, heterosexuality is assumed to be the default position unless indicated otherwise; therefore, we imagine all male characters as heterosexual unless they are coded as homosexual, or unless we have previous information from the narrative. Matt Damon's casting as Ripley no doubt supports, but does not necessarily confirm the heterosexuality of the character. Before we learn about Ripley, we already have some extra-diegetic information about the star that plays Ripley. From this information, we may think of Ripley as a heterosexual, honest, and even a sympathetic character.³⁵ According to Keller, Ripley "is more likeable than most of the

³⁵ When TMR came out, Matt Damon was not as famous as he is at the time of the writing of this dissertation; however, his filmography included playing several 'good' characters. He had secondary roles as good guys in a number of films [like *Geronimo* (Walter Hill, 1993), *Courage Under Fire* (Edward Zwick, 1996), *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998)], but was most famous for *Good Will Hunting* (Gus Van Sant, 1997), which has reinforced his typical casting. This film affected Damon's star persona even further as he and Ben Affleck received an Oscar for the film's script. At that time, Ben Affleck was known as the more handsome of the two friends, and Damon as the plainer and down-to-earth one.

people he kills”, although “he goes too far” (2002, 69). Although he is evil, murders people and steals their identities, we do not hate Ripley, instead we pity him.³⁶ However, the audience learns to be suspicious about the assumption that Ripley is an innocent, masculine, and heterosexual man within the first few minutes.³⁷

After the shots of Ripley that initiate the film, a sound bridge to the next scene transforms the non-diegetic song to a diegetic one. At a private concert in New York, a female soloist is singing “Lullaby for Cain”, whilst Ripley is playing the piano. After the concert, Ripley kisses the singer and Emily Greenleaf, the wealthy socialite whose husband has organized the concert, says, “Darling couple, aren’t they?” Soon, Ripley is approached by Herbert Greenleaf, who offers him money and a voyage to Italy to help him bring his son, Dickie, home.

During the concert Ripley wears a Princeton University jacket, and both the audience and the Greenleafs assume that he is a student at Princeton. After the concert, the film audience, unlike the Greenleafs, find out that the jacket is not Ripley’s; he has borrowed it from the actual pianist he is filling in for that day. When the singer gets into the car of the actual pianist, the audience understands that the pianist is not only the Princeton student, but he is almost certainly the singer’s boyfriend; thus, the “darling couple” is not she and Ripley, as Emily Greenleaf imagined.

From this opening sequence we learn that Ripley is not working as a pianist, but was just filling in for the day since the actual pianist was not available. It turns out that Ripley actually works in the men’s room of a concert hall. Through shots of him watching the piano players and practicing the piano when the hall is empty, we infer that Ripley may have learned to play the piano by simply watching the concert pianists, which adds the element of talent to his characterization. It is important to note that we do not know if Ripley has any genuine musical talent, but he clearly has a striking imitative talent. Through this talent, he can play the piano, forge signatures, and even become a totally different person.

³⁶ One of the signs that showed that the viewers liked Matt Damon’s performance as an evil man was his nomination for an MTV Award in Best Villain category in 2000.

³⁷ Matt Damon’s Ripley casting looks more relevant now since he has played other characters who lead double lives, for instance in the *Bourne Identity* trilogy (Doug Liman, 2002; Paul Greengrass, 2004 and 2007), *The Departed* (Martin Scorsese, 2006) and *The Good Shepherd* (Robert De Niro, 2006).

The features of luck, talent, deception, and unclear sexual orientation are at play in this sequence in varying degrees. Herbert Greenleaf chooses Ripley because of his apparent talent, taste in high culture, social class (aspiring artist), and heterosexuality (assumed girlfriend). Yet Ripley is also lucky, since he could not know that playing the piano for his friend for a day would result in Mr. Greenleaf's offer. In this sequence, Ripley does not actively lie to the Greenleafs, but uses several misunderstandings attached to this series of events to his benefit.

The characterization of Ripley brings several medical terms to mind, like sociopathy or multiple personality disorder.³⁸ His shattered identity is even mirrored in the unveiling of the title of the film; according to this sequence, there is no single Ripley. The title is revealed successively at the beginning of the film: before the adjective "talented" appears beside "Mr. Ripley", we see other adjectives in a rapid sequence: The Mysterious Yearning Secretive Sad Lonely Troubled Confused Loving Musical Gifted Intelligent Beautiful Tender Sensitive Haunted Passionate Mr. Ripley. When "passionate" fades out, "Talented" appears beside "Mr. Ripley" and unlike the other adjectives it settles to make the title of the film. There is indeed no true self in Ripley; he constructs himself out of the pieces, here symbolized as adjectives, of other people. The film can be read as Ripley's search for an identity, and the use of several spaces in the film defines this search in spatial terms.

The sequence that follows builds on Ripley's 'talent'. Ripley is in his house studying jazz singers; in particular, he is struggling to hear the difference between the voices of several singers, complaining, "I don't even know if this is a man or a woman" as Chet Baker sings *My Funny Valentine*. Learning to be a concert pianist by watching pianists in the concert hall requires not only talent but also hard work. This scene adds to the element of hard work; Ripley works for hours to learn all of these singers. At this stage we are not sure whether Ripley is just getting ready to meet Dickie by learning his tastes or preparing to deceive Dickie, but the way this scene is shot, with minimum lighting and extreme angles, causes a feeling of discomfort.

³⁸ "Multiple Personality Disorder" is not a clinically correct term and is referred to as "Dissociative Identity Disorder" in the American Psychiatric Association DSM-IV from 1994 on. It is interesting that we learn these terms from films and TV rather than medical literature and their inaccurate filmic descriptions become what most of us know as these disorders.

In due course Ripley travels to Italy to retrieve Dickie, but instead of achieving Mr. Greenleaf's wishes, Ripley will instead murder Dickie and steal his identity, attempt to murder Dickie's girlfriend Marge, and murder Dickie's friend Freddie and Marge's friend (and his own boyfriend) Peter. At the end of the film, the audience has no doubt Ripley can murder again and again.³⁹

Upon arriving in Italy, in the customs hall of the harbour Ripley meets Meredith, the daughter of the wealthy Randalls who are part of the Greenleaf's social circle. Ripley surprisingly introduces himself as Emily Greenleaf to her, which turns out to be a joke, but not a comment that other men would make in the context of this film. He then introduces himself as Dickie Greenleaf. It is not talent or hard work on Ripley's part but simply luck that Meredith does not know Dickie. As she is from the high society of America, she could have met Dickie in person or seen his photograph in the paper. By now, around ten minutes into the film, we are aware that we are dealing with some kind of a sociopath who can easily pretend to be another person, and, as will be clarified further in the film, he is very successful at doing so.

The audiences may also read this scene in another way: Meredith is surprised that Ripley has only one bag and is traveling in R class although he is an American. Ripley lies because he is embarrassed about his poverty. Ultimately, the way Ripley is presented here draws our attention to the fact that Ripley is ashamed of his financial status, and thus, when analyzing his gender performance, we should also be sensitive to the markers that make him different from the upper class he wants to surround himself with and gain access to.

Watching the way Minghella portrays this character I find myself with these questions: is Ripley not heterosexual? Is he effeminate or does he lack masculinity? Is his 'unmasculinity' used as a means to explain his sexual orientation? Is he a liar and sociopath because of his sexual orientation and/or lack of masculinity or vice versa?

³⁹ Although, as Straayer notes, thinking that he is simply an evil murderer who gets away with these murders would be wrong; Ripley rather self-destructs: "One might say that Ripley gets away with murder in Minghella's film, but this would be to ignore the film's implication of self-destruction" (2004, 380).

Ripley as Closeted Homosexual

It is often suggested that the story of Ripley is a metaphor for a closeted man being outed. Most reviewers, even gay ones, believe Ripley is gay. For Bronski he is a “confused gay man at a social disadvantage in a world in which his social betters are often mean to him” (2000, 13). Brophy goes further: “Matt Damon delivers one of the best portrayals of a repressed gay man ever seen in movies” (1999). Some others suggest Minghella is modernizing/queering earlier versions of the film and of the book, in which homoeroticism is, at best, subtle. For example, Benshoff suggests that Minghella is humanizing Ripley so that viewers might empathise with his conflicted state (2004, 181), as his “murders arise from his entrapment in the closet” (179). Brandt points out that in this film, “it is not the homosexual in general, but, more specifically, the closeted gay man who constitutes a risk for society” (2000, 90). Keller takes it further: “The film may also be a warning to its audience of the potential danger in the obligatory suppression of homosexual desires” (2002, 81); nonetheless, he also refers to Ripley as a “gay serial killer” (69).⁴⁰

In actual life gay men or closeted gay men are not prone to murder; however, on screen this has been a common representation. Not only are homosexual men often represented as killers in film,⁴¹ but in films from *Strangers on a Train* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1951)⁴² to *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980) and even to *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999) repressed homosexuality is also represented as dangerous and monstrous (also see Benshoff 1997). To reduce Ripley’s sociopathy to his ‘repressed’ homosexuality is a simplistic way to read this film. There is no doubt Ripley is a queer character, but it is important to note that although Minghella aims to queer the novel, in some ways he actually repeats what is common in earlier and mainstream films about homosexuality; in TMR Ripley is always treated as suspect. Although different characters and different audiences will come to these conclusions at different times whilst watching the film, Ripley’s unclear sexual orientation will nearly always be assumed as homosexuality, his non-masculine behaviour will frequently be thought of as explanatory of his homosexuality, and his obsessive

⁴⁰ Indeed, New Queer Cinema films like *Swoon* (Tom Kalin, 1992) and *The Living End* (Gregg Araki, 1992) already explored the concept of the queer killer. As the films were made by queers and for queers, compared to TMR, which is made for a mainstream audience, neither the films themselves nor their audience are easily comparable. Benshoff adds that “the film [TMR] was unable to make most of its points about queer identity politics understood to a mass audience, partly because of its own textual ambiguity, but also because the audience itself lacked a sufficient understanding of those ideas in the first place” (2004, 175).

⁴¹ As Dyer also asks, “Why are so many serial killers homosexual?” (1993, 113) (See also Brandt 2000).

⁴² The film is also based on a Patricia Highsmith’s 1950 novel of the same name.

lying/criminality will commonly be read as a counterpart of his closeted homosexuality and of his ambiguous gender performance. I suggest that Ripley's sexual desires, lack of masculinity, poverty, and criminality are so indistinguishable in the film that it is simply not possible to comprehend which comes first. There is indeed no true self in Ripley; Ripley performs behaviors of other people. The film can be read as Ripley's search for an identity, and the use of several different spaces in the film defines this search in spatial terms. Significantly, Ripley, as a non-masculine man, never truly gets to occupy any of these spaces, which are the beach, a bathtub, the hollow space in the mirror, and various vehicles for transportation, including boats, ships, and buses.

The Geography of the Beach

In Italy, Ripley meets Dickie and his girlfriend Marge on a beach in Mongi, also referred to as Mongibello, a fictitious provincial town. Although Ripley pretends to encounter them by coincidence (and makes up a story that he knew Dickie from Harvard), the meeting is not a twist of fate. Before he meets the couple, Ripley follows their every step with his binoculars and learns their routine. He also discovers that Dickie is having an affair with an Italian woman named Silvana.

The first space to provide hints about Ripley's gender is the beach. Beaches are spaces in which the line separating the heterosexual from the non-heterosexual is hardly visible because everyone is nearly naked and the codes of masculinity as created by costumes exist to a lesser extent. Further, men (homo)socialize on beaches by playing games with each other (like they do in sport fields). Therefore, in this scene the *mise-en-scène* is as important as the narrative. The scene starts with Ripley entering the beach: although the camera follows him, he is in the background and the extras cover most of the screen space. The men outnumber the women; they are placed in front of the women and, apart from the initial shot that displays two couples, men talk to each other rather than to women. The extras all look like Italians or people from the Mediterranean; they are carefully chosen extras, mostly handsome men whose masculinity is emphasized by their perfectly muscled and tanned bodies. The representation of this space will unmistakably remind most gay male audiences of a gay beach.

At the beach, Ripley is significantly coded as being out of place with his fluorescent lime-green swimwear, which is in contrast to other men's sexy swimwear. There is something wrong with this swimwear; if it is not exactly feminine, it still looks like it belongs to a child rather than an adult man because of its colour. Like the colour of his swimwear, Ripley's own colour is wrong. When he introduces himself to Dickie, the first thing the latter says is, "You are so white! . . . Did you ever see a guy so white, Marge? Grey, actually".

Ripley's skin is not necessarily grey in colour; he is just not tanned, nor is he properly 'white'. In fact, white people are not always literally white; in Richard Dyer's terms, white (or whiteness) is not a colour, but rather a symbol. Dyer notes that "in Western tradition, white is beautiful because it is the colour of virtue"; it symbolizes goodness, purity, and chastity (1997, 72). Further, according to Dyer, whiteness is an unmarked source of power: "White power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular . . . the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human" (1988, 44). Dyer's conceptualization of whiteness is instrumental in understanding Ripley's desire to become like Dickie, because 'others' desire the qualities/privileges 'white' people are assumed to have. Dickie is a white but tanned man; Ripley's desire to become white like Dickie and his desire to have the ability to become tanned like Dickie can be attributed to certain ideals about sexual orientation, performance of gender, and upper socio-economic class.

Dickie is rich and he does not have to work. He is masculine, heterosexual and has a powerful sex drive; as stereotypical of the representation of white, heterosexual and rich men, all of his worries have to do "with not being able to resist [his sexual] drives or with struggling to master them" (Dyer 1997, 27). While he is white, he is aware of the implications of whiteness, which he finds boring. Thus, he lies in the sun and becomes perfectly tanned. Dyer writes, "In becoming darker, white people may wish to take on some of the imputed characteristics of dark people" (49). A tanned person brings to mind passion and carnal, worldly pleasures. Dickie converts his white skin to brown by tanning, but as a tanned man he is still a white man; he does not become black. As Dyer states, "there's no loss of prestige . . . Tanned white male skin was only sometimes prized as a sign of manliness, of vigour and enterprise" (49). Furthermore, when white people become darker they utilize the "white people's right to be various, literally to incorporate into themselves

features of other peoples” (49). Tanning also shows health and leisure: “leisure (having the time to lie about acquiring a tan), wealth (buying that time, acquiring an artificial tan or traveling to the sun) and a healthy life style,” something that only rich people can afford (Dyer, 155). Thus, Dickie is doubly privileged: both as a white man, and as a white man who can afford to darken with no loss of prestige.

White is ideal, but, on the other hand, it is cultureless; there is no particularity in being white (Dyer, 9). Dickie tans and listens to the music of blacks: jazz, which his white father labels “insolent noise”. He listens to this music from his privileged position (like his tanning); therefore, he engages with blackness but without really becoming black. Dickie is not a creator of jazz music or part of black culture, but a consumer, from an upper-class position of white privilege.

Ripley is neither white nor tanned. He is grey and undesired. When Dickie first sees Ripley and thinks of him as white, he also sees a masculine, heterosexual man who can afford to spend his time holidaying in Mongi. Seconds later, he realizes Ripley is not white, and sees Ripley’s ‘real’ colour, which is grey. Grey is a dirty or unhealthy white. A grey person looks as if his blood has been sucked out; he is cadaverous and lifeless. Grey is unsexy because it connotes death, sorrow or depression.

Ripley is sexualized in this scene; however, he is sexualized as *unsexy*. In this very sexual space, Ripley looks like the only person without any sexiness. Ripley is grey, unlike Marge, who is white, and Dickie, who is brown. Especially compared to the sexy, bronzed bodies on the beach, Ripley, with his lack of a tan and his swimwear, looks as if he could not stimulate sexual desire in anyone.

In this scene, Marge is described as white by Dickie. A woman’s whiteness describes her purity and chastity, but Dickie makes fun of Marge’s body colour. Later in the film, Dickie describes sex with Marge as “Marge maintenance” and cheats on his perfectly white girlfriend with a dark/brunette woman. Italian women, like Spanish women, are stereotyped as passionate, carnal, and worldly. Marge is beautiful but she is not represented as passionate or sexually attractive; rather, she is like a perfectly white wife: pure, faithful, and dispassionate.

Ripley's greyness marks his unclear sexual orientation, lower financial status and boyishness. He is physically in the geography of the beach in this scene, yet he does not belong there and his lasting greyness/whiteness in the film proves that he does not go to the beach to tan again. Ripley cannot become white enough to possess the privilege of tanning.

Bathtub

The child-like Ripley matures and becomes more sexual in the sequences that follow. The narrative suggests that he achieves this transformation through his 'whitening'. During his friendship with Dickie, Ripley uses Dickie's money to access material things and starts to look different by wearing Dickie's clothes. He also throws away the big glasses, often thought of as unsexy accessories which did not suit his face. Dickie says, "Without the glasses you are not even ugly." In fact, this is a confirmation that he can be attractive; the way he has chosen to dress because of his class, taste and financial situation makes him uglier and less sexy than he could be. After this scene, the sexless boy with the funny swimwear disappears permanently from the film's narrative. In fact, because of the flashback narration, the audience already knows more than Dickie about Ripley's lies, and it is debatable whether Ripley was really unsexual or he was acting purposefully so to grab Dickie's attention.

As Ripley changes and becomes more like Dickie, the two men become closer and "Dickie and Marge" quickly become "Dickie, Ripley and Marge". Soon, Ripley starts to replace Marge as the closest person to Dickie. When Ripley confesses to Dickie that he has been sent by Herbert Greenleaf to take him back to New York, Dickie tells Ripley that he is not planning to go back. However, once he realizes that Ripley is interested in jazz music (which is a calculated move by Ripley), Dickie asks him to stay so that they can extort money from his father for their expenses. Marge is excluded from their friendship after Dickie learns of Ripley's interest in jazz music, and Ripley moves in with Dickie. On one occasion, Dickie serves coffee to Ripley before serving Marge because she is "dull", but Ripley is not.

Ripley's jealousy of Marge and Dickie's relationship is quickly replaced by Marge's jealousy of Ripley and Dickie's friendship. When the two men spend too much time

together, Marge says, "It's a good thing we are not getting married; we would have to invite Tom to our honeymoon". Ripley is further sexualized through this jealousy, this time not in terms of becoming attractive, but in terms of possessing sexual desires. Marge treats Ripley as a woman competing with herself. For example, when Silvana falls pregnant by Dickie and is found dead in the sea after committing suicide, Dickie leaves the scene of the event in excruciating emotional pain. Ripley follows Dickie, saying, "I'll go see what's the matter". Marge pushes Ripley aside in a jealous manner: "I'll go". Ripley acts like the closest person to Dickie, and the unusual closeness of the two men causes Marge to panic. This panic is undoubtedly sexual since Ripley acts like the wife or the girlfriend of Dickie. Each time Marge is shown as anxious because of the two men's closeness, the couple has sex or gets closer physically, so both the audience and Marge are reassured as to Dickie's heterosexuality. To further relieve Marge's panic, Ripley creates a fictitious fiancé, Frances, which (hetero)sexualizes him in both Marge's and Dickie's eyes, although they never see but only hear about her.

Ripley starts to claim space through possessing more money, acting more masculine and passing as heterosexual, thereby fulfilling the privileges of whiteness. The space he claims is physically beside Dickie and metaphorically in the space of Marge. If this causes any homoerotic attraction between the two men, only some of the audience (not to mention Ripley as well as Marge) are aware of this, as the film portrays the relationship between the two at this stage as brotherly friendship, which is the normal outcome of homosocial relationships between men.

After they sing together at a jazz club, Dickie gives Ripley a friendly kiss on the cheek, and in the following scenes, he shows physical attention to Ripley by hugging him, squeezing his cheeks, jumping on his shoulders, and driving him on his motorbike. The physical closeness that was an expression of close friendship starts to become physically painful as Marge is more and more excluded from their relationship and Ripley starts to literally claim her space. For example, on the motorcycle, while Ripley is sitting behind him (ordinarily Marge's place) and hugging him, Dickie says, "You're breaking my ribs." Ripley hugs him tightly with love, but it is exactly this physical closeness that hurts Dickie. As they are both ostensibly heterosexual men, there is something wrong in this closeness. To a lesser degree,

this scene also foreshadows what's coming next: the literal breaking of the bones when Ripley murders Dickie by beating him with an oar.

As the narrative progresses, Ripley is (homo)sexualized through the plot, and more crucially, also by use of point of view shots. When Dickie and Ripley talk to each other, the audience sees how Ripley sees Dickie; in other words, in many shots of Dickie, Ripley's point of view is employed and the (star) lighting increases the already handsome Jude Law's glamour in each of these shots. In contrast, we often look at Ripley from a third-person point of view, especially when he is looking at Dickie. The way he looks at Dickie is clearly not a friend's but a lover's gaze.

One scene that radically displays such desire is the bath sequence where Dickie and Ripley play chess while Dickie is having a bath. The shot opens with a chessboard, candles and a glass of red wine in the frame as the trombone plays a romantic tune. Audiences would doubtlessly note the romantic atmosphere created by the *mise-en-scène* and use of music. In this scene, we watch Dickie through Ripley's eyes; Dickie is divided into parts and every bit of him is fetishized. The shot starts with Dickie's hairy tummy, before the camera tilts up to show his chest and ends with Dickie placing a cigarette suggestively between his lips. When the camera turns to Ripley, we get a close-up of his eyes to imply that he is the bearer of the gaze. Ripley says he feels cold and wants to get in the bath: "We never shared a bath". Dickie says, "No!" in a surprised manner. Like a closeted gay man trying his luck but being rejected, Ripley turns to lying, "I didn't mean with you in it." From the editing of the previous shots, it is clear to the audience that he wants to get in the bath with Dickie.

While Dickie is getting out of the bath, the audience is provided with a glimpse of Dickie's penis that is hidden from the view of Ripley, who stands behind him. However, in a mirror image the audience has the chance to study Dickie's (and Jude Law's) naked body and butt for some time. When the camera returns to a medium shot, it is clear that this has indeed been Ripley's point of view and he is watching Dickie's body through its mirror reflection. Just as the audience understands this to be Ripley's point of view, so Dickie also understands he is being watched by Ripley and flicks his towel at him. The look on Ripley's face clarifies his odd past behaviour even further to the audience, though not to Dickie, who has conveniently turned his back.

In the bathroom, and more specifically in the bathtub, there is an identity briefly available for Ripley. If he were to get in the bathtub and if the two men were to start kissing each other, there is a possibility that Ripley would become gay (or bisexual) and have a sexual identity. However, Dickie does not let him get in the bath, nor does he let him watch his body at length. It is crucial that the two men are shot separately in this space. The separate shots symbolize the desire that is different from the brotherly love of the previous scenes. Dickie and Ripley are mostly framed together, both in earlier scenes (for instance in the jazz club) and in the next scene following this one, which starts with a shot in a bank with the two men looking identical like brothers or twins. Especially when they are shot together in similar clothes, the two men look very similar. Nonetheless, Ripley earns this closeness to Dickie through lying about himself and through his potential to become white. If Dickie doubted Ripley's heterosexuality, he obviously would not have let him anywhere near his bathtub, just like his father would not have sent Ripley anywhere near his son.

This is also the first time Dickie calls Ripley mysterious: "The mysterious Mr Ripley. Marge and I spend hours speculating." Marge and Dickie realize, and accept, Ripley's unusual identity, which they describe as mysterious. Ripley is like a puzzle and Dickie does not try to solve this puzzle, whilst the audience are given the clues one by one. Dickie is an unwilling detective and when he comes across the truth he hardly tries to understand what is behind this mysteriousness. Dickie attributes Ripley's transformation to his changing taste and money, whereas the audiences, step by step, follow Ripley's increasing masculinization, (homo)sexualization and dishonesty. Only when Dickie catches Ripley dancing half naked by accident, does he become a part of the audience and Ripley's mysteriousness gains another meaning.

Shades of Non-Masculinity

It is no accident that Freddie enters the film here, before any homosocial desire fully transforms into a homosexual one. A good friend of Dickie's, Freddie enters the narrative and replaces Ripley in Dickie's affections, just as Ripley had replaced Marge. Indeed, it is Marge who comforts the heart-broken Ripley and explains to him that everyone is replaceable in Dickie's world. The Freddie character is exemplary of another kind of non-masculinity; although he acts very 'effeminately' compared to Ripley, Freddie's non-

masculinity neither jeopardizes his status nor creates panic because it is explained as an outcome of his social class (Plate V).



Plate V

Freddie is a dandy. He has no profession that we know of; rather, he travels and listens to jazz music. He moves as if he were continuously hearing music in his mind. The casting of Philip Seymour Hoffman as Freddie is no coincidence; Hoffman has perfected his characterization of gay men, transvestites, and men who are not necessarily gay but effeminate and/or closeted/pseudo gays, in films including *Boogie Nights* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1997), *Flawless* (Joel Schumacher, 1999), *Capote* (Bennett Miller, 2005), *Happiness* (Todd Solondz, 1998), *Magnolia* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999) and *Mission: Impossible II* (J.J. Abrams, 2006). As Freddie, Hoffman performs a non-gay but highly effeminate and irritating character. More precisely, the Freddie character is irritating especially because of his effeminacy, like several other Hoffman characters. There is no doubt that Hoffman is a heterosexual actor, but in films his effeminate characters, whether gay or straight, do not get sex. In TMR, Freddie's heterosexuality is established instantly; the moment he enters the story he looks at a woman and says, "Oh, God; don't you want to fuck every woman you see just once?" Effeminacy as a signifier of his dandiness is confirmed through this superfluous heterosexuality. Later on, we learn that he has 'fiancées' in every European city. At the same time, however, his heterosexuality is hollow; we do not see him engaging in a sexual affair with anyone. Freddie's heterosexuality is presumed rather than confirmed. Maybe that is why Freddie does not stay in Mongi or

another city, unlike Dickie; on the contrary, just like Ripley he is restless and continuously on the move.

Dickie acts in a less masculine fashion around Freddie, especially when the two are listening to music together, but this closeness never becomes painful as it does with Ripley. They feel secure with each other's heterosexuality; when Freddie jokes about fucking every woman just once, Dickie replies: "Only once?" It is not only the act of listening to music in a booth, but also the safety of both men's purported heterosexuality that makes the two men's extreme physical closeness possible. Thus, both effeminacy and non-masculinity are represented as irritating in the film, but neither is threatening unless it merges with homosexuality. Dickie finds Freddie boring, but he does not find him 'girly', or 'spooky', or 'mysterious'.

Freddie's function in the narrative is to display the end point of what Ripley is striving for. If Ripley could ever become as white and moneyed as he would like, the suggestion is that he would just end up being dull and boring, like Freddie. Ripley is not only unable to become like Freddie and be Dickie's friend and his equal; he is also unwilling to do so. Dyer notes that whiteness not only connotes privilege, dominance and superiority but it also means missing colour. Strictly speaking, white is not a colour, but rather the combination of all the colours of the visible light spectrum. White is also invisible; in an entirely white room one would ask, "Don't you think you need a bit of colour?" (Dyer 1997, 47). Dickie finds whiteness dull, hence his tan; therefore, although Dickie prefers to hang out with Freddie at the moment, and invites him rather than Ripley to concerts, he will move on to the next person soon. It is maybe at this point that Ripley makes up his mind about being Dickie himself rather than his brother/best friend. In fact, from here on Dickie and Ripley's threatening closeness makes their friendship dissolve very quickly.

Mirror Existence

In the first ten minutes of TMR, Ripley's image is broken into pieces. There is no coherent image of Ripley to fill the screen. The film starts with Ripley's face masked in black. As the face is slowly revealed, a coloured gel blocks and claims the space, and stripes cut through Ripley's image (Plates VI and VIa). In the following shots, while Ripley is secretly watching a concert pianist perform, we see only half of his face on the screen; the rest of

the screen is black as he is behind a black curtain (Plate VII). Once in his house, Ripley's image is blocked and framed by the windowsill; soon after, the windscreen of Mr. Greenleaf's car frames Ripley's image. These images are spatially significant images that are symbolic of Ripley's broken identity.



Plate VI



Plate VIa



Plate VII

There are several mirror scenes in the film that are crucial, as they are expressive of Ripley's identity. Ripley appears to have confidence that he exists in space only when he looks in the mirror, so throughout the film he keeps looking in mirrors. Several times the mirrors he looks into are shattered, hence splitting his image into pieces, sometimes these mirrors are illusionary, showing the dead Dickie instead of him when he looks at them. Looking into mirrors implies Ripley's desire to secure an identity, but this identity will at best be hollow, since a mirror image occupies no real space. The moment Ripley turns his head from the mirror; he loses the utopic spatial identity he found in the mirror.

In one scene when Ripley looks in the mirror, he sees his reflection beside Marge and Dickie's photos in its corner, and he watches three people rather than himself, as if he exists only in relation to or as an extension of them. His ideal self is made up of others, and especially Marge and Dickie, as he claims the metaphorical space of Marge and the literal space beside Dickie.

Later in the film Ripley cheerfully dances to the mirror, singing along to Bing Crosby's "May I?" while wearing Dickie's tuxedo minus trousers. The camera continuously pans and keeps Ripley or his mirror image at the centre of the frame to give us an exact picture of how he moves. In the last frame, we see Dickie's image in the mirror too, as he has entered the room, and has been watching a semi-nude Ripley dancing in a girlish manner. Ripley is content opposite the mirror, and he seems able to claim an identity which he lacked before. As mentioned, this reflection is also sexual; Ripley has no trousers, but is partly dressed in Dickie's clothes. In the dancing sequence Ripley dances to the mirror watching his ideal image, but when Dickie arrives all of a sudden, he hides behind the mirror and Dickie's image covers the mirror with Ripley's head on top of the mirror. His body becomes Dickie's body, the ideal heterosexual, masculine, and white body. He momentarily achieves an ideal entity. Nonetheless, a mirror reflection is the most hollow of spaces. Foucault writes:

The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. . . The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at

once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (1984)

In Foucault's description, the space occupied is at the same time real and unreal, causing dislocation in both Ripley himself and the audience. His image is there and real, as something he can hold on to, and it is an image that makes him content, as he no longer looks like the Ripley at the beginning of the film. At the same time, his mirror image is a utopia; a fantasy he wants to become, and this image is dependent on Dickie both literally, because his reflection is also in the mirror, and metaphorically, as Ripley needs Dickie's money, tastes, and masculine behaviour to become the upper-class white man he desires to become.

Effeminacy

The scene that shows Ripley dancing in front of the mirror is the only scene in the film in which he acts in an explicitly effeminate manner. This scene is significant plot-wise, as the brief dance causes the flourishing friendship between Ripley and Dickie to come to an abrupt end. After Dickie sees how Ripley acts when he is alone, he literally throws him out of his life, and suggests that Ripley go back to the States.

This scene opens up a variety of possible readings. First, this scene could be read simply as a performance by Ripley. We already know that Ripley continuously imitates different people effectively; as the audience has already witnessed, Ripley is an accomplished performer and in this scene he is imitating a famous 1930s singer. Also, Ripley is in Dickie's room and in his clothes, so he may also be imitating Dickie's or Freddie's dandiness. At the beginning of the film Ripley wears his pianist friend's Princeton jacket to claim his status. Dickie's jacket is similarly a symbol of his status, and not wearing Dickie's trousers but dancing semi-nude adds a degree of sexuality to Ripley's behaviour.

However, rather than a performance, this scene is carefully shot and edited to be read as revealing Ripley's real, albeit flawed and fraudulent, sexual identity. What is definitive about our understanding of effeminacy is that men who show unmasculine behaviour are assumed to be homosexual unless explicitly marked as heterosexual, as demonstrated by Freddie. So a certain mode of behaviour or performance of gender becomes explanatory of

our sexual orientation. As Dyer puts it, “There are signs of gayness, a repertoire of gestures, expressions, stances, clothing, and even environments that bespeak gayness” (1993, 19). From the representation of gay men in mainstream films – from *Boys in the Band* (William Friedkin, 1970) to *Be Cool* (F. Gary Grey, 2005) – we learn that in certain environments, like when they are alone or in the safety of a gay bar, some gay men feel free to act like their allegedly ‘real’ selves or as who they want to be, an authenticity that is mostly represented as the performance of effeminacy. In this scene, Ripley’s dance makes this unmasculine behaviour sexual. From this moment on, it is clear to the audience that Ripley’s non-masculinity bespeaks his homosexuality; in other words, his homosexuality achieves a kind of visibility through his effeminacy. The audience learns that Ripley can transform himself like a chameleon, but there is one truth about him that does not change – he *is* a homosexual. When unmasculine Ripley is fully sexualized, he is not a talented boyish/girly liar, but a dangerous homosexual.

The scene is also significant because this is the first time Dickie watches Ripley just like the audience does. The term “sissy” means many things but most importantly a man who acts like a sissy gives up a dominant position, the position of the masculine man. Masculinity is not seen as learned, but as something that the male body naturally possesses. Therefore, being a sissy is acting against your nature. Likewise, in this scene effeminacy is something in a man’s body that does not fit; it is simply out of place (Sinfield 1994, Edwards 1994). It is a form of lying, because it is acting unnaturally in relation to your body. When effeminacy is represented like lying to your body, this also addresses the notion that gay men are untrustworthy (since they do not act like ‘real’ men but women). However, there is no textual proof to suggest that Dickie decides Ripley is gay. Dickie throws Ripley out of his life because he is not acting in a manly fashion; in Butler’s terms, Ripley is punished for not doing his gender right (1990, 140).

Unlike most of the viewers, Dickie probably does not decide that Ripley is gay, because he is blind to non-heterosexuality. His decadence certainly does not include ‘queer’ sexual decadence. He is not blatantly homophobic, since we know that the openly gay man Peter Smith-Kingsley is his friend. Yet, we do not ever see Peter and Dickie in the same shot in TMR other than with Peter in the position of “the girlfriend’s best gay friend”, another filmic cliché of mainstream films like *My Best Friend's Wedding* (P.J. Hogan, 1997) and

The Next Best Thing (John Schlesinger, 2000). Nonetheless, Dickie, like the audience, learns that Ripley is lying, perhaps not about his sexual orientation but certainly about his gender performance. Ripley's effeminate behaviour is obviously not grounded in his social class, and his newly found masculinity turns out to be fraudulent and a pretension rather than a transformation in Dickie's eyes.

As I have discussed in the introduction, effeminacy sticks to you. After Dickie's lover Silvana commits suicide, Ripley takes on the maid Ermelinda's role in the house and starts tidying up. Dickie rapidly loses his temper and yells at Ripley: "You don't have to clean up". Ermelinda is motherly and she is unsexy because of her age and her social class. Ripley is unsexy because he takes on this supposedly female and lower-social class role so easily. Ripley also acts like a boring wife. When Dickie and Freddie decide to go to a jazz club, Ripley is unwillingly sent back home. He suddenly returns to the two men and says, "You said to make sure you didn't miss the train. Leaves at eight." Freddie bursts into laughter as this could be expected from an over-responsible mother or jealous wife. Even before his murder, Dickie does not accuse Ripley of being gay, but of acting like a little girl around him.

The sissy-dance scene in turn explains all of Ripley's future non-masculinity. This scene serves to explain earlier and forthcoming scenes in which Ripley's masculinity is questioned; from this scene on, Ripley will never be treated as a man, but at best as a girl or an old woman. The interest Ripley causes in Dickie is temporary and is not sexual, although Ripley hopes otherwise when he tries to position himself in Marge's place. Dickie likes Ripley because, in his words, "[Ripley] makes me laugh"; Ripley makes him laugh by being childish, unsexy, poor and unmasculine. For example, Dickie asks Ripley if he can mix a martini, something Ripley has possibly not even drunk before. It is funny that Ripley cannot fix a martini, but at the same time it is a class and a gender issue; not only does Ripley not know how to fix a martini, but he also does not know how to ski nor how to help Dickie with his boat. Although he lacks the financial means to ski or the masculinity needed for sailing, he is very good at analyzing handwriting, which is deemed as mystical and feminine. Overall, Ripley acts like some unsexy female figure, but his general attitude belongs to another unsexual being – an immature little girl.

Murder

“Each man kills the thing he loves” Oscar Wilde

After the dance scene, the connections between Ripley’s non-masculinity and lying/criminality become clear. Ultimately, this very brief scene not only puts Ripley’s masculinity but his entire being into question. The Tom Ripley that Dickie knew becomes a lie, and a fraud. After this scene, we (and Dickie) learn that everything about Ripley is untrustworthy. For example, Dickie guesses that Ripley is not from Princeton and he also asks, “Do you even like jazz?” The real Tom Ripley is the one who performs the sissy dance in front of the mirror, not the one Dickie thought he knew until then. Ripley’s lack of masculinity ends his temporary whiteness and attractiveness, and Ripley becomes entrapped in the space in which he was dancing to the mirror. Ripley is well aware of what his dance will be associated with, and he apologizes: “I was just fooling around; don’t say anything.” He begs Dickie not to tell anyone, but the next morning when Ripley joins them for breakfast, from the way Freddie grins Ripley understands that he already knows.

Before Ripley goes back to the States as Dickie has suggested, he and Dickie decide to go to a jazz festival one last time together. They take a train to San Remo and Dickie falls asleep in the train. Ripley lays his head on Dickie's shoulder and smells him with desire and the pain of leaving him. Dickie notices this as he wakes up and calls Ripley “spooky.” The terms that define Ripley also change. He was funny, then mysterious; now he is referred to as spooky, as well as a parasite.

The space Ripley has claimed in the film through his new-found whiteness is temporary; but this is not a real space, both because it is based on a mirror reflection and because it is an ideal rather than real. The money Ripley uses is not his own money but Dickie’s, and his heterosexuality is presumed by others rather than genuinely possessed. In the meantime, Dickie not only replaces Ripley with Freddie as his friend, but he also decides to marry Marge; in effect, the spaces Ripley attempted to possess are both taken back by their previous holders. Ripley’s access to whiteness is blocked by this rejection, and the murder of Dickie becomes inevitable for the survival of the white man Ripley is in the process of becoming. Because of his sissified gender performance, Ripley loses an identity he was craving to have and the one space that he would be keen to belong in: the space right beside Dickie.

In one sense, it is clear from Ripley's characterization and the flow of the narrative that Ripley is ready to murder Dickie. When the two men are in a boat on the calm sea, the *mise-en-scène* creates tension and the atmosphere is ready for this murder to take place. However, at the same time, the murder comes unexpectedly. Ripley says he would like to come back with his own money to Italy and rent a house with Dickie, to which Dickie replies by revealing that he is marrying Marge. He calls Ripley a leech, repeats several times that he is boring, tells him that he gives him the creeps, and finally says, "You move around like a little girl, Dickie, Dickie, Dickie all the time." It is clear that the whiteness Ripley tried to accomplish never actually convinced Dickie. The marriage, the loss of the space he wanted to belong to, the co-identities with Dickie he has missed having (as brothers, lovers, equals), and most painfully Dickie's confession that he thinks of him no more than a little girl makes Ripley fetch the oar and start hitting Dickie. Ripley kills the thing he loves; he is in pain when he is hitting Dickie, yet he does not stop as this is the means for his survival.

After disposing of the body in the sea, Ripley steals Dickie's identity. Ripley's transformation into Dickie is very unproblematic both because of his imitative talent and also because his image is so ungraspable. When Dickie is revealed to be responsible for the murders of Ripley and Freddie in the papers, the reporters corner Ripley, believing he is Dickie, to take his photographs. Although Ripley tries to hide his face, they manage to take some photos. It is astounding that neither Dickie's family nor Marge see these photographs in the papers and realize that Ripley is impersonating Dickie. It seems that Ripley's image is one which cannot be captured on the negatives; that there is no image to capture is also symbolic of his identity, an identity that does not exist.

Traveling Through Geographies

After murdering Dickie and stealing his identity, Ripley pretends to be Dickie subsequent to his arrival in Rome. He runs into Meredith, who already knows him as Dickie Greenleaf from their first meeting. When he meets Marge, who is in Rome looking for Dickie, he also meets her openly gay friend Peter Smith-Kingsley and the two later become lovers; this relationship defines Ripley as homosexual. Ripley then murders Freddie, who has become suspicious about Dickie's whereabouts. Over the next few weeks, Ripley pretends to be one or the other of these men, depending on whom he is with: Meredith thinks he is Dickie,

while Marge, Peter, the Italian police, and an American private detective know him as Ripley.

Ripley plays the masculine man successfully once he is wearing Dickie's clothes. He is talented in performing genders, and while performing heterosexuality he even kisses Meredith. Nonetheless, Ripley tries to possess an impossible sexual identity as he is both heterosexual and homosexual (and not bisexual) at the same time. Ripley becomes desirable both when he performs Dickie (to Meredith), and also when he performs wealthy Ripley (with Peter). For example, when Meredith is about to invite him to the opera, she realizes that he does not have his top on and is hypnotized by Ripley's (or Dickie's) body. It is not only Dickie's status she likes, but also his (Ripley's) body. The shot is important as the audience's attention is drawn to his (here also Matt Damon's) body and especially his chest. The actor probably had the same abs and muscles at the beach scene, but they were not emphasized with the lighting. The transformation to grey/unsexy to sexy/muscle is evident.

He starts a relationship with Peter and through this relationship he is (homo)sexualized and also masculinized, as he does not behave as sexless, childish or womanly anymore. Although he now acts like an openly gay man, at the same time his gender performance is more masculine than before. Marge becomes increasingly suspicious after she finds Dickie's rings in Ripley's house when she is visiting Peter. Peter is not home when Marge visits, so Ripley tries to murder her, because she is the only person to notice he has 'stolen' Dickie's image. Ripley has incredibly transformed himself from a non-sexual and non-masculine boy to a masculine and sexual man. As he walks towards her with a knife in his hand, he drops his towel and shows Marge that he is now a man through a literal display of his manhood. He is interrupted when Peter enters the apartment, but all the characters believe the words of the manly Ripley and suppose that Marge's accusations are simply a consequence of her hysterical state.

It is also significant that although Ripley becomes more sexual later in the film, he remains pointedly white; he does not get a tan. All Ripley possesses is the now whitened body as his marker of superiority. His body is white, but when he studies himself in the mirror several times and sees Dickie's face, and when he hears Dickie's voice calling him a little girl in

his dreams, he – and the audience – knows that he is still grey. He imitates Dickie perfectly, but both he and the viewers know that he is not Dickie.

From now on, Ripley continuously moves through various geographies to attempt to claim a space and, therefore, an acceptable identity. At the beginning of the film, Herbert Greenleaf's driver says, "I can tell you, the Greenleaf name opens many doors". Ripley starts to move up in terms of his socio-economic class after this scene; however, he also starts to move physically, which becomes disturbing since moving is symbolic of a restless person, and a person on the run. Minghella makes sure we see every form of transportation Ripley uses by employing wide angles in his establishing shots: after the driver's comment we watch the car leave from a crane shot and this shot dissolves into the shot of the ship leaving the harbour. A blue minibus enters the screen and Ripley ends up in Mongi. Then Ripley moves from the hotel to Dickie's house and moves with him on his motorbike.

However, Ripley can claim neither space nor an identity even after his transformation to Dickie is complete. Through his imitative talent, he can pretend to be Dickie, but he cannot be Dickie. What Ripley holds on to is an image: literally the reflection in the mirror when Dickie entered the room, half Ripley and half Dickie. As Ripley cannot assume an identity, nor posses a space of his own, he keeps moving. Later on, he moves between cities. When he thinks he will stop moving, as in Rome, the circumstances – in this case Freddie's suspicions and murder – make him move again. Eventually, even the first murder Ripley commits can be read as an issue of movement; he kills Dickie after he learns that Dickie is going skiing with his friends, but he is not invited. It is important to note that skiing is literally moving and moving very fast. Yet it is also moving in terms of class. Like his ignorance about fixing a martini, Dickie makes fun of Ripley when he learns the latter cannot ski. Going skiing with the others would move Ripley up the social ladder. Ripley does not give up and commit suicide like Silvana, but murders Dickie to move further up using his name and money.

The film ends in a boat in which Ripley and Peter are traveling. When Ripley finds out that he and Meredith and Peter are on the same boat, Ripley feels trapped. His final murder is not different from the previous ones; Ripley does not murder necessarily because he is evil, but rather murders for survival. It is simply not possible, even for Ripley, to play two

different men in the undersized space of the boat. He either has to kill Meredith and live as gay Ripley with Peter or murder Peter and live as heterosexual Dickie in a relationship with Meredith. Ripley prefers to kill Peter, an obstacle to being Dickie, rather than being gay and Ripley.

Earlier in the film, after being abandoned by Freddie and Dickie when they are going to a concert, Ripley starts walking to his house and in a brief moment he sees a male couple: a younger man sitting on another man's lap playing with his tie. A woman passes by and the man sitting on the chair starts whistling to her. This scene is important as it claims to show us the 'real' Italy, the inferno of its back streets. The 'real' Italy is represented as an oriental place where some men easily engage in sex with women and with (preferably) younger men without losing their heterosexual status and their masculinity. The scene is significant in portraying Ripley's disinterest in this couple. It is filmed in a long shot and the audience follows Ripley walking through the street, hardly turning his head to look at the men. Ripley's disinterest in this couple also reminds us of his indifference to the men on the beach. In Ripley, there is not a closeted homosexual man that needs to be outed, nor does Ripley need a homosexual identity unless it is accompanied by masculinity and finances. There is simply nothing 'authentic' within Ripley himself, and he constructs his identity through bits and pieces of other people he meets or sees or listens to. TMR makes clear that Ripley's inability to claim a space of his own is about his gender performance and sexual orientation. The protagonist, Tom Ripley, cannot claim space because he is an 'unmasculine' man and because his sexual orientation is unclear. The several personalities he takes on and Peter's murder cause the film to end with Ripley's nightmares. The nightmares consist of one significant element, Dickie's voice in his mind repeating again and again that he is a little girl, effeminate and sexless.

Foucault writes, "The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates" (1967). Ripley is in a boat and sailing to a future that is unknown both to himself and to us, the audience. There is hope, because Ripley is talented enough to find others to imitate and there will always be a way out for him. Pointedly, the film ends how it started; Ripley is once again across from a mirror, but his look is blank. In fact, we only learn that he is looking at the mirror because we see his and the mirror's reflection in another mirror.

After all of these attempts to claim space and an identity, there is no space to be had except on the boat or “the basement” as Ripley calls it, and there is nothing to see in the mirror. The boat is on the move, sailing, and since he has murdered Peter, Ripley will have to keep moving until the moment the ship stops at a port. To claim a space, Ripley will need a new identity and other people to be able to construct that new identity.

Part III. The Mexican

Gore Verbinski's *The Mexican* (2001) is thrilling, because it is one of the few contemporary mainstream movies to present a “bear” gay male character who is also a masculine man in terms of his gender performance. “Bears” are gay men who reject the bodily codes of contemporary Western gay men, whom Sinfield describes as “urban gays” (1998), like sticking to a strict diet, going to the gym and acquiring a toned or muscled body, shaving facial and/or bodily hair, and taking care of their hair, face, body with creams and so forth. Rejection of these bodily codes, and the ‘effeminate’ behaviour associated with such regimens, is strongly aligned with post-Stonewall gay men. After Stonewall gay men were divided into two camps according to their gender expression: the effeminists,⁴³ who sought to denounce traditional masculinity, and the masculinists who sought to challenge the long-held effeminate stereotype of gay men (Edwards 1994, 46). Chauncey notes that after Stonewall it was no longer necessary for sissies to be sissies, and there was no need to search for ‘normal’ men because gay men became masculine themselves (1994, 358). Madison similarly points out that 1970s gay men not only desired the masculine but also learned how to identify as masculine (2000, 37). In Sedgwick's words, the effeminate boy (and man) became the “haunting abject” of both the gay and heterosexual cultures (1994, 157). Effeminacy suddenly became not a possible outcome of homosexuality but an aberration, a mistake some gay men make and employ in their bodies, which needs to be corrected or repressed. Gayle Rubin argues:

Among gay men, the adoption of masculinity is complicated, and has a lot to do with rejecting the traditional equations of male homosexual desire with effeminacy . . . The development of the leather community is part of a long historical process in

⁴³ Effeminism has hardly ever been seen as positive and something to be encouraged in this century. Some effeminists formed groups like Faggot Effeminists (NYC) and The Radical Effeminists in the 70s and protested traditional masculinity (see also “The Effeminist Manifesto” by Steven Dansky, John Knoebel, and Kenneth Pitchford in Smith 2003). The Effeminist Manifesto reads, “Faggots and all effeminate men are oppressed by the patriarchy's systematic enforcement of masculinist standards . . . Our purpose is to urge all such men as ourselves (whether celibate, homosexual, or heterosexual) to become traitors to the class of men by uniting in a movement of Revolutionary Effeminism” (in Blasius 1997, 436).

which masculinity has been claimed, asserted, or reappropriated by male homosexuals. (Cited in Butler 1994)

What Rubin describes as the leather community are men who share a strongly masculine look and behaviour: they wear leather, especially jacket and boots, have cropped hair and facial hair, and body hair is not trimmed or shaved. The men who preferred masculinity after Stonewall were not only masculine – they were ultra-masculine.⁴⁴

Effeminacy is disturbing as it reminds us of homosexuality, the possibility of a man acting like a woman in sexual intercourse. However, ultra-masculinity may bring similar harassment and violence if it is assumed to be a marker of homosexuality. For example, the 70s gay man performed masculinity but not heterosexuality when he was walking on the streets alone or with other masculine men, and he was still vulnerable to attack.⁴⁵ Relations between extreme masculinity and suspicion of homosexuality have been explored in films such as *Raging Bull* (Martin Scorsese, 1980), *Magnolia* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999) and *Mean Creek* (Jacob Aaron Estes, 2004). In *The Mexican*, masculinity does not operate as a marker of heterosexuality and the film displays a flexibility of masculine codes in its protagonist's performance. Nonetheless, like TMR, *The Mexican* makes connections between sexual orientation, gender performance and lying (behaviour). Although the protagonist is masculine (Plate VIII), his inability to claim a space is similarly linked to criminality and homosexuality in the film.

⁴⁴ This type of masculinity may also be thought of as a means to parody masculinity. Segal designates that "Gay machismo is, however, defended by many gay men as a new form of camp – the super-macho style exposing the absurdity of masculinity more effectively than effeminacy" (1990, 149). On a similar note Rechy claims, "[i]ron-pumped muscles are as exaggerated a form of decoration as is high drag" (2000, 124).

⁴⁵ The most famous example of this is the attack on the leather bar Ramrod, which features in *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980). Two months after the film's release a man armed with a sub-machine gun opened fire on patrons of the bar, killing two and wounding twelve (Ehrenstein 1995).



Plate VIII

The film is about Jerry (Brad Pitt) who has to go to Mexico to retrieve a precious pistol. Since his bosses do not trust him, as he has had several failures before, they decide to kidnap Jerry's girlfriend Samantha (Julia Roberts) and send a psychopathic killer, Leroy, to "keep an eye" on her in case Jerry does not return. Just when an African-American man with a gun is about to kidnap Sam in the bathroom of a restaurant, Leroy saves her, shoots the African-American man and kidnaps her himself. Leroy is coded as a very masculine man: he has a beard and a big beer belly, and is a big-time criminal capable of cold-blooded murder. The actor who plays Leroy is James Gandolfini, whom most viewers know as Tony Soprano from the TV series *The Sopranos* (1999-2007). The series presented him, among other things, as an extremely masculine and cruel head of a mafia family, so the extra-diegetic information most viewers may have about the actor's previous roles will complement his characterization.

Although he is very masculine, Leroy speaks softly. When Sam asks, "Are you gonna rape me?", he replies, "That's not likely; no." He listens to Dean Martin, specifically "You're Nobody 'Till Somebody Loves You", when he is driving; he dances to his mirror image as he massages his eyes for wrinkles (but then combs his beard so that the masculine/manly attitude overwrites the other bodily regimen and makes it invisible for a while), and most importantly he listens to, and is very interested in, Sam's relationship problems. These details serve to neutralize his masculinity to some extent. Compared to Ripley's behaviour

(especially his swimwear choice and dancing in front of the mirror), Leroy's gender performance draws less attention both because of his physical qualities (bear masculinity) and because it takes much less screen time as the film keeps cutting to the parallel story in Mexico. However, Sam soon realizes that there is something wrong with Leroy: "You know you're a very sensitive person for a cold-blooded killer". He embodies a softness not reserved for tough men or killers. All the codes of homosexuality, despite unexpected performances of masculinity from a physically manly man, are already provided, but they do not take on any firm meaning as yet. The outing of Leroy happens only through another man's lack of masculinity; when they are talking about Sam's relationship problems in a bar, Leroy eye contact with a man who is visually coded as homosexual through his unmasculine behaviour. Sam catches this gaze: "You just checked out that guy and had a moment." She then whispers: "Are you gay?" Leroy plays dumb and asks, "As in happy?" She replies: "As in homosexual." Sam not only recognizes the other man's homosexuality, but also picks up the gaydar between the two men. Leroy does not tell her about his sexual orientation, but he is outed in this scene. Sam asks Leroy several times if he is gay, to which he replies: "You want me to rape you?" However, he simply cannot resist being outed. Sam decides: "You're gay. I knew it! Oh, I so knew it. I just knew it. What a relief." It is important to note the relief she feels (and maybe some audiences will feel) when Leroy's sexual orientation is clarified, a relief that is withheld from viewers and the characters of TMR.

Leroy's previously unmasculine behaviour makes better sense to the audience, as it is now clear that he was hiding his sexual orientation. We also learn that Sam was suspicious of Leroy's heterosexuality because he said he would not rape her, as if she were repulsive. However, she still questions Leroy's career choice as a gay man, to which Leroy responds, "Like I should be an interior decorator? That's insulting. I am very good at what I do." This discovery leads to another filmic cliché, in which the gay man and the straight woman become best friends. Then again, it seems this friendship is not based in honesty.

The gay man in the bar, Frank, joins them and they dance to the 1980s disco (and gay) anthem "Safety Dance" (by Men Without Hats), talk more about their relationships, and Leroy cries about a previous boyfriend in their hotel room. The signs of the lack of masculinity are now not hidden, but are presented as being simple and straightforward –

Leroy now acts like ‘himself’. In the morning, when Sam asks him about the tattoo “Winston” on his arm, he replies that Winston is someone he does not like much. Sam does not ask any more questions, but she and the audience suppose that Winston may be an ex-partner.

While Frank is still sleeping, Sam and Leroy leave him and go for breakfast. The African-American man, apparently not dead, enters their hotel room and throws Frank out of the window. When they come back to the hotel room, Leroy feels that something is wrong and after a shooting spree he kills the African-American man. Sam is grateful to Leroy, who has saved her life twice. But it is only after Jerry returns with the pistol that Sam and the audience see the real face of Leroy. Having met Leroy years ago, Jerry knows that Leroy is an African-American, not the white man posing as Leroy. Just as Jerry is trying to make sense of what’s happening, he realizes ‘Leroy’ is taking out his gun to murder him (and possibly Sam as well), and he shoots ‘Leroy’ dead before he can do the same to him. Jerry checks Leroy’s wallet and finds out that his real name is Winston Baldry, the name on his tattoo. As it turns out, the African-American man was Leroy and was supposed to “keep an eye” on Sam until Jerry brought the pistol, and Winston turns out to be an opportunist who was trying to steal the pistol from Jerry and his bosses. Once he is killed, order is restored and Sam and Jerry get back together for the archetypal happy ending.

Although the two films are very different, especially because Leroy/Winston is not the protagonist of the film, and thus we learn little about him, there are also striking resemblances in the characterization of Leroy/Winston and Ripley, or more precisely Leroy/Winston and Ripley/Dickie. To begin with, Ripley is a murderer and he is queer; Winston is a cold-blooded killer and he is gay. Both perform masculinity differently than other heterosexual men. In the case of Ripley, this fact is emphasized from early on in the film. In the case of Winston, his homosexuality is meant to serve as a plot-twist in terms of the narrative, so there is not much emphasis on his performance of masculinity. In addition, the actor’s physical qualities take attention away from his unmasculine behaviour for a while. His ‘softness’ gains a different meaning only through his gaydar, when he looks at another gay man. At the same time, like Ripley, Winston is a talented and opportunistic liar. His masculinity may be a mask and even a lie, like the many masks that Ripley wears according to whom he is with/who he wants to be. If he is so successful at acting like

another man, and a heterosexual man for a while, Winston may just as well be performing a masculinity that is not really his regular behaviour. Maybe the man in front of the mirror who dances to his mirror image as he massages his eyes for wrinkles is how Winston acts when he is alone and/or in front of a mirror.

Mirror identity is a significant concept in TMR. Similarly, in *The Mexican*, the film's first image of Winston Baldry is a mirror image; it is a reflection of him in a mirror in the shopping mall following Sam. This mirror image serves as an early indicator of his unreal identity, while the dancing image, like Ripley's dance in front of the mirror, indicates his possible 'real' identity. Both films suggest that identity stealing is an easy thing for queer men. When Sam asks about the tattoo of the name "Winston" on his arm, Winston does not hesitate for a second and, although he is Winston himself, he acts like Winston is another person and tells her it is someone he does not like. Ripley is incredibly successful at imitating Dickie, while in *The Mexican* we do not learn if Winston knows Leroy or to what extent he knows him. At the same time, it is not clear whether Winston is being himself and only using Leroy's name or whether he is completely pretending to be another person and he has no identity, like Ripley. Spatially, just like Ripley, Winston does not have a sense of belonging, which may be as a result of his having no identity. This is a road movie, so he is continuously on the road and on the run. From their conversations we learn that his life has been like this for some time, and he does not have a house/place. He also does not share a space with anyone as he has lost a previous partner, and his newfound love, Frank, is murdered during the course of the film.

Bear gay men perceive their bodies as larger and hairier than the 'ideal' gay male body and through possession of these 'regular-guy' bodies they claim 'authentic' masculinity. However, the characterization of Leroy/Winston in the film works to undermine this masculinity and display the conventions of effeminacy in bear men's masculinity. The masculinity Winston performs becomes a performance to hide his sexual orientation and only a momentary gaze of desire outs him to Sam. Because of his lack of masculinity, he easily takes on a heterosexual man's identity. Pretending to be masculine and pretending to be someone else come together to reinforce Winston's extreme dishonesty.

The film ends with Winston's murder. When the lie is exposed, Sam is shattered. The Leroy she knew and liked was not the real Leroy, and could have possibly murdered her. TMR ends with trapping Ripley in his mirror image; *The Mexican* gets rid of the gay villain by killing him before he can steal the pistol and continue traveling through geographies, as he would then have been on the run. Winston, unlike Ripley and exactly like most other gay characters, is a supporting character, so the information about the character is limited. Crucially, the audience learns so little about Winston it is not even clear whether what we have learned about him (in his performance of Leroy) was actually a targeted performance, aimed at getting the pistol, or a performance in its entirety (aimed at assuming other men's identities) because he lacked an identity, like Ripley.

Part IV. Conclusion

I started this chapter by describing the encompassing but also hollow qualities of the term "effeminacy". In films, there is no unique way to detect effeminacy, and viewers often use the tools that they have learned from film history to recognize non-masculine behaviour in male characters. I have suggested that most often, any diversion from the hegemonic definition of masculinity is thought of as effeminacy.

In my reading of TMR, I have initially problematized several writers' suggestions that Ripley acts as a metaphor of a gay man coming out of the closet. Gay men, and especially gay men in the closet, have often been represented as murderous, and the nature of (closeted) homosexuality has been at numerous times associated with criminality. I argue that this analysis is too simplistic, and have instead looked at a variety of Ripley's character traits, which contribute to his characterization as a criminal. I have suggested that Ripley imitates the traits of people around him, whether it is white male heterosexuality (Dickie) or homosexuality (Peter), in order to realize his class aspirations. However, to deepen this reading it has been worth noting in which spaces and in what ways the film attempts to homosexualize him; for instance, when Ripley is dancing in front of the mirror in a non-masculine manner, and when Dickie and Ripley are in the bathroom through the way Ripley gazes at Dickie. The film is aware of "effeminacies" rather than a single, uniform effeminacy; therefore, the highly effeminate character Freddie is introduced just as the signifiers that code Ripley as homosexual are being revealed to the audience and the characters in the film. However, the ideology behind the film reveals different facets to

effeminacy: Freddie's effeminacy is an extension of his dandy behaviour, so it does not connote monstrosity, while effeminacy as signifier of homosexuality does.

It would be too simple to say that Ripley's dishonesty and criminality are caused by his homosexuality or effeminacy, but in the film homosexuality, effeminacy and criminality are linked together so inseparably that it is hard to detect any priority or cause-and-effect relation between them. Yet Ripley's supposed homosexuality is hollow, as he prefers to murder his boyfriend, who would most likely not suspect Ripley of murder, rather than Meredith. With the murder of Peter, Ripley possibly becomes proto-heterosexual again, but his sexual identity has no significance for him; rather, his "talent" lies in his imitative talent, and it is clear that he will become hetero/homo/bisexual where and when necessary.

In *The Mexican*, although the protagonist is initially coded as overly masculine, this masculinity is revealed to be a gay bear man's masculinity through his use of gaydar and non-masculine, which become noticeable as the film progresses. Just like Ripley's characterization, Leroy's characterization is made up of his 'false' or 'weak' performance of masculinity, homosexuality and lying/criminality. Unlike TMR, Leroy's dishonesty comes as a surprise and a shock to the audience. As viewers do not have unrestricted narrative information to study this character throughout the film, it becomes even harder to comprehend whether, according to the film, non-masculine behaviour, homosexuality and criminality can exist as free-standing attributes or whether we should expect a homosexual character to be criminal and non-masculine, and vice versa.

In this chapter, I have argued that in these films there is no space for effeminacy. The characters that lack conventional masculinity (whether it is Freddie, Leroy or Ripley) are continuously on the move and through their restlessness the audience senses that something is wrong with these characters. As the Western culture still idealizes a specific and utopic type of masculinity, any textual/aural/visual codes that resemble non-masculinity taints the characters with homosexuality and, by extension, criminality, which results in a symbolic denial of a home space, or even a resting point, for such characters.

CHAPTER III GEOGRAPHIES OF EXCLUSION

In this chapter, I first look at some of the more common cultural assumptions about paedophilia. I propose that *Mystic River* (Clint Eastwood, 2003) does not differentiate between homosexuality, paedophilia and child abuse, a move that has noteworthy and politically significant implications. The film's protagonist, Dave Boyle, is queered through his ambiguous gender performance and is raped in a cellar, which I argue to be a sexualized space. Through my close reading of the film, I propose that the film's denial of space to Dave Boyle is coterminous with intolerance of all queer bodies. At the end of the chapter, I explore how Gregg Araki's *Mysterious Skin* (2005), an independent film made by a queer director, deals with similar issues. The film refrains from repeating the stereotypical, boy-hungry representation of a paedophile and attempts to distance paedophilia and homosexuality from rape.

Part I. Introduction

In films about child abuse a recurring scene occurs: rape takes place in a claustrophobic space, particularly a cellar. For example, in *Sleepers* (Barry Levinson, 1986) four children are raped in the cellar of the reformatory. In *Butterfly Effect* (Eric Bress and J. Mackye Gruber, 2004) a father abuses his own and other children in the cellar of his house. In *Reckoning* (Paul McGuigan, 2004) the space of the abuse is a tower but it is as dark as a cellar. In *Running Scared* (Wayne Kramer, 2006) the room in which children are raped and murdered resembles a cellar; there are no windows but just a locked door. In *Mysterious Skin* (Gregg Araki, 2005) children are not raped in a cellar but the film starts in one: an abused child locks himself in the cellar after the shock of the rape. This motif is repeated so many times that the space of the cellar becomes one of the leading characters in such films.

Moreover, in these films, the child abusers are typically represented as murderous villains or sadistic serial rapists: for example, the merciless boy-hungry guards of *The Sleepers* (Barry Levinson, 1996), the cruel paedophile rings in *The Lost Son* (Chris Menges, 1999), the incestuous evil father who rapes all of his children in *Just Evil* (James Ronald Whitney, 2000), the rich local nobleman who is also a pederast and a murderer in *Reckoning* (Paul McGuigan, 2004), the immoral paedophile counselor in *The Weather Man* (Gore Verbinski,

2005), and the paedophile couple in *Running Scared* (Wayne Kramer, 2006) – all represent such psychopathic villains as pedophiles/pederasts. In cinematic terms the most famous example of this monster is Freddy Krueger, the hero of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Wes Craven, 1984). Krueger's house, with him in it, was burned down by angry parents whose children he molested. Ironically, audiences were so fascinated with the burned molester's revenge fantasies that six sequels succeeded the film.

Abuse, rape and murder of children are frightening, yet the extent of the outcry suggests the existence of more than concerns about violence and harm. Kincaid claims: "These stories are not told simply to solve a problem but also to focus and restate the problem, to keep it alive and before us" (Kincaid 1998, 6).⁴⁶ These stories are told continuously and in extreme detail. The films about this subject are in abundance, which similarly makes us feel that the danger is extreme. Child molestation, abuse, rape and even murder do exist, but we must remember that the events themselves are not the same as discourses and representations of such events. Thus, it is important to carefully analyze how we talk about, write and visualize the sexuality of children/adolescents; both sexual contact with and the sexual abuse of them. As there is limited literature available about the abuse of children, especially boys, in film, in the beginning of this chapter I benefit from queer literature about paedophilia to expand my argument and briefly refer to how discourses about actual paedophilia and child abuse are analyzed in such literature.

It is evident that dominant discourses do not allow any discussion of intergenerational-sex other than in pejorative terms or any representation of it except as abuse, and most often as homosexual abuse in its man-boy form. Typically gay rights advocates respond by denying any link between (gay) sexual orientation and paedophilia, yet Kevin Ohi argues that "The antihomophobic 'solution' is not to insist that homosexuality has nothing to do with child abuse" (Ohi 2000, 195). He explains:

The link between child molestation and homosexuality may well be . . . a homophobic illusion, but the effort to challenge the political ideology underlying this link – an ideology of sexual oppression in general – is better served by a

⁴⁶ He adds that we get a perverse pleasure in retelling these stories and learning details of what took place: "We take a good, long look at what they are doing . . . We reject this monstrous activity with such automatic indignation that the indignation comes to seem almost like pleasure" (Kincaid 1998, 7).

thorough examination of structures uniting homophobia and abuse paranoias than by a simple debunking of this homophobic illusion as counterfactual. (195)

Ohi calls for an examination of structures uniting homophobia and abuse paranoias rather than rejecting the possibility that they have anything in common. One way to examine such structures is to look at films that bring the two issues together.

Child Abuse, Paedophilia or Intergenerational-Sex?

A discussion of intergenerational-sex (sometimes referred to as intergenerational-sexual contact in the literature) is crucial because, if we made a map of Western societies' moral codes, it would be apparent that some of our deepest fears about sexuality repeatedly circulate around this issue. When Gayle Rubin described the hierarchical sexual system of modern Western societies, she placed marital, reproductive heterosexuals on top and "those whose eroticism transgresses generational boundaries" at the bottom of the ladder (1984, 279). Although ideas about pollution do change across time, if we are looking for consensus over the most polluted act in our society today, it is still intergenerational-sex; which, according to the dominant discourses, is synonymous with rape.

There is a lack of clear terminology in regard to intergenerational-sex, and most often child abuse, paedophilia and intergenerational-sex are not only referred to but also represented as the same thing. Paedophilia is mostly used synonymously with abuse. However, "paedophilia, whether 'acted out' or merely fantasized, is not the same thing as child abuse" (Ohi 2000, 195). Paedophilia is a term that needs to be clearly defined, as it is often used erroneously and covering a number of practices. Yet the dictionary definition of this term is itself vague.⁴⁷ For example, according to *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*' definition, sexual interaction between a thirteen-year-old and a nineteen-year-old, even if consensual, is considered paedophilic abuse.⁴⁸ As we do not have a common term to describe the love between men and postpubescent boys, the use of

⁴⁷ Paedophilia is defined as "a paraphilia characterized by recurrent, intense sexual fantasies, urges, or behaviour involving sexual activity with pre-pubescent girls or boys" (Colman, 2006). The use of 'prepubescent' is interesting because a boy's or a girl's reproductive organs may become functional as early as nine years of age, and one wonders if fantasizing about or having sex with this age group is thus not a mental disorder according to the dictionary.

⁴⁸ Paedophilia is described as "[r]ecurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviours involving sexual activity with a pre-pubescent child or children (generally age 13 years or younger)" (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fourth Edition (DSM-IV), 1994). According to this manual, the pedophile must be at least sixteen and at least five years older than the child.

“pederasty” could equally function today to describe consensual sexual desire between them. Today the term is rarely, if ever, used in daily life, but is common mainly in academic work and in the specific context of Greek history (see also Jenkins 1998, 7).⁴⁹ Intergenerational-sex opponents prefer to use the term “paedophilia” to describe intergenerational-sex, regardless of age variations.

The age variations matter, because the concepts of ‘childhood’ and ‘adolescence’ are themselves discursive constructions. In the dictionary, adolescence is described as the period of development from puberty to adulthood beginning “usually between 11 and 13 years of age, continuing through the teenage years, and terminating legally at the age of majority, usually 18 years of age” (Colman, 2006). Therefore, there is no definite beginning or ending biological/natural age for adolescence. The adolescent male is neither a boy nor a man. His body is in between, as is his mind.

As Sibley points out, “[t]he limits of the category ‘child’ vary between cultures and have changed considerably through history within western, capitalist, societies . . . Adolescents are denied access to the adult world, but they attempt to distance themselves from the world of the child” (1995, 35). Indeed, according to many historians the construction of childhood in European societies dates back only to the 18th century (Levine 2002, xxvii). Adolescence is even more obviously a discursive construction than childhood. Stanley Hall coined the term (and thus *invented* adolescence) only in 1904:

Adolescence was not perceived as a distinct stage of life in earlier centuries; individuals simply moved from childhood into young adulthood. The rise of the middle class through the period of the Industrial Revolution allowed many privileged teens to remain outside the labour force; thus, education became increasingly important. As a result of these social changes, the term adolescence was created to indicate the gap between childhood and young adulthood. (Flynn 2003)

At first sight, there is a rational correspondence between the concepts of the child and adult, and the real bodies that belong to them; when we look at a person we understand if s/he is a child or an adult. However, the difference between an adolescent and a child or an adolescent and an adult can often be hard to distinguish. If we add to this confusion how

⁴⁹ The medical term ephebophilia differentiates between post-pubescent and pre-pubescent boys; however, it is not in common use even by clinical researchers.

different cultures have described childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, the descriptions of the terms become even more problematic. A child goes to work in some countries, whereas s/he is not allowed to work (because of child-labour laws) in others. In another example, in England the age of criminal responsibility is 10, which means the child arrested for a felony will be tried as an adult, but when s/he wants access to the entertainment of the adult world (for example, to a horror film) s/he will not be admitted. Internationally, children/adolescents are permitted to have tattoos, smoke, buy alcohol and vote at different ages; there is no definite biological or psychological age that covers all of these practices together.

Age of Consent Laws

Films that incorporate fears of children being raped reflect a social anxiety about intergenerational (and teenage) sexual contact, which is itself linked to the instability of changing/decreasing ages of consent, and as a result, to the changing definitions of ‘child’ and ‘adolescent’.

In her highly acclaimed book *Pollution and Taboo*, Mary Douglas argues:

Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom . . . upstairs things downstairs . . . and so on. In short, our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications. (1984, 37)

Thus, if shoes spend enough time on the table, it will not be a place for eating any longer; or if the parents’ bed is in the living room, the secrecy over sex, a “cherished classification”, will no longer exist. The age of consent laws are another “cherished classification”. When the officially sanctioned age of consent changes, what is clean suddenly becomes dirty.

In the contemporary West, intergenerational sex is constructed as immoral in order to distinguish our allegedly ‘advanced’ society from previous and ‘other’ cultures that condone these relationships. In reality, the boundaries we create are not much different in form from those of primitive societies. By defining what is polluted, such societies classified their social life into two opposite categories: what is pure and what is impure. Today, such categories describe what is acceptable and what is unacceptable; once the

boundary is set, it looks as if there is no commonality between the two sides of the boundary. It looks as if on one side of the boundary there is a group of men who rape children while on the other side there is a society that refuses in any way to conceptualize and represent children erotically. These moral boundaries are sometimes based on geography, such as the borders between our (Western) societies and others. Boundaries work by establishing dichotomies; in this discourse rejection of intergenerational-sex becomes our culture's understanding of how sexuality cannot be similar to other, inferior cultures', which at times legitimize and/or encourage intergenerational sex. Sometimes, discourse produces boundaries based on time, between the uncivilized past and the civilized present. We regularly treat historical gender systems as an evolutionary stage in social development: the earlier set of beliefs is assumed to be deficient or entirely wrong whereas the contemporary ones are correct and progressive. Thus, just like non-Western cultures' desires, earlier cultures' desires look inferior to us. Although we think of it as liberal, we have such a rigid organization of sexuality today that we have difficulty understanding the sex/gender systems of earlier cultures, other cultures, and even other possible sexualities in our own culture. This lost memory is especially important in discussions of paedophilia and sexuality of children and adolescents, since we had a drastically different approach to such issues just a century ago.⁵⁰

The way our societies deal with the moral pollution that intergenerational-sex creates is through using biology (trying to represent the child's body as asexual and beyond sexual pleasure), psychology (insisting that even consensual intergenerational-sex will harm children) and laws regarding age of consent, which name a minimum legal age for young persons' participation in sex. In other words, they legalize sexual intercourse for people above a certain age and sometimes they strictly define what age groups can have sex with other age groups. The boundaries these laws make are culturally specific (they designate different ages in different countries) and historically specific (they change over time). Yet, in much contemporary Western discourse such laws are treated as natural rather than socially constructed (especially if the age of consent is high). By producing such laws this

⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that the judgment of child abusers was in fact quite different even 40 years ago. In the 1960s most psychiatrists, psychologists, and even anthropologists extended Freud's theories to put the blame on children for being abused: "The adult offender was often portrayed as a harmless victim of child seductiveness, and the usually female victims were often deemed aggressive delinquents driven by sexual psychopathologies" (Angelides 2004, 145; see also Jenkins 1998).

discourse elides the presence of earlier and other cultures, and criminalizes people who cross such boundaries.

Today, the discussions about intergenerational-sex are significantly tied to discussions about age of consent laws. When the age of consent changes in history⁵¹, we also change a boundary, which causes confusion about what is clean and what is dirty.⁵² Also, these laws have generally been written with intensely homophobic concerns. When homosexuality was illegal, there was no need for such laws, but after the legalization of homosexuality a (usually higher) age of consent was set for (usually male) homosexuals.⁵³ Opponents of lowering the age of consent have openly emphasized the risk of seduction into homosexuality, “both by predatory older homosexuals and the gay community’s desire to convert young men” (Waites 2005, 174).⁵⁴ In this description it is obvious that the age of

⁵¹ In the Western world age of consent laws began to appear in the early 19th century, but only took on ‘modern’ standards towards the end of that century. The laws were mainly created to ‘protect’ young girls from prostitution and ensure their virginity, which belonged to their fathers.

⁵² Attempts to decrease the age of consent in the United States have sometimes been referred to as “legalizing paedophilia” or “normalizing paedophilia” (Brown 2003) – the dirty becoming part of the system, as Douglas may have put it.

⁵³ In England anal intercourse was a criminal offence until 1991 although homosexuality was legalized in 1967. In 1994 the age of consent for male-to-male sexual contact was lowered to 18 from 21, while it has been 16 for heterosexuals since 1885. Only after intense pressure from the European Court of Human Rights was the age of consent equalized for homosexuals and heterosexuals in 2000 (Waites 2005). In Finland gay men had to wait until 1998 and in Austria until 2002 to have the same age of consent as heterosexuals. The laws in North America are important because they are higher than in Europe. In the USA, 13 states had sodomy laws, which made oral sex, or anal sex or both of them illegal. Since the Supreme Court invalidated such laws in 2003, the age of consent for homosexuals is not yet defined in most states. The age of consent for heterosexuals in most states is 3-4 years older than in Europe. In Canada the age of consent for vaginal and oral sex is 14. In practice, this makes the homosexual age of consent 18, at least for gay men who want to legally engage in anal sex. There has also never been a law to protect girls from women; however, in the name of the standardization and equalization of the law for everyone, age of consent now covers female-to-female sexual contact, which is referred to as “the invention of lesbian age of consent” (Waites 2002). Even if there are changes in the law, in practice the majority of court cases include a male adult and female minor or an adult (gay) male and a younger gay male. Worldwide, the age of consent is usually around 16. There are, however, higher ones like 18 in California and lower ones like 12 in Holland, which holds unless the preteen complains to the authorities about the sexual encounter.

⁵⁴ In *Looking at French Gay Movements Since the Early 1980s*, Scott reminds us that in 1976 a leading gay organization’s journal declared that “the fight for the liberation of pederasts . . . is essential. This fight for liberation is essential, perhaps, more fundamental than that of homosexuals, perhaps even more than that of women. It radically questions all of society; subversion par excellence” (Gunther 2004). In the U.S. in 1972, the National Coalition of Gay Organizations adopted a “Gay Rights Platform” that included the following demand: “Repeal of all laws governing the age of sexual consent.” Gay magazines published sympathetic articles on pederasty; for example, in the spring of 1977 Toronto’s gay newspaper *The Body Politic* was raided following the publication of one such article (Jenkins 78, 157). Yet, in exchange for successful assimilation, the less tolerable elements of the early gay movements, like defending unsafe sex, public sex, polygamy and especially pederastic and paedophilic action, had to be excluded.

Legal scholar and gay militant Gérard Bach-Ignasse noted the dramatic change in attitudes: “It wasn’t until the mid-eighties that the idea of family or of a homosexual partnership became a positive thing. Until then, the gay discourse had always been an antifamily discourse. Then in the eighties it changed to issues of how to

consent laws are not made only to protect children, but also to discipline adolescents' sexual lives and to regulate their sexual preferences.

Representing Intergenerational-Sex

Today, it is not easy to talk about, write about and represent intergenerational-sex (or paedophilia) without being accused of endorsing child abuse (or paedophilia). In *Harmful to Minors*, one of the few pivotal books about the subject, Levine describes how hard it has been to publish her work: "In America today, it is nearly impossible to publish a book that says children and teenagers can have sexual pleasure and be safe too" (2002, xix).⁵⁵ When gay male writers suggest children have sexual desires (in their calls for younger age of consent) this is taken as a wilful seduction of sexless children or a transformation of proto-heterosexual children into homosexuals (Hanson 2003). Therefore, if queers are ever vocal about children choosing their sexual partners at an early age this is interpreted as the abuse of the desireless, sexual-pleasure-free children. Gay adoption is refused because of similar abuse paranoias, both on the grounds that queer people will produce queer children, although the research suggests otherwise, and because gay men are represented as naturally inclined to rape children.

According to Benshoff, until the 1950s gay men were represented as non-sexual sissies in film, but when actual gay men started to become more visible in social life, they started to be represented as sexual psychopaths who queer younger men: "Implicit in these films and essays is the idea that 'normal' young men (who engage in 'normal' homosexual experimentation during adolescence) would only turn into 'true' homosexuals if older 'true' homosexuals continued to lead them astray" (1997, 122).⁵⁶ Child molestation has been a popular subject in the movies; if, on the one hand, these films serve as a warning to parents (that there are dirty men out there stealing children's innocence), paradoxically they also

integrate homosexuality into the family, how to form partnerships, how to have children, etc. These became legitimate questions, and the movement's ideas about family made a complete U-turn" (Gunther 2004).

⁵⁵ Julia Shaw wrote: "Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives threw a tantrum over her book (the Republican majority leader insisted that 'this kind of disgusting victimization of children is intolerable, and the state should have no part in it)'" (2005).

⁵⁶ In the West, the boy-lover became a child abuser at some point. Chauncey points out that "[t]he image of the 'homosexual as psychopathic child molester' was created after WWII ended" (Chauncey 2000, 312; see also Chauncey 1994, 359-60; Jenkins 1998, 189-215; Ohi 2000; Angelides 2005). He also observes that the "homosexuality-as-seductive-pederasty idea was becoming increasingly prevalent during the post-war period" (1997, 139). As Levine discusses, this fear is eventually tied to the destruction of the homosexual culture that had flourished during the war (2002, 31).

display our societies' extreme curiosity in these images. The abundance of such films (and their victims and abusers) also suggests that children ooze sexual appeal that adults are incapable of resisting. Kincaid notes, "We have become so engaged with tales of childhood eroticism (molestation, incest, abduction, pornography) that we have come to take for granted the irrepressible allure of children. We allow so much power to the child's sexual appeal that we no longer question whether adults are drawn to children" (1998, 13).

Ellis Hanson maintains that "the erotic innocence of children is founded on the presumption that they cannot possibly understand or experience sexual desire except as a trauma" (2003, 374). Research suggests that pleasurable sexual contact can take place most often between boy-lovers and boys, sometimes between male children and older women, and rarely between young girls and adult men (Waites 2005, 27).⁵⁷ However, a pleasurable account of intergenerational sex is beyond visual representation; if filmmakers were to attempt to make such a film, their films would not likely be financed. If they were to get financing, their films would be guaranteed limited release, censorship, and moral condemnation, because such films are not treated as representation but as reality themselves and regarded as endorsement of child abuse. The discussion of the films – both in their girl/man format, from *Pretty Baby* (Louis Malle, 1978) to *Palindromes* (Todd Solondz, 2005), and in their boy/man format, from *Happiness* (Todd Solondz, 1998) to *Mysterious Skin* (Gregg Araki, 2005), is often limited to mainstream media's (and reviewers') discussion of whether these films are or are not exploitative in their representations.

In most mainstream films the representation of intergenerational-sex is often simplistic and formulaic: according to these films, older, mostly homosexual men rape innocent and sexless boys. By having sex with a younger man or a boy, the older man crosses a cultural boundary and creates pollution. Not only does he become polluted, but he also pollutes the boy and the space he occupies. The putatively sexless boy, who according to our moral codes is proto-heterosexual, becomes deviant because of the paedophile(s). However, these filmic representations of paedophiles are mostly not an accurate depiction of real pedophiles. According to recent research, paedophiles mostly avoid actual sexual contact

⁵⁷ It is also crucial that it is not always possible to publish objective research about intergenerational sexual contact. When the *American Psychological Association* (APA) journal published an article based on similar research, which suggested that all adult/child sexual encounters were not detrimental to the children involved, the political pressure was so intense that APA had to release a statement repudiating the conclusions of the research (Rindt et al. 1998).

with boys because of its legal consequences, but indeed fantasize about it; if they do engage in sexual activity, they do not have sexual intercourse, but mutual masturbation, commonly with underage but post-pubertal boys (Jenkins 1998 and Levine 2002).

According to film critics, there has recently been an increase in films about intergenerational-sex and child abuse: for example, Taubin describes the 2005 Sundance film festival as “a festival obsessed with childhood sexuality and underage sex” (2005, 62). What marks this period, though, is the rise of queer filmmakers and also many filmmakers’ interest in queer issues. Recent films can be roughly situated in a few groups: there are films 1) about adolescent sexual contact (with each other or with adults): *Kids* (Larry Clark, 1995), *Thirteen* (2003), *Me and You and Everyone We Know* (Miranda July, 2005), *Twelve and Holding* (Michael Cuesta, 2005), and *Palindromes* (Todd Solondz, 2005); 2) about adolescent rape: *Fat Girl* (Catherine Breillat, 2001), *Magdalene Sisters* (Peter Mullan, 2002), and *Woodsmen* (Nicole Kassell, 2004); 3) about false accusations of abuse: *Pretty Persuasion* (Marcos Siega, 2005); 4) about the rape of adolescent boys by older men: *Sleepers* (Barry Levinson, 1996), *Mystic River* (Clint Eastwood, 2003), *Reckoning* (Paul McGuigan, 2003), *Butterfly Effect* (Eric Bress and J. Mackye Gruber, 2004); and 5) about sexual contact between queer boys and adult men made by queer film-makers: *Happiness* (Todd Solondz, 1998), *L.I.E.* (Michael Cuesta, 2001), and *Mysterious Skin* (Gregg Araki, 2005). *Mystic River* and *Mysterious Skin* are dissimilar films in their imagination and creation of paedophilic worlds, but both films are products of this recent era.

Part II. The Cellar: Politics of *Mystic River*

Clint Eastwood’s *Mystic River* (hereafter referred to as MR), has been both a commercial and a critical success. The film was recognized by the Academy Awards, grossed heavily at the box office, especially after its Oscar wins, and is included in nearly every list for “Top 10 films of 2004”. The director, Clint Eastwood, is a 78-year-old cinema veteran and this is his 23rd film. The actors are all famous for their depiction of character roles, and according to the reviews not only the three main actors – Sean Penn, Kevin Bacon, and Tim Robbins – but also the two supporting actresses – Marcia Gay Harden and Laura Linney – give incredible performances. The reviewers could not decide who the best actor is; sometimes the credit goes to Sean Penn’s portrayal of a grieving father, sometimes to Kevin Bacon, whose previous performances have been unnoticed by Academy Awards, and sometimes to

Tim Robbins who plays a tortured man who was abused as a child. At least three of these performances were recognized by nominations for Academy Awards (Penn, Robbins and Gay Harden) and both Penn and Robbins received Oscars in the end.

Everything is 'big' in this film: big actors, big actresses, a big director and also a big story. The makers of MR have high ambitions, like the bestselling Dennis Lehane novel it is based on, which in Richards Cooper's words is "a piece of high-gloss crime fiction with serious literary ambitions" (2003). The film is over-polished since it aims to make big statements about its central issues, which causes a problem in terms of its narration: it takes itself so seriously that the characters continuously summarize what's happening in the film so that we do not miss any of the details.⁵⁸ The film asks us to watch it very carefully, because it is much more than a piece of entertainment; it is in fact a moral lesson. It seems that not only the filmmakers, but the positive reviewers and award-givers have agreed that MR makes crucial and pointed statements about its main issues violence, child rape, paedophilia and pederasty.

Jonathan Rosenbaum summarizes the overall approach to MR:

The critical community has spoken: Clint Eastwood's *Mystic River* is a masterpiece and a profound, tragic statement about who we are and the inevitability of violence in our lives - a pitiless view, in which violence begets violence and the sins of the fathers pass to later generations. (2003)

As Rosenbaum points out, most critics agree that this film is about violence. The discussion surrounding MR has been about the violence sometimes read as a metaphor for America's current political situation. The critics and reviewers of MR discuss the film's stance regarding violence in heatedly divided reviews; is MR critical of the violence in the film or approving of it? Do the characters stand in for the director's voice?

Kimberly Chun, like many others, believes the film takes an anti-violence stance:

⁵⁸ Heaton protests the film's self-indulgence in *Senses of Cinema*: "[this year] my least favourite film-viewing experiences were *Mystic River* and *Irreversible*, two films that were trying so hard to convince me of their importance that I just wanted to walk away, like you'd do to an obnoxious child who desperately wants attention" (Heaton 2003).

Mystic River, which deals compassionately with such tabloidish material as childhood sexual assault and misplaced revenge, is essentially a dirge for the erosion of trust and community in a world grown too jaded to embrace such apparently outmoded ideals. Eastwood's more classical brand of cinema, however, yearns for moral certitude and mourns its palpable absence. (2004, 22)

Tibbets, on the other hand, takes our attention to the complexity of violence rather than making a simple decision and claims that “a certain relief, or catharsis, marks Eastwood's earlier films, while Eastwood's later films, *Unforgiven* in particular, forces audiences to stare into the complexities of the violence seemingly celebrated in earlier films” (1993, 10). Although the article is written before MR, the general attitude towards Eastwood's films can be applicable to MR: they are violent but they do not celebrate violence.

The opposition to this film can actually be described as an anti-Eastwood stand because of Eastwood's own history/filmography of violence. Legendary film critic Pauline Kael's comments are exemplary of such an anti-Eastwood stand:

We all know that Kael had her bêtes noires, but Eastwood was Number One. It wasn't anything in particular about the films he directed that bothered her—it was the fact that anyone took him seriously as a director at all that seemed utterly preposterous. This idea has had legs. The fact that Eastwood began as a glamour boy who cultivated a rough-hewn image and achieved fame through the good offices of Leone and Siegel was bad enough. That he was a virtual law-and-order poster boy for Nixon and John Mitchell was the final nail in his coffin. (Jones 2003)

Such a stand is most certainly critical of Eastwood's persona as much as his filmography: “To many people, Eastwood is the opportunistic Hollywood star who garnered enough power to proclaim himself a serious artist” (Jones 2003). Eastwood made his fame as an avatar of violence in his acting career, for example in *Dirty Harry* (Don Siegel, 1971), which is the story of a cop who has little respect for law and catches a serial killer using his own vigilante methods (also see Kellner 1997). Politically, Eastwood is a famous Republican and supporter of Nixon's 1968 election campaign, and was elected as a Republican mayor to Carmel in California in 1986. Jonathan Rosenbaum is critical of both Eastwood's filmography and of Eastwood himself:

Even if the wrong people die, at least we know our intentions were good. This is a form of popular psychosis, and it gives even such seemingly antithetical movies as *Mystic River* and Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill - Vol. 1* a grotesque kind of kinship. I

hasten to add that the most winning aspect of Tarantino's frenetic movie is that it doesn't in any way pretend to be grown-up, whereas critics are claiming Eastwood's movie has all the wisdom of his 70-old years, if not the wisdom of Solomon. (2003)

Anti-Eastwood critics agree that Eastwood's right wing worldview is now hidden under his image as an experienced director and a mature 78-year-old man. But to claim Eastwood is simply a conservative right-wing man – just like Charlton Heston – may be wrong: indeed, Eastwood was boycotted by some right-wing and Christian groups both because the cold-blooded murderer of MR, Jimmy Marcus, is set up as a Christian and because of his choice of actors. The leading actors of the film, Tim Robbins and Sean Penn, are both known to be socially conscious and, like Eastwood, politically active actors, although on a different side of politics:

There is a boycott on for Clint Eastwood's *Mystic River* (2003). Didn't you know? On right wing blogs, *The O'Reilly Factor*, and among the Confederate Flag Pick-up Truck people, Clint is in big trouble. Seems he hired the two biggest traitors since Benedict Arnold, Tim Robbins and “Hanoi Sean” Penn, and put them in a movie. Gave ‘em a buncha lines, too. (Chamberlin 2004)

Robbins and Penn are left-wing in their politics and Penn is famously known to have paid fifty-six thousand dollars to publish an open letter to George Bush about the Iraq War covering nearly a full page of the *Washington Post*. He is sometimes known as a hero, like when he helped to rescue about forty people from Hurricane Katrina, or a traitor, because of his trips to Iraq under Hussein's regime. Yet, if there is one thing that underlines his star persona, just like Jimmy Markum's personality, it is violence:

Penn has had his share of run-ins with the police. In Macao in 1986, during the shooting of *Shanghai Surprise*, he was arrested for helping to deter an intruding paparazzo by hanging him by his ankles from the ninth-floor balcony of his hotel room. (Penn subsequently broke out of the jail where he was being held on charges of attempted murder and escaped from the country by jetfoil.) In 1987, he served thirty-three days of a sixty-day sentence in the Los Angeles County jail (twenty-three hours a day in solitary) for violating the probation he'd been given for punching a fan who tried to get too close to his first wife, Madonna. In 1988, Madonna herself summoned a SWAT team to the couple's house in Malibu, after the two had fought. “*She developed a concern that if she were to return to the house she would get a very severe haircut,*” Penn, who was not arrested in the well-publicized incident, said later. (emphasis mine, Lahr 2006)

Penn is certainly a socially aware actor, but as the above paragraph suggests there is also a macho and violent aspect to his persona. This is the exact opposite of Tim Robbins's socially aware persona, which is more urban and refined. Although Robbins is equally outspoken about his political ideas, this is not accompanied by extreme displays of masculinity. Like Penn, Robbins is heterosexual and is in a relationship with Susan Sarandon, but there is even something queer about this relationship, as Sarandon is ten years his senior, which is uncommon in male/female relationships. Robbins lacks any history or even suggestion of violence in his personal life. Both Penn and Robbins make a statement by choosing to be in this film and in this case their characters are not significantly different than their star personas. For example, the casting of Robbins as 'rapable' is no coincidence; Tim Robbins is 'rapable'. When MR came out, the gay magazine *Advocate* proposed a new genre, "Tim Robbins traumatized by gay rape", referring to *Shawshank Redemption* (Frank Darabont, 1994) in which Robbins's character was repeatedly raped in prison (Duralde, 2004). Penn portrays violent and masculine characters so well that he played nearly the same role in two films in 2003, the other being his performance in *21 Grams* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2003). His character (and acting) in that film is so similar to his performance in MR that one may find it hard to believe they are from two different films. It would be impossible to picture Penn cast in Tim Robbins's role as Dave Boyle, and if this was done it would probably be much more challenging for the director and Penn to make it believable. In such a film, the audience would probably expect Sean Penn as Dave Boyle to murder the abusers himself when he grows up.

It is also significant that Sean Penn got an Oscar for Best Actor for his portrayal of an avenger, whereas Robbins got an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor for his depiction of a man who was raped as a child. If there is a supporting actor in the film, it is more obviously Bacon, so one is left to wonder what it is about Robbins' acting or Dave Boyle's character that makes him a supporting figure in the film. Oscar nominations are apparently a result of a procedure in which producers of a film nominate the stars for certain categories. In the film there is no doubt Dave is as much a leading character as Jimmy. Although I am more interested in the injustice done to Dave Boyle's character than to Tim Robbins as an actor, it is worth pointing out how the producers and the voters agree that a character, which I will argue to be queer, is necessarily a supporting character, although the film suggests otherwise.

Sexual Politics of *Mystic River*

MR actually has two plots: the plot I will explain soon takes most of the screen time and is about a murder that takes place in town. Yet in my reading of the film, a second plot, which actually takes a few minutes of screen time at the beginning of the film, is treated as the main plot of the film. Despite its brevity, this is the scene that is the core of the film.

The scene starts with a shot of the stairs of a dark cellar. Next, we see a man descending the stairs, and a close-up of his legs. Fade out. From the man's point of view, we see a young boy (Dave) wake up and get disturbed by the light. From the boy's point of view, we see two men walking towards him. Then, from each man's point of view we see Dave; he looks scared and begs, "Please, no more" (Plate IX). Fade out. With a sound bridge, his voice echoes and turns into the sound of wolves. Dave is now in the forest nervously looking back. He starts to run.



Plate IX

The scene gives the feeling of a nightmare scene, rather than reality, mainly because of the echoing sounds and the fade-outs. However, when the scene ends, we do not know what exactly happened in that cellar. Did they rape him anally? Did they do it together, in each other's presence? Did they make Dave (who is around 10) fuck them? Was it only oral sex that was performed on Dave (or by Dave) or was it masturbation? "Please, no more" could refer just as equally to any of these. In this scene there is no actual representation of rape, but there is an overwhelming suggestion of anal rape that the film is simultaneously

frightened of and titillated by, as I will go on to discuss in the subsequent paragraphs. MR connotes what happened in the cellar rather than displaying it, because it cannot; it is afraid to, and it prefers not to show it.

It is evidently not the concern of Hollywood film to show the unshowable; one obvious reason is censorship (Couvares 1996; Lyons 1997). The portrayal of sex is a taboo when it comes to displaying same-sex desire and especially pederastic/paedophilic relations.⁵⁹ Such films are rated harshly in many countries, specifically in the United States, which guarantees a limited release and possible financial loss. As Jon Davies notes, these films “legally cannot show the very acts that they build their narratives around” (2007, 371). If the rape scene was shown, it would either be censored or unseen by audiences, because of its rating.

MR is also afraid to show what happened in the cellar because some members of the audience may enjoy it. This “some” may refer to paedophiles or gay men or some unexpected audience members like heterosexual men or teenage boys (since this film is rated R, viewers younger than 17 are admitted with a parent or adult guardian). It has been discussed that rape scenes in films may unexpectedly arouse the audiences or at least may be found entertaining – especially when shown out of context from the rest of the film (see Cook 1989, Clover 1992, and Horeck 2004 for a discussion of rape-revenge genre). By not showing what happened in the cellar Eastwood assumes he is withholding such ‘perverted’ pleasures, but in fact he is inviting some members of the audience to invest erotically in this scene and write their own version of this scene according to their fantasies. Some audiences may entertain passionate fantasies rather than imagining a painful case of sodomy.

Eastwood makes a statement by how he shoots this scene. The rape scene can be read as the fantasy of the director; it displays how Eastwood fantasized that this rape took place. As I argued above, Eastwood withholds erotic investment in the rape by not showing its details, but at the same time he wants us to understand it is precisely painful sodomy that took place through the rape. Indeed, when many members of the audience see the grown-up Dave as a sexually ambiguous and dysfunctional man, they will not find it hard to imagine

⁵⁹ The 2006 documentary *This Film Is Not Yet Rated* (Kirby Dick) is precisely about the double standards of American Motion Picture Association’s rating system for movies containing heterosexual or homosexual sex scenes.

what happened in the cellar. As I discussed above, most actual paedophiles prefer mutual masturbation; however, in Eastwood's filmic imagination paedophiles are men who are obsessed with violently and anally raping boys. If there were a code for displaying anal rape without showing anal sex, Eastwood would have shot this scene differently and he would have shown the rape. Since there is not, Eastwood asks us to understand that a rape took place through distorted sound and by employing long shots of Dave, who looks extremely scared and is running frantically as if he is running for his life.

In point of fact, we do not see any other sign of physical violence, which shows he was not beaten. When Dave is running, his clothes are not torn. He is not bleeding anywhere. Except his "Please, no more", there is no proof to suggest that he was badly hurt. We need to believe he is in a state of shock because of the pain of being raped. However, from his social conditioning Dave should know that even if the men did not rape him, being taken by two grown up men would mean emasculation. Even if he did not know it previously, he must have learned it as soon as he got back. Once 'perverted' men take a boy away, others would also employ certain fantasies of what took place when he was taken away. Rape does not even need to take place for Dave to feel emasculated or for people around him to undermine his masculinity.

What Eastwood wants the viewer to see in the cellar is exploitation and pain rather than pleasure. In the film's ideology, there is a thick line between the innocent world of sexless children and the dirty world of adult male molesters. However, the film does indicate the difference between queer and heterosexual children, and finds ways of asserting that such men rape particular boys rather than just anyone.

Deserved Rape as a Result of Failed Masculinity

Summer of 1975. South Boston. The crane shot briefly studies the working-class neighbourhood. Three boys – Dave, Sean and Jimmy – are playing hockey on an empty street. While they are scrawling their names in the wet cement of a freshly repaired sidewalk, a car pulls up. The men, who hold police badges, tell the boys that they are damaging public property and order Dave to get into their car. The two men take Dave to a cellar and Dave is abused there until he runs away.

The abduction sequence starts with three kids playing hockey in the streets. Dave is quickly shown as the clumsiest in the group. The ball he hits goes into the sewer instead of the goal. The space of the sewer is the first image that shows where Dave's interest is; he is not able to put the ball in a goal but in the sewer. The sewer can easily be read as an ugly metaphor with unavoidable connotations of anal sex and decay, which I will discuss at length later. Dave says he is so strong that he could not control the ball, but his friends make fun of him; he is not strong but rather unskilled. It is the first few minutes of the film and from his friends' attitude we understand Dave is always like this; he is portrayed as a spare member of the group. This is visualized especially when Sean and Jimmy sit near each other, but Dave faces them. The sequence goes on with a scene that emphasizes all the children's interest in forbidden things. The children write their names on wet cement on the pavement. Dave again follows his friends and is the last one who writes his name on the cement. The molesters arrive just as he has written the first two letters of his name. This short sequence confirms that Dave is already misperforming masculinity, at least according to his friends. He is into boys' games, but is not very successful at them. Although none of the boys verbalize it, we feel their, especially Jimmy's, "Go home and play with your dolls" attitude.

The name-writing incident is also used as an excuse by the molesters: they tell the kids that they are damaging public property, so they have to take one of the boys to the police station. In fact, it is Jimmy who decides to write their names in the cement, and he is actually the first choice of the molesters. Yet they decide he is the "hard-case of the group"; they understand that he is the toughest boy in the group, so it is both harder to convince him to go with them and possibly harder to rape him as he will fight back. After asking all the boys where they live, they base their decision on whose house is the farthest; yet this is also a decision about who can be taken more easily and who is the most subordinate. Eastwood firmly points his finger at Dave to be taken because he's not manly enough.

MR marks Dave as clearly different and possibly queer from early on. The rape of this particular boy is no accident. The molesters do not come out of nowhere and pick up all the children, which they easily could have done since the streets were all empty; they look for a specific kid, and they purposely choose Dave. It looks like Eastwood deliberately shot the scene like this, because it looks as if there was something wrong with Dave in the first place, and he *deserved* rape because of his difference. "If I'd got into that car, I'd be a

basket case,” says Jimmy to Sean, but from very early on it’s clear for the audience who will be taken into the car.

The rape is also justified by a superimposition. Dave, now grown up, goes for a walk with his son. He suddenly sees his childhood friends’ names on the cement and his face is superimposed on one of the molester’s.

Superimposition is the queerest of cinematic inventions. It refuses dichotomies and delights in improbable associations. It makes strange bedfellows of disparate images, such that we can scarcely tell a juxtaposition from a caress, an accident from an intention, a person from a ghost, a reality from a fantasy, or a dreamer from a dream. (Hanson 2003, 384)

Eastwood uses this “queerest” of cinematic inventions to create a queer body. In the beginning of the film, when Dave remembers his childhood, his face is imposed upon the molester’s face for a second. With superimposition, following Hanson, it becomes nearly impossible to tell the difference between two different things. This superimposition can be read in two ways: first; that the rape queered Dave, and second, that he was already queer material. The child-abuse paranoias, as I mentioned before, are mostly homophobic paranoias. If a male child is raped, he is expected to turn homosexual. This superimposition coming at the beginning of the film opens up the possibility that Dave ended up like his molester (whose sexual orientation is not explained in the film). The superimposition is located right after Dave is portrayed as a spare member of the group. With its careful positioning it can also be read to mean that there was something wrong with Dave already. The rapist and the raped found each other and that was not coincidental; Dave was meant to be picked. Through rape, the rapist’s failed heterosexuality and Dave’s failed masculinity complement each other. The superimposition may even be read as meaning that the raped is as guilty as the rapist.

Although what happened in the cellar is not clear, what happens when Dave runs away is: “Looks like damaged goods to me,” says one of the men in the crowd gathered in front of Dave’s house after the child has come back home. This comment, first of all, draws a picture of an intolerant neighbourhood. This scene probably serves to reproach his comment, but, at the same time, it contributes to the characterization of grown-up Dave; he is a dysfunctional man whose development has been arrested in those four days of the rape.

Jimmy Markum, now a dairy shop owner and criminal, and Sean Devine, now a detective, both repeat several times that nothing would have been the same if they had been in that car. Similarly, Dave keeps saying, “I was murdered that day,” and all the characters agree and the audience is expected to agree as well. None of the characters mention that Dave was a child when he was taken, and it was not his fault; Dave is guilty for being taken by his rapists. The last scene we see in 1975 is when Dave is watching his friends from the window, and his mother closes the curtain. We do not know if he was ever allowed outside again, but later in the film we learn that his friends were not his friends anymore.

Dave’s Monstrous Body

In classical horror film, especially those with vampires, the climactic scene often depicts the destruction of the monster. In *Monsters in the Closet*, Benshoff likens monsters to gay men in the closet: “The figure of the monster can frequently be equated (with greater or lesser degrees of ease) with that of the homosexual” (1997, 4). Fantastic genres in general can be read as geographies of queer desire (Benshoff 1997). Various kinds of monsters’ similarity to Otherness, other sexualities, gayness and queerness have been discussed significantly in *The Celluloid Closet* (Russo 1981), (Rob Epstein, 1995), *Monsters in the Closet* (Benshoff 1997), and *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan... and Beyond* (Wood 2003). The monsters have sometimes been represented as sympathetic and identifiable and sometimes as “a social threat which must be eradicated”, according to when and by whom (Benshoff 1997, 256). Dave Boyle is represented as monstrous and he falls into the latter category.

When we see the grown up Dave the first time, there is no doubt his sexuality is ambiguous and queer – essential qualities of many monsters (Benshoff 1997, 7). We do not even know whether Dave is working; he seems to be around his house all the time and walking his son to school every day. Dave walks slowly, talks slowly, and most of the time looks as if he is not alive but is a *zombie*, the living dead. Robbins’s ‘successful’ representation of Dave as semi-alive is most possibly his performance of failed masculinity, which is not very different than the child Dave’s failure to perform the masculinity expected from a (heterosexual) boy. The reviewers generally agree that Robbins’s portrayal of a man ‘raped’ as a child is accurate. But in another sense, Tim Robbins’s acting, which earned him the

Best Supporting Actor Oscar Award, is conventional. He portrays Dave Boyle as dysfunctional and traumatized. That's apparently what Eastwood, Robbins and the reviewers expect him to be. As a monster, Dave is like a zombie; he exists, but it looks like he is not aware of his existence and hardly completes day-to-day jobs.

The first time we see the change in Dave's positioning as a monster is when he comes home covered in blood in the middle of the night. He is shot from above as he is standing and aimlessly looking at his hands. This shot is soon revealed to be his wife Celeste's point of view. Celeste gets closer to him and looks at his hands that are covered in blood. Dave's shirt is torn and also covered in blood. Speaking in panic, he tells Celeste that he has beaten a man who tried to rob him. To our surprise, Celeste looks suspicious as if she does not believe a word he says. Ignoring that he is in panic and a state of shock, she instantly tries to catch his mistakes and questions him. "You said you swung at him first?", she asks. Her reaction shows that Dave has made up stories before and is untrustworthy. From the next day on, Celeste keeps on checking newspapers and not finding anything about the incident: "There is nothing about it in the papers. I checked three times". She also, unconvincingly, does not know Dave was 'raped' as a child. This makes Dave even a bigger failure as a man, and completely mistrusted by his wife. Since she knows nothing about Dave's past to cause her to doubt him, Celeste must be thinking that it is her husband's nature not to be a completely ordinary manly man, but somehow an odd or even queer one and thus, he is a potential liar. Dave, especially compared to Jimmy, does not reflect the accepted understanding of masculinity of their neighbourhood.

The next day we learn that Jimmy's 18-year-old daughter Katie was violently murdered that night and her body was found at the bottom of an animal cage at the abandoned zoo close to the neighbourhood. Sean Devine takes on the case and Jimmy starts an investigation himself. Only one person thinks she knows the murderer already: Dave's wife, Celeste. To learn that someone you knew so well has committed a monstrous act shocks a lot of real people or characters on screen. Celeste is devastated but not shocked and she watches her queer husband become a monster step by step.

Dave becomes a monster after the rape either because of the act of the rape and/or because of the way he is treated after the rape. Initially, he looks and acts like a zombie; he is

already dead but thinks he is undead – a mindless existence. Then, he comes home covered in blood; in fact he looks as if *he is* bleeding. To make things worse Dave starts to act weirdly, almost madly in contrast to his previous calm, repressed behaviour. He also starts watching vampire movies, says he thinks about vampires and werewolves all the time, and starts to believe he is one of them: “Once it's in you,” Dave tells his wife, “it stays.” What is it that stays in him? Is it being a criminal, paedophile or homosexual? Whatever he thinks has stayed in him is not human and is connected to some type of a monster.

Chamberlin argues that MR's style plays on horror archetypes:

Its “realism” belongs to the nightmare. The atmosphere is deliberately grim. We don't feel the sun until the end of the movie. Tim Robbins is consistently shot to increase his menace and emphasise his six-foot-five-inch frame in cramped spaces. (2004)

As Chamberlin notes, the film becomes literally dark after the first hour. Most scenes are shot at night and the use of light is minimal, with Dave's face often lighted from underneath, making him look dangerous and monstrous. However, it is not only the style of the film that is reminiscent of horror films. Dave becomes both *obsessed with* and *like* a character from a horror film. Not only does Dave talk about monsters, but Tim Robbins's acting also changes completely once the formerly repressed Dave starts having emotional outbursts. The make-up adds to the monstrosity/vampiric effect; there is so much white powder on Tim Robbins' face that we barely recognize him. His paleness now looks like a corpse's; his face, the face of death. In this make-up and lighting, he looks more like a vampire than any other monster.

According to Nina Auerbach, the vampire genre actually owes its birth to the homoerotic relationship of the authors of the two foundational texts: Lord Byron's *Fragment of a Tale* (1816) and John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) – (qtd. in Dyer 2002, 70). From *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922), which depicts an effeminate vampire who has a homoerotic relationship with his male guest, to Anne Rice's *Interview With the Vampire* (1976), which could not be filmed until 1994 because of its self-conscious references to homosexuality, gay men and lesbian women have frequently been portrayed as vampires – or the depiction of the vampires have reminded the audience of homosexuality. It is in fact possible to comprehend the entire vampire genre as a discussion of homosexuality.

Dyer writes:

What has been imagined through the vampire image is of a piece with how people have thought and felt about homosexual women and men – how others have thought and felt about us, and how we have thought and felt about ourselves. (2002, 73)

One thing to bear in mind is that Dave's fascination with vampire films is as important as his increasing similarity with the monster. As Milly Williamson points out, "the vampire has more often fascinated us rather than terrified us" (2005, 1), and it is obvious that Dave is not terrified by watching vampire films. In another sense, fandom of vampire films is a queer pleasure in itself. In Linda Williams's article "When the Woman Looks", she studies female audiences' relation to looking – especially to looking at a monster. One of the conclusions she reaches is that

The female look . . . shares the male fear of the monster's freakishness, but also recognizes the sense in which this freakishness is similar to her own difference . . . In other words, in the rare instance when the cinema permits the woman's look, she not only sees a monster, she sees a monster that offers a distorted reflection of her own image. (1996, 22)

Queer audiences' fascination with vampire films, monster films, and heroes with super-natural powers can be read in the same way: the appalling figure of the monster frightens the spectator, but his/her freakishness resembles the gay spectator's own. Today, especially for queer audiences, "the vampire has become an image of . . . a glamorous outsider, a figure whose otherness we find versions of (sometimes ambivalently) in ourselves" (Williamson 2005, 1).⁶⁰ Therefore, Dave's, like queer audiences', fascination with such films and stories indicates a queer pleasure he shares even if it does not make him queer altogether.

The zombie metaphor is asexual and impotent (to my knowledge, we have never seen a movie in which zombies have sex), but Dave undergoes a monstrous transformation from the zombie to the werewolf and vampire. The werewolf is sometimes, but not commonly, represented as sexual – for example, in *Underworld* (Len Wiseman, 2003). The vampire, however, is explicitly sexual – for example in *Interview with the Vampire* (Neil Jordan, 1994). So queer

⁶⁰ It is important to note that vampires and other monsters are often played by "homosexual or homosexually-coded actors" (Benshoff 1997, 175). This type of casting is maybe a (conscious or unconscious) attempt to relate to queer audiences.

audiences' (and maybe Dave's) fascination with the vampire image is not only with the vampire's freakishness but also with his/her expression of sexuality.

"It's in His Kiss!" is the title of Dyer's essay on vampires; the vampire *kisses* to kill (2002). The attack usually takes place at night in a bedroom, with the victim in a state of sexual expectation, often aroused. This sexual expression is mostly a queer but occasionally heterosexual one in the genre; when it is a heterosexual expression it is employed as a symbol of uncivilized and violent male heterosexuality (Dyer 2002, 87). In the eyes of his wife and others, Dave becomes a heterosexual vampire: although Kate is not raped before being murdered, there is something very sexual about the incident and the way the scene is shot enhances the feeling of rape or sexual assault. Kate is a young, beautiful woman running in the forest in the middle of the night; she is then beaten to death with sticks and her body is found lying in an animal cage in a deserted zoo. When the camera turns to display her body in her little dress, the audiences are likely to think she has been raped as well as murdered.

Dave does not become sexual just because of being the suspect of this rape-like murder. Dyer's discussion of vampirism evolves around its availability as an image of queer sexuality and experience: "In most vampire tales, the fact that a character is a vampire is only gradually discovered ... Much of the suspense of the story is about finding out . . ." (2002, 78). Similarly, Gelder discusses two kinds of sexual identifications that are specific to queer and to vampire texts: "Firstly, 'it takes one to know one'; and secondly, 'you can't tell who is and who is not'" (1994, 59). Thus, when the other characters (particularly Sean, Jimmy and Celeste) try to find Kate's murderer, they also find out about (or wrongly assume they find about) Dave's repressed and monstrous sexual self. In the above quote, Dyer puts the emphasis on others' finding out about the vampire; in Dave's characterization, his interest in vampires works also as a tool for exploring himself and becoming sexual. He watches each vampire movie like a self-conscious queer man – to see his resemblance to the vampire, which is a frightening but also likely to be a fascinating experience.

Zombie, werewolf and vampire figures are all in some sense parasites; zombies, like werewolves, eat humans, and vampires are bloodsuckers. Yet there is a significant difference between a zombie and a vampire: a zombie does not know how to die and is a

figure of pity, while a vampire dies in order to wake up and glamorously lives as an immortal. The film encourages us to read Dave's character like this: he is a man who died on the day of rape, and is literally living as a zombie who refuses to die, so Jimmy kills him. The monster has to be killed so that order can be restored. This is parallel to the narrative structure of the vampire tale that "frequently consists of two parts: the first leading up to the discovery of the vampire's hidden nature, the second concerned with his/her destruction" (Dyer 2002, 78).

Yet why is it not possible to read Dave's character as a man who was *forced* to live as dead although he was very much alive? Through such a reading, we cannot change the finale of the film and Dave's murder, but we can note the exact time when he realizes and accepts his queerness. Although you could not tell he is one of them, just like with many vampires, and although he lived like a zombie all of his life in order to avoid coming to terms with his queerness, Dave finds out he is queer. Dave does not want to die; he wants to live out his newly found vampiric/sexual self. He begs his murderers for his life; he is not a self-hating victim who accepts his fate and is happy to be sacrificed once he finds out he is queer. In another film, this could have simply been represented as a coming out of the closet narrative; however, in MR's retrograde ideology about molested children, the pollution can only be eliminated by the destruction of the monster.

Deserved Murder as a Result of Failed Masculinity

After a series of wrong clues that come one after another, Jimmy decides Dave murdered his daughter. His ultra-masculine friends, the "Savage brothers", put him into their car in a scene reminiscent of little Dave's being put into the molesters' car and take him to the Mystic River. Since the film continuously summarizes itself, Eastwood uses a parallel cut between the two scenes so that we do not pass over the fact that this scene resembles the first scene. It is also a sign of Dave's two deaths: the former referring to his psychological self, the latter to his actual death.

On the banks of the Mystic River, moonlight hits Dave's face, making him look even paler than he does in the rest of the film. The camera watches them as a third person; we watch the scene as an outsider rather than from their point of view. Although Dave continuously denies that he murdered Katie, and although he confesses to killing a child molester, Jimmy

keeps forcing him to tell “the truth” and convinces him that he will let him live if he does. Dave hesitantly accepts that he has murdered Kate. Jimmy first stabs him, then shoots him dead and, finally, throws his body into the river just as the police catch the real murderers. These two scenes of murder and capture are intercut with each other, to emphasize the wrongness of Jimmy’s action.

The film applauds the death of the half man, the unliving, and the raped. In the ideology of MR, these figures are disposable and their elimination brings relief to the neighbourhood, not unlike the relief that is brought by the murder of the paedophiles and pederast in the film. “We bury our sins here”, says Jimmy as he is killing Dave. In this film, the troublemakers and the molested are thrown into the waters of Mystic River.

After the murder, there are three positive changes in the plot that demonstrate this sense of relief and the restoration of order in the community. First, the real murderers are caught. Then, in the first and only sex scene of the film, Jimmy Markum has sex with his wife.⁶¹ Finally, detective Sean Devine’s long missing wife suddenly, and without any reason, comes back home with their child. Thus, everyone except Dave’s wife is more or less happy.

In the extra-diegetic level, there is another change that shows how reluctant Eastwood is to punish Jimmy. He has already got away with one murder, and at the end of the film, although Sean pretends to shoot him with his fingers to imply he is going to catch him, it is possible that he will get away with Dave’s murder as well. Ironically, Eastwood thought the novel’s ending was too explicit about Sean’s pinpointing of Jimmy as suspect, so in the film he decided to be more vague about the ending (Macklin 2005). In the same interview he also carefully does not comment on whether he thinks Jimmy will be captured and maintains the possibility that he will not, which implicitly serves as Eastwood’s wish and affirmation of Dave’s murder.

⁶¹ Jimmy’s wife Annabeth’s last speech may be read as the director’s voice. She convinces her husband that he is not guilty because he did not know. The speech might cause some members of the audience to question her stand but also convinces us of the inevitability of Jimmy’s action. The scene ends with the affirmation of her husband and we watch them having sex.

This film has a moral agenda, but delivers multiple and apparently contradictory messages. To some extent, it criticizes the prejudice of society against men who were raped as children; just because someone is raped, this does not mean that they will rape and/or kill. According to this moral stand, one would expect to see Jimmy caught and punished; however, Eastwood, his scriptwriter and his characters seem to be more fascinated with Dave's murder. In Dave's murder, not only he but also his rapists are punished. As the film proved both with Dave's characterization and with a super-imposition, Dave is the seed of his rapists. If he lives, he will always be a suspect in every (sexual) crime that takes place around him. I would agree that the film does not approve of the violence and emphasizes that chaos cannot be overcome through violence, but it also does not pity Dave Boyle's death. The use of violence and Dave's murder become two separate issues; lamenting the use of pointless violence does not mean lamenting Dave's murder.

By his murder, Dave is punished not only for his misperformance of masculinity but also as a failed heterosexual. In a way, the film's ideology suggests that if Dave was "damaged goods", he should have stayed that way. His denunciation of the sexless zombie he has been and his flourishing interest in the lustful vampire is not permitted. In "Dave as murder suspect", a misperformance of masculinity (being unmanly), failed heterosexuality (the supposed rape instead of consensual sex) and failed homosexuality (if he remained "damaged goods" he would not be a threat to women) find each other. Hence, Dave is punished for being ambiguous and for being all and none of the above, in other words, for being unreadable. Isabel Pinedo submits that "it is only when the monster is truly dead and subject to decay that it ceases to threaten the social order" (2004, 94). In the masculine world MR is depicting, queerness is so unacceptable that Dave's murder is portrayed as inevitable and it is represented as a horror film cliché, "destruction of the monster".

The Space of the Cellar: Paedophilia and Pederasty as Disease

The other bodies the film does not pity are the molesters' and the murdered pederast's bodies. Dave confesses his murder of the pederast to a non-believing Jimmy. In a flashback, the incident is shown to the audiences: the pederast is in his car, his eyes are closed and he is enjoying the oral sex he is receiving. This is revealed to be Dave's point of view when he opens the door, starts to punch the man and throws him out of the car. We see the young boy in a single shot before Dave tells him to run away; his blonde, probably

dyed hair (compared to his dark eyebrows), his childish face, absence of facial hair and the slightly non-masculine look on his face are visual codes that connote his non-heterosexual identity. The boy is not a child but an adolescent. He looks very surprised, and it is clear that this is apparently not a case of rape or abuse. We may assume that he is doing this for money, out of pleasure or both. If it is for money, this brings in a different scale of measure; commercial sex between younger and older men can be read as a social event that brings older and younger men and richer and poorer men into union (Herdt 1997, 72). For example, he might want to use the money to escape from his homophobic family. However, although the film clearly portrays that the boy is running away from Dave rather than the pederast, what's happening in that car is simply positioned there to display how repulsive this act is. Pleasure in such an act is unthinkable in this film's terms; where one might see psychological/sexual/financial fulfillment, Dave (and surely Eastwood) sees pain, abuse and repugnance. Even though it appears to be consensual, the young boy is supposed to be the victim of the pederast, who, as we learn later, had "three priors". Dave asks, "Who cares if a child molester is killed?" Nobody cares.

We hear a single comment about the men who raped Dave. One of them died when he was running from police and the other one got busted and "went the noose route in his cell". Nobody cares who they are: only towards the end of the film do we learn that the molesters' names were Henry and George. Were they married men? Did they have children? Were they a homosexual couple? Did they have sex with each other? Did they prefer boys to girls or did they like children of either sex? As Ohi puts it, "An account of the pedophile's point of view is so impossible that the minimal empathy necessary even to identify a paedophile becomes a confession of errant desire" (2000, 204). Hence, it is better to show or talk about them only in terms of their destruction, something Eastwood is unwilling to do when it came to the vigilante Jimmy's potential capture and imprisonment (therefore, destruction).

If the plot of the film did not depend on this incident, maybe these questions would be irrelevant. However, MR is significantly about rape: the rape of Dave, the oral abuse of the teen-age boy in the car, the supposed rape of Katie that makes Dave a suspect while the former makes him a murderer. Yet the primary rape of Dave as a child is the cause of all

that happens in the film; thus, all of these questions that I have asked and the film's refusal to comment on them become significant.

In this respect, it is also possible to comprehend MR as a reaction to increasingly liberal attitudes to tolerance of homosexuality, one of the outcomes of which is decreasing age of consent laws. Colin Flint observes that "Contemporary hate activity is a reasoned (if erroneous) yet extreme response to broader social change" (2004, 6). Not only the film itself but also Dave's murder can be read as an extreme response to concerns about changing age of consent and partnership laws; the film not only gets rid of the pederasts/paedophiles but also their seeds (Dave).

MR distances itself from the dirty area of child rape, because it cannot, does not, and prefers not to comment on it, as I have discussed in the previous pages. This film is certainly not a film that aims to raise awareness about this subject; on the contrary, it blurs the lines between consensual and non-consensual sex, monstrosity and homosexuality, monstrosity and queerness, paedophilia and pederasty, paedophilia/pederasty and homosexuality. All of these pairs became conflated and reified in MR. David Sibley discusses that in stereotyping there is no interaction with the "other"; it becomes an arrested, fixated idea about the stereotyped (1995, 18). In this film all pedophiles/pederasts are stereotypes, perverted men hungry for boys. That's why it is no surprise that the film does nothing to differentiate between these pairs.

Like the paedophiles themselves, the space they occupy is stereotyped in this film. Everything starts with a ball lost in the sewer. Years later Dave tells his son, "If we could get that *manhole* cover up, could be 1000 balls there" (emphasis mine). 1000 balls could be read as a reference to all abused boys who became queers. Dave does not know any of them, as he is the only one raped in his town. The "manhole" is no doubt metaphorical as much as it describes the sewer; a sewer represents extreme dirt, the cellar in the film is dirty, and so is the car the molesters drive. It is full of mud and used handkerchiefs, possibly with semen on them.

Dirtiness is dangerous since it threatens the "undirty". Usually, it is not the clean that threatens the dirty, but the opposite. For example, the sewer is disgusting because of what it

contains (waste, rats, cockroaches), but also what it brings to mind (stench, disease, decay, anal sex, death etc). If sewage is left running in the streets, even if the rest is “undirty”, we would no longer be able to call our cities clean. By putting them in a sewer we not only remove the waste, pee, excrement, mucus, bile, saliva, rats, cockroaches from our eyesight, but also the notions of stench, disease, decay, anal sex, and death are also contained underground.

The cellar is not much different than the sewer; overall it serves the same purpose. The action of rape does not, and most of the time cannot, take place in a normal house or bedroom; it has to be pushed into spaces we do not associate with cleanliness. When we think of a cellar in which children are raped, we do not want to imagine a clean space. The place of rape in such films is usually a dark, humid, and disgusting place; this space also emphasizes the indecent nature of the action. The cellar is, just like the sewer, *underground*. Underground means out of sight, but also indicates illegal action: rape is a highly illegal way to display lust and rapists end up in prison. The cellar itself recalls a dungeon underground; since rape is an illegal desire it is practiced in an illegal environment. Furthermore, prison itself can be read as the *mise-en-scène* of forbidden desires; both because the prisoners are there because of an illegal action, and because prisons are known to be places where illegal or ‘immoral’ action takes place. For example, drugs are easily found and homosexual intercourse occasionally takes place in the form of rape or because there is no heterosexual option for intercourse. We should also keep in mind that we never see the house attached to the cellar in the film, as if this is a cellar without a house over it, which makes it look more like a medieval dungeon and completely removes it from the notion of a ‘normal’ environment.

A thick forest serves the purpose of spatial exclusion; in MR the cellar not only lacks a house on top of it, it is also in the middle of a forest, a place where there is no civilization, no laws, and no rules. Flint observes, “whether it is the neighbourhood or the nation-state, people adopt cognitive maps as to what should belong there and what needs to be expelled” (2004, 2). The actuality of rape, which is expelled from the neighbourhood, is pushed away so strongly that once a child from the neighbourhood is taken, it is impossible to find him. Sibley, drawing on both Mary Douglas and Julie Kristeva, adds, “Disease is a more potent danger if it is contagious. The fear of infection leads to the erection of the barricades to

resist the spread of diseased, polluted others” (1995, 25). As Sibley points out, there are barricades, and if you fall through to the other side, you are ‘damaged’. Once you cross the physical borders of the neighbourhood and enter those of the cellar you become “damaged goods”. Thus, Dave is not found, as if the society left him there once he crossed the border, so he has to escape himself. It takes an entire “four days” for Dave to come back from ‘uncivilization’ – the geography of the forest and the cellar. “Four days” sounds more metaphorical than real, as if Dave has been literally taken underground and it took four days to get back to the surface. We have mechanisms to protect ourselves from dirt, but once it takes us, it is not possible to be clean anymore; threatening to spread his disease of failed masculinity, dirty Dave is subsequently imprisoned in his family house. In MR’s ideology, there is no possibility of purification when a boy is taken into the cellar.

In MR, the cellar can be read as a symbolic space of exclusion, and it also marks a real, geographical exclusion of some members of a society. The film attempts to exclude not only the pedophiles/pederasts themselves, but also all of their acts, their victims and the spaces they inhabit. The dirty men are not from our neighbourhood; they are outsiders. Once they take one of us, that person is not one of us anymore. This rejection is not simply about ‘our neighbourhood’, but on a wider scale it is also a rejection of paedophilia/pederasty in ‘our civilized culture’. Such films act as a warning that pederasty/paedophilia have to be pushed strongly to somewhere outside ‘us’. An isolated cellar that is underground in an implausibly inaccessible forest four days’ walking distance from the neighbourhood is a highly effective spatial image for imprisoning the rule-breakers and their victim.

PART III. *Mysterious Skin*

The director of *Mysterious Skin* (hereafter referred to as MS), Greg Araki, approaches paedophilia in a significant way, as he is not a mainstream (and heterosexual) director like Eastwood, but one of the most prominent directors of New Queer Cinema. MS has been successful critically and commercially, just like MR, but at the same time on a different level. Made with a small budget and for a select audience, Araki’s film satisfied his audiences and many reviewers who have not liked Araki’s films before. The reviewers’ discussions of Araki and his film are reminiscent of the discussions about Eastwood and MR. Nearly all of Araki’s earlier films have been about adolescents. However, these films

have been satirical in terms of plot and postmodern in terms of narrative, whereas MS is a more conventionally structured film. As with Eastwood's MR, most reviewers agree that Araki's style is perfected now: Jeff Vice calls MS "the best, most accomplished film Araki has done to date" (2005), Dennis Schwartz declares, "This one clearly has more meat on the plate than Araki's earlier more shallow and sensationalistic films" (2006), and even *The Christian Science Monitor* agrees that this film "is leagues above the sensationalistic stuff Araki peddled in earlier films" (Sterritt 2005).

Maturity is another adjective used to describe MS and an adjective I have problematized in my reading of MR. David Rooney describes MS as Araki's "most challenging and arguably most mature film". Joel Dossi emphasizes the director's own maturity: "*Mysterious Skin* is an even more powerful film as a result of Araki's maturation" (2005). Robert W. Butler declares that "Araki has given us his most mature work yet" (2005). In his interview with Araki, Caluya asks:

It seems there is a shift in your responsible treatment of paedophilia in *Mysterious Skin*. That's in contrast to *The Living End*, which the pre-title announces as "An irresponsible film by Gregg Araki".

Greg Araki: In general, there's a more serious, 'mature' sensibility at work in *Mysterious Skin*. I'm at a different place in my life; I don't think I could have made *Mysterious Skin* ten years ago when the book was sent to me for the first time. (Young and Caluya 2005)

Maturity is not necessarily a graceful attribute. Here, maturity is a sign of Araki's changing film style but also, in terms of his ideology, his coming closer to mainstream opinion. Although he finds the film successful, Koresky claims that "Araki has purged himself of Queer Cinema's fuck-you hedonism" to be absorbed into the mainstream (Koresky 2005). Ultimately, although MS is very different than MR, the terms 'responsibility' and 'maturity' are shared, at least in the reviewers' discussions of the film, and are in stark contrast to adjectives used about Araki's previous films that identified them as 'queer' and different from the rest.

When it was released, MS caused controversy akin to films with the same subject matter, as it illustrated what is often impossible to show; two boys having sex with a pedophile.

Remarkably, the film starts in a cellar.⁶² 8-year-old Brian's older sister finds him locked in the bathroom with his nose bleeding, but Brian does not remember what happened to him in the last five hours. In the years that follow, he convinces himself that he was abducted by aliens in those hours. When he is 20 years old, Brian starts a search and seeks out Neil to learn what happened to him in the five hours that have "disappeared from [his] life". Parallel to his story is Neil's story: he is a queer child abused by his baseball coach and in the next 12 years Neil becomes an openly gay teenager. Neil is a self-destructive man who prostitutes himself and is obsessed with men who look like his coach. When Brian finally finds Neil, he also finds out that he was also abused by the coach in the hours missing from his memory.

Although, it is difficult to depict what happened in the house in which the boys were abused, this is exactly what the film attempts to narrate. It is also impossible to express what happened in this house in any neutral language, since all the words we use to describe such events have negative connotations and none are free of prejudice. In the spirit of Araki's rewriting of paedophilic abuse narratives, however, I will attempt to use the term "mistreat", rather than rape, especially in Neil's story.

The film is different than MR in its attempt to give a full picture of the mistreated boys. It is most significant that there are two victims in MS rather than one. Neil and Brian give different responses to the incidents that occurred in their childhood. In the characters' different responses, Araki is able to display that there is no single, universal response to sexual mistreatment by adults, like MR implicitly suggests.

The use of space in MS is not only symbolic as in Eastwood's MR. The cellar Brian hides in is a real cellar, in a real house. In MS, the cellar is not employed as a symbolic space of rape, but as a real place to hide, just like most children would do if they are scared. The house of the coach is a real house in town; it does not take days to run away from it. Unlike the dark, scary cellar of MR (or the dirty car of the film's molesters), this is not an ugly, dirty home with a cellar, but a clean, homely home. Araki's main difference from Eastwood

⁶² The film was granted an NC-17 rating in the United States, and in Australia it was nearly banned following pressure from Christian and 'family' groups. MS was reviewed by the OFLC's Classification Review Board after the Australian Family Association's Richard Egan – who had not seen the film – labelled it "a 'how to manual' for paedophiles" (Young and Caluya 2005).

is his resistance to representing such spaces as symbols. I have argued in my reading of MR that the film curses all queer desire, as if it is cursing paedophilia, and the cellar symbolizes the disgust felt toward such desires. Here, the cellar stands for what it is: a space Brian hides in because of the complicated feelings (including pleasure?) that he goes through, which will come to surface at the end of the film.

In MR, Eastwood makes sure the abused does not end up as the abuser; adult Dave is not the murderer of Jimmy's daughter, although the other characters assume so. Araki makes a more direct link between the abused and abuser in Neil's case. After his experience with the coach, Brian loses this memory and becomes dysfunctional like adult Dave in MR. He is asexual and his social skills are limited. Interestingly, Brian, like young Dave, is chosen by the coach for his difference from other boys. Even as a boy, Brian is silent, insignificant and he is very unsuccessful at trying to play hockey, a game that other boys play.

MS represents the complexity of Neil's reaction to intergenerational sexual contact convincingly. Significantly, Araki does not choose to represent Neil only as a victim. Early in the film, the 8 year-old Neil already masturbates while looking at his mother's *Playgirl* magazines and her boyfriends. By depicting Neil as queer before the abuse, he avoids homophobia, which is the backbone of similar films. Neil does not become gay because he is mistreated by the coach.

Brian is traumatized by this incident and if we are to use the term "abuse" for one of the children, it would be more appropriate for Brian. However, Araki underlines the possibility that Brian may also have enjoyed having sex with Neil and the coach. When his sister finds in the cellar, Brian is bleeding from the nose. Even though he defines himself as an assimilated Japanese-American (Young and Caluya 2005), Araki is probably aware that because of strict censorship in Japan sexual arousal in manga is represented by a bloody nose.⁶³ However, Brian's possible physical enjoyment of the actual sex does not change the fact that he erases this moment from his memory and as a teenager he is anti-social, terrified of sex with a man or a woman, and subject to fainting spells. In addition, by adding

⁶³ "In Japanese manga, the nosebleed is a visual shorthand/euphemism for sexual arousal, specifically an erection in males (which makes it all the more odd when used with a female character.) When blood shoots from the nose explosively, and in ridiculous quantity, the implication is an actual ejaculation" (anonymous 2008b).

the possibility that Brian may have enjoyed the sexual contact in a metaphor only few will understand, Araki also differentiates abuse and physical pleasure. Unlike in MR's imaginary painful rape ("Please, no more!"), Araki underlines the fact that abuse does not have to be painful, and while physical pleasure does not mean that there was no abuse. In fact, Neil has pleasure through his sexual contact with the coach. However, he also feels abused by the coach by the time he is an adolescent. Araki thus, very courageously, is not afraid to display that a sexual episode between an adult male and a boy may be enjoyable. Such sexual contact takes place between Neil and the coach. Indeed, even when he is a young adult man, Neil remembers this as a good memory; his flashbacks are shot in polished images with vibrant colours in a dreamy atmosphere.

At the same time, Neil becomes a very cruel child after the rape, torturing another boy by putting fireworks in his mouth and by giving him a blowjob so that he will not tell anyone what had happened. In this representation, what is significant is MS's insistence on linking this violence to Neil's mistreatment. In the film, the connection between Neil's problems and his dysfunctional family, a negligent mother and absent father, is not highlighted and he is portrayed as a victim only because of the coach's mistreatment of him. As a teenager, Neil hustles and looks for trouble, and is represented as arrogant and unhappy. His best friend says, "Neil has a black hole instead of a heart". He is obsessed with men who look like his coach, mainly older and fatherly men. Looking for such men is not a disease in itself, but the film suggests that it is only because of the mistreatment that Neil desires similar men. It is possible to think that Neil's personality and his actions are not extreme, but regular adolescent feelings/behaviours. However, the narration connects Neil's confusion to his mistreatment – as proof, Araki portrays one of Neil's friends as a gay teenager who does not have any problems whatsoever. Araki, like Eastwood, is sure there is no easy path to adolescence if a child is mistreated. In line with most research, Neil's characterization may suggest that he is not traumatised by the sexual contact itself, but by learning that this type of contact is abuse; however, this possibility is not explored by the film's narrative.

Araki significantly ignores MR's (and many similar mainstream films') pedophile-as-violent rapist formula. He represents the coach in a realistic and somehow sympathetic manner rather than as a 'monster'. The coach engages in cornflake fights with Neil, and

likes to play with toys and video games with the children. Undoubtedly, there is a childish side to him. Although some could read these scenes as exemplary of the coach's opportunism, by shooting such scenes in bright and colourful imagery, Araki makes sure we understand that the coach enjoys being with children and feels at home with them; at heart, he is a child himself. In MR, the paedophiles are boy-rapists; the viewers do not learn whether they engage in sexual contact with anyone except boys. In MS, at the end of the film the audience learns that the coach has left the town and married a woman. As paedophilia itself is not a type of sexual orientation, nor are all paedophiles only interested in children, Araki creates a more three-dimensional and realistic character. Although some homophobic audiences may still think of this character as a closeted homosexual, there are further possibilities for other viewers: most paedophiles are interested not in adult men but only in boys and it is possible that the coach is also interested in adult women.⁶⁴

The house also becomes a space that is visited again and again; in one sense, it becomes a piece of the coach. After the coach marries and leaves town, Neil becomes obsessed with this space and revisits it continuously to re-experience the feeling he experienced when he had sex with the coach. The house also has a therapeutic effect for both of the characters. Neil tells Brian the truth about what had happened to him as a child in this house after they break into it when its new owners are away. The film does not end with suicide or the murder of either of its characters; through the optimistic ending that is reached in this house, the audience feels Brian will probably move forward after learning the truth and that Neil will bring his self-destruction to an end.

PART IV. Conclusion

I started this chapter by differentiating between paedophilia, pederasty, and intergenerational sex and by trying to draw out the differences of these terms from "abuse" and "rape". In the present age, certainly, the only acceptable representation of paedophilia in mainstream film is as "abuse" or "rape".⁶⁵

⁶⁴ In his study of actual paedophiles Fajer argues that "[m]en who abuse boys self-identify as heterosexual or have no interest in adult males" (1992, 541).

⁶⁵ *Fat Girl* (Catherine Breillat, 2001) may be the only a film that resists cultural expectations and pressure about a film that brings an insight to the relationship between an adolescent girl and an adult man. The film daringly suggests that an adolescent girl may enjoy being raped by an adult man. However, this scene was censored in the British DVD version of the film that was in wide distribution.

I have argued that the central, if sidelined, plot in MR is the rape scene, which can be called that only because the depiction connotes rape, although there is no actual representation of rape. The characters in the film, like the audience, take for granted that painful anal rape took place in the cellar and in MR such rape cripples the victim for life. The abusers in the film are cruel and stereotyped, and the audience is given very brief information about them so that they are not humanized. When the film depicts a pederast having sex with a teenage boy, he is treated just like the abusers by the narration; the audience is not given any information about him and he is viciously beaten to death. In effect, in the ideology of the film there is no difference between abusers, pederasts and paedophiles, and all deserve to be murdered.

MR, moreover, presents conflicting messages about Dave. Although Dave is initially shown as a victim in the film, he quickly becomes delirious. Even in his victimization Dave is monstrous; he acts like a zombie and lives as if he is not alive. However, I have noted the transformation in Dave's monstrous characterization. After murdering the pederast, Dave is represented as vampiric, he lusts for blood and he becomes obsessed with and like a character from a horror film. MR employs Dave's delirium as evidence of his being a suspect in the rape; it is not the others who think that he has raped and murdered Jimmy's daughter, but it is rather Dave who makes them think that. In other words, through his inconsistent behaviour Dave invites death. I have pointed out the fact that the film characterises this death as inevitable, and disallows any other future for Dave.

In the third part of the chapter, I have analyzed MS to display its differences from MR. Where MR sees simplicity, MS sees complexity. In this film, abuse does not necessarily mean painful anal rape, but it can include pleasure. Paedophiles are not boy-hungry monsters, but real people. The victims do not necessarily end up like zombies/vampires and commit suicide or get killed, but have some ability to work out their confusions. In fact, the film's most significant difference from MR is in its materialisation of the cellar that I have argued is highly metaphorical in the former film. MS is based on Brian's attempt to understand how he ended up in a cellar with a bloody nose and he finds out the answer at the end of the film.

In MR the cellar is represented as an excellent symbolic space of exclusion. As a metaphor, the cellar represents our societies' disinterest in discussing actual paedophilia and intergenerational sex, and also the denial of non-stereotypical representations of paedophilia by censorship laws/regulations. When films like MS are censored or denied wide distribution, the only form mainstream films can imagine for paedophilia will be brutal rape and the only space in which it can be imagined will be a cellar, a place into which we often push aside what we do not want to see.

CHAPTER IV GEOGRAPHIES OF ABUSE AND RAPE

I start this chapter by critically examining the socio-cultural meaning of male-male rape and the cultural stigmas attached to men who are raped and men who rape. Through my reading of *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead* (Mike Hodges, 2003), I articulate the relationship between male/male rape and homosexuality, and explore how the film deals with the representation of male/male rape and notions of domination, homosexuality, homosociality and homoeroticism. It is notable that in this film, the victim of the rape, a man whose gender performance is ambiguous, is denied entry to spaces that are essentially heterosexual and male. At the end of the chapter, I explore how the male/female rape scene in *Irreversible* (Gaspar No  , 2002) is shot to be read as if it were a male/male rape scene.

Part I. Introduction

In Chapter III, I discussed the fact that when we imagine a boy being raped, we often represent the rape as taking place in a dirty, humid, and ugly place, commonly in a cellar. When an adult male is raped, our representations of it are equally iconographic; however, they are less metaphorical. Actual male rape as well as male rape in film tend to take place in prisons.⁶⁶ Although different from each other in their subjects, films like *Fortune and Men's Eyes* (Harvey Hart, 1971), *Midnight Express* (Alan Parker, 1978), *An Innocent Man* (Peter Yates, 1989), *American Me* (Edward James Olmos, 1992), *Fortress* (Stuart Gordon 1993), *Bad Boys* (Michael Bay, 1995), *Shawshank Redemption* (Frank Darabont, 1994), *Murder in the First* (Marc Rocco, 1995), and *American History X* (Tony Kaye, 1998) can be considered prison-rape films, since the rape that takes place in prison and the revenge by the victim are arguably central to the plot. If such a rape scene in a film does not take place in a prison, the space in which it takes place often becomes equally iconographic and these spaces (and scenes) usually become unforgettable because of the way they are shot: such scenes include the rapes that takes place outdoors in *Deliverance* (John Boorman, 1972), in a cellar in *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994), and in a bathtub in *Mysterious Skin* (Gregg Araki, 2004).

⁶⁶ Actual male rape also takes place in military barracks, locker rooms, fraternities, boarding schools, monasteries and dormitories (Scarce 1997).

As early as 1976, Gregory Lehne convincingly argued that homophobia is often directed at heterosexual men. He writes, “men devalue homosexuality, then use this norm of homophobia to control other men in their male roles . . . Homophobia is only incidentally directed against actual homosexuals – its more common use is against the heterosexual male. Homophobia is a threat used by societies and individuals to enforce social conformity in the male role, and maintain social control” (1992, 389). In most films, male/male rape is clearly a homophobic device used by heterosexual men against heterosexual men to debase their masculinity. Even so, in films the heterosexual victims of the rape are presumed to be homosexual-oriented either before the rape takes place (by casting and filmic techniques) or after (because of) this rape.

What is definitive about our understanding of male/male rape in real and reel life is that both parties involved in it are tainted with homosexuality. Although both men are so affected, the victim is considered to be in a more inferior position: real men do not get raped, but homosexuals or homosexually coded men do.⁶⁷ Thus, men are tainted with homosexuality when they get raped because they allegedly caused the rape by looking, acting or behaving like a homosexual man.⁶⁸ In our erroneous understanding of homosexuality, gay men willingly put themselves in the stereotypical position of women during sexual intercourse and, like the misogynistic attitude that considers women ‘rapable’, when such men get raped there is something acceptable in that rape. Yet, the aggressors are also tainted with homosexuality, because only homosexual men who cannot control their libido would rape other men.⁶⁹ In this case, homosexual men are thought as ultra-sexual monsters who cannot control their libido. Sivakumaran notes that “this results

⁶⁷ Sivakumaran notes that in actual prisons if the rape involves self-identified homosexuals, the matter is not even considered to be rape (2005, 1301).

⁶⁸ When Andrew, a heterosexual man, was raped and called the police they said: “‘Well probably you really wanted this to happen. You wanted to have sex with a man. Then you got scared, and now you want to say it was something else.’ I just hung up,” Andrew said to Scarce (1997, 217). When gay men are raped, especially in prisons, they are similarly held responsible for it, told they deserved or asked for it (Brook 2004). A gay man who was raped in prison describes what happened after the rape: “‘If you want to be a ‘ho’ you’ll be treated like a ‘ho’, he says one official told him. He also alleges that officials crudely suggested that because he was gay, all the sex was consensual. In his legal complaint, Johnson quotes one official as saying, ‘I personally believe you like dick. You like this shit. . . . I don’t think you need no safekeeping. You need to be placed on high security where you don’t have anything but one cellie and then you can get fucked all the time’” (Brook 2004).

⁶⁹ Gay men sometimes do rape other men, but Scarce informs us that the incidence of gay men raping heterosexual men is relatively low and that “the fears typically associated with gay on straight rape are greatly exaggerated” (1997, 75).

from society's focus on the sexual aspect of the rape and not the power/dominance aspects" (2005, 1286). Heterosexual men, in fact, rape other men to assure their submission.

The literature about male/male rape is at best meager. Male/male rape is an issue that hardly attracts the attention of feminist or queer scholars, to the protest of a minority of these scholars themselves. According to Sivakumaran, there are three reasons why queer scholars stay away from this subject:

First, the queer movement may be wary that drawing attention to the issue of male/male rape perpetuates the notion that it is only homosexuals who are parties to such rapes. This would have the opposite effect to that which is intended, namely reinforcement of such myths already prevalent in society. This is not to suggest that male/male rape does not take place within the homosexual community, simply that the queer movement may not wish to draw attention to those instances in the fear that this will reinforce inaccurate public perceptions of homosexuals. Second, the queer movement is rarely given a voice at the international level. Even at the domestic level, such voice is limited. Given the limited opportunity to be heard, let alone listened to, a tactical decision may have been made to concentrate on one area, that of equality and non-discrimination. These issues are of obvious importance and would also clearly lead to a reduction in homophobia. Third, the queer movement may argue that it does indeed address male/male rape, or rather that part of it, which can be considered "queer-bashing," in the form of hate crimes and the right to bodily integrity. (2005, 1283-4)

As Sivakumaran describes above, for various reasons the queer literature on male/male rape is limited. Nonetheless, we do need a queer perspective to analyze male/male rape in film, because it is nearly impossible to exclude discussions of homosexuality when a man rapes another man in a film, even if the film explicitly tries to point out differences between male/male rape and homosexuality as in *ISWID*. All men who are raped, and frequently the rapists themselves, are tainted with homosexuality in our culture.

I am interested in real male/male rape and its effect on men's lives only to the extent that it helps me understand its function in film. The issue of male/male rape, which takes up minimum attention in real life, gets maximum attention in reel life and is represented in many films. Curiously, the literature is still limited when authors write about male/male rape in film. In the absence of books solely devoted to male/male rape films, I have considered books about female rape, like Projansky's *Watching Rape* (2001), Horeck's *Public Rape* (2003), Boyle's *Media and Violence* (2004), or even Clover's *Men, Women,*

and *Chain Saws* (1992), and applied their findings to male/male rape on film. Male/male rape in film is either covers a few pages in books about female rape revenge films⁷⁰ or is limited to books about prison films with some emphasis on prison rape. Although I benefit from literature about female rape-revenge, it is important to note that male rape-revenge and female rape-revenge are intrinsically different according to some scholars. Wlodarz pointedly describes this difference: “while the female rape revenge films may be laden with disruptive feminist politics, the male rape revenge films continue to go out of their way to recuperate patriarchy and masculinity . . . through the incessant scapegoating of gay men” (2001, 78). Although Wlodarz’s argument is relevant to ISWID and many other films, it is important to underline that this statement is nonetheless too general.

As I mentioned above, books about prison films also refer to male/male rape scenes. A brief discussion of some memorable rape scenes will enable me to review some of this literature and introduce issues that are relevant to the discussion of *I’ll Sleep When I’m Dead*. As Carpenter puts it, referring to his own prison experiences, “Prison rape is not a necessity, not every man is raped and it is itself a homophobic construction” (1982, 5). However, when we see male/male rape implied or practiced in film, it tends to take place in a prison setting. In prison films, rape is depicted as almost inevitable and every man in prison is represented, as being prone to homosexuality and to violence (in the form of rape).

Rape in prison appeared in prison films like *Escape from Alcatraz* as early as 1979 (Don Siegel), but according to Derral Cheatwood prison films made between 1963 and 1980 were about the day-to-day issues of most prisons and the issue of rape had minor significance in the films’ plots (1998, 223). According to Cheatwood, only from the 1980s on, namely after *Brubaker* (Stuart Rosenberg, 1980), do we start to see rape explicitly and as a major plot device in prison films. In an aptly titled article, *If you drop the soap in the shower you are on your own*, Eigenberg and Baro study more recent films and conclude that the rapes or rape attempts are central to the plot in most prison films and rape is referred to in the plot in others, although it is unnecessary for the narration (2003, 65).

⁷⁰ For example, in 270 pages *Watching Rape* (2005) Projansky devotes three pages to male/male rape. Similarly, Boyle has only got “a brief word” on the subject at the end of one of her chapters (2001, 142).

The literature about male/male rape is scarce, but books and articles about prison films tend to deal with prison rape to some extent (Crowther 1989, Cheatwood 1997, Jarvis 2004). Despite their attention to male/male rape, these books echo homophobic attitudes. For example, in his discussion of *Scum* (Alan Clarke, 1979), Crowther can easily write, “A grim threat to young offenders in reform schools and especially if they were placed in adult prisons, is that of *homosexual attack*” (1989, 75). In his book, he reads all male/male rape scenes in prison films as “homosexual attack” and describes the problem of rape in prisons as the “problem of homosexuality”. In a more recent article Schauer pointedly complains that consensual homosexual relationships are absent in prison films, yet he refers to all rape in prison films as “homosexual rape”, although none of the characters are homosexual in these films (2004, 35). The term homosexual rape should only apply to rapes in which both parties are homosexual, so that commonly the use of the term “homosexual rape” is erroneous and homophobic.

Prison rape is significant not only because of the quantity of films in which it appears or because of the questionable representation: something else that is entirely unthinkable about male/female rape happens when we consider male/male rape. We find male/male rape funny, specifically in a prison context. Through several waves of feminism most of us have learned that male/female violence is not funny and any representations of such rape are investigated carefully by feminist activists/academics. Nobody can joke about women getting raped in any space. Male/male rape, on the other hand, has become funny. On TV in a chips commercial a man claims that he will go out naked if the other customers give him their chips. In the following scene he is naked in a prison cell and another guy comes near him and looks at him as if he is gay and possibly offering sex. The tagline of the commercial is “tastes like they say they do”, which may refer to both the chips and the naked man.⁷¹ There is an assumption here that conflates nudity with vulnerability, implying that in a prison context vulnerability brings sexual attack. As the man looks frightened, there is an assumption that rape will certainly take place and he will be the submissive partner since he is nude and vulnerable compared to the dressed, strong, tattooed, and masculine other man. Maybe the ‘comic’ response as a reaction to the implication/depiction

⁷¹ This Upper Cuts commercial is probably plagiarized from a 7UP soft drink commercial in the USA, dated 2002 which was taken off the air after protests from a convict rights group over its alleged jail rape allusions (Rutenberg, 2002).

of male/male rape is in fact social defensiveness against something that is very uncomfortable.

Some rape scenes are written into our cultural unconscious. According to Limbacher, the very first male/male rape scene is in *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean 1962) (Barnett 2004, 161), though it is implied rather than displayed. However, John Boorman's *Deliverance* (1972) is the first well-known film to deal with male/male rape, as its major plot, outside of a prison context. In this film, four suburban men decide to go on a canoe and camping trip. The trip turns into a terrifying ordeal with one of the men nearly getting orally raped, and another (Bobby, played by Ned Beatty) getting anally raped. During the rape, Bobby, in shock and pain, groans and the rapist tells him to squeal like a pig. Scarce informs us that actor Ned Beatty, who played the rape victim in this film, is still taunted by other men when he is in public: "'Squeal like a pig' they shout, mimicking the rapist's 'squeal piggy piggy' words in what is perhaps the most graphic mass media portrayal of male on male rape" (1997, 117). This scene has certainly been written into the cultural memory (even by those who have never seen the film but heard about the scene) as the first scene that dared to display male/male rape on screen so explicitly. As Clover aptly discusses, this rape is also emblematic of city/country divisions (1992, 114-166) and depicts controlling and dominating men who are 'out of place'. As arrogant suburban people, these men actually do not have the power they think they possess in the countryside. The most radical image of male disempowerment is to be raped by another man, and the film takes suburban men's power away through the shocking imagery of the rape.

From Scarce we learn that Quentin Tarantino had this scene in mind when shooting a rape scene that has been equally provocative, that in *Pulp Fiction* (1994). In this film, the rape takes place in the iconic cellar. The scene is very significant because it represents homosocial bonding between two men who have been enemies, a theme which is also important in the discussion of *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead*. In *Pulp Fiction* Marsellus Wallace is a gangster, played by a heavily built black actor (Ving Rhames). As he pursues another gangster, Butch Coolidge (Bruce Willis), both men are caught by two other men who engage in S&M and are rapists. These men are stereotypically portrayed and look like they rape men for pleasure. Butch escapes his bonds as Marsellus is being raped by both men. It is obviously in Butch's best interest to run away, but he ends up rescuing Marsellus from

the rapists. As long as this rape is kept a secret (and if Butch does not come back to Los Angeles) Marsellus tells Butch that he will not kill him. Witnessing this rape not only forms a bond that did not exist between them before, promoting each other's interests, but also places Butch in a position of power as he knows Marsellus is rapable and demasculinized after this rape.⁷²

Finally, *American History X* (Tony Kaye, 1998) brings our attention back to the specific setting of the male/male rape in prison. In a prison context, it may be thought that male/male rape is an issue of sexual frustration because of the lack of women, but the film shows how, more importantly, this is an issue of domination and power. In the film, men control and punish other men who do not obey their rules of behaviour. Typical of prison rape films, Derek (Edward Norton) is attacked by a group of men and gang-raped in the shower. The rape is employed to dominate Derek and subject him to the gang's demands. In all three films rape is not about, at least primarily, sexual satisfaction, but is about teaching a lesson to males who think they are tough men.

Part II. I'll Sleep When I'm Dead

In an early sequence of *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead* (hereafter referred to as ISWID), we witness Davey Graham (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers) walking in the dark streets of London. Suddenly he is captured by three men and is raped by at least one of them, Boad (Malcolm McDowell). After his suicide, Davey's brother, Will Graham (Clive Owen) starts a search to find out the reason for Davey's suicide and through this search he learns that Davey was raped. He decides to take revenge on Boad.

It is possible to read ISWID as a rape-revenge film. Rape-revenge films can be described as films in which the victim of a rape, often female, gets her revenge on the rapists. According to Clover, the rape-revenge story as a drama genre came into its own in the 1970s (1992, 137). Read defines rape-revenge as "not a genre, but a narrative structure, which has been mapped over other genres" (2000, 25). When we say rape-revenge, we usually think of films that use the rape of the protagonist as the main theme of the film and that have low production values, like *Thriller/They Call Her One Eye* (Bo Arne Vibenius, 1974), *Lipstick*

⁷² In *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (1994), Susan Jeffords also discusses the interracial bonding that takes place between men through male/male rape in *Pulp Fiction* and *Shawshank Redemption*.

(Lamont Johnson, 1976), *I Spit on Your Grave/Day of the Woman* (Meir Zarchi, 1978), *Ms.45* (Abel Ferrara, 1981), and *Extremities* (Robert M. Young, 1986). Most of these films have been read as exploitation films (Horeck 2003; Projansky 2001; Read 2000), yet other films with better production values or which are considered art films have also been read as rape-revenge films, like *The Virgin Spring* (Ingmar Bergman, 1960), *Deliverance* (John Boorman, 1972), *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991), and *Sleepers* (Barry Levinson, 1996). Therefore, the term “rape-revenge” covers a wide range of films that are similar in having rape and revenge motives in their plots, but they do not constitute a coherent genre or guarantee a particular audience and/or level of production values.

ISWID follows many of the conventions of rape-revenge films. Essentially, rape and revenge taken afterwards are crucial to the plot of ISWID. However, most reviewers and the filmmakers read this film as anything but a rape-revenge film:⁷³

Hodges describes *I'll Sleep* as a samurai film. By contrast, his writer likens it to Greek myth. Personally, I saw it more in terms of a cowboy picture, where the loner hero rides into town to kill the evil sheriff. (Brooks 2003)

Notably, male/male rape is not a core generic convention of samurai or cowboy films, nor of Greek myths. Although Hodges and the reviewers ignore it, in ISWID rape is not a part of a larger narrative structure, as in *Mysterious Skin* (Greg Araki, 2004); rather it is primary to the structure of the film, as it is in *I Spit on Your Grave/Day of the Woman* (Meir Zarchi, 1978).

Although there is an attempt to read the film as a ‘serious’ film, the first-person title of the film also brings a B movie to mind, not unlike *I Spit on Your Grave*. *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead* circles around the rape in the film. The title can be read in different ways: the victim will be able to sleep only when he dies (commits suicide), since he has been raped; his brother will only be able to sleep when he takes revenge (though he may die himself before murdering the rapist); or even if he murders the rapist he will not find peace until he dies because of this rape. In each reading the torment of male/male rape can only be appeased through some form of death, whether murder or suicide or death from natural causes.

⁷³ For example, A. O. Scott refers to ISWID as a revenge film, but never refers to the rape (2007). According to O’Sullivan ISWID is a “NEO-NOIR thriller” (2004)! In *San Francisco Chronicle*, Meyer refers to the film as crime drama (Meyer, 2004).

The Space of Rape: Out of Placeness

The rape sequence scene starts with Davey walking the streets. Some men in a car follow him at a distance, as do the audience. Throughout this sequence Davey visits various places and the car keeps following him. Pursuing this trailing, we are already aware that something is going to happen to Davey but we do not know whether he is going to be kidnapped, beaten or murdered. Suddenly, when Davey walks towards a dark alley, some guys jump out of the car. While they are attacking him a loud truck covers the passerby's (and the audience's) view and makes it impossible to hear his cries for help. Davey is pushed into a dark place and raped.

Let's ponder some questions: What is this place? Why is it chosen for (this) rape? Is this a space that is repeatedly used for rape (and/or beating people up) by these men?

This scene requires careful analysis both because it does not last for more than a few seconds, and also because it does not offer the very basic information of where this location is. The place looks dirty and dark; the darkness prevents us from seeing the space clearly. It can easily be thought of as a cellar, but there is a brief moment in the sequence in which we see a glass ceiling. This place looks like a garage because of a number of tyres covering the left part of the screen. The tyres bring to mind a male space; women don't belong there.

In films that present male/male rape, such scenes become unforgettable both because of the trauma they cause in the character (and possibly in some members of the audience) and because of the representation of the space in which the rape takes place. Spaces in which men are raped are often iconographic, whereby the space evokes meaning without even staging the act of rape – when we see prison showers or male locker rooms on screen we expect rape to take place. In such films, the space becomes a character itself because of the detailed *mise-en-scène*. Furthermore, the space also may tell us why rape takes place: for example, in the space of prison, we can read the absence of women into the space and the act of rape. In on-screen locker rooms, it is not homosexual desire but the power struggle between schoolmates that usually causes abuse and rape. In *ISWID*, the representation of the space does not connote such firm meanings, and thus gives us the freedom to read more than a single explanation into the scene. Space matters in making meaning, but its illegibility also makes meaning.

It is also possible to suggest that unless it is in an iconographic space (like the prison showers or locker rooms), we do *not* want to imagine a space for rape. This kind of rejection of a space for male rape is in accordance with the lack of representation of other types of male rape, the lack of discussion of male/male rape by scholars, the rejection of rape by the victim, who is most likely in a state of denial, and the rejection by the societies that do not accept the problem of male/male rape and do very little to solve it. On this level, the film's message seems to be that such rape is so horrific and barbaric that we cannot imagine a space/recognize the space in which it is committed.

I would argue that the term "out of place" is appropriate for analyzing this scene. It would be naïve not to notice that Davey is punished for cruising freely, as if he owns the streets and the city without any concern for the politics of geography. Even his rapist, Boad, says so: "I was watching him for weeks, you know. At the parties, the restaurants, clubs. He was everything I loathed. The clothes, the walk ..." Davey is out of place in the streets.

If a woman were walking alone at night in those alleys, we would expect her immediately to be the victim of such an action. Women are raped in films often because they are out of place. For example, in *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991), Thelma is nearly raped for being courageous and stupid enough to flirt with a man in a parking lot in the middle of the night; in *The Accused* (Jonathan Kaplan, 1988), Sarah Tobias is raped because of daring to go to a pool bar at night; in *I Spit on Your Grave* (Meir Zarchi, 1978), Jennifer is raped for deciding to spend a summer alone in a townhouse; finally in *Irreversible* (Gaspar Noé, 2002), Alex is brutally beaten and raped for daring to walk through a tunnel in the middle of the night. Davey cruises through the streets as if he owns the space just because he is a man; it is his sex, that is possessing a penis, that he thinks authorizes him to use the public space, here the streets, in the middle of the night without the concerns that a lot of women would have. Davey is unaware that gender issues are at play within masculinities as well. Possessing a penis does not guarantee the performance of a certain masculinity that will keep each man safe in all public/private spaces. On the contrary, possessing a penis is quite insignificant compared to the effect of the performance of masculinity. When Clover discusses films like *Deliverance* and *Hunter's Blood* (Robert C. Hughes, 1987), she reminds us that these films present a universe in which men are sodomizable in much the same way that women are rapable and with much the same meaning and consequences:

“They suggest a universe in which that thing [vagina or anus] has no specific relation to male or female bodies” (1992, 158). Being rapable is one thing that some men forget when they are using the space without restraint, but if men possess penises that may ensure them a ‘safe’ place in the power structure, they also have anuses that may indeed place them in an ‘unsafe’ and submissive position. As Clover rightly points out, male/male rape films present a world “in which gender precedes and determines sex” (158). There is no doubt Davey is a man, although we do not see his penis, and it is not his sex but his gender performance (and as a result of this performance, his sexual orientation) that is called into question during the course of this film.

Filmic Style

In ISWID, the filmic style is employed in many ways to distance the audience from the rape. Initially, our attention is turned away from the actual space in which the rape takes place; in the garage there is a single shot showing the rape. Two men hold Davey’s arms and bend him over the table. The camera zooms in on a man (Boad) who enters the room. The man pulls Davey’s pants down and rapes Davey (Plate X). The sequence takes a few seconds overall; we are shown only the beginning of Davey’s rape. From there, the film cuts to the next morning when Davey leaves the garage completely traumatized and obviously in pain. We do not know what happened in between or whether Davey was raped by other men in a gang-rape session.



PLATE X

In the rape scene the camera frames the four men. It pans or zooms in only to keep the actors in the frame. Indeed, if it did not have to move up once to keep the rapist in the frame, we could have been sure that the rape took place in a cellar; however, that move shows the glass ceiling of the space. This scene is shot as if the director is frightened that the camera work will reveal what this place is. In fact, the space of this rape is swathed in secrecy by the camera work, just as it has been protected by the *mise en scène* and the dim lighting of the space. The camera locks the viewer into a position; the rape takes place from the point of view of the audience, but this is a much more limited picture than we would have had if we were there.

This scene takes only a few seconds, which is too brief for the audience to see the details of the place. In feminist discussions of rape on screen, it is argued that rape sequences may be eroticised by their length and attention to details (Horeck 2003). This is why Roger Ebert famously read *I Spit on Your Grave* as “a vile bag of garbage”; he thought the revenge part did not justify the “movie’s hour of rape scenes” (1980). With male/male rape, the opposite occurs; the lack of detail attempts to ensure that no eroticization intrudes on the power play.

The brevity of the scene is also a device that both aids the audience’s incomprehension of the space and works in Will’s favour in terms of audience identification. When a woman is raped on screen, the length of the rape is usually long, not only (just) to eroticise her, but often “to make the rapes painfully difficult to watch . . . [and allow] the audience to feel that what follows is justified” (Lehman 1993, 104). Like Lehman, Clover argues that because of the length of such scenes we identify with the victim regardless of our sex (1992). In *ISWID* the shortness of this scene causes us not to feel for Davey; even if the scene serves as the basis for later revenge, it does not give us time to identify with him as a victim. For example, the medium-long shot used through the rape sequence is notable in its insistence on keeping the audience distant from the rape. When Clover compares the way male rape scenes are shot to those of female rapes, she observes that female rape films study the victim’s face in detail in close ups (1992, 139). If the medium-long shot employed in this scene is careful not to reveal much of the space, it is equally careful not to provide us access to the emotions and pain of Davey, so as to cause us to identify with him.

Boyle points out that male rape-revenge films characterize the victim as unerotic, unlike the victims in female rape-revenge films (2005, 142). It is not only how the scene is shot that makes this scene unerotic, but also where it is placed in the whole film. In her reading of *The Accused*, Deborah Cheney reminds us that “there was condemnation of the positioning of the rape scene within the final footage as catering to ‘whetted appetites’; of the scene as salacious; of the length of the rape sequence encouraging (what if we saw him ejaculating) it being seen as an act of love-making; of the film exploiting sex and violence under a guise of condemning it” (1993, 190). ISWID makes sure the rape is shown in the very beginning, thereby preventing the audiences’ possibility of fantasizing about a forthcoming rape.

When Davey leaves the space of rape, he looks to be in terrible pain. In *Mystic River* a child was raped several times and he was able to run away from his captors after five days without any pain. There is something very wrong in one of these depictions and ISWID’s description of male rape seems more flawed. Anal intercourse may certainly be painful, especially if there is no lubrication, but here it looks as if Davey’s emotional pain is manifested by the actor as physical pain. It is the moral disgust and the taint of homosexuality that causes Davey’s inability to walk back home.

This discussion shows a few things: first, male/male rape scenes on screen cause controversy and discontent in ways that are not true of male/female rape scenes. Indeed, one might say that Hodges did not know how to shoot (and we perhaps still do not know how to read) male/male rape scenes. The film in fact had financing problems because of its controversial subject. Producer Mike Kaplan explains:

With an impressive script, and with the now hot Hodges and Owen committed, it looked as though financing would be immediate. But as is the movies’ rule rather than the exception, what seems obvious often takes years to accomplish. Everyone was eager to read *I’ll Sleep*, but despite the moderate budget, Hodges’ proven economic resourcefulness and Clive Owen’s rising profile, it had controversial elements, and it took nearly three more years to secure financing. (Hodges, 2004)

For similar reasons, even Malcolm McDowell, who plays the rapist, had his doubts about being in this film: “Mike is a great friend and we always wanted to work together but I had to think twice about taking this role for there is a major scene which is quite horrible, something I refused to do, even in *Caligula* (Tinto Brass, 1979). But I am so impressed with Mike, who did this horrific sequence all in one shot” (Hodges, 2004). The filmic style,

in particular the lighting, mise en scène and camerawork, suggests that Hodges did everything to prevent the (presumably heterosexual male) audience from enjoying the rape sequence through identification with either the rapist or the raped. However, the film is precisely about the issues of violation and violence between white, heterosexual men. The audience is asked to think about these issues through the film, but by omission of the representation of this significant scene, the same audience is also protected from the pleasure and/or discomfort of identifying with or being attached to either character. The brief duration, anonymous camera, and punitive force of the rape scene cause us not to identify with the victim.

The Connotations of Male/Male Rape

Historically, even before homosexuality appeared as an identity, the passive part of male/male sexual intercourse was considered a more embarrassing position than the active part. For example, Romans considered all active positions in anal and oral sex as ‘normal’ male sexuality “regardless of whether the mouths and anuses men penetrated were male or female”; however, a man’s choice of the ‘passive’ position was considered humiliating (Cameron 2003, 22; see also Herdt 1997). This idea is still prevalent; in general being receptive (being fucked/being raped) is thought to be the more humiliating position: Pronger argues that men who are receptive are thought to be “worse than failures, they have betrayed their dominant position and made themselves ‘like women’” (1990, 139).

Being raped by forced anal penetration not only puts Davey in a woman’s position but is also a form of punishment.⁷⁴ Indeed, anal sex has historically been used as punishment. Franke notes that in Rome, “when a husband caught another man in bed with his wife, it was acceptable punishment for the husband and/or his male slaves to orally or anally rape the male offender. So too, oral and anal rape were used as a punishment in medieval Persia for various crimes” (2002, 298). In contemporary pornographic film, anal sex scenes are shot as if men punish women or other men through anal sex, which can be more painful than vaginal sex. For example in *Hard Core* (2004), Linda Williams reads anal sex in heterosexual porn as punishment and underlines the obsessive anal focus of some of

⁷⁴ Anal sex itself has been a reason for getting punished in the past. Men who engaged in anal sex were not punished for being a homosexual but for engaging in sodomy: “The central point was that the law was directed against a series of sexual acts, not a particular type of person. There was no concept of the homosexual in law, and homosexuality was regarded not as a particular attribute of a certain type of person but as a potential in all sinful creatures” (Weeks 1977, 12).

today's porn films. In gay porn "anal sex as punishment is a recurrent image" (Fung 2004, 258). In gay porn, however, anal sex is also configured as pleasure (see Dyer 1985), but the point at which anal sex/pleasure becomes anal violation/rape (or vice versa) is not clear. Actors shift from a punishing to pleasure-giving mode continuously and the language used sometimes resembles rape.

ISWID denies that there may be (homo)sexual pleasure in this rape in several ways. First of all, Boad is characterized as someone who perceives the rape as a violent and heterosexual act with no connotations of homosexuality and/or pleasure. According to Boad, this rape was not a homosexual rape but an act of mere punishment of Davey for being out of place. He brings two young men to help him and hold Davey, so that he cannot even move. Both of these men are 'pretty' men in their tuxedos, which undoubtedly will suggest to some of the audience that they may not be heterosexual. Although their costumes and looks do not make them necessarily gay, visually they are not coded as heterosexual like Will or Boad through their display of masculinity. Nonetheless, it is impossible to discuss their sexuality without speculation, since their only narrative significance is in the rape sequence. The fact that they, like Boad, are in their tuxedos looks like they have dressed up specifically for this occasion (just like Will dresses up and wears a tuxedo before he kills Boad). This is a planned and well-rehearsed rape. Obviously, Boad is not sexually frustrated like a man in prison nor does the film suggest that he is openly or closeted bisexual/homosexual. Rather, Boad tries to discipline Davey through the rape and reminds him that he is out of place. Boad is the one who says where and when other men can use 'his' streets. The power in these streets is earned (through violent display of masculinity and crime); being a man is not enough a reason to claim the streets and the neighbourhood.

However, for other characters (and indeed for most audiences) male/male rape is also a homosexualizing act for the rapist and as such it is a cause of embarrassment. That's why it has to be done in secrecy; nobody can either hear about the rape or recognize the space of the rape. Thus, even the man who followed Davey before the rape and reported his whereabouts on the phone to Boad does not know where Davey was taken and what happened to him. When he later realizes he is being followed by Davey's brother, he asks Boad what he has done to Davey:

The man: If he finds out...

Boad replies: What? What's he going to find out? What can he possibly find out?

The man: What happened that night? I mean ... what did you do to him to make him ...?

Boad: That night I was at home. With my family.

For Boad, the rape simply did not take place. Although at the end of the film he is neither apologetic about the rape nor afraid of Davey's brother, here he denies male/male rape entirely, not because he is frightened of being caught but because he seeks to deny any pleasure that he may have taken. It is also significant that even the man who helped him trap Davey does not know what happened to him.

Boad brings the other men along not only to take control of Davey's body, but also to secure his heterosexuality and masculinity even though he is going to rape a man. The two men are there as witnesses; they are there to prove that Davey's masculinity is debased by Boad. Yet they are also in that space as guarantors that there is no homosexual attraction between the two men, and there is no sexual pleasure in this rape. As ISWID is aware that removing sexual pleasure from rape so markedly is hardly possible, unlike other characters that do Boad's 'dirty' work these two men disappear from the film entirely after this scene. There are no witnesses to this rape and his version becomes the only version – there was no rape, and he only gave Davey a lesson.

Identification with Characters

The viewer is not only distanced from this rape scene, but also from its participants. Boad, as a rapist, is evidently not the intended character for identification as both the actor's physical qualities and his acting make him look evil.⁷⁵ The casting of Malcolm McDowell as Boad complicates things slightly. McDowell is the famous villain and rapist of *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971) and *Caligula* (Tinto Brass, 1979). In both films, he is not represented only as a dirty rapist; there is also a sympathetic side to his villains. It is possible that some audiences who know it is not Boad but Malcolm McDowell raping Davey/Jonathan Rhys-Meyers may get a certain sense of pleasure from accessing

⁷⁵ Lehman notes that in female rape-revenge the victim is always a beautiful woman whereas the rapists are repulsive (1993, 103 and 166).

this extra-diegetic information. However, for exactly the same reason, the casting of McDowell may on the contrary make his character more disgusting; in a reviewer's words, "McDowell is not a man you want to mess with – hasn't been since . . . *A Clockwork Orange*" (Villarreal 2003). It is worth noting that even audiences who know McDowell's earlier work may not recognize him, as he is in his sixties when making ISWID.

We also do not identify with Davey nor do we feel for him for a number of reasons. In ISWID, like in other male/male films (e.g. not Sean Penn but Tim Robbins in *Mystic River*, and not Burt Reynolds but Ned Beatty in *Deliverance*), a star who is rapable plays Davey. Although he has lately played more heterosexual characters (like Chris Wilton in Woody Allen's *Match Point* [2005]), Meyers' character was androgynous, and possibly bisexual or gay, in *Velvet Goldmine* (Todd Haynes, 1998) and *The Lion in Winter* (Andrei Konchalovsky, 2003), while being gay in *B. Monkey* (Michael Radford 1998). A photograph of Rhys-Meyers says it all: in 2006 he was chosen as the new face of Versace and these photographs show him not only as pretty, but also sexually ambiguous (Plate XI). Thus, the film presents Davey as not masculine enough and the casting of Meyers adds to this ambiguity both because of his prettiness and because some members of the audience will recognize his earlier roles. One needs to ponder this question: could the makers of ISWID imagine Clive Owen as rapable and would Boad be able to rape Davey if Owen played that role? Similar to the Sean Penn/Tim Robbins dilemma in *Mystic River*, this film would feel less conventional only if Owen or another unrapable actor were cast as Davey and if Rhys-Meyers were cast as Will. It is Meyers' good looks and the roles he played before which make his rape believable to the director and perhaps – so the casting director hopes – to the audience. In such a casting there are actors who are believably rapable because they are visually coded as androgynous and hence sexually 'suspect', while others are unambiguously masculine and thus are heterosexually coded. Such casting is not different from the codes that ensure that some men are raped in prison because they looked/acted gay and therefore they deserved it. It is generally good-looking, boyish, not extremely masculine-looking actors who are raped in film.

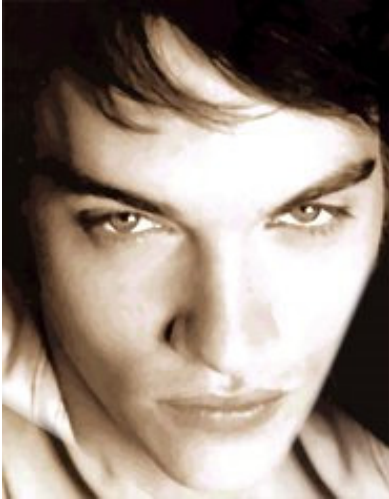


Plate XI

There is, moreover, a motif of deserved rape running through this film. The victim is not an innocent young man whose abuse would disturb the audience. In the first fifteen minutes of the film Davey is portrayed as a cocaine dealer and a thief. He steals from people he does not know, and he even steals from a woman he has sex with. Later on, we learn that he decreases the quality of the cocaine he sells and his customers are probably “snorting rat shit”. Clover explains that the revenge sequences in rape-revenge films make no sense if the viewer does not identify with the victim (1992, 159), but we are not given any reason to identify with Davey in *ISWID*. According to Boyle, unlike female rape-revenge films, male rape-revenge films characterize the victim as deviant (2005, 142). In *ISWID*, Davey is not portrayed as sexually deviant, but he is surely a non-standard person both for the people outside the male world described in the film and also, as the rape proves, to some members of that world. Boyle adds that the male victim can become a hero if he is not in a position of sexual objectification (142). Davey, however, is in such a position because of his/Jonathan Rhys-Meyers’s good looks, which are highlighted by the film’s cinematography and how he is shot, by the costumes chosen for him, and by the way Meyers acts. Davey, unlike his brother’s picture of him, does not entirely belong to the masculine and heterosexual world of the film. Even his boyish name, which brings to mind *Mystic River*’s Dave, does not belong to that world. Will thinks Davey was rough, but even the woman he sleeps with at the beginning of the film understands that he is not; she says, “You are not as rough as you act”. He may be selling cocaine or burgling, but he is not an armed robber – he is more like a parasite abusing people’s weaknesses.

It is safer for the film's (presumably heterosexual) audience to identify with someone who has not been a part of the rape. Even the title points out whom to identify with. This title brings to mind a very passive protagonist compared to other first-person titles, for example *I Spit on Your Grave*'s protagonist, who is so full of rage that she kills her rapists and spits on their grave. In female rape-revenge film, it is common for the female character to avenge and the audience to identify with her through this revenge, although there are examples in which the relatives of the victim take revenge (Projansky 2001, 60). For example, in *Last House on the Left* (Wes Craven, 1972) the victim's father is the avenger. The victim's mother also joins the avenging crew and bites off a rapist's penis instead of fellating him as he imagined. Similarly, in *Virgin Spring* (Ingmar Bergman, 1960) it is the father who takes the revenge.⁷⁶ Although I would not argue that in all male rape-revenge films another man must take revenge because the victim has lost his masculinity, this recurring motif can be traced as far back as *Deliverance*; in ISWID, the demasculinized Davey commits suicide in the bathtub of his house and his brother takes on the avenger's role.⁷⁷

As the term "rape-revenge" suggests, these films are equally about the rape itself and the bloody revenge that comes as the rape's consequence, where all audiences, regardless of their sex or gender, identify with the (female) victim (Clover, 1992). Here, it is not the victim himself but the victim's brother who is the figure of identification. The audience's sympathy is directed to the manly Will, not the rapable Davey. Will is the protagonist of the film and there is no other sympathetic character apart from him. Identification and/or sympathy is also created by use of unrestricted narration; by watching the rape take place, the audience knows/sees more than Will and sympathizes with his search to find out what took place before his brother's suicide.

ISWID is divided into two parts. In the first part, the first 70 minutes present Will's search for the rapist. After this, Will drastically changes his appearance for revenge in a ritualistic manner. A barber shaves his beard and hair in his hotel room, and he dons a black tuxedo for the act of revenge, preparing to 'clean up' his family name by restoring its masculine dignity. Will is a tough and very masculine character running from the law and he lives in

⁷⁶ Jacinda Read regards films in which the rape victim takes her revenge highly. In these films women refuse to be silenced and live in fear. She notes that the female perspective is repressed in films like *The Virgin Spring* (2000, 88).

⁷⁷ Scarce notes that actual male victims of rape often question whether they have caused the rape by acting like a gay man. This frequently results in self-blame and suicide (1997, 217).

the woods. The opening scene of the film is not the rape scene, but a man being beaten by two other men in the woods. Will watches from a distance; obviously he does not want to get in trouble nor does he want to be involved in further crimes, so he helps the man only after the other men have left. The first scene instantly displays that Will is a 'good' man. Will obviously has participated in many crimes, including a few murders according to one character in the film. He is in hiding from the police, but he has also given up this life to become a good man. It is significant that we do not have any information about his past crimes, but the more we see how righteous Will is, the more we think those were 'good' crimes. The casting also reinforces this impression. The casting of Clive Owen as Will is no surprise as Owen plays smart men who also happen to be very tough and manly, either as a croupier (*Croupier* [Mike Hodges, 1998]), a doctor (*Closer* [Mike Nichols, 2004]), or a robber (*Inside Man* [Spike Lee, 2006]). He is also cast as a hero in *Sin City* (Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez, 2005) and *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006) because of his physical qualities and the masculinity such male characters require. This casting is important as the revenge sequence serves to restore the masculinity lacking in the family. Masculinity is in short supply in the Graham family because of the rapable, small-crimes man Davey, but through this revenge, the elder brother Will, who performs big-crimes like murder, brings masculinity (and honour) back to the family. Davey's demasculinization finds compensation in his brother's toughness.

ISWID and Male/Male Rape: Murder of Bent Heterosexuals

Male/male rape is necessarily attached to homosexuality in the cultural consciousness. In its depiction, ISWID tries remove connotations of homosexuality from *this* rape, just like it tries to remove sexual pleasure from it. Although the film deals with the issue of male/male rape *scientifically*, even feeding from queer literature about male/male rape at times⁷⁸, it ends up repeating the conventional formula of the representation of male/male rape that it is trying to distance itself from by representing the victim as homosexually coded. Most significantly, it is through Will's characterization that the film gives such conflicting messages.

⁷⁸ In the film, the pathologist's dialogue and explanations about male/male rape, which I discuss below, are accurate with regard to the literature on the subject. In fact, it is possible to find these explanations in Scarce's *Male on Male Rape* (1997).

Davey commits suicide after getting raped by cutting his veins in the bathtub. The autopsy gives his cause of death as suicide as his extended stay in the bathtub removed the evidence of the rape. Will does not believe that his brother could commit suicide for any reason, so he orders a second, private autopsy. When he goes to meet the pathologist after the autopsy had taken place, the pathologist asks: “Was your brother homosexual... or perhaps bisexual?”

The camera momentarily stays on Will, showing pure disgust on his face in an extended close-up. He does not even need to answer. The camera turns back to the pathologist, who explains that there was damage to the anal mucus membrane as well as internal bleeding, and that Davey had had anal intercourse sometime before his death. A second close-up shows Will speechless; as if does not believe what the pathologist is saying. It is important that he does not make any homophobic comments, for the concept of homosexuality is given as being entirely outside Will’s world. All male characters in the film and close to Will are represented as masculine, tough and presumably heterosexual. Will takes for granted that he is living in an entirely heterosexual world in which homosexuality and bisexuality do not exist, at least in his family and circle of friends.

Will replies that his brother was not bisexual. He does not even need to say that he was not homosexual – the only possibility could have been his bisexuality. Similarly, when the pathologist starts to tell the familiar story of a man he knew who turned out to be a bisexual after hiding it from everyone for years, Will cuts him short and simply says, “I would have known”. The pathologist’s point, of course, is that many people do not know of their acquaintances’ homosexuality or bisexuality, as it is kept in shadows most of the time.

Why is Will so sure? First of all, he has not seen his brother in years, so although he feels very sure about Davey’s indisputable heterosexuality, he actually could not have known. Ironically, he also thought Davey was too worldly, too manly, and too tough to commit suicide and he possibly expected to discover murder, not rape, in the pathologist’s report. Yet Davey did commit suicide.

Pathologist: There was evidence that he ejaculated.

Will: What the fuck are you saying?

Pathologist: It's not uncommon for victims to become aroused during the act. Even ejaculate. This can cause damaging psychological stress. If, and I do say "if", this happened to your brother, then it might account for the subsequent suicide.

Will: (silence)

Pathologist: I can put you in touch with someone who can explain it a little better than me.

We assume this someone to be a psychologist. He is an older man and Will meets him in his house. The psychologist explains:

Every victim reacts in a different way. But there are patterns. Various elements. Disbelief. They try to switch off. It didn't happen. Couldn't happen to them. Shock can and does take all kind of forms. Some victims say they feel strangely calm, unfeeling, detached. Others feel the need to shout, express hostility, rage. But sometimes ... not often, but there're cases, I've known at least three, where this disgust ... this... terrible anger ... is turned against themselves.

Will asks what kind of man he is looking for and the psychologist corrects him with what kind of a man the police would be looking for: "Well, he's more than likely to be heterosexual, even married with kids. Could be any reasonable age. And there may have been more than one. Often, the others just hold the victim down."

The pathologist's speech starts a didactic sequence which runs the course of ten minutes, and which I read as the film's attempt to distance itself from homophobia. By educating the audience about male/male rape, the film makes sure that the rape that has taken place in this film has nothing to do with homosexuality. Nonetheless, the film's and Will's insistence that Davey is heterosexual works against the non-homophobic ideology the film tries to embed, because it is not Davey's rape that disturbs Will; it is heterosexual Davey's rape that is disturbing. This is such a heterosexual world that even the possibility of homosexuality or bisexuality of one of its characters is inconceivable; although we do not see all of them with women, we have to believe that the male characters are all 100% heterosexuals. In particular, we do not know Boad's sexual orientation. As with the other characters, we are supposed to assume that he is heterosexual just because we get a glimpse of his happily married life. Since a pathologist said most rapists are heterosexuals, and more importantly, since he is in the world of manly men, we are supposed to understand

Boad as heterosexual. It is as if homosexuality and bisexuality, as well as the character of Davey, are “out of place” in the world the film represents.

The desire to distance the film from a homophobic discourse on male/male rape is clear from the pathologist’s explanations, which are influenced by relevant literature about male/male rape, but ISWID unsuccessfully attempts to describe a strongly homosocial world (in which groups of men promote the interests of other men) that is stripped of homoeroticism. Such worlds are indeed built upon repressed homoeroticism.⁷⁹ In his discussion of football and other sporting practices Pronger notes, “all proceed under the assumption that no one involved is aware of the erotic potential of these phenomena, that everyone is heterosexual” (1990, 9), and the same could be said of the allegedly non-erotic activities within the male-dominated world of ISWID. In the course of the film, one of Will’s friends expresses his hatred of a rival and says, “One day I am gonna fuck him where he breathes”. Within the film male/male rape is presented as a discourse of power and a dominance issue; it is significant that this character wants to punish someone by “fucking his throat”; however, apparently neither he nor the other characters see the homoerotic connotations of such a punishment. In fact, all the characters in the film talk about rape as punishment (approved by the pathologist) with no homoerotic element in it.

The film presents Boad as possibly heterosexual, but on the other hand Boad is tainted with homosexuality through the rape. When Will comes to murder Boad and he explains why he raped Davey, Wills says, “I wanna kill you so badly, I can taste it.”

Boad replies:

I know who you are. You're just like he was. So sure of himself. So certain of what he was. I was watching him for weeks, you know. At the parties, the restaurants, clubs. He was everything I loathed. The clothes, the walk, the talk, the lies. The way he smoked. The way he laughed. Laughing, always laughing. Mocking. Everything, everyone. And the women. Their eyes, like hands, on him all the time. I mean, come on, what was he, huh? Thief, huh? Drug dealer? A degenerate? I wanted to show

⁷⁹ The world the film represents is also free of women. There is a single leading female character in the film, but she notably is silent throughout the film maybe to signify the absence of a female point of view in this world. However, a strong leading actress (Charlotte Rampling) is cast for the role and some reviewers also wonder what her role is in the film except looking sad in the scenes she is present. For example Gilbey writes, “Still, it would have been encouraging if the film-makers had found something else for her to do than be held at gun-point” (2004).

him what he was. Nothing. Nothing. He was less than nothing. I wanted him to know that.

The dialogue is important, as this is the only place in the film in which Boad describes why he raped Davey.⁸⁰ What he says, at first sight, describes the rape as a spatial and a power issue without sexual connotations. Davey claimed a space that he was not allowed in (where he was “out of place” as a non-masculine man) and Boad punished him in the worst way possible to remind him of his erroneous spatial claim. Yet, is it possible to read this rape as a form of sexual expression by Boad in the guise of maintaining his power? Is the domination and punishment of Davey in fact a sexual expression? We know that he does not have much of a reason to rape Davey, so does he desire Davey? He surely does not love Davey, but as Sedgwick suggests, desire is different from love; it is the “glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred . . . that shapes an important relationship” (1985, 2). If to rape another male requires such hatred, it is impossible not to consider an element of desire in this act. In Boad’s speech we feel such jealousy, such hatred of Davey’s claiming of any space with indifference to everything around him, that his hatred mimics desire. He hates Davey’s clothes, walk, talk, lies, the way he smoked, the way he laughed, and women’s continuous interest in him (and we can add to these Davey’s youth). His hatred is strong and genuine; it seems that he desires to be Davey and becomes literally one body with him through the penetration in the rape, which could have been repeated if Davey had not committed suicide.

Even though we do not see it, in the rape scene Boad must have had an erection the moment Davey’s pants were pulled down, since the penetration starts at that very moment. Has he watched a porn film before to guarantee erection? How can we know for sure that there is nothing that turns Boad on about Davey’s naked body? Does dominance provide enough grounds for an erection? Can you drain sexual pleasure from the act of rape altogether?

Authors writing about male/male rape have been consistent and careful in pointing out that male/male rape has nothing to do with homosexuality, in spite of commonly held

⁸⁰ This is also paralleled to actual rapes, as we learn from research carried out through interviews with the victims (Eigenberg and Baro 2003, 58). The male/male rapist’s point of view is not included in most research and in the film we certainly know very little of this fictional character.

assumptions to the contrary: “Male rape is *rarely, if ever*, a homosexual problem. More commonly it *is* a heterosexual offence” (McMullen 1990, 14). In real life, it is mostly heterosexual men, most of whom are not repressed homosexuals, who rape other heterosexual or homosexual or homosexually coded men:

While there certainly exists a view that male/male rapists are in fact repressed homosexuals, this discounts completely the power/dominance explanation of rape and merely seeks to portray the homosexual, repressed or otherwise, as the aggressor. (Sivakumaran 2005, 1286)

Although Boad does everything in his power to keep the rape a secret, the truth is revealed and he is tainted with homosexuality. He commits an act thought of as essentially homosexual and, as Sivakumaran explains, not only the victim but the aggressor too may be thought of as a homosexual or a repressed homosexual (though in a more privileged position than the receptive victim). Thinking through Sedgwick’s terms, male rape lies precisely between socially accepted homosocial desire and socially condemned homosexuality. The display of homosocial desire is limited at most to men shaking hands in Western culture, but through rape Boad crosses a boundary that is punishable by death.

Indeed, ISWID feels most disturbing because it offers us a puzzle with only one solution: a man’s brother is raped and tainted with homosexuality, but as he committed suicide there is no way to prove it. It is likely that most audiences will appreciate that Will has to murder the villain; it is offered as a necessity. In the revenge sequence, it is shown that a good man does what he must do when the most horrible crime, male/male rape, is committed. The law does not help, as it is not possible to prove the rape, so Will interferes to perform vigilante justice. He also does this as a reformed, good man. According to Will, and some members of the audience, the punishment the film proposes is fair because a ‘straight’ man has been raped by a definitely perverted (and arguably homosexual/bisexual) man.

The removal of the victim and the rapist serves as a means to purge the film of homosexuality. Only through these deaths and murders can ISWID imagine restoring a masculine and unquestionably heterosexual order. The receptive side of anal violation turns out to be a humiliating position that requires the victim to commit suicide. In both female and male rape-revenge films, rapists are also often murdered (*Midnight Express*, *I Spit on Your Grave*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Deliverance*). As Eigenberg and Baro observe, “rapists were

injured and/or killed in the majority of these films, perhaps because so many American films traditionally involve the punishment of evil” (2003, 86).

Through its engagement in academic literature about male/male rape, and its repression of the homoeroticism between its characters, *ISWID* tries to distance the rape it presents from homosexuality. At the same time, through casting and filmic style the film taints both parties of the rape, but especially the victim, with homosexuality. So as much as some characters in the film voice that this rape is not a homosexual rape nor are its parties homosexual, the film simultaneously conflates male/male rape with homosexuality. It is, indeed, possible to read the rape in this film as a homosexual rape and, from my discussions above, I conclude that it is the film’s insistence that “nothing in this film is about homosexuality and none of the characters are homosexual” that is itself a homophobic construction.

PART III. *Irreversible*: Whose Rectum Is This?

Gaspar Noé’s *Irreversible* (2003) is a rape-revenge film that is about the vicious anal rape of Alex (Monica Bellucci), and the victim’s boyfriend Marcus and ex-boyfriend Pierre’s avenging her that very night. In the newspapers and magazines, the discussions of the film were reduced to its portrayal of the rape and murder scenes, in particular whether either was watchable and whether the rape scene was exploitative.⁸¹ Although the victim of the rape is a woman in this film, I argue that the film has more interest in discussing homosociality/homosexuality than a woman’s rape, and that the rape that takes place can be thought of as homosexual rape.

Noé shot *Irreversible* with a reverse chronology; the film consists of about thirteen sequences, beginning with at its finale (thirteenth sequence) and ending with the beginning of the story (first sequence). This is significant for the audience, as they know very little from the start of the film and make sense of what is happening only towards the middle of it.

⁸¹ According to Hoberman, the film was the most walked-out film at the Cannes film festival that year (2002). Roger Ebert confesses that some of the critics at the screening walked out, but he stayed, sometimes closing his eyes (2003). Brottman and Sterritt conclude, “In sum, Noé’s work got short shrift from critics too offended by the film to seriously consider its structural complexity” (2003, 37).

The film starts with a shaky handheld shot of two men being taken out of a club. One of the men, Marcus (Vincent Cassel), is unconscious and the other man, Pierre (Albert Dupontel), is accompanied by the police. In the second sequence, Marcus and Pierre are frantically searching for a man nicknamed Le Tenia (Jo Prestia) in a gay S/M club named The Rectum. Le Tenia means Tapeworm in English and I will refer to the character as such when necessary. With these crudely metaphoric names, the film instantly displays its attention to homosexuality and violence; simply put, we search for the Tapeworm in The Rectum. The club is an all-male world; moreover, it is an all-queer male world and significantly it is literally located underground. As I stated in the third chapter, underground spaces such as the cellar are iconographic spaces in films in which men rape boys, and as much as they connote immorality, they equally suggest illegal action. An S/M club is the perfect geography for immorality and illegal action. Although opening such clubs is legal, S/M often is semi-legal: its participants can be subject to prosecution in several Western countries. The way the scene is shot reinforces this view. The film begins with the camera entering The Rectum. Once the camera enters The Rectum, the members of the audience feel dizzy and off balance, as the lengthy shot is taken by a handheld camera that shakes, weaves, turns upside down, moves in and out of focus and uses implausible tilts and pans. As if this is not enough, the soundtrack is made up of a constant 27-hertz noise specifically designed by No  , which reinforces the feeling of intrusion even further. Altogether, this exploration of The Rectum creates nausea and dizziness. Once the characters appear and we understand that we are experiencing their point of view, the search in The Rectum continues and The Tapeworm is found at the deepest end of The Rectum.

Although they are men, we soon learn that as (presumably) heterosexual men, Marcus and Pierre have no place in this world and their entrance is itself an intrusion and a metaphoric rape. Marcus and Pierre are simply not welcome in this space; they are out of place. While the other men are slowly moving, cruising, looking at each others' eyes in the hope of finding sexual partners, Marcus and Pierre look at the other men in repugnance, push them aside and move swiftly with the hope of finding the rapist soon. In The Rectum, the camera slowly passes by men in the midst of various sex acts; men are begging to be fisted, burning each other's nipples with candles, whipping each other. This is a very private space and the men's actions depend on mutual trust as an S/M session is often a conscious and

conscientious play on power/pleasure rather than uncontrolled violence. Nevertheless, the filmic depiction of this world makes it look completely perverted.

Both Marcus and Pierre, but especially the former, hit gay men, insult them and interrupt their actions and intrude into their space. As Marcus repeatedly hits him, one submissive man begs: “Don’t hit my face, fist me”. He is indeed not getting any pleasure from being hit in the face, but Marcus keeps breaking the rules, probably assuming all of these men just want to be beaten, as he does not understand the dynamics of the S/M play. This beating also foreshadows the coming rape since the intruder is incapable of responding to Alex’s “no” and he goes on with beating and raping her.

After the painstaking search for both Marcus and the audience, Marcus decides that he has located Le Tenia. Following some confrontation, the two men start to fight and the man they assume to be Le Tenia violently breaks Marcus’s arm; the audience hears the cracking of the arm. Marcus falls down on his face (just as Alex will do soon). The film’s portrayal of the world is both cruel and metaphoric: this is such a perverted homosexual world that some gay men cheer up and shout, “Fuck his ass!” while the supposed Le Tenia undoes his zipper to rape Marcus. I have already argued that women in film are raped because they are out of place in spaces which implicitly belong to heterosexual men who intensely perform masculinity, but Marcus cannot be raped in a space that openly and legally belongs to queer men. Pierre comes in just in time whilst the man is undoing his zipper and starts to bang the man’s head with a fire extinguisher, the sound of which is amplified. The bashing goes on until there is literally no more head. The camera pans left to show another man smiling and the audience understands that this is the ‘real’ Le Tenia, and that Marcus and Pierre have attacked and killed the wrong man. We do not learn who this man is; recalling Vito Russo’s *Celluloid Closet* (1981), he is just another murdered queer man who deserved it.

This depiction is cruel, because it is shockingly homophobic – for most audiences this is the only or one of the few times they will enter the world of gay S/M and the film’s depiction will have a documentary-like effect on some of the audience. The scene is homophobic also because, according to the representation in this scene, gay men rape heterosexual men and bystander gay men cheer up at the prospect of watching such a rape; murder excites them even further. Nonetheless, the scene is at the same time metaphoric: if audiences who have

not had access to the S/M world find this representation repulsive, some will also be aware that this is (according to some audiences a tremendously homophobic) fiction. In fact, if we read this scene as a metaphor rather than a representation of real gay S/M clubs and their clientele, it will be clearer to us that both rape scenes display rape as an act of power, not of pleasure. There is no pleasure to be taken for the victim in this rape, and both the rapist and the audience of the rape in *The Rectum*, and certainly most viewers in the theatre, know this as they cheer for Marcus to be raped. The masculinity of this ultra-masculine man who does not belong to this space (as some of them have experienced first hand with his fists) will be debased once the rape takes place. He will either metaphorically be dead or literally commit suicide like Davey, as Marcus is portrayed as unrapable and the completion of the rape would mark his submission. However, the film does not allow this rape to take place and indeed prefers to display a woman being raped to make its point.

As the film progresses backwards, from this scene on we follow the frantic search of Marcus and Pierre and come to learn that they are in search of Le Tenia, since he raped Alex. The rape scene starts quite suddenly. We follow a woman into a tunnel and the moment she enters the tunnel, the audience knows that something is wrong. The space in which Alex is raped is self-explanatory, a tunnel in the middle of the night is a male space and Alex is obviously out of place. In the tunnel, Le Tenia is beating a transvestite prostitute. The prostitute is not out of place in the tunnel as she has access to male spaces because of her profession. To emphasize this point even further, the film also makes sure to display her possession of a penis later in the film, when the prostitute shows her penis to Marcus. However, at the same time she is vulnerable as she is being beaten and, like Alex, cannot run away from Le Tenia although she tries to.

Le Tenia traps Alex in the tunnel and starts to rape her. The rape scene, like the murder scene, is simply unwatchable. No   stays away from the tactics of exploitation rape-revenge films, and does not use any close-ups in this scene. He keeps the camera static and at a distance throughout the scene, which is shot in a single long take. The duration of the rape and the beating that follows is realistic at nine and a half minutes. Similar to Marcus's possible rape, there is no pleasure to be had in this rape, certainly not for Alex, not for the audience because of the way it is shot, and presumably not for Le Tenia, who disgustingly spits into Alex's face. Like Davey, Alex is out of place and there is no textual proof that Le

Tenia is heterosexual. On the contrary, his name (Tapeworm) suggests that he belongs in The Rectum, which is not a gay bar where men socialize, but rather an S/M fuck club for leather gay men. In the rape scene, Le Tenia may rape a real woman, but as I will explain below the film's emphasis lies on the fact that he rapes a rectum and his disgust points to the fact that Alex should not be in that space. If a man who is not explicitly masculine entered that tunnel, regardless of that man's sexual orientation, Le Tenia would quite possibly have raped him as well. Still, one wonders if Le Tenia would beat him into a coma and spit on his face after the rape.

Although this scene is unwatchable, unlike Davey's rape, which is cut short, and Marcus's rape, which did not take place, we *do* watch this rape at length. Although Noé, like Mike Hodges, does not portray male/male rape, he shoots this scene as if it is male/male rape taking place. Monica Belluci is an actress known for her beauty (as a former model) and her character Alex is extremely sexual and feminine. Yet this gender performance is not displayed to the audience before the rape and Alex's female gender is significantly blurred in different ways. Before we see Alex, we hear about her. In the film, Belluci plays an Italian woman living in France. However, Alex is not a common name for women in Italy or France. Alex is an abbreviation for Alessandro or Alexander, and less commonly an abbreviation for Alexandra, so just as Davey is feminized by his name, Alex is androgynized or masculinized by hers. It is possible that some audiences who heard the name Alex before seeing her may have assumed that Alex is a man. Crucially, because the film progresses backwards, the rape occurs before the audience ever sees Alex, and particularly before we have seen her face. The rape sequence starts with the camera following a head that could belong to anyone (if not a man, then a drag queen or a transvestite). Until she is in the tunnel, the camera is behind the head and we follow someone without any identification or understanding of who s/he is. Throughout the rape Alex lies on her face; in addition, the positioning of the camera at a distance and the dim lighting make sure that we see the rape but not clearly who is being raped. As in ISWID, although the camera is positioned as the audience's point of view, what we see is considerably less clear than what we could have seen had we been there.

It is also possible to suggest, after nine minutes of rape and savage beating, that Alex is not a woman because she is barely human any longer. Especially after the vicious beating she

does not look like a person anymore. I have argued that the representation of male/male rape is unwatchable whereas female rape-revenge films often eroticize the rape scene and the victim. Here, although a woman is being raped, the rape is shown purely as violence and there is no pleasure for the audience to be gained from this scene. In this film if Pierre had not come to his rescue and Marcus had been raped, or if ISWID had shown the rape scene in its entirety, male/male rape in these films would look – and feel – exactly like what this scene makes its viewers feel. Consequently, although No   prefers to display the rape of a woman, it could be argued that this female character also stands in for a male victim.

Men in *Irreversible*

In *Irreversible*, the male characters of the film are obsessed with anal sex and rape. As the film progresses, the audience learns that Marcus tries to engage in anal sex with Alex, but the scene ends before we see anal sex taking place. The conversation that takes place between the couple is important. Marcus asks, “You know what? I wanna fuck your arse.” Alex laughs and says, “I thought you were a romantic.” Her surprise underlines the level of dominance/submission attached to anal sex even in ostensibly consensual sex. If penetrating and being penetrated are a binary opposition, the former dominant and the latter passive, then when it is a rectum that is penetrated, the opposition becomes even sharper.

As in ISWID, the world we are presented with here is an all-male world in which active anal sexual intercourse is used and practiced as a threat. Alex is raped, Marcus is nearly raped in *The Rectum*, and he threatens a taxi driver with rape: “Hurry, or I’ll fuck your arse!” (As the driver is Asian, one needs to note also the racial undertones; Marcus calls him a Peking duck). The three male worlds – the ‘decadent’ underground homosexual world, the violently masculine heterosexual world Marcus pretends to participate in, and the homosocial world Marcus and Pierre live in – are all imbricated within each other in the first half of the film.

Marcus and Pierre’s homosocial relationship is Sedgwickian in the sense that two men (Marcus and Pierre) compete with each other for one woman (Alex), but it is not clear if Alex or Marcus is the ultimate object of Pierre’s desire. Alex is Pierre’s ex-girlfriend and is ‘stolen’, in his words, by Marcus (although Alex protests and tells him that it is women who make the decision). In the train that they take to go to a party, the party Alex leaves

before the rape, Pierre continuously jokes about his unsatisfactory sexual life with Alex; apparently he could not give her an orgasm. While the close friendship between them allows such jokes, his extreme interest in how Marcus makes her come becomes disturbing after a while and Marcus turns away and shuts himself out. The boundaries between the homosocial and the homosexual are blurred from here on: is Pierre's interest in Alex, Marcus or both? Some of the questions he asks Alex are: "Does he make noise? Is he hairy? Does he smell? Does he yell and scream?" Admittedly, he is interested in how Marcus makes Alex have orgasms, but his questions are all about Marcus's body.

After they find out that Alex has been raped and is in a coma, Marcus and Pierre are approached by two men beside the ambulance. The men tell them that they can help them find the rapist if they are willing to pay, but "this is a man's job, no pussies allowed". The homosocial relationship between Marcus and Pierre is not a relationship of equals; Pierre cannot make his girlfriend have orgasms, so she is taken by Marcus (or she leaves him for Marcus). Marcus calls Pierre a sissy because he is a professor, he doesn't do drugs, and he is not into random sex; in Marcus's terms he is a "social reject". His submissive position continues throughout the search, as he is the one who tries to calm Marcus down, to no avail. In doing so, Pierre is both the rational one of the two, but also the pansified one.

When Marcus is about to be raped, however, it is Pierre who saves him from the humiliation of losing his masculinity. Marcus's 'out of placeness' nearly gets him raped and this is Pierre's chance to prove he is not a sissy or a pussy, but a man. The first time Pierre hits the rapist with a fire extinguisher, he is already down with a broken jaw and possibly a fractured skull. With unbearable rage he keeps hitting the man until his face is unrecognizable. His extreme reaction and rage is identical to Marcus's when the latter learns Alex has been raped. Pierre manages to keep his calm when Alex is raped and nearly murdered, but he is intolerant of someone raping Marcus. Just a few hours before, Pierre was notably curious about Marcus's odour, body, and orgasmic sounds. It is no accident that Marcus's rage over Alex's rape and Pierre's rage over Marcus's rape run in parallel; as one of the characters in the film (and the film's tagline) says, "Vengeance is a man's right" when his woman/buddy is raped. When Alex is raped, Marcus tries to avenge her and when Marcus is nearly raped, it is Pierre's turn to avenge him. The act of violence is as strong as

each man's desire for desired subjects: namely, Marcus's desire for Alex and Pierre's desire for Marcus.

Only when the film ends does its beginning become clearer. Ironically, when they are taken out of *The Rectum*, both Pierre and Marcus are stained with shit and tainted with homosexuality. Just at the moment that Pierre has proved his masculinity, the police and the bystanders think both men are gay as they are coming out of a gay club, and insult them with homophobic slurs about fags getting Aids in prison. Although they prove their masculinity through violence, just like *Le Tenia* did, they still end up as fags.

The film's script is built upon the revenge of the rape of a woman, Alex. Ironically, Alex's rape is not revenged at the end of the film as the two men have killed the wrong person, but it is Marcus's possible rapist who is killed and his revenge for humiliation is taken. Therefore, in a way *Irreversible*, just like *ISWID*, makes sure (possible) male/male rape is harshly punished. However, it complicates the characters involved in the rape/revenge plot and elaborates the power/pleasure dynamics within each rape.

PART IV. Conclusion

In order to analyze the representation of male/male rape in *ISWID*, I started the chapter by discussing actual male/male rape to point out the similarities and differences between the actuality and such a rape's often crude filmic representations. Both men who rape men and these who are raped by men are tainted with homosexuality, but the victim has a lower status both because he may have done something to invite the rape and because he is a failure as a man since he could not stop it.

In my reading of the film, I have emphasized the insignificance of the space of the rape. Compared to other films where rape takes place in iconographic spaces, in *ISWID* it is hard even to comprehend the space of the rape. In *ISWID*, the filmic style is employed in many ways – such as the brief duration of the scene, the unclear *mise-en-scène*, camera framing – to distance the audience from the rape rather than to eroticize it. The viewer is not only distanced from this rape scene, but also from its participants. I have discussed at length how the audiences are made to identify not with the victim whose masculinity is debased by this

rape but with his brother, who is a tough and masculine man. In this it is important that Jonathan Rhys-Meyers is cast as the victim, and Clive Owen as the avenger.

In addition, I have pointed out that the film's messages are conflicting. The film criticizes the rape, yet the narrative shows this rape as deserved. As well as repressing the homoerotic element in homosocial bonds, the film denies its characters any other bond than aggressive masculinity. In my reading of the film, I have been particularly interested in the zones where homosociality and homoeroticism, if not homosexuality, overlap with each other. Sedgwick, of course, argues that homosociality and homosexuality are connected and can never be fully disentangled, and that sexual expression between men is suppressed in contemporary Western society in the interest of maintaining power (1985). Extending this to the relation between sexual expression and homophobia, I have argued that Boad's hatred of Davey's performance of masculinity mimics desire. Pronger writes that "[f]ucking someone is traditionally a sign of mastery over them; the penis becomes the weapon that guarantees submission" (1990, 138). ISWID attempts to display male/male rape as an act of domination/submission rather than a sexual expression; however, as I discussed in detail above, this is limited to the characters' dialogues. The film does not depict male/male rape solely as an issue of power (with no pleasure to be taken), since both the rapist (with his erection and physical pleasure) and the victim (with his erection and ejaculation), as well as the men who help Boad rape (with their voyeurism), are represented or constructed (by the pathologist) as having experienced some sort of pleasure. Additionally, the film conflates male/male rape with homosexuality, through Davey's unclear sexual gender performance means that rape becomes something deserved.

In my reading of *Irreversible*, I have suggested that the male/ female rape, which takes place unlike other male/ female rape scenes, and implies male/male rape despite the victim being a woman. It is thus possible to read this film as a commentary on male/male rape, as if a woman stands in for the male victim. It is noteworthy that *Irreversible*, like ISWID, does not have any openly gay or bisexual characters, but both films comment on homosexuality through the homosociality they portray. *Irreversible*'s male characters suppress their desire for each other through a strong homosocial bond. Their friendship is so strong that even when Pierre's girlfriend starts a relationship with Marcus, this is not a big problem. The film, in fact, suggests that the object of desire is ambivalent for Pierre.

The homoerotic element in the men's friendship is not repressed, but it subtly presented, though Marcus seems to be unaware of such a connection.

Spatially, both films make use of what I have called being "out of place". The rapes in both films commence in places that exclude certain genders and sexes: streets in the middle of the night. In *ISWID*, the attack starts in the streets and the rape takes place in a place that looks like a garage; in *Irreversible* the camera begins trailing the victim in the streets and the rape takes place in a tunnel. Davey's gender performance makes him an outsider in the streets, but he is unaware of this fact. *Irreversible* complicates the relation between spaces and genders/sexes through the use of its iconic sex club The Rectum, so that nearly every character in the film is "out of place" one way or another. Out of placeness is similarly punished in this film with beating and rape to guarantee submission.

Irreversible challenges the audiences by attempting to display the rape as real, as an act of pure violence with erotic attachment nearly impossible for the audience or the characters. Even the rapist himself is depicted as disgusted with the victim and the rape, in contrast to Boad's disgust *at* his victim. If *ISWID* or *Irreversible* dared to show the male/male rapes that take (or are about to take) place in the film, it would look exactly like the way Alex was raped. Yet, male/male rape causes such social anxiety, it seems like even No   in *Irreversible* had to show male/male rape in the form of male/female rape, while Hodges in *ISWID* did not want to display male/male rape at all. Finally, I submitted that in our culture, which sees male/male rape as inextricably connected to homosexuality, it is not easy to make a film that convinces us otherwise. This is why *ISWID* is itself confused about whether there is something homosexual about either of its characters, the rapist or the victim. Male/male rape is this beyond the pale of representation. It 'leaks' eroticism even while it tries to portray the act as solely violence and power and it must be avenged to quell our social anxieties about homoeroticism.

CHAPTER V BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN

As I was in the later stages of writing this dissertation, a gay-themed film was released without much advertising. It soon went on to be heavily distributed, won awards in major film festivals such as the Venice Film Festival, received an Academy Award for Best Director, was critically and anonymously acclaimed by several media sites and at the same time boycotted by others, brought in nearly \$200 million at the box office for its minor (\$14 million) production budget and, finally, became heavily publicized once again after the untimely death of one of its lead actors.

In general, the gay response to *Brokeback Mountain* (hereafter referred to as BM) was positive. B. Ruby Rich, who writes extensively on queer cinema and who coined the term “New Queer Cinema”, praised the film as the gay breakthrough film that was never delivered by the likes of Gregg Araki or Todd Haynes, noted “New Queer Cinema” directors. “With utter audacity,” writes Rich, “Ang Lee... has taken on the most sacred of American genres, the Western, and queered it” (Rich 2007). Although, as Rich herself mentions, the gay press was positive about the film on its initial release, some queer men and women, scholars, bloggers, reviewers, audiences, and members of gay organizations like GLAAD soon started to ask uncomfortable questions: is this film really about gay men? Was the film targeted at a gay male audience, despite famously being marketed to older women? Is the film realistic in its portrayal of its characters’ sexuality and the representation of male/male sex? Finally, is the film’s depiction of its characters homophobic?⁸² Many of these questions are no doubt relevant to the conclusion of this dissertation. Films about male same-sex passion of this magnitude are made so rarely that it is important to have thorough discussions of how such films represent their queer characters, and how audiences read and react to such films. Some academic journals, like *Film Quarterly* and *GLQ*, have in fact become the platforms for such discussions in the special editions they publish for films that have a major influence on public opinion. BM has certainly had such an effect, following in the tradition of films like *Philadelphia*

⁸² Others, like D.A. Miller, have been critical of these approaches, calling them “harangues from the Woman on the neglected wives, from the Gay Man on still-persisting homophobia, from the Film Critic on the Western or Ang Lee as auteur” (2007, 50).

(Jonathan Demme, 1993), *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980) and *The Deer Hunter* (Michael Cimino, 1978).

BM is relevant to this dissertation because of its huge impact on contemporary culture, its strong emphasis on the space in which its characters try to survive, and its reflection on the tensions between homosexuality (or same-sex desire) and gender performance. On the surface, BM appears to be a tragic tale of romance between two men. At the beginning of the film, Ennis del Mar and Jack Twist are hired by Joe Aguirre to herd his sheep on Brokeback Mountain in deepest Wyoming throughout the summer of 1963. The two men fall in love that summer, and the narrative covers the next twenty years of their lives and the ‘impossible’ love the two men feel for each other. In my analysis of BM, I argue that the film is more about contemporary sexuality than about the same-sex desire its two characters experience in 1960s Wyoming. In trying to narrate both its story and provide commentary about contemporary homosexuality, the film generates conflicting messages and creates unrealistic characters, especially because there is no such thing as the ahistorical homosexuality the film suggests. Jack and Ennis desire each other but live the only way they know, as masculine heterosexuals of their cultural era and space, unlike contemporary gay men, who often live homo/bisexuality as identities they are aware of and openly claim. These identities cannot be conceived of without the specific spatial, discursive and historical conditions that produce these identities, conditions that did not exist in the context of the film.

Although the diegetic time span the film covers is clearly bracketed, its representation of this roughly 20-year passage is not explicitly reflected through the physical changes the filmic characters undergo; moreover, the film gives little indication of a historical/cultural context or of the zeitgeist the characters live in. As the diegetic era seems timeless, the characters who live in this diegesis look ageless as well. The narrative begins in 1963 and ends 1982, nearly twenty years in which the characters hardly age, and are played by the same actors from their 20s to 40s. In addition, Clover notes the absence of pop-culture in the film:

We begin with the ways in which pop-cultural space itself is missing from Brokeback Mountain: to batten onto only one example, the utter absence of pop music . . . This seems worth remarking, in a film set in the United States between

1963 and 1983: from the arrival of the Beatles, that is, through the success of Urban Cowboy (1980) in shepherding cowboy music into the pop mainstream. (2007, 65)

It is as if the film ‘hides’ the time of its story through its use of classical music, rather than the popular or country music that actual people similar to this film’s characters would have listened to. There is another thing that these people are likely to do in actuality but not in BM: they do not watch TV. Clarke also observes the absence of politics in the film: “It takes place over 40 years (sic) beginning in 1963, a few months before the assassination of John F. Kennedy, but nothing about America registers in the narrative. Vietnam? No mention” (2006). Radios and TVs, which would inform us of the time of these events, are significantly absent from the film. In fact, the only time the TV is being watched, it is turned off by Jack. It is the film’s timelessness and lack of historical signifiers that makes it contemporary although its story takes place between the 60s and early 80s.

Space

On the one hand, BM offers the vastest spaces considered in this dissertation: huge stretches of land, inaccessible mountains, infinite skies, and endless lakes. Yet the seemingly spacious environments presented in this film are perhaps the most restrictive places that I have studied in this dissertation. In fact, I would summarize BM not as a love story between two men, but as a story about the harshness of living in a small town where one cannot claim a desired gender/sexual identity.

The iconic space of the film is a mountain: Brokeback Mountain. This space is so significant that it gives the film its title and is presented as a main figure in the poster of the film (Plate XII). With its reflection in the lake, the mountain envelops the protagonists. It is behind the two characters; however, it surrounds the characters and frames them. The eye is drawn to the mountain’s reflection in the lake.



Plate XII: Film's poster

Especially in the first part of the film, while Ennis and Jack are herding sheep on Brokeback Mountain, the mountain is idealized through the cinematography. There are numerous shots of the landscape without either character in it. Often, these shots are not even from their point of view, but are inserted between the scenes like postcard shots of pastoral ideals, without any attachment to the plot. Layers of blue skies behind mountains recede into the distance and give a strong feeling of the vastness of space. At the same time, a storm is always pending when Jack and Ennis are on Brokeback Mountain; they hear the thunder, the clouds gather and the men expect the coming storm and metaphorically a disaster.

In fact, the moment they are off the mountain, the space narrows from the vastness of mountains to the limited spaces of their houses. Visually, we move from expansive open plains to limited interior views, and it is the use of a telephoto lens, rather than wide or neutral lenses, which make the spaces feel even narrower and tighter than they are. Ennis' house chokes him with its small size, the continuous noise from the washing machine and the seemingly endless cry of the two babies; the house becomes even more suffocating when the family moves into town. He can hardly cope with having to help his wife with the care of the two daughters that have obviously arrived before they could afford to feed them. Every time Ennis comes into the house he rushes (or tries to rush) out again, which

becomes even more the case once Jack comes back into his life. There is no peace in either man's house. Jack's house is bigger, but he is often outside of the power dynamics in the house, as the authority figure is Lureen's wealthy father and later Lureen herself. Jack is often shown outside the house or as he is leaving the house to meet Ennis. In the few scenes in which we see Jack with his family, the sound of farm-machines and the arguments in the family add to the tension in this space. The noises in both houses are followed by the silence and soundscapes of Ennis and Jack's travels in the green hills of Wyoming, where the two men are happy. Although the narrative of the men's marriages takes up limited screen time, it is significant both thematically, as it determines the two men's heterosexual identity, and spatially, as it is represented claustrophobically and in direct contrast to other spaces in the film. These scenes emphasize the importance of the space one lives in. With the distracting sounds, other characters' presence and voices (wives, children, wife's father), and their own size, these spaces make Ennis and Jack feel trapped.

Four years after the summer on Brokeback, Jack and Ennis start seeing each other again and again end up in nature. However, Brokeback Mountain is inaccessible to them. Although they always meet in Wyoming, they never go back to Brokeback Mountain, which makes it fantasy-like and utopian. Although the Wyoming hills are still beautiful and the setting picturesque, Jack and Ennis are not in the wilderness (and the space of lawlessness) any longer. There are no bears, no sheep, no vast meadows, and no deep forests. Apart from their first meeting when Jack (and probably the audience) hope that the utopian days they had in the wilderness will become a constant, the awesome scale of the mountains is reduced to a postcard. This is in part due to the cinematography, which purposefully flattens the landscape through the use of different film stock, aspect and ratio (Calhoun 2006), and in part due to the shots of the landscape looking like backdrop postcards, recalling studio films where actors are in front of hand-drawn settings rather than in real surroundings. Jack and Ennis are not in nature anymore, but are significantly in front of it. They feel expelled by civilization and try to re-experience what they had in the wilderness and on the mountain in these public parks. There is also no display of sexual contact between the two men in the post-Brokeback scenes. This geography is no longer a geography of celebration as it was on Brokeback Mountain, but is increasingly a geography of exclusion, where the two men try to express themselves freely to no avail.

Identities

Even before viewers had a chance to view BM, from the overwhelming media publicity they learned that the film was the story of two *gay* men who had to be *closeted* in 1960s Wyoming.⁸³ When the film was released, however, some viewers and reviewers were no longer so sure that this was a film about two closeted gay men and suggested different identities for both Ennis and Jack:

Certainly, Lee's film has enjoyed both curiosity and novelty value in being known as the "gay cowboy movie." Never mind that its protagonists are actually bisexual shepherders. The vernacular tagline proved so effective that you can still practically hear Universal Pictures' advertising department breathing a collective sigh of relief at not having to sell America on "that bi shepherds flick." (Cheshire 2006)

Brokeback Mountain is not a movie about gay people, and there are no gay people in it. There. I said it. Despite what you may have read in the many reviews that have come out about this new cowboy feature film, *Brokeback Mountain* is a bisexual picture. (Andre 2006)

The two guys – cowboys – are in love with each other, but we don't ever quite know if they're in love with each other because they're gay, or if they're gay because they're in love with each other. (LaSalle 2005)

As these reviewers suggest, there is no consensus on the characters' sexual identity. In fact, it is futile to try to label these men's sexual identity, because the characters of the film do not suffer from a lack identity, but rather from having too many identities. The film refuses to give its characters the final, definite and distinguished homo/bi/hetero sexual identity that contemporary audiences are used to seeing on screen, which is precisely the reason for the confusion of some audiences and reviewers.

In *Sexuality and Space*, Elder cites Mayer stating that "all sexual identities make little sense when removed from their local, regional or national settings"; he adds, "in short, the politics of sex are always contextual" (Mayer quoted in Elder 2004, 203). In BM, Jack and Ennis's sexual identities make sense only in their spatial settings. The deepest Wyoming wilderness and Brokeback Mountain give permission to have a queer identity, the towns where the two men are living serve as the heterosexual part of the film, and the Wyoming

⁸³ For example Peyser wrote: "'Brokeback' is arguably the first Hollywood picture that focuses steadfastly on a gay relationship . . . This is not simply a movie about love denied, but an exploration of the particular traps, emotional and social, waiting for gay men of a certain background and disposition" (Peyser 2006).

greenery and Jack's continuous trips between Texas, Mexico and Wyoming serve as a spatial metaphor for his search for a gay identity.

The film's prologue introduces us to the two characters in a scene in which makes their homoerotic desire instantly felt. At the beginning of the film, Ennis arrives at local rancher Joe Aguirre's office and waits outside for him to show up. When Jack arrives, he finds Ennis standing there, his face partly covered by his position, his oversized hat and his bent neck as he looks at the ground, hardly moving. Jack stands right across from Ennis, and studies him. As neither of the men utters a word, this scene looks like it is taken from a film about gay cruising. This effect is reinforced when Jack starts to shave in the truck's side mirror, but the use of the reverse-shot suggests to most audiences that he is covertly looking at Ennis. The audience's understanding of gaydar, or at least their understanding that it exists, is crucial to their decision about these men's sexual identity. Some audiences may hastily, and wrongly, think that these men are gay because of this scene.

When they first go to Brokeback Mountain, it is not the two men's closeness, but their distance that makes meaning. Ennis and Jack are often not shot in the same frame. If they are in the same frame, they are miles away from each other, doing different things in harmony. They do not talk to each other, but this silence looks like it belongs to a perfect couple. Only when Jack looks at Ennis do we feel the tension between the two men, and we feel Jack's as yet inarticulate sexual attraction to Ennis. Once they are on the mountain, Ennis becomes aware of Jack watching him and looks back at him for a few seconds. A subtle grin appears on his face and he asks, "What?" Later, when Ennis is washing and cleaning himself, Jack does not watch him, but he is carefully positioned closer to the camera, and his restlessness displays his excitement at the prospect of turning and seeing Ennis naked. In an apparent attempt to resist the homoerotic attraction, when a bear attacks Ennis, he does not let Jack clean his wound, as he does not want to be touched by another man, or at least not by this man.

Jack easily takes on heterosexual male behaviour during their conversations. When he imitates how he rides in a rodeo, Jack pretends to be "waving to the girls in the stands". This behaviour characterizes Jack as a heterosexual man. On the other hand, the way he looks at Ennis is entirely sexual, as if it is a gay man's gaze, and it becomes difficult to

overlook, both for Ennis and the audience. The ease with which he moves between these two behaviours suggests that Jack may be bisexual. Jack's surname, Twist, also serves as an indication of his twisted sexual identity. The name Jack Twist is also reminiscent of the child hero Oliver Twist. The surname is evocative of Jack's childishness and playfulness, but at his age this playing with Ennis is clearly sexual and is more about his queerness than childishness. Ennis's continuous refrain of "Jack fucking Twist" adds to the sexual element coded in Jack's surname.

After they have sex the first time, the resistance, at least by Ennis, first to male/male physical contact, then to homosexual sex, becomes a rejection of queerness.⁸⁴ Ennis says, "You know I ain't queer". Jack agrees, "Me neither." There is, however, no rejection of homosexual practice, as the two men have sex again after this conversation. The rejection is of a homosexual identity, an identity that the film resists defining. There is something in this identity that makes it undesired, but practicing male/male sex does not necessarily make one "queer", in their sense. Homosexual identity cannot be representable, as it does not have any correspondence in the characters' lives, and as they do not have any social or verbal tools to represent, embrace or claim such an identity. In other words, only male/male sex is available for these characters, as for the diegetic time in which the film takes place, while no corresponding gay sexual identity is possible for them in this diegesis, or in the zeitgeist the film depicts.

The first part of the movie ends with Ennis saying, "I'll see you around". Although it is painful to leave, Jack drives away as he watches Ennis walk behind the car. Soon, Ennis starts to cry and vomits in a corner. The two men probably do not think that they will see each other again and the deviation they have experienced from their proto-heterosexual identities is over. However, Jack's continuous look in the side-mirror and Ennis's heart-breaking cry and choking reflects the desire the two men feel towards each other.

After the first part of the film we are left with some questions. In actual life straight men do have sex with other men without identifying as gay, but are Jack and Ennis two happily

⁸⁴ To use the term correctly and to make a distinction between the first (queer) and third (gay) parts of the film, it is necessary to explain how "queer" is used here. Queer was a name for homosexuals before gay liberation, and according to Chauncey (1995), it had been used in this way since 1920s. The word, though, does not connote the pathological aspect of the term homosexuality, but is simply an insult.

heterosexual men just having sex with each other? Are they two bisexual men? Are they two gay men in the closet who are perhaps not even aware of this? The questions are pertinent to the film because they are precisely those questions which the film raises but avoids answering.

The second and brief heterosexual part of the movie begins instantly, right after the two men separate. Ennis's heterosexuality is confirmed through his intended marriage to his fiancée, Alma. Soon after, Jack marries Lureen. The two men's ease in having sex with women displays their fulfilment of expected behaviour from men in their societies. In the next few years the two men apparently have sex only with their wives and therefore practice monogamous heterosexual sex.

The third part of the film begins when Jack contacts Ennis the moment he fulfils his obligation of giving a grandson to Lureen's father, L.D. Newsome. The first time they meet, Jack offers to buy a ranch for the two of them together. During the years they were apart, he seems to have decided that his desire for Ennis is not something that could be satisfied with casual meetings; indeed, the more time they spend with each other, the more Jack craves a more settled relationship. This, in effect, shows that Jack is ready to be "queer". Jack also travels to Mexico to have sex with other men. There is no filmic evidence to suggest that that he is still having sex with his wife. On the other hand, the absence of such scenes does not necessarily mean they are not having sex anymore, but that Jack is simply fulfilling his duties as a husband when he is with his wife, which indeed makes more sense in terms of the plural identities the film provides for these men.

If, as Mayer has pointed out, sexual identities make little sense when they are removed from space, these identities also make little sense when they are removed from the context of time. The film does not show Jack and Ennis's sexual preferences apart from the first male/male intercourse scene, where Jack's preference for a 'bottom' position in sexual intercourse is made clear. Although penetration between the two men is never shown again, most audiences not aware of gay male sexual practices will assume that if Jack and Ennis practice anal sex Jack is bottom, as this was the only representation that they had been exposed to. However, other, possibly gay male, audiences will realize that both men may be coded as versatile because of the way the characters are carefully positioned beside and on

top of each other in the later scenes, specifically Ennis lying naked in Jack's muscled arms. Furthermore, when Jack visits Mexico the prostitute he has eye contact with is a very effeminate man, and effeminacy is the sign of bottom sexual positioning in mainstream films. Later on there is another crude metaphor that could be read as a symbol of Jack's versatility. Through modernization in agriculture, Lureen's father starts to sell tractors and we see Jack driving one. The tractor is a symbol of powerful and refined masculinity (Clope 2005, 53). But this new model tractor's brand is "versatile", which covers the lower half of the screen. This brand may serve as a metaphor of Jack's own versatility in his behaviour, his masculinity and his homo/heterosexuality. Yet it also may refer to Jack's versatility in bed. Not only have gay historians argued that the decision of which partner took the top/bottom role was very clear before gay liberation, they also explained that the bottom partner was often effeminate. My point is to suggest not only that for some audiences Ennis's and Jack's characterizations will look historically inaccurate, but also that their characterization is simply conflicted: their equally masculine gender performances and possibly versatile intercourse positions, which is a preference of modern, post-liberation gay men, are at odds with their confused, closeted states from the early 1960s to the early 1980s. Something does not make sense when the two men are not frightened to rent a hotel room and have sex all night as if they were in an urban city, but still cannot decide whether they are 'queer' or straight after twenty years.

Alma ends up leaving Ennis after her suspicions that Jack and Ennis may be having a sexual relationship are confirmed. Soon afterwards, Ennis attempts to have another heterosexual relationship, this time initiated by a woman, Cassie, just like Jack's relationship with Lureen, but he is not able to maintain this relationship. When Cassie comes to confront him after he has left her without saying a word, Ennis does not even look her in the face. At the same time, Cassie appears to be devastated because Ennis has left her, which shows that Ennis satisfied her on either a sexual or an emotional level, or both.

Ennis becomes weaker the more his hold of a sexual identity slips. He first loses his wife and then his girlfriend because of his unsuccessful claim on a heterosexual identity and his rejection of a bisexual (or gay/queer) one. The last scene before the couple slips up displays how confused Ennis is. The couple starts to have an argument in bed just when they are about to have sex, and the argument goes sour not because there is no pleasure, but because

there is no contraception. When Alma wants to use a condom, Ennis says, "If you don't want no more of my kids, I'll be happy to leave you alone." Ennis is ready to have another child with Alma before she leaves him. Without really thinking about it, Ennis is trying to fulfil the requirements of heterosexuality and masculinity. He lives his life according to common and accepted, if sometimes deviant, behaviours, rather than consciously identifying as hetero/bi/homosexual. Having children as a means to assert your manhood is a heterosexual male behaviour; his practice of homosexual sex, or sodomy, is a deviation from this behaviour that is not punished in 60s Wyoming as long as it is not 'flaunted'. These two behaviours perhaps do not complement each other but neither do they necessarily contradict each other.

At the end of the film, we learn that Jack's desire for a space (ranch) of his own and for life with a man is much stronger than his love for Ennis. Jack and Ennis were supposed to move to a ranch close to Jack's father's and help him run his ranch. After Jack's sudden death, in a conversation with his father Ennis learns that Jack had already replaced him with another man (probably Randall, whose wife is a friend of Lureen), as Ennis was not ready to move in with a man. Although Jack does not fully acknowledge any gay/queer identity and knows that living with another man, even near his father's remote ranch, would break social boundaries, he pursues this dream. In Jack's insistence on living with another man, in addition to his masculine behaviour and versatile sexual preference, the film's disregard of time and space becomes particularly noticeable. At this point Jack acts like the proto-gay man, because he becomes 'gay' without any supporting context, as he does not have contact with other gay men and it is clear that he is unaware of gay liberation taking place in other parts of the country. Homosexuality as an identity did not exist in rural America in the 60s. Logically, Stonewall is absent from the film and so are gay men, gay liberation, and AIDS, as the year the film ends in the early 80s, when the term AIDS began to enter mainstream discourse.⁸⁵ Jack cannot have learned about being a gay man from the Mexican prostitutes, who do not acquire any gay identity but rather engage in homosexual behaviour for money.

Ennis is more confused than Jack. At the end of the film he is distraught not only because he is devastated by Jack's death, but also because he appears to lack a solid sense of

⁸⁵ On the Web, the film is often parodied as "Bareback Mountain", since condoms are absent from the film, as is AIDS (which was already common in Mexico and the United States in the early 1980s).

identity. Sexual identity is often established over the course of one's life, but Ennis is neither heterosexual, nor gay, nor bisexual. In fact, at the end of the film there is no expectation that he will ever have another relationship or sexual contact with either a man or a woman. Even if Ennis does have another affair, the film associates him at the end not with hope but rather with an endless, neurotic mourning.

In terms of sexual identity, there are actually no gay characters in this famously gay film, but practicing bisexuals at best. These men are not bisexual by choice. They behave as perfectly masculine and heterosexual when they are with their wives, and they act like modern, in the post-liberation sense, gay men when they are together. These multiple behaviours are problematic in terms of their characterization and in terms of the 'realistic' representation the film aims to portray; as I will discuss, this representation becomes even more problematic when this characterization stays the same for 20 years on Ennis's part.

Love, Lust and Sex in BM

BM dichotomizes love and sex so as to 'de-queer' Jack and Ennis's relationship and turn the film into a great love story rather than a film about a gay relationship. In the film, Ennis and Jack have sex with men and with women. However, they do not identify as bisexual nor does the film or its publicity characterize them as bisexuals. Significantly, we never witness a sex scene from beginning to end in the film; thus, we cannot comprehend how Jack and Ennis react to having sex with each other, with other men and with women. Often, we hear about sex or assume that sex is taking place through the implications (between husbands and wives, between Ennis and Cassie, between Jack and prostitutes in Mexico, and between Jack and Ennis in the third part of the film). BM's refusal to display sexual desire makes this film important in respect of not what it shows, but what it does not show. D.A. Miller rightly points out that "erotic disappointment may well be the only genuine homosexual response to *Brokeback Mountain* – and hence the only genuine basis for a political critique of the film" (2007, 50). For a film so much about lust, to the point of physical pain for both men, BM hardly displays lust on screen, and it causes the audiences who want to see the representation of lust to leave the theatre in sheer disappointment.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ It is impossible not to compare this to Ang Lee's latest film, *Lust, Caution* (2007), which is similarly about lust but as a continuous show of heterosexual contact, most of which was heavily censored in China. The film's U.S. rating is NC-17, which also indicates the level of sexual contact in the film.

Bearing in mind the extensive press (positive and negative) about the film, it would be safe to assume that the moment viewers entered the cinema, they were ready to watch the story of two queer, if not gay, men. The question is not if, but when they will have sex in the film. The first sex scene comes half an hour into the film. Although it is implied that the two men engage in (possibly) anal sex several times, this is displayed only once and is divided into two parts. The scene starts after the two men talk personally to each other for the first time. After some drinking, they laugh and play together like children. When Ennis tries to sleep outside, Jack is in the tent and is once again shown to be restless and unable to sleep. Ennis is shivering and freezing, so Jack tells him to come and sleep inside the tent. The moment Ennis lies beside him, Jack tempts him by moving Ennis's arm over himself. At this point, the film cuts to a shot of the rising moon. On the one hand, this picture is a postcard view; on the other hand, it is from the iconography of horror films, thus, informing us that some horrific action is about to take place.

As Jack keeps pulling on Ennis' arm and putting it around himself, Ennis wakes up and suddenly starts to fuck Jack. There is no kissing or lovemaking; it is not anal sex but sodomy which is taking place. To support this analysis, it is essential to make a distinction between sodomy and anal sex. Both words might mean anal intercourse between two men or a man and a woman. However, they have different connotations: "anal sex" suggests a pleasurable act, whereas "sodomy" sounds like a medical, religious and especially a legal term and brings a punishable crime to mind. The implication of this scene for most viewers is that Ennis would not have had sex with Jack if he were not drunk (and sexually aroused) and if Jack had not initiated the sex. Jack knows that Ennis has a fiancé and is getting married soon, so his actions are courageous (he may have been beaten instead), though he appears to be aware from their early encounters that his sexual advances will not be rejected. Ennis spits on his hand and enters Jack from behind. This extreme readiness, the shocking ease and cleanliness of this act of anal sex is fascinating. From their conversations we presume that Jack has not had sex with another man before, and Ennis is most likely a virgin, but they both act as if they know what they are doing. The scene is shot in the dark, is brief (takes less than 40 seconds), and there is no nudity; even in the only depiction of anal sex, sex is implied rather than displayed. The scene ends with a shot of the tent as the two men's grunting continues in a sound bridge. The tent is lit with a strong blue light, which adds to the romanticism, but the artificiality and fakeness of the light also serves as a

way to remind the audience that this is a fantasy (of Jack, of the filmmakers and of some viewers). The viewers learn from this scene that the two men have sex in the tent and the tent becomes a metaphor for their sexual contact, which is significant for future scenes in which we see the tent but no sexual contact.

The next morning, when Ennis wakes up, he sees that he is naked and realizes that they had sex. He leaves the tent in fury and when Jack wakes up, he tells him, “You know I ain’t queer” to which Jack replies, “Me neither”. But the same night, when Jack goes to bed in the nude, instead of going to guard the sheep Ennis comes into the tent and starts to kiss Jack passionately. If this is an educational film, in the sense that it most probably shows some members of its heterosexual audience the first male/male anal sex scene they have ever seen, it succeeds in not scaring them. It is important that the sex scene does not take place at the beginning of the film. The two men gaze at each other in front of Aguirre’s office, but they do not then have sex as soon as they are on the mountain. The audience warms up to the possibility of seeing two men having sex, just like the two men warm up to each other. If the sex scene had started the film, it is possible that some audiences would have left the theatre. The dividing of the male same-sex scene into two parts also makes it easier to watch; rather than being exposed to an extended scene, the two scenes offer a pause or breathing space; they are divided by a conversation for audiences who may find it too much.⁸⁷ At the same time, the sodomy caused by alcohol and the soft kisses caused by flourishing love are kept separate, as if they can be thought of separately and as if men who ‘love’ each other do not practice anal sex. Indeed, penetration between the two men will not be represented again in the film.

In the first, queer part of the film, public sex is celebrated with a subtle warning. Male-male sex in the midst of wilderness certainly brings to mind the absence of women as a reason for Ennis’s temptation. As Ennis himself points out several times, if he had never met Jack, he would have probably led a satisfying heterosexual life. Male-male sex in the wilderness in 1960s Wyoming is also a sign of lawlessness. The mechanisms that are at work to punish homosexuals and the practice of anal sex do not exist on Brokeback Mountain. For this

⁸⁷ Ang Lee has projected that “while some people will find it too shocking, others won’t find it shocking enough” (Osterweil 2007, 39) To put it more accurately, audiences who find it too tame will be mostly gay male audiences, and the audiences that find it shocking will most probably be heterosexual audiences who have not been exposed to such scenes in mainstream films before.

same reason, the scene is an ode to the beauty of sex in nature, removing all cultural constructions brought to public sex. Bell argues that public sex is often thought of as “the very antipathy to the romantically charged (and heteronormative) model of sexual love” (1995, 306). Although Bell has public toilets, car parks and so forth in mind, in *BM* the sex can be thought of as public at the same time as it is out of reach of the public. The sex, especially in the extension of the first sex scene when the two men are playing and kissing each other in the mud, feels intimate and romantic, but it gives this impression because it repeats rather than contradicting the heteronormative model of sexual love – the error of sodomy is not repeated again. The space of public sex – in the sense that it is open to view – becomes a geography of celebration to some extent, but only until a member of the public comes to this space and sees them: the DVD edition’s title for this part (chapter) of the film is, aptly, “bad news”. The mechanisms that exist in “civilization” still encompass the characters’ actions even on the fantastical *Brokeback Mountain*, a point I will discuss further.

Gay men biologically can have sex with women, but they do not desire women. In the second, heterosexual part, the film shows that these men engage in heterosexual sex with no trouble. However, the only depiction of intercourse in the film that brings pleasure to mind is the one between Jack and Lureen. Jack first meets the “rodeo princess” Lureen when she is riding her horse. The same night in the bar Lureen is the one who comes on to him, saying, “What are you waitin’ for, cowboy? A matin’ call?” To complicate things further, just before meeting her, a penniless Jack learns that Lureen’s dad is wealthy. When they end up in her car, she is the one who initiates sex: “You don’t think I’m too fast, do you?” She sits on top of him and rides him, in a way like her horse. The film makes the following crude and problematic suggestions through its portrayal of the intercourse and relationship between Jack and Lureen: that Jack is bisexual, that he is looking for a dominant figure, either a man or a woman, that because of Lureen’s father’s money Jack is quite happy to engage in sex with a woman, and, since Jack bottomed Ennis, he prefers to be submissive, which by extension means gay men can practice sex with dominant women as though the relationships and behaviours are somehow equivalent. By implication, Lureen can stand in for the man Jack would rather be with, since with her he is also the bottom, in the position of being ridden. Although sex between Jack and Lureen is not depicted again, the audience

assumes that they had sex more than once in the first years of their marriage, since the couple has a son.

Ennis and his wife Alma are shown as having sex in the film two times. There is pleasure in both sex scenes, but the first scene, which initiates the second part of the film, ends with Ennis entering Alma from behind during vaginal intercourse, much to her disappointment. As this is the single intercourse scene that is representative of their sexual life, it serves to make the audience feel that every time they have vaginal intercourse, Alma has to lie on her stomach. It looks as though through vaginal sex in this position (or less possibly through anal sex) Ennis is trying to re-experience his sexual satisfaction with Jack and the vagina serves no different purpose than an anus. The suggestions made by this portrayal are similarly simplistic to those made about Jack through his conjugal behaviour: is Ennis gay or is he anally obsessed? To put it more accurately, does Ennis desire a male body (and does a female body recall a male body when she is lying on her face) or is he obsessed with anal sex (and does vaginal sex recall anal sex when the woman is on her stomach)? *BM* does not explore Ennis's desires, but in its limited representation of sex between the characters, it suggests that he is happy to engage in sex with men or women as long as they are in the doggie position. The film displays male and female bodies as being interchangeable and the desire of Jack and Ennis as directed not to a certain, individual person but to certain male/female body parts (anus) or behaviours (dominance/submissiveness). While it is true to say, as I have suggested earlier, that heterosexual behaviour does not contradict homosexual behaviour in this film, there is nonetheless a contradiction between the interchangeability of bodies, as witnessed by Jack's and Ennis' sexual practices, and the supposed romantic love between these two individual protagonists.

Arguably, the only passionate scene between the two men as lovers takes place in the third part of the film, when they meet again for the first time in four years (Plate XIII).⁸⁸ The scene suddenly takes on the point of view of Alma and her emotional pain at seeing them kiss; the only scene that represents lust thus becomes painful for some (most likely heterosexual/bisexual female) audiences. It is no longer possible for the viewers to appreciate the sexuality of this kiss when the film cuts to the tears of Alma, a cut, which

⁸⁸ Pointedly, Ledger nearly broke Gyllenhaal's nose in the making of this scene (anonymous, 2004).

indicates the preferred audience members and where their sympathies are presumed to lie.⁸⁹ Ultimately, this kiss is the reason why Alma and Ennis's marriage collapses. Yet homosexual passion does not overwrite heterosexual sex. It is implied that Ennis still engages in sex with his wife, and possibly later with Cassie, after this scene.



Plate XIII

In the third part of the film, there are no graphic sex scenes between Jack and Ennis, between them and their wives, between Ennis and Cassie, between Jack and Randall or between the Mexican prostitute(s) and Jack. Although their relationship becomes more intense and they spend a lot of time together on several trips, up to the end of the film sexual contact between Jack and Ennis is implied rather than displayed. For example, in their first night together after four years, the two men spend the night at a hotel and the viewer understands that they have had sex when we see them naked and Ennis is lying in Jack's arms. Later on, the two men start their fishing trips, but often there is not even an implication that they are having sex, just as in the scenes with the two men and their wives. As Alma eventually realizes, Ennis and Jack are not fishing; their equipment remains untouched. If they are not fishing, what are they doing during these trips? As there is no textual proof to suggest otherwise, audiences are left to assume that they are engaging in

⁸⁹ DA Miller argues that the film practices a kind of "aversion therapy", framing its images with a chill thrown over them: "The most gruesome instance comes when Ennis, rejoining the herd after his first night with Jack, finds a sheep's gutted carcass. A first shot gives us Ennis and the dead sheep together. A second shot shows us a close-up of Ennis looking and a third the sheep's mutilated carcass. A fourth shot makes as if to replicate this shot/countershot elaboration. We see Ennis look away, look back, but then-where the reverse shot of the dead sheep ought to be-we get a shot, in no way continuous with Ennis's sight line, of Jack naked, washing clothes by the stream. His fresh nudity has already been 'spoiled,' assimilated to the carrion it will become" (2007, 60).

anal sex, especially since the *mise-en-scène* often includes the tent as a metaphor for sex. But for audiences who do not want to think too much about this aspect of the relationship, the assumption is enough.

Even in this ‘groundbreaking’ film, the viewers are protected from displays of homosexual intercourse. It does intend to destroy or cause pleasure by showing two men having sex, but simply ignores sexual contact. Whenever the two men start having sex, it is not the two men’s bodies,⁹⁰ but the landscape that is fetishized. Especially in the third part of the film, the postcard beauty of nature becomes a reason to look away from the sight, or even implication, of male bodies making love. Like most other (heterosexual) sex scenes in the film, these sex scenes are informative and do not intend to convey visual pleasure. Sex is implied to inform the audience about the state of the couple’s relationship.

It could be argued that because gay men’s entire existence is often reduced to their practice of anal sex in homophobic discourses, by showing that two men can love each other *BM* attempts to release homosexuality from its homophobic meaning. Nonetheless, the film’s representation of anal sex is quite straightforward. When men lust after each other, when they are drunk and possibly when they are horny (Jack and Mexican prostitutes), they practice anal sex. When they are not, they kiss each other, lie in bed naked and hug each other. Therefore, *BM* creates a dichotomy of love and (anal) sex in which anal sex does not come as a result of love but is placed opposite – and in opposing relation to – it.

Hygiene

Coming in the midst of civil union, marriage and adoption discussions, *BM* inevitably has social implications. In its desire for ultimate hygiene, the film reassures heterosexual audiences that queer men are not really different from them; they do fall in love.⁹¹ If we try to apply historical terms to *BM*, it is not a queer but rather a gay liberal film asking for tolerance and inclusion with its emphasis on positing that “we are not different”. In this

⁹⁰ Interestingly, in heterosexual films with homoerotic undertones, from *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986) to *Lethal Weapon* (Richard Donner, 1987) and *Starship Troopers* (Paul Verhoeven, 1997), male bodies are repeatedly fetishized. In an interview Ang Lee pointed to such homoeroticism in his own films: “*Ride with the Devil* is so homo you just can’t help it. In the Civil War all these men slept together like spoons in the drawer. And the Hulk fighting with his father is very homo” (Clarke 2006).

⁹¹ Robin Wood agrees. *Brokeback Mountain* is “the film about gay men that the general public is ready for and can accept. Whatever one thinks of the film, its influence can only be positive” (2007, 28).

respect, BM displays how gay love is supposed to be represented by heterosexual filmmakers⁹² for⁹³ heterosexual audiences in the 21st century.⁹⁴

BM is made for a contemporary, mainstream audience. As it aims for a wider audience's appreciation and tolerance, the world represented in the film is a hygienic world. Firstly, the film's display of sexual contact is limited to what it presumes audiences will tolerate. It is true to say that there is a general rejection of sex in the film, and the heterosexual sex scenes are as brief as the homosexual ones. These scenes are no doubt perfectly measured (both for audiences' and possibly for the actors' tolerance) and the filmmakers have probably calculated that it would be unacceptable if heterosexual sex scenes took much more screen time than homosexual ones, which would cause BM to be protested rather than celebrated by gay audiences. Instead of sex (and especially anal sex) between the two men, our attention is drawn to virginal nature, unmarred by plastic bottles, condoms, or pieces of paper.

In its positive reviews, BM is appreciated for taking a gay love story to mainstream audiences like no other film has done before.⁹⁵ A sexless and hygienic world helps this film to be about 'humans', not about gay men. BM dehomosexualizes its characters; we appreciate these characters as two people (who happen to be men) in love, not as two men in love. The film's sexless tagline, "Love Is A Force Of Nature", draws attention to a love that overwhelms all, and the film is likened to classics like *Romeo and Juliet* and *Titanic* rather than films with gay subjects (Rubin 2007). This is illustrated by the comments made about the film by Rick Moody (the author of the novel on which Ang Lee's 1997 film *The Ice Storm* is based): "During the unravelling marriages of these two men, as the film hastens toward its heart-rending completion, is that you stop thinking of these men as men, or gay men, or whatever, and you start thinking about them only as human beings, people who long for something, for some kind of union they are never likely to have" (2005). Levy

⁹² To my knowledge, BM is the creation solely of heterosexuals: director Ang Lee, actors Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal, story writer Annie Proulx, and screenwriters Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana.

⁹³ Some even speculated that Focus Features' marketing strategy for *Brokeback Mountain* played down the gay content of the film and denied reporters from the gay media access to its stars (Jones 2006, 22).

⁹⁴ In its display of male/male sexual contact, BM is strongly reminiscent of *Philadelphia*, which does not permit its two male characters to have a single, passionate kiss. BM is perhaps *Philadelphia* for a 2006 audience. Like its predecessor, it does not push limits, but presents what it assumes will be accepted by a mainstream 2006 audience.

⁹⁵ Clarke writes, "[t]he New Queer Cinema hipsters never did deliver a simple and true gay love story, or one as honeyed and bitter as this" (2006).

thinks of the film's success in similar terms: "In the hands of another director, 'Brokeback' could have easily become a 'queer' love story in both the popular and political senses of this term. However, Lee and his writers have succeeded in broadening the scope of a story that goes beyond homosexuality into the realm of any forbidden love that's marked by pain and suffering" (2006). Similar comparisons appeared in, among others, Kaufman (2005) and Loder (2006). In such appraisals of the film, the film not only dehomosexualizes but even desexes its characters. Some audiences like this film precisely because they do not think of the protagonists as two men, and their male sex becomes invisible as the film proceeds especially because of the lack of display of sexual intercourse between them.

Another factor that adds to the hygienic world in the film is the casting of its handsome, tall and athletic actors, Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal. At the time of the movie's release, both actors had a hygienic image unsmudged by rumours of drinking, drugs or bisexuality/homosexuality. Since Ledger's death, this image has been reinforced as, unlike the first round of rumours, Ledger did not commit suicide or suffer a drug overdose, but died because of prescription drugs. Both actors are also famously straight. Not for a moment would we think these men could really be gay; rather, we celebrate their wonderful acting and success in bringing (closeted) gay men to the screen.⁹⁶ In fact, while Ennis was falling in love with Jack, Heath Ledger was falling in love with his wife on screen, Michelle Williams.⁹⁷

On a production level, the characters' hygiene is as striking as the virgin beauty of nature. These men are not only fit and handsome, but their clothes are amazingly clean and there is no sign of hard labour in their costumes or appearance. Camille Paglia comments that she was "steadily annoyed by the over-stylish, absurdly clean and unwrinkled clothes of the

⁹⁶ Grundmann protests the double standards for gay and heterosexual actors in his *Cinéaste* article: "The mysterious thing is when a straight actor gets to testify how hard it was to play a gay character, because 'feeling oneself into' such a 'very different' person is supposedly extremely challenging. (With the deck stacked against him to be nominated for a best lead Oscar, Gyllenhaal played this card hard during interviews.) More importantly, today's out gay actors — Chad Allen, Craig Chester, Mitchell Anderson, Dan Butler, David Drake and Peter Paige — have to deal with the 'incredible fact' that they've been left to fend for themselves in indie and pay-TV climes. But when it comes to parts like Ennis Del Mar, Jack Twist and Truman Capote, they're not even going to get an audition. Only heterosexuals need apply" (2006, 52). The famous gay actor Stephen Fry similarly criticises the way straight actors are congratulated for playing gay parts. "People say: 'Ooh, how brave of you.' Why should it be difficult for a man to kiss another man? . . . [Fry] pointed out nobody tells a gay actor: 'How brave of you to kiss that woman, that must have been very difficult for you.'" (anonymous, 2008).

⁹⁷ D A Miller also suggests that there is also a level of repression in Ledger's falling in love and hasty marriage to Williams and a maybe unconscious desire to distance himself from Ennis (2007).

two leads (they looked like Ralph Lauren catalogue models)” (Adnum 2006). Accordingly, the two men do not age (with aid of make-up) in the following twenty years, but rather continuously change hairstyles and costumes as a sign of passing years (as Paglia appropriately points out, the costume department may have worked with Ralph Lauren). If (gay) men could look like this after so much dirty work, hard labour and time, they surely would not cause pollution.

The film also creates hygiene by eliminating effeminacy, a pollution that is maybe even more poisonous than homosexuality (and hated by as many gay men as heterosexual men) (Sedgwick 1994, Bergling 2001). The characters’ ‘masculine’ attitude is, on the one hand, positive as compared to the habitual use of effeminate behaviour as the sole signifier of homosexuality or closeted homosexuality in mainstream films. On the other hand, as the characters do not possess a gay identity during or at the end of the film, in BM masculine behaviour is not a characteristic of homosexuals. BM might be imagining its characters as masculine, because they are not unequivocally gay. In addition, this masculine characterization is also employed as a tactic to make these characters attractive for female audiences.

There is only one thing that pollutes the hygienic world of BM: homophobia. While Ennis’s resistance to becoming ‘gay’ pathologizes him, Jack’s claim to live in this hygienic proto-gay world – where men do not age, wear nice, manly clothes and act ‘like’ men, i.e. in a masculine manner – comes to an end because of evil homophobes.

Space of Murder

Audiences have learned to expect gay (or gay-coded) characters to be murdered in mainstream film, and BM fulfils this expectation. It will come as no surprise to many audiences that one of the characters is murdered at the end of this film. This is obviously not only a ‘realistic’ portrayal, but also a choice made by the filmmakers. Interestingly, seen in its entirety, the film does not bring sex and danger together. When the two men have sex, this could have been represented as dangerous both because it is homosexual sex, and because it is public sex, which is “constantly practiced in a situation of potential private disruption through public intrusion” (Edwards 2006, 99). In addition, some, particularly gay male, audiences may expect homophobic attack to take place from their own personal

experiences. Nevertheless, the use of *mise-en-scène* (e.g., cutaways to the stunning landscape) and music (e.g., soft tunes accompanying these scenes) reinforce the feeling of safety in the film. Later in the film, every time the two men go into their tent the same techniques of music and cinematography is used. As sex scenes are no longer displayed, the brief shots of the tent, with the camera turning to landscapes and soft tunes accompanying such scenes, do not signify danger but rather harmony.

Towards the end of the film, a postcard, which Ennis has sent to Jack to arrange a meeting is returned with the stamp “deceased.” In the ensuing telephone conversation, Lureen tells Ennis:

Jack was pumpin’ up a flat out on a back road, when the tire blew up. The rim of the tire slammed into his face, broke his nose and jaw and knocked him unconscious on his back. By the time somebody come along, he’d drowned in his own blood.

Her explanation of the incident is overlaid with images of Jack being brutally beaten by three men. Although most audiences will think this is a portrayal of what *really* happened because of the gay-as-victim filmic tradition they have been accustomed to, the space of the murder may well be an imaginary space in Ennis’s mind; in other words, Jack may really have died in a banal accident. One reason to think of this flashback as a representation of Ennis’s subjective memory is because this scene is shot in a way very similar to a previous flashback from Ennis’s childhood, in which his father showed him and his brother a ‘queer’ man, Earl, who was beaten to death, with the same grainy and filtered look. Trapped in rurality, Ennis does not know that times have changed for other men (or that Stonewall has taken place, and gay liberation has reached its peak in other parts of the country), so like most audiences, he can only imagine a murder. Although some audiences may have expected the two men to be attacked, such an event did not take place earlier in the film. Even when Aguirre catches them having sex, he does not shoot them, does not have them beaten, does not talk to the sheriff; he just does not hire them again. He tells Jack: “You guys wasn’t getting’ paid to leave the dogs babysit the sheep, while you stemmed the rose”. In this speech, he does not even reproach their sexual identity or behaviour (as “stem the rose” most likely refers to their practice of anal sex), but their work ethics. Furthermore, the

accident Lureen describes is so bizarre that it seems as if she would have been likely to find a more credible lie if she were trying to cover up a homophobic murder.

On the other hand, in Hathaway's acting and tone of speech, Lureen looks as if she *is* lying. It looks as if Ang Lee directed this scene in this particular way to connote murder rather than a banal accident; there is no soft music that accompanies the scene, nor does the camera turn to a picturesque landscape after the conversation. These connotations will also make the viewers who were already expecting homophobic attack even more suspicious. Especially if they know the actual state of Wyoming, they will be aware that this part of the country sometimes functions as if gay liberation never took place and homophobic murder is not out of place, not only in 1980 but even in the late 90s.⁹⁸ It is undeniable that most queer audiences will see murder in this scene and BM does not try to convince us otherwise, although it does not confirm it either. If we imagine a murder, the implication of this is clear: Jack finally assumes a sexual identity only through his murder.

Although Lureen describes and/or Ennis imagines the murder on a back road close to town, the space of the murder could be anywhere as Jack's and Ennis' bodies are marginal in the spaces in which they live. Although the two men are both aware of their marginality, the narrative is shaped by their inability to move. If they move, the move is always to a more secluded space rather than an urban one. In the second part of the film, Alma wants to move to Riverton as she is tired of "these lonesome old ranches", but Ennis wants to be as far away from the town as possible. After their divorce, Ennis moves to a scruffy mobile home that is far away from any other life form. Yet there are imaginary boundaries. Ennis cannot move away from Wyoming; he cannot move to Texas, Mexico or San Francisco. He seems not to realize that his trailer is the means for his mobility and could take him away from these lands. All the roads take him to mountains, to spaces of absolute exclusion.

If Jack is murdered, this would confirm that Texas is as non-tolerant as Riverton and he should also have moved. Contrary to Ennis, Jack tries to move, and he accuses Ennis of not moving with him to create a space of their own. In this respect, what is more significant is not whether Jack is murdered, but how restricted the imaginary boundaries in Jack's mind

⁹⁸ Although the short story the film is based on was written before the event, most queer audiences will be aware of Matthew Shepard's 1998 murder in Wyoming, documented in *The Laramie Project* (Moisés Kaufman, 2002), when they are watching BM.

are; even in his thirst to have a space with Ennis, Jack can only imagine moving to the plot beside his father's ranch, which is equally remote and scarily isolated. In this geography of exclusion, the two men would not be any safer than they are at home, and Ennis's conversation with Jack's father reveals that the father may have been the one to shoot both Jack and Ennis if he were to understand they were 'queers'.

In *BM*, as suggested by Aguirre's behaviour, sodomy (as a sexual act) in the context of 'wild nature' is discovered but accepted as an aberration. Maybe because of the absence of women on Brokeback Mountain, male/male sexual contact is ignored. Sodomy in town, however, may be, since we are not sure about what happened to Jack, punishable by murder. As it is, or might be, Jack who is murdered, the audience will assume that he has either flirted with the wrong person or flaunted his homosexuality and homosexual practices. Ennis, the moral and abstinent character, is spared his life, but after Jack's death it is most likely that he will never be able to have a sexual identity nor will he have (homosexual) sex. In its finale, *BM* ultimately manages to create the most hygienic world with no possibility of homosexual sex being continued. What we are left with is the melancholy of an "impossible" love.

Gender Performance and Masculinity

In films, one way viewers understand non-heterosexual characters' sexual identity is through how the characters perform gender. In general, rurality signifies masculinity. However, it is obvious that both characters are on the bottom rung of cowboyship as shepherds, both in terms of ranking and in terms of masculinity – it is the poorer and often the younger, inexperienced and sometimes foreign men who herd the sheep.

In *BM*, there are only a few instances in which Jack's performance of masculinity is questioned. In the rodeo scene, a few minutes after Jack claims that he doubts there is a filly that could throw him, he is thrown off a horse. On Brokeback Mountain, he tries to shoot a coyote, but he misses. Later, when Ennis shoots a deer, he tells Jack, "I was getting tired of your dumb-ass missing". In the second part of the film, after he is married to Lureen, Jack is represented as a failed rodeo cowboy; we hear two farmers talking behind him as one of them asks, "Didn't that pissant used to ride the bulls?" The other replies: "He used to try." It is not he who manages the business but his wife, and she wants him to be the salesman:

“You’re the best combine salesman we got.” After a pause, she goes on to make it unflattering: “You’re the only combine salesman, in fact.” Nonetheless, although he is not good at riding horses or shooting coyotes, Jack is not effeminate; his physical performance of gender is masculine. Ennis acts equally masculinely, though unlike Jack, he is successful in all manly jobs and hobbies.

Interestingly, the more Jack takes on a gay/bisexual identity, the stronger he becomes. When Jack and Lureen’s father discuss whether Jack’s son is permitted to watch TV while he is having dinner, Jack hastily moves to turn on the TV that L.D. had just turned off and yells at him: “This is my house, this is my child, and you are my guest. Now you sit down... before I knock your ignorant ass into next week.” There is a mid-close up to Lureen’s smiling face, as she probably feels very satisfied that her husband is finally acting like a ‘man’ and standing up to her father. Sleeping with men does not make Jack effeminate or queer, but stronger and more dominant.

After his divorce, Ennis becomes both emotionally fragile and physically weaker. When his ex-wife tells him that she knew Jack and Ennis did not go fishing as there were never any fish in the case, Ennis leaves the house hastily. Right outside the house, the tough Ennis, who has once beaten two men who were drunk in the town fair, gets beaten badly by a man of his own size. It is as if Ennis’s performance of masculinity becomes more neutral the more he rejects a (homo)sexual identity or when he is reminded of his ‘unsuccessful’ claim on heterosexuality.

Rural masculinity provides men with a certain gender performance but not necessarily a sexual orientation. Bell notes that for some men the countryside opens up “a space for certain forms of same-sex activity whether this is ‘manly love’, hillbilly priapism, or rustic sodomy” (2005, 55). Therefore, in the world BM portrays everyone is more or less masculine; effeminacy cannot even exist. BM attempts to explain Ennis’s ‘closetedness’ (some would claim, quite unconvincingly) because of an incident that took place in his childhood. As Ennis describes it,

There were these two old guys ranched up together down home. Earl and Rich. And they was a joke in town even though they were pretty tough old birds. Anyway, they found Earl dead in an irrigation ditch. They took a tire iron to him, spurred him up

and drug him around by his dick till it pulled off . . . My dad, he made sure me and my brother saw it. For all I know, he did it.

Although the term ‘old birds’ is usually applied to women who manage on their own in a masculine territory, we do not imagine two effeminate men from this description, but rather two tough men who dared to live on the same ranch. The brief image in the flashback displays a man who is dressed like any other cowboy, so that Earl is not represented as “different” through use of unmasculine clothing. Yet his penis has been pulled off as a punishment, so Earl symbolically becomes a woman through his murder.

Ennis is aware that in these homo/bi-phobic lands, when a man lives in the same space with another man, this means he is ‘flaunting’ his homosexuality and may be murdered, even if his gender performance is very masculine. Thus, in BM gender performance has little relevance; it is sexual identity that has significance; leaving your wife and/or living with another man means murder.

CONCLUSION

I began this dissertation with the observation that although there have been significant changes in gay men's lives, there are still homophobic representations of gay men. I have also noted that contemporary films rarely feature the stereotypical, cartoonish homosexual characters that were criticized heavily by Vito Russo in 1981. Throughout the particular films I selected, I investigated the ways in which homophobia still might be present, despite the absence of the caricatures of earlier representations.

Throughout this dissertation, the use of space has been significant in my analysis of all the films. In the first chapter, Bill Harford walks the streets; he is a city walker. Although the streets are full of dangers, they are also full of adventures, and through cruising it is possible that Harford may find a (homo)sexual identity. In Chapters III and IV, the space is prison-like. In *Mystic River*, the space of the abuse is underground; in *I'll Sleep When I Am Dead* it is above ground. However, in both films the place in which the abuse takes place is unrecognisable. Furthermore, the protagonists are imprisoned in these places; these spaces literally suck the life out of their victims and the victims are denied (or are aware that they will be denied) any space, to the extent that Dave is murdered and Davey commits suicide. In Chapter II, there is no fixed space. In *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Ripley unsuccessfully tries to claim a space and an identity, and is left perpetually on the move as a result. Whether it is a ranch or a house or a room, the characters in these films are either trapped in spaces they do not want to be a part of, or they cannot claim a space although they would like to.

In this dissertation, I have consistently noticed homophobia being exercised because of 'non-masculine' gender performance, rather than non-heterosexual identity. I have noted that in these films there are no major gay characters. The characters are 'queered' through their actions. Thus, the discussion of contemporary filmic modes of homophobia in this dissertation shows that homophobia in film persists not strictly as a rejection of (homo)sexual identity, but rather as a policing of gender identity which causes the exclusion of queer characters.

In *Eyes Wide Shut*, Bill Harford is represented as a heterosexual man. In my reading of the film, I have concluded that Dr. Harford's exclusion from the historically male spaces, such

as the streets, is linked to how he performs gender. He becomes a victim of homophobic attack, and is thrown out of an orgy at which it seems everyone except he is welcome, because of an inconsistency in his performance of masculinity, not because of his sexual orientation or any sort of involvement with another male character.

In *Talented Mr. Ripley*, I suggested that Ripley is not a closeted homosexual, but is polysexual. He is capable of being hetero/homo/bisexual according to whom he is with. The film is exemplary in showing its queer (anti)hero as unsuccessful in claiming space when he is portrayed as non-masculine (and possibly heterosexual), and successful in claiming space when he is portrayed as masculine (and in an openly gay relationship). Ripley is influenced by Dickie's performance of hegemonic masculinity when he is reconstructing his identity, but crucially he does not need to mimic Dickie's heterosexuality to continue his existence in his desired places. At the end of the film not only is the openly gay character (Peter) murdered, but also the queer Ripley is excluded from any place he wishes to occupy, and is trapped in a boat that is perpetually on the move.

In *Mystic River*, Dave is portrayed as a heterosexual man, but, as I have tried to display, he is a 'failed' heterosexual. As a child, he is portrayed as less masculine than his friends, which causes his rape in a cellar. Later on, Dave Boyle is excluded from society not only because he was raped as a child, but also because this rape made him even more non-masculine. Although Dave has a wife and they have a son together, his heterosexuality does not confirm his masculinity. He is first excluded from society, and then murdered because of his queerness, which is displayed in his insufficient and vampiric (therefore queer) performance of hegemonic masculinity.

The victim in *I'll Sleep When I Am Dead* is also a heterosexual man, although the film questions his masculinity because of his rape. Davey is raped in a garage, an essentially male space, not because there is doubt about his heterosexuality – he is indeed vigorously heterosexual – but because there is doubt about his performance of masculinity. It is masculine men who can walk in dark streets late at night in the world ISWID depicts; Davey takes for granted that he is one of those men probably because he is a heterosexual man, but the narrative proves him wrong by means of his vicious rape. Davey's masculinity is thrown even further in doubt because he cannot avenge the rape but commits suicide, and

unlike in female rape-revenge films, it is not the victim himself but his brother who fulfils the vengeful demands of hegemonic masculinity. The rapist is murdered because, just like his victim, he is tainted with homosexuality through anal rape.

Not until the last chapter, in the analysis of *Brokeback Mountain*, a contemporary 'gay' film, did I turn to a homophobic assault not triggered by ambiguous gender performance. Throughout my analysis, I have sought to rely on reviews and scholarly articles, and to distance myself from the anecdotal material provided by my conversations with friends and colleagues. However, at the end of this dissertation I believe it is appropriate to mention that the gay men I have talked to have commonly disliked *Brokeback Mountain* because they thought its representation of gay men was *unrealistic*, which is no accident, given the film's ambiguity around these characters' sexual identity. The film constantly tries to locate homophobia in the time (1960s) and space (Wyoming) that the story takes place; however, as the (possible) homophobic murder is explained by sexual behaviour (Jack flaunting his homosexuality to the wrong person), BM's continuous attempts to portray these men as 'masculine' and as 'confused' – rather than as men whose gender performances are ambiguous – end up making the film a superficial and unconvincing exercise on gay men's lives in 1960s Wyoming.

As this dissertation has proved several times, this is by no means to suggest that only gay men perform their gender 'wrong'. It is common knowledge that a non-masculine gender performance may put real men in danger on actual streets, and as these film analyses have established, such a gender performance also causes homophobic attack in contemporary film. However, it is notable that BM – film that is often praised for its realistic portrayal of gay men – stands out as the only film that remains oblivious to the role of gender performance in contemporary homophobia. It is therefore not possible to come to a definite conclusion that the homophobia displayed in contemporary film is only directed at non-masculine men, and it would be interesting to see whether homophobic assault resulting from ambivalent gender performance will become a more common or a rarer sight in future film.

However, as these films readings have proven, the increasing 'acceptance' of gay characters produced a greater range of 'queerable' characters who are not necessarily

homosexual. Therefore, the homophobia displayed in these films was not inflicted upon gay characters but on characters that were queerable. This increase in the range of queerable characters marks a significant shift in how homophobia is displayed in contemporary film. In an era in which gay marriages are increasingly discussed and accepted, straight actors are not frightened to play gay characters, and gay actors are becoming more visible on TV and film, homophobia has not disappeared but it has shifted, and is now exercised upon not only on gay characters but also male characters that are queerable.

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