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## Performing masculinities: U.S. representations of the male body in performance art monologues

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PERFORMING MASCULINITIES:  
U.S. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MALE BODY  
IN PERFORMANCE ART MONOLOGUES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

In

The Department of Communication Studies

by  
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B.A., Emory University, 1994  
M.A., Florida State University, 1997  
August, 2004

To my family of origin and  
my chosen family who  
have shaped my performance of masculinity.

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## ABSTRACT

In this study, I describe and analyze the masculinities constructed in four performance art monologues staged in the US on Broadway. I examined Whoopi Goldberg's 1984 performance Whoopi Goldberg Live, Lily Tomlin's 1987 performance in Jane Wagner's The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe, Eric Bogosian's 1990 performance Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll, and John Leguizamo's 1998 performance Freak: A Semi-Demi-Quasi-Pseudo Autobiography. My method of analysis is a critical interpretation incorporating the lenses of Robert Connell and Victor Seidler. It is grounded in a social-cultural perspective using Arthur W. Frank's "sociology of the body." By means of Connell, Seidler, and Frank's theories, I conceptualize human behavior, gender in particular, in light of the social signs and codes, roles, and identities, that the performers' bodies represent.

The shows advance social critiques to their audience while also meeting the expectations of the popular marketplace by incorporating representational and presentational aesthetics. By evaluating and reconceiving the constructed nature of the self in and by means of performance, the performances advance a praxis. In light of my interest, they serve as a model for masculinities, as everyday actors, might (re-)conceive of and construct their lives, identities, and relationships.

This study contributes to the growing literature and discourses concerned with representations of the male body and masculinities, particularly in live performance. In particular, this study offers an analysis of performance art monologues presented to the mainstream audiences that tend to frequent Broadway shows and that focus on diverse masculinities.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: STAGING MASCULINITIES

In this study, I describe and analyze the masculinities constructed in four performance art monologues staged in the US on Broadway. I use a critical interpretation grounded in a social-cultural perspective as my method of analysis. I am interested in a sociology based theory of the body that allows me to view human behavior, gender in particular, in light of the social signs and codes, roles and identities that the performers' bodies represent. One reason for conducting this study is to contribute to the growing literature and discourses concerned with representations of the male body and masculinities, particularly in live performance. An analysis of performance art monologues presented to the mainstream audiences that tend to frequent Broadway shows and that focus on diverse masculinities has not been conducted, as of yet. In this chapter, I discuss the subjects, methodology, and significance of the study.

#### Subjects of Study

In this study, I examine US masculinities as represented in four performance art monologues staged on Broadway from 1984 to 1998. Below, then, I discuss the subject areas of performance art monologues, the social-aesthetic expectations of Broadway productions, and masculinities.

The performance art monologue has multiple definitions because there are multiple antecedents and, in turn, manifestations of the genre. The traditions of platform reading, stand-up comedy, and avant-garde aesthetics as they inform contemporary performance, performance art, autobiography and autoperformance contribute to the genre as elucidated by scholars Michael Peterson, John Gentile, and Michael Kirby.

In Straight White Male: Performance Art Monologues, Michael Peterson defines the performance art monologue as "a highly concentrated, rarefied cultural production that depends on and participates in the construction of contemporary identity" (6). For Peterson, the genre is comprised of solo performances where the material is drawn from and may reproduce or possibly recode commonplace cultural types and identities. Frequently, these popular types are filtered through an autobiographical perspective and context. The composer-performer identifies with or has experienced these types in his or her life, or so the content and form of the performance implies. As was the case in the performances of nineteenth and twentieth century platform readers, the performance art monologue also highlights the performer's technical control and virtuosity—e.g., in creating and enacting the various types of characters that arise in the text. In sum, according to Peterson, performance art monologues are highly refined and meticulously rehearsed representations or re-presentations of types that frequent popular culture, discourses, and material texts.

In Cast of One, John Gentile tracks the history of the one-person show beginning with the platform readers that graced the Chautauqua stage(s) in the late nineteenth through early twentieth centuries and concluding with the works of contemporary performers, such as Eric Bogosian, Whoopi Goldberg, and Spalding Gray. In light of this history, Gentile positions the one-person show and performer in a "nebulous zone betwixt stand-up comic and solo actor" (169). Gentile proceeds to specify characteristics of performances that fall within this "zone." Typically, the shows consist of a series of scenes that are unified by a plot or theme. They also emphasize a diverse collection of characters, which calls for and highlights the solo performer's representational virtuosity



and skill. Since the aforementioned traits also are characteristic of realistic aesthetics, the shows tend to meet popular expectations (i.e., for realism), and hence are produced in mainstream venues, such as Broadway theaters and HBO. In short, they are marketed and received by audiences and critics as legitimate theatre. For Gentile, the one-person show is typically humorous as well. From the performances of Mark Twain through those of Spalding Gray, comic devices such as irony and parody were and are used to offer commentary on social issues, controversial figures, and social-cultural character types. Although contemporary stand-up comics tend to spin material in a like manner, according to Gentile, the actor in a one-person show advances commentary that is more complex and comprehensive due to the longer length of the show and its basic format of scenes unified by a plot or theme.

In his "Introduction," Michael Kirby discusses contemporary performance art and largely as practiced by solo performers. Like Peterson, Kirby observes that autobiographical content is commonplace in these performances. The composer-performers draw on their own experiences or compile materials from other sources that reflect their experiences. Kirby proceeds to explain that this particular genre of performance art, or "autoperformance" (2), is substantiated by current post-structural theory. In brief, post-structural theory understands that our realities are historically situated language constructs in which our individual or subjective perspectives play a part. Since the post-structural project is to deconstruct of what these constructs consist and how they operate, auto-perspectives are included in the analysis as agencies that conform to, alter, or oppose the construct and its mode of production. Autoperformers stage this understanding by performing material that acknowledges and investigates the

relationship between their subjective perspectives (stories, experiences, beliefs, and values), and the social-historical manifestations of the construct.

Given the long-standing traditions of autobiography, travel tales, and journals, and the popularity of contemporary talk shows and other "Reality TV" formats, writing and performing one's own story is neither a new phenomenon nor do all these "autobiographical" manifestations function similarly. Or, do they? That is, one might question if a personal story told on a Jerry Springer talk show differs, rhetorically, from a Karen Finley autoperformance, or Whoopi Goldberg's Broadway performance, Whoopi Goldberg Live. Further, do all tellings of personal stories in public forums politicize or even socialize the self? And, if so, for whom and how?

Kirby and others who study or practice performance art and, specifically, autoperformance would argue that there are differences between these various personal expressions, and that the differences lie in the use of presentational or deconstructionist aesthetics to compose and context the material. The basic aim of such use is to acknowledge and make accessible to the audience the constructed nature of the performance and its subject matter. Per autoperformance, presentational modes and devices operate to show how one's identity and behavior are a social construction and, further, how the performance itself is a constructed rhetoric. In so doing, composer-performers find they not only are able to criticize certain constructs (e.g., of masculinity), but also context them within broader social-political frameworks, temporarily recode them, make commonly effaced identities more visible, and imagine new or alternative identities, behaviors, and relationships. By evaluating and reconceiving the constructed nature of the self in and by means of performance, the performance advances itself as a

social praxis that serves as a model for how we, as everyday actors, might (re-)conceive of and construct our lives, identities, and relationships.

One presentational tactic that many performance artists/autoperformers use to activate these aims is to compose pieces that work against or, in Brecht's well-known terms, defamiliarize (*Verfremdung*) the conventions of representational realism. Since the basic aim of representational realism is to create the illusion of spontaneous real life and since it is the most prevalent, hence familiar, aesthetic in mass US culture since the late nineteenth century, by breaking its conventions, artists find they can call attention to the constructed nature of their works or at least prompt audiences in that direction. To defamiliarize the familiar codes and conventions of representational realism, artists often stress verbal, visual, aural, and tactile image making over plot and character driven compositions. Rather than a syllogistic progression of action, montage and collage forms are used. Likewise, a mix of materials and styles upset representational conventions of verisimilitude and clarity in focus. In lieu of or in addition to dramatic monologues and conversations that imply the inner psychology of character, the corporeal body figures forth in active, often symbolic or metaphoric ways. Indeed, double-voice, multiple, and excessive forms of visual and verbal activity are commonly used to acknowledge one's rhetoric as well as critique social constructs.

In articulating some of the basic ways performance artists/autoperformers meet their aims, I do not intend to suggest that all performance artists/autoperformers use these conventions, or use all of them. Nor does their use necessarily fulfill the social aesthetic functions outlined above. I support then Kirby's understanding that personal

expressions do differ in function in light of their composition and context. In turn, although all expressions are fundamentally social and political, personal too, they may not be composed so as to be accessed and interpreted in these ways by a given audience. In other words, the popular theoretical assumption that "the personal is political" is put to the test when composed and contexted in an actual performance, and the upshot may well be that the personal expression is interpreted by the audience as nothing more or less than "personal"—i.e., the singular expression of a singular individual regarding his or her singular experiences. Codes for comprehending the individual as a social construct too, impacted by certain social institutions and discourses that we all share and for which we all are responsible are absent or, for some reason, inaccessible.

The above-noted issues are of key importance to my study because of the particular kind of performance art monologue I have selected to analyze, which are those that have been composed and marketed for the Broadway stage and the mainstream audiences that tend to frequent Broadway fare. The shows I analyze are Whoopi Goldberg's 1984 performance Whoopi Goldberg Live, Lily Tomlin's 1987 performance of Jane Wagner's The Search For Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe, Eric Bogosian's 1990 performance of Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll, and John Leguizamo's Freak: A Semi-Demi-Quasi-Pseudo Autobiography, which appeared on Broadway in 1998. All four performances fall within the categorical definitions supplied by Peterson, Gentile, and Kirby: they are one-person shows where the material is or appears to be autobiographical while they also attempt to communicate a broad range of common or socially-shared character types. The characters are contexted within a series of scenes unified by a plot or theme. By means of comic and other devices, evaluation and

sometimes revision of the social-cultural types, their construction, identities, relationships, and situations are attempted. The broad range of characters demands performer virtuosity as does of course the Broadway context. Indeed, all aspects of the production are expected to be highly refined—aesthetically and technically superior to productions one might see elsewhere—if for no other reason than to substantiate the high-end ticket prices. Marketed and received as "legitimate" theatre, the shows I have selected played to full houses, earned critical acclaim and, in all cases, were reproduced for television and home-video audiences. In sum, the shows were popular.

Of course, a contributing factor to the popularity of the shows was the star status of the performers. In one way or another, all four performers had proven themselves to be valuable currency in the popular marketplace prior to or at the same time as their appearance on Broadway. For instance, on the West Coast, Whoopi Goldberg drew large audiences to The Spook Show and was under contract to film the popular picture Jumping Jack Flash right around the time of her Broadway debut. Lily Tomlin had achieved critical acclaim for her first collaboration with Wagner, Appearing Nitely, and was well-known for appearances on Rowan and Martin's Laugh In as Ernestine the operator and on Sesame Street as the lovable Edith Ann. Meanwhile, in Manhattan, Eric Bogosian and John Leguizamo had drawn consistent audiences to their one-person shows, which proved they were popular enough to fill a Broadway theatre house. On the one hand, the star status of each performer benefited his or her access to Broadway and the marketing of the show there and in mass media products thereafter. In brief, the show gained currency due to the ethos of the star. On the other hand, the show may well have lost its critical exigency due to the very system that promoted and rendered it valuable.

The show may have become secondary to the display of the star. The problematic dimensions in this paradox interest me and it is for this reason I selected the four noted performances. While solo performance artists such as Tim Miller, Holly Hughes, and Spalding Gray were addressing questions of gender in their art, they had not yet gained the mainstream celebrity of Goldberg, Tomlin, and Bogosian. As Miller, Hughes, and Gray were not caught in the paradox between celebrity and message, I elected not to address them in this study.

A guiding question of the study then is if and if so how the four shows advance social critique to their audiences while also meeting the expectations and demands of the popular marketplace. In addition to the star apparatus I mentioned above, one of the concerns here entails the expectation and use of representational aesthetics. Weaned on television throughout their childhood, the popular US audience expects and typically receives theatrical performances that are composed in terms of representational realism. The main aim of this aesthetic is to create the illusion of spontaneous real life as contrasted to showing how real life, if not also the performance, is constructed. By interrupting the illusion that things "just happen" and showing how they are "worked on," social critique and revision are possible. This deconstructing impulse is of course the aim and domain of presentational aesthetics or, as Brecht termed it, epic theatre.<sup>1</sup> Brecht and other theatre/performance practitioners discovered that one possible way to prompt popular audiences to enjoy and participate in social critique is by merging representational and presentational modes. As Brecht and others also discovered, merging the two to meet the desired functions is a difficult balance to achieve. The main reason for the difficulty is that to access and interpret a performance, audiences will draw

on the codes with which they are familiar. Urging audiences to use new or different interpretive codes requires some savvy encoding of the performance by the composer-performer. In short, it doesn't "just happen."

In the study, I do not provide an empirical answer to the question of how each show functions—e.g., by polling audience members as to their reception and interpretation of the given show. Instead, I pursue the question by analyzing how each show is composed and, specifically, in terms of its use or not of representational and presentational (deconstructing) modes and conventions. Based on theoretical and practical understandings regarding how these conventions operate and vis-à-vis the content of each show, I propose answers to the question of function—largely theoretical but no less significant for being so.

I also specify function in terms of my main area of interest, which is "masculinities" (see Connell below). My aim is to determine how the masculine characters and character types are constructed and function in each performance and in light of their representational and presentational composition. As such, the four performances I have selected illustrate an interest in this subject matter as well. They are either about what it means to be a man, a particular kind of man, or masculine types figure prominently in the content of the show.

As compared to feminist research on gender and female gender construction, research in masculinities is relatively new. Although a construct of masculinity is implied in the "waves" of feminist theory generated in the last quarter of the twentieth century, it is only in the past ten years that studies of diverse masculinities have gained scholarly currency. Understandably, a good part of this scholarship draws on and

benefits from feminist scholarship and its interdisciplinary use of psychoanalytical, sociological, political, literary, aesthetic, and physiological theories and methods.<sup>2</sup> Given my social-cultural interests, the masculinity studies I have found most helpful are those by Robert Connell, Michael Messner, and Victor Seidler. Below, I draw on these and other studies to offer a brief survey of masculinity scholarship.

In each of their texts, Connell, Messner, and Seidler observe that scholarship in masculinities is defined by two distinct trajectories. The majority of scholars embrace post-structural theories of gender and gender politics. As such, they understand gender as an historical construct (i.e., culture and context specific), and one that typically articulates a political relationship between men and women, defined here in terms of both sex and gender. Since, in most situations, men claim more power than women, many researchers focus on and deconstruct this imbalance, theorizing how the masculine subject depends on and draws power from the feminine. Other scholars particularize this critique in terms of race and sexual orientation. They argue that by means of controlling language and its mode of production, white heterosexual males retain power and subjugate minorities, such as women, homosexuals, and people of color. Given the on-going imbalance in the political relationship between genders, many scholars advocate an alteration in how men/masculinities perform. For example, Messner urges that men and women pursue a cooperative effort to redress sex and gender inequalities. In "Men's Power with Women, Other Men and Society: A Men's Movement Analysis," Pleck differentiates between "traditional" and "modern" male roles. Whereas the traditional male attempts to dominate others, the modern male attempts to share power by altering how he behaves and communicates with others. Pleck advocates the latter role and offers specific



suggestions as to how men might interact with each other, women, and children in more democratic ways.

For both Connell and Messner, the second trajectory in masculinity scholarship is epitomized by Robert Bly's Iron John: A Book About Men. In his study, Bly articulates an essentialist theory of masculinity as practiced by the male rites/rights group he inspired, The Promise Keepers. Reacting to the feminist movement of the late twentieth century and post-structural theories of gender and sexuality, Bly calls on a mythopoetic perspective to argue that there is one true masculine.<sup>3</sup> According to Bly, this fact of manliness predates civilization. It is trans-historical and trans-cultural and, as such, it is neither a language construct nor does it need anyone to formulate and confirm its identity. It just is. Connell, Messner, and many other scholars such as Victor Seidler and David Buchbinder take a strong stance against Bly's mythopoetic praxis. They argue that Bly perpetuates a hetero-normative master narrative that collapses historical and social-cultural differences, displaces the political realities of the same, and objectifies women and everyone else who is not an "Iron John." Although Bly's theory might appear somewhat naive at this point, masculinity scholars continue to address it because it does form a part of the history and identity of masculinity; because, whether valorized or parodied, it is a common trope of masculinity in popular culture; and because manifestations of it are used by some scholars like Bly to essentialize masculinity and, unlike Bly, to condemn it.

As indicated by the titles of their respective studies, Masculinities and Man Enough: Embodying Masculinities, Connell and Seidler are among those scholars who condemn Bly's essentialist perspective. Instead, they advance an understanding of

masculinity as a shifting gender construct. As Connell explains, masculinity is "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (71). Both Connell and Seidler draw on similar social and psychological factors to study the places, practices, and effects of masculinity constructs and, likewise, both stress the importance of the body in how gender is enacted. For these reasons, I draw on Connell's and Seidler's studies and also Arthur Frank's "sociology of the body" to analyze the masculinities that arise in the four performances.

#### Method of Study

To analyze each performance, I pursue a critical interpretation in which I provide a fairly in-depth description of what occurred in the performance and offer my interpretation as guided by Connell, Seidler, and Frank. I also evaluate the relative merit or significance of the piece in light of the questions that guide my study. Below, I detail what each of these steps entails.

My description of each piece is based on a video tape recording of the show, the dramatic text or script, and second hand accounts in books and journals. To start, I offer the reader an overview of the key content and composition features—e.g., what, in general, the show was about and how it was formulated or put together. Then, I proceed to offer a more thorough description, attempting to construct a fairly vivid picture of what, quite literally, happened in the performance and how. My description is guided by Don Whitmore's identification of the different signifying systems, or theatrical elements, that are typically at work in a performance. In his semiotic based textbook, Directing Postmodern Theatre, Whitmore discusses the different elements that can affect meaning

in a performance, which I use as a kind of "check list" for my description. The merit of Whitmore's semiotic process is that it reminds me to consider signifying systems I might otherwise overlook, to question their relative importance and, thereby, to decide whether to entertain each in my description and analysis and, if so, to what extent.

For Whitmore, the framing system is constituted by paratheatrical elements such as the locale of the performance, the type of theatre or space in which it occurs, and any publicity and reviews. Generally, these elements influence the audience's expectations and in turn their reception and interpretation of the performance.

Whitmore's audience system refers to audience demographics, which generally affect how the audience behaves or knows to behave given the show and its performance frame. For instance, youths at a screening of The Rocky Horror Picture Show will behave differently than an audience of scholars at a colloquy. In turn, the performance proper is affected by the audience abiding or not by the social conventions inscribed by their demographics and the frame. Should an audience choose to alter their inscribed role (e.g., the scholars decide to throw rice and bologna at the colloquy), likely the performance will alter too.

The performer system is immense and includes such elements as the performer's corporeal givens, personality, and the extent to which she plays herself in the performance. It also includes the performer's vocal and physical depiction of the character(s), her makeup and hairstyle. Lastly, it includes the vocalized text, the lines as spoken by the performer/character(s). In short, the performer system refers to the performer/character's physical presence and everything she might say and do.

The visual system is constituted by the *mise-en-scène* and includes the physical stage space, the setting(s), costume(s), properties, and lighting. The aural system includes all sound and music used in the performance. The olfactory system encompasses any deliberate use of scent while the tactile system refers to the use of any elements that stimulate the audience's sense of touch.

Although I consider the significance of all the theatrical systems Whitmore discusses, I am selective in my application of them. Generally, I make sure to describe those elements that seem to predominate or establish norms in the performance text; in theatrical terms, they construct the fictive "world" or "reality" of the performance. Elements that contrast or conflict with the established norms also receive attention since it is in the contrasting elements where key meanings often lie. Specifically, I stress the composer-performer's depiction of the different masculine character types that arise in and throughout the performance. I also emphasize the composer-performer's use of representational and presentational modes and conventions.

Once I describe the performance, I proceed to interpret it in light of the social-cultural codes it carries and communicates. In particular, I focus on how the masculine character types, or masculinities, are constructed by the theatrical elements so as to reflect social-cultural roles, identities, relationships, situations, and activities. While I often draw on discrete studies to address the particularities of the performance, I consistently draw on Connell's and Seidler's theories of masculinities and Frank's "sociology of the body." My analytical perspective is indebted to the work of these three scholars and, below, I discuss the key aspects of each study and the relationship between them.

In Masculinities, Connell theorizes that one's gender place, practices, and effects are determined by three factors: power relations, production relations, and cathexis. In terms of masculinities, power relations refer to the deliberate and unintentional strategies men enact to maintain or share power. These strategies and their affect on gender construction are informed by factors of class, race, age, and so forth. Production relations refer to how power is generated and distributed—i.e., its mode of production. According to Connell, because men often occupy a place of privilege and power, they play a major role in the production and perpetuation of social institutions and the discourses that uphold them. In turn, these institutions and discourses protect and maintain their empowered place and practices. Connell defines cathexis as “emotional attachment” (74). He goes on to say,

sexual desire is so often seen as natural that it is commonly excluded from social theory. Yet when we consider desire in Freudian terms, as emotional energy being attached to an object, its gendered character is clear. This is true for both heterosexual and homosexual desire. The practices that shape and realize desire are thus an aspect of the gender order. (74)

I understand cathexis as a burst of energy directed toward some thing. The burst of energy is constructed through and by means of the performance of the desire. As such, cathexis is much like performativity because, in the burst of energy, it brings something about; the doing is the agency.

For Connell, then, masculinity is contingent on the intersection of multiple factors, which in turn give rise to multiple and diverse masculinities. In his study, Connell activates his theory by specifying the above-noted factors and discussing how

their intersection effects different masculinities. The four masculine types Connell discusses are the hegemonic, the complicit, the marginalized, and the subordinate. For Connell, the hegemonic male believes that men are the determining agents of power and its modes of production. As such, the hegemonic male enacts practices that articulate and facilitate his perceived right to the dominant place in gender and other relations. To claim and maintain his position, the hegemonic male attempts to elide and thereby control the identities and rights of others. For Connell, the "reckless youth" and his self-centered or myopic perspective and practices serve as an example of this type.<sup>4</sup>

For the complicit male, the "environment" and its mode of production determine his understanding of, placement in, and practicing of gender. Because he comprehends that he is but one spoke in the environmental wheel—i.e., his place and practices are dependent on others—this masculinity supports the "natural" and equal rights of others, such as women.<sup>5</sup>

The marginalized male or masculinity understands that his identity and agency is controlled and limited by the production modes of white, male, hetero-normative institutions. Typically, the controls and constraints placed on the marginalized male are due to his being poor, a person of color, of a bi- or trans-gender orientation, or of a bi-, trans- or homosexual orientation.<sup>6</sup> In response to hegemonic controls, marginalized males enact practices that either conform to the institutional norms, attempt to subvert them from within, or oppose them from without. In his study, Connell discusses how, in attempting to pass as a heterosexual, the straight-acting gay male conforms to and perpetuates not only institutional norms but his own marginalized status.

The subordinate male sacrifices his claim to power and production modes and thereby propels the advancement of others, such as women. An example of this masculine type is a man who advocates and enacts practices of radical feminism—i.e., advocates women's rights over equal sex and gender rights.<sup>7</sup>

In Man Enough: Embodying Masculinities, Victor Seidler theorizes that gender and, specifically, masculinities are informed by the factors of authority, identity, and relationships. Similar to Connell's explication of power relations, authority refers to whether, how, and to what effect men claim power in given situations. Identity refers to one's construction and expression of self in light of authority issues. As such, identity is a mode of production that implicates others, whether one chooses to acknowledge them or not. In turn, Seidler theorizes that relationships are the most potent factor as regards generating new or alternative gender identities and practices. Very like Connell in his discussion of cathexis, Seidler argues that although some relationships may uphold and perpetuate norms of gender authority, others may provoke alternative practices that arise due to the relationship and one's desire to maintain it. For both Connell and Seidler, the corporeal body is an integral factor of gender. As they and a host of other scholars observe, gender is inscribed on and signified by the physical surface, décor, and practices of the corporeal body. If not the authorizing agent of gender, the corporeal body is the material agency. In addition to surface markings, Connell also understands that

the physical sense of maleness and femaleness is central to a cultural interpretation of gender. Masculine gender is (among other things) a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex. Bodily experience is often central in the

memories of our own lives, and this [body memory] features in our understanding of who and what we are. (53)

As the above quote implies, Connell includes physiological sex as a factor in gender construction. It impacts not only our physical experiences but also the interpretive discourses we use to understand them. Since social systems of power and production relations are integral to Connell's understanding of gender, they too impact and are impacted by corporeal sexuality.

In his essay, "For a Sociology of the Body: An Analytical Review," Frank undertakes a more general understanding of the body—its factors, practices, and effects—than do Connell and Seidler. For the reasons I discuss below, I highlight Frank's discourse in my analyses because: (1) like Connell and Seidler, Frank prompts a sociological understanding and articulation of the body; (2) he specifies the body as a changing entity affected by the inter-relationship of corporeality, discourse, and regulating institutions; (3) in initial application, Frank's discursive typology is more flexible than Connell's or Seidler's because it is more general; (4) the general approach allows me to address the range of bodies and genders that construct masculinities in the performances; and (5) Frank urges the researcher to apply the theory from the "body up" (Frank 49). Below, I briefly expand on these five points and then proceed to discuss the particularities of Frank's theory and how I apply it in the study.

In his essay, Frank's aim is to offer a discursive typology and language that allows sociologists, like himself, to describe human behavior that appears to predominate (i.e., is common or shared among many individuals) in a particular society, culture, or community. Thereby, the sociologist may theorize as to the general character, systems,



values and beliefs of that society. Although informed by a structural discourse and aims, Frank is the first to acknowledge that human behavior is not fixed and that alternative and contesting behaviors constantly interact with and potentially alter the prevailing social norms. In sum, Frank urges a cautious application of his typology, prompting the researcher to acknowledge what appears to be prevalent behavior while also observing any changes in that behavior and any contesting practices. This basic methodology is applicable to the study of theatrical performance texts because, generally, the dramatic conflict in such texts is created by establishing norms (e.g., a fictive world order), which in one way or another are contested. Further, in most theatrical performances, the signifying elements are more unified (structured) than in everyday real life so as to create a heightened sense of the created world and communicate meanings more clearly to the audience. Also, as in many art forms, composers of theatrical texts rely on common or socially-shared signs and codes so as to communicate meanings more efficiently to their audiences if not also more creatively than if they invented their own signifying systems. As noted above, these common signs are typically exaggerated so as to intensify the drama and its messages. Frank's sociology of the body, then, provides me with a discourse that focuses on the social features of the text. It also is a method for viewing that seems quite appropriate to how many theatrical performances construct their dramatic realities and rhetoric, including those I analyze in my study.

Frank understands that the body is constituted by three inter-related factors: corporeality, discourses, and institutions. Corporeal substance refers to the material body itself and the literal actions it performs. Discourses are those ways we make sense of the body. According to Frank, "discourses imply mappings of the body's possibilities and

limitations, which bodies experience as already there for their self understanding" (48). For example, the practices and aims of body builders are informed by discourses of physiology (muscular development), aesthetics (beauty), image or product consumption (commercialism), and gender identity. Institutions have official license to regulate the body. "Specific . . . within both space and time," an institution is and is represented by "a physical space" where official rules or laws regarding human behavior are generated (Frank 49). The American Bodybuilder's Association, the American Medical Association, and the gym are institutions that authorize and prescribe rules that mandate what a body builder may or may not do.

The merits of Frank's understanding of the body are threefold. First, unlike some body and gender theorists, Frank offers a definition for the body rather than assume we all agree as to what the body is. Second, his definition acknowledges, integrates, and extends factors that some theorists tend to separate or ignore. That is, for Frank, the body is neither constituted by just language (discourses) nor does it necessarily escape the constraints of language, for example, by means of corporeal pleasure or pain—although depending on the particular body and its situation it may well desire or be forced to do so.<sup>8</sup> In addition to corporeality and discourses, Frank understands that institutionalized laws play a significant part in how we behave. While discourse may be used to interpret, uphold or condemn laws, the regulatory function of laws is irrefutable. For example, should a teacher show up to class naked, he will face punitive measures regardless of how he or others interpret the action. Third, as Frank explains, although the three factors inter-relate, their significance alters given the particular situation. Corporeality may be more significant to meaning-making in one situation than discourses or regulatory laws

whereas, a moment later, discourses may claim precedence. It depends. For instance, initially, I understand my decision to wear a tuxedo and dress shoes to a formal party in terms of class, gender, and aesthetic discourses whereas, ninety minutes into the event, I understand my decision in largely corporeal terms: the tie is restricting, the French cuffs are rubbing my wrists raw, and the toe box of the shoes is cramping my feet. Who cares about class or being a gentleman? Frank, then, has developed a definition that activates what I speculate most (post-structuralist) body theorists believe: namely, most bodies are in a constant state of flux, moving from one situation to the next, confronting different rules and expectations, interpreting them and selecting behavior that addresses, or not, the situation, rules and expectations at hand. In my analyses of the selected performances, I use this aspect of Frank's theory to determine which factor(s) the masculine character types seem to stress in their articulation and enactment of gender. For example, one character may understand his masculinity as largely a corporeal experience whereas another may stress how the social laws of his culture have regulated and constrained his masculine identity and, perhaps, over the course and by means of his discursive monologue, he attempts to break or alter those constraints.

At first glance, Frank's typology may appear to be a limited and inflexible system for categorizing the body and certainly it could be applied in such a way. However, as Frank urges, if the typology is understood as a general discourse that the researcher specifies in terms of the observed behavior, then it proves to offer expansive and flexible interpretive possibilities. In other words, the four social body types Frank discusses are but starting or germinating points for analysis. The observed behavior may adhere quite closely to the characteristics of a particular type, alter or integrate characteristics of the

different types, move between types over the course of time, or perhaps not adhere at all. Of course, the alterations and deviations are just as significant to understanding how a particular body views and constructs itself as the seeming adherences.

Further, it should be noted that the four general types Frank offers are quite common to scholarship on the body. In other words, Frank is not the first to identify and discuss the types as evocative of socially-shared behavior in western societies and cultures. In his discussion of the various types, Frank acknowledges and integrates the scholarship of social-cultural theorists who have contributed to his study—e.g., Foucault on discipline; Baudrillard and Bourdieu on consumption; Theweleit and Gregor on domination; and, initially anyway, Bakhtin on communicative praxis. One merit of Frank's project is that he devises an interpretive method that includes all these general types. Thereby, he prompts the researcher to view each in relation to the others, to watch for the alterations and deviations I mentioned above, and to consider the operations of multiple rather than singular body orientations within a given situation. Lastly, and due perhaps to the sheer range of his project, Frank's discussion of the various types is more descriptive than prescriptive, although he certainly entertains the evaluative positions of, for example, Foucault on capitalist discipline and Baudrillard on the sad state of consuming bodies. The merit of Frank's descriptive orientation is that it urges the researcher to do likewise—i.e., to move toward an evaluative position after having described and interpreted the particularities of the observed behavior. As a result, we learn to specify how a body or body type functions and, in turn, we realize the multiplicity of functions attributable to bodies and body types.

The broad nature of Frank's typology allows me to address the range of bodies and genders that construct masculinities in the four performance art monologues. While Connell and Seidler's theories are certainly applicable in all cases, Frank's more general approach makes ample room for the possibilities of women performing men, of a feminine masculinity, and of an "ideal" gender construct, such as the one that can be advanced in a fictive (performance) text. In other words, because Frank's typology is not centered in masculinities, it may offer new or alternative ways to conceive of and discuss masculinities.

Frank urges researchers to begin their study from "the body up" (49); that is, to carefully observe and describe behavior before one moves to interpret and evaluate it. Further, Frank tends to locate authority for behavior in the living body that performs or enacts it. At a conscious or subconscious level, we choose the bodies we construct and enact as compared to being acted on by some outside invisible force. For example, in cases of mental or physical domination, Frank urges us to specify the dominating agent and agency; to locate it in a body(-ies) acting on another body(-ies). Frank's promptings here implicate a research focus that locates the human body (corporeality, discourses, and institutions) in praxis and, ultimately, holds human beings responsible for the behavior they construct, enact, and perpetuate.

The first step in Frank's methodology is to describe the body in terms of how it behaves. In light of that behavior, the researcher is to question and identify the body's understanding of itself in relation to four key forces or drives: control, desire, self, and other. As I note below, Connell's theory of masculinity as a function of cathexis, power and production relations and Seidler's notion that masculine identities are impacted by

power relations and human interactions correspond to Frank's forces or drives. By noting the connections, I hope to imply how the three theories relate and how Frank's theory can be specified to a discussion of gender and masculinities.

According to Frank, a body understands itself as in control or not, or existing somewhere on a continuum between extremes. Desire for control depends on the individual and her understanding of the body—i.e., corporeality, discourses, and regulatory laws—within the given situation. Control manifests itself in predictable, often repeated behavior and practices. In their discussions, both Connell and Seidler characterize power as a control issue and observe that for many masculinities and regardless of the situation it is a desired attribute.

As regards desire, Frank suggests that a body understands that it either lacks what it desires, is producing what it desires, or that its desires are fulfilled. Since the objects of our desires are variable (e.g., sexual pleasure, spiritual transcendence, material items, control over others), so too is the behavior we enact to fulfill or retain them. In Connell's theory, this drive is specified as cathexis or “emotional attachment” (74). Connell also implicates this drive when he discusses how men desire or feel obligated to enact a key part in the production and perpetuation of our social systems.

The body also understands itself and its actions in terms of whether the internal mind or “self” is connected to the corporeal body or desires a connection given the situation. Clearly this drive is impacted by religious and philosophical discourses on the merits and drawbacks of a mind-body split, should such a split even exist. Evident manifestations of dissociation include religious and other meditation practices aimed at transcendence, near-death experiences, and the taking of hallucinogenic drugs. Evident

manifestations of association are practices where corporeality is the key factor in the formation of one's identity or self—e.g., experiences of corporeal pleasure or pain and the consumption and display of clothing and other decor on the body's surface.

The drive of "other" refers to the body understanding its behavior as dyadic or monadic: to do a given action, the body requires the physical presence of others or it does not. Dyadic "need" is frequently determined by one's perception or preference. For instance, one individual may feel she needs a partner to have sex while another does not. Further, communication technologies such as the telephone, cellular phone, and the internet fulfill dyadic needs for many. Conversations, meetings, marriages, game playing, travel, shopping, and sex can occur now in virtual spaces with virtual others. The extent to which we, as individuals and a community, substitute virtual others for corporeal others has and will affect our understanding of what constitutes the body and its solo, pair, and group practices.<sup>9</sup> Seidler's notion that masculine identity is significantly affected by one's relationship with others corresponds to this particular drive.

The body's understanding of itself in relation to these key forces or drives results in different combinations and, in his typology, Frank highlights four he feels are most common to occidental societies and cultures. He identifies the four types as the disciplined body, the consumer or mirroring body, the dominating body, and the communicative body. Again, it is imperative to understand that these categories are flexible and serve as germinating points for analysis.

The key trait of the disciplined body is that it understands that it lacks what it desires. This understanding stems from its desire to attain an outside ideal, whether it is material or spiritual. A Hindu, for example, may desire to connect to the elemental

energy of the universe, a runner may desire to run a four minute mile, or an anorexic may desire to disappear. To remedy the lack, the body engages in a disciplinary regimen that renders the body predictable or in control. Since the regimen may be painful or boring or have as its objective mental or spiritual transcendence, the mind disassociates from its corporeality. Self-identity is located in the ideal, not the corporeal act. The ideal gives meaning to the act. Characteristically, the disciplined body is monadic. It does not need the corporeal presence of others to engage in its disciplinary regimen. In fact, the presence of others may counter-act the discipline and its objectives. Alternatives here are disciplinary regimens that have as their aim a collective identity. Military training, for example, seeks to instill a unified and dependent identity among the trainees.

The characteristic act of the mirroring or consumer body is its constant assimilation of material images and products available for its consumption. Although, like a "shifting screen" (Baudrillard quoted in Frank 66), the surface of the body changes as it consumes and mirrors different images or products, the constant act of consumption renders the body predictable. It understands itself as in control of the images or products it consumes and how it engages in the act of consumption. Unlike the disciplined body, the mirroring or consumer body locates self-identity in the corporeal body and its act of consumption. Identity is not associated with some outside or transcendent ideal; it is associated with the material and corporeal surface of the body and its ability to assimilate, reflect, mix-and-match the world's images or products as its own. For these reasons, the body understands its actions as monadic, even narcissistic. It does not need others to consume and, in the act of assimilation, the "outside" images or products become one's own. Theoretically, the body takes pleasure in its predictable consumption



of images and its corporeal surface. Frank theorizes, then, that this body understands itself as producing what it desires, at least temporarily. Although a sense of fulfillment may occur for many, I believe certain factors can impact and alter this understanding. For example, the economic class of an individual or group may render the world's images or products inaccessible in both literal and figurative terms. Or a consumer image may be framed and promoted to the extent that it becomes a god-like ideal always just outside the reach of assimilation by mere mortals. For instance, very few women can mirror the enhanced images of models in fashion magazines. A woman's attempt to reflect the ideal may lead to her being dissatisfied with her own body and she may move to engage disciplinary regimens in an attempt to achieve the ideal.

The dominating body understands that it lacks what it desires and what it desires most is to be in control and, typically, to be in control of others. In Frank, this desire to control others is theorized in psychological terms: dominating bodies are threatened by others, by their corporeal presence and its potential and/or by their views and values. Dominating bodies seek to silence opposition and, to do so, they take aggressive action against the corporeal bodies that are or that represent the threat. As with a warrior on a battlefield, the literal act of aggression situates the body in an unpredictable situation and calls for contingent based practices. A warrior does not know what his opponent will do. To carry out the acts of domination, the body typically disassociates his identity from the corporeal body and the acts it commits. Like the disciplined body, one's rationale for aggressive behavior is usually located in an abstract or transcendent ideal to which one is committed. The ideal, not the act, defines one's self. And yet, unlike the disciplined body, the dominating body is defined by the presence of others. It takes action because

of others and the threat they represent. In sum, while the cause and act of domination is dyadic, the ultimate function is monadic control.

In his study, Frank's ideal type is the communicative body.<sup>10</sup> Its key characteristic is its need for and the pleasure it takes in communicating with others. Unlike the dominating body, its dyadic relationship with others is not based in control, rather dialogue. It appreciates the corporeal presence and views of others even though they may differ from one's own. Given the dyadic dynamic, the communicative body is and understands its actions as unpredictable. The give-and-take of conversation, for example, calls for contingent based responses and interchanges. This very process of dyadic inter-dependence produces what the communicative body desires.

Frank theorizes that the communicative body associates its self-identity with the corporeal body. I would suggest, instead, that self-identity is located in the corporeal or virtual presence of the other. One may or may not associate self-identity with one's own corporeal surface but, regardless, one's self-identity is reliant on the presence of a receiver and respondent. For Frank, the communicative body is exemplified by people engaged in open or democratic conversation, by the creative act and event of storytelling, and by dance. Indeed, performance activities figure prominently in Frank's examples although he does not context them in terms of a performance paradigm. While performance is not Frank's area of expertise, he also seems reluctant to theorize the communicative body in terms of performance practices because, for him, a communicative body expresses a "real" or "truthful" self. It does not role-play or veer in the direction of artifice or fiction. Frank's conception then limits the communicative

body's potential diversity and also its more extreme manifestations, the grotesque and carnivalesque bodies.

For the social literary theorist, M. M. Bakhtin, the concept of carnival is rooted in two inter-related factors, grotesque realism and carnival laughter. Grotesque realism infers the topographical division of the public body into high and low domains and, as Bakhtin writes in Rabelais and His World, "the essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (19-20). In the same text, Bakhtin theorizes that the degradation of which he speaks is potentially destructive and regenerative, the lower regions of the body related to "acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth" (21). For Bakhtin,

Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third, this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. (12)

The grotesque and (regenerative) carnival bodies then are extreme versions of Frank's communicative body. First, self-identity is very much situated in corporeal bodies and, further, in what the low domains of bodies can do and affect that high and abstract conceptions cannot. Second, carnival bodies understand themselves as public bodies, representing many and reliant on others in their implicit use of double-voice practices. Third, carnival bodies revel in the contingent and unpredictable nature of their corporeal substance and activities and those of others. As Stallybrass and White offer, carnival

bodies represent "a world of topsy-turvy . . . of ceaseless overrunning and excess" (8). In these ways, the bodies understand themselves as producing what they desire; namely, the public invention and expression of unpredictable, hybrid, and excessive corporeal practices that defile and potentially generate new or alternative public identities.

I use Frank's definition of the body and his typology to interpret the masculinities in each piece I analyze. To further specify my interpretation, I draw on Connell's and Seidler's studies. In all cases, my application is guided by an understanding that the masculinities may or may not adhere to the categories and characteristics as defined. Variations and deviations arise, as do multiple body types.

In general, my interpretive aims are to highlight any masculine norms that arise in the performance text and thereby contribute to the overall fictive reality created in and by the piece. Since many of these norms reflect certain social-cultural norms of "real life," I am able to speculate as to what the composer-performer sees to be masculine norms in our society or a particular culture therein. Equally important is my interpretation of any conflicting masculinities since it is often by means of conflict that key meanings are communicated in dramatic and other fictive materials. For instance, in Eric Bogosian's Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll, the bulk of the masculine characters speak and behave in ways that are quite similar to Frank's characterization of consumer and dominating or aggressive bodies. The proliferation of these types implicates the social norms of the text, its overall fictive world or reality. In conflict with these norms are two or three masculine characters who, in the content of their speeches, reflect Frank's communicative body type. As I discuss at length in Chapter Four, Bogosian seems to locate an alternative and positive model of masculinity in these anomalous characters. As I

interpret them, they constitute the moral center of the performance text. However, while the content of the characters' speeches is aimed at communicative praxis, the language style is indicative of Frank's traits of domination or Connell's hegemonic masculinity. In sum, aggressive rhetoric is used to advance communicative praxis. Although I cannot speak to authorial intent, I theorize how this seeming contradiction or irony functions in terms of the specific characters and the piece as a whole.

In the third phase of my critical interpretation of each performance, I undertake a discussion that addresses just such questions of function. My evaluation is based on my interpretation of the performance and guided by questions that have arisen there. In particular, I am concerned with what appears to be the evaluative stance of the performance as regards gender issues and specifically masculinities, in what ways the critique is advanced to the audience, and what this particular agenda suggests in broader theoretical terms. As regards the first point, I am interested in how the masculine body types are coded in evaluative terms—e.g., as negative or positive models of masculinity; as immoral, amoral, or moral centers in the performance; as "real life" imitations or creative alternatives offered in and by means of the performance.

As regards to how the performance extends its critique, I focus on how representational and presentational modes and techniques are used. One of my main theoretical questions is if and, if so, how the performances extend critique while also meeting the expectations of the commercial (Broadway) marketplace. Understanding that all four performances were popular, my theory is that they attempted critique by means of integrating the two primary modes. My concern then is to specify the critical aim of the integration and evaluate its success or failure.

In turn, broader theoretical issues and queries are implicated. In Chapter Six, I focus on these concerns directing my discussion toward the social aesthetics of critique within commercial performance, the politics of typifying and individuating masculinities within performance contexts, and the merits and drawbacks of the body and gender discourses I have used to analyze the performances.

#### Significance of the Study

I have pursued this study for many reasons. First, within the discipline of oral interpretation-performance studies, it conserves the study of text based performances and contributes to scholarship on the one-person show. Second, and related, it contributes to studies concerned with autoperformance as contexted in the popular commercial marketplace. Thereby, it offers practical and theoretical scholarship regarding the social aesthetics of such an integration. Third, the study supports and contributes to scholarship on masculinities. Fourth, it contributes to body scholarship by promoting and testing a discursive methodology that, to start, highlights body types which the theorist and others deem to be common in Western societies and cultures. Thereby, the method activates a sociology of the body and also body literature.

Within the discipline of oral interpretation, now performance studies, a somewhat contrived battle has arisen between those who lament the apparent lack of (written or literary) text based performances and scholarship and those who apparently celebrate the same by studying oral and other non-literary performance practices. The battle is contrived in so far as literary texts continue to be studied and performed by theorists and practitioners across the world. Indeed, from student experiments to amateur and professional performances, many of those working in the genre of autoperformance

compose highly refined written texts in which they draw on well known literary conventions. More to the point then, and as Paul Edwards so eloquently discusses in his monograph, our paradigm for study has changed. Whereas performance and performance scholarship was once informed by a literary canon and new critical perspectives, our research is now largely informed by a canon of post-structural theories (Edwards 12-13). Initially, one of the limitations of this paradigm switch was that the study of a practice like autoperformance was dissociated from both its literary and theatrical traditions.<sup>11</sup> The dissociation was not faulty as much as it limited how we comprehended, evaluated, and theorized autoperformance. It also contributed to the "battle" noted above. In the study, I address these issues indirectly by selecting a set of autoperformances that are based on highly refined written texts and, in addition to gender and body theories, using a discursive tool that is common to both literary and performance aesthetics—i.e., representational and presentational modes and conventions. By making these connections, I hope to avoid the above-noted limitations and confirm the links between "oral interpretation" and "performance studies."

In both professional and academic theatre and performance studies, autoperformance is a current hot topic.<sup>12</sup> The performances I analyze fall within this genre and are composed for the popular commercial stage as well. As I discussed above, this fusion of popularized autoperformance appears to entertain contradictory aims. By analyzing how the fusion operates and to what effects, I hope to contribute to our understanding of how more radical or experimental performance practices, common in the performance studies classroom and professional "fringe" venues, might be adjusted so as to meet and alter popular expectations and aims. On the other hand, the study also

highlights when the adjustments are too great in so far as they displace the critical exigency of deconstructing practices. In either case, the study contributes to our understanding of the relationship between so called dominant and emergent ideas and practices and how this relationship operates in solo performance on the commercial stage.

The study also contributes to the relatively new field of research on masculinities. In the study, I apply and test the theories of masculinity as offered by Connell, Seidler, and others. Issues regarding gender authority or power, modes of gender production, the impact of relationships, and one's desire or attraction for others inform my analyses and also are tested in terms of their relevancy to the particular texts being analyzed. On that point, because the selected texts are fictive, my study contributes less to an understanding of how masculinities are enacted in everyday "real life" (as theorized anyway), and more to how masculinities are represented in performance art monologues on the popular theatrical stage. As such, my study offers and analyzes meta-perspectives on gender performance. If, as Judith Butler argues, gender in everyday life is performative, "a *stylized repetition of acts*" (140: emphasis in original), then a study of deliberately-constructed (re-)performances of gender will highlight not only what the composer-performer deems as significant "acts" of gender but also the mode or agency of stylization. Further, a performance may prove to re-stylize a stylistic mode so as to deconstruct "real life" gender constructs and offer alternative possibilities for gender practice. Lastly, the study of fictive performances of gender confirms that gender is or can be constructed and hence de- and re-constructed. In this way, the study validates performance as both a subject and method of studying gender.



The study also contributes to scholarship on the body by advocating and testing a discursive methodology that is based on social body types that Frank and others deem to be common in occidental societies and cultures. As I discussed above, the use of social(-ized) body types to construct or deconstruct human behavior is commonplace in structural and post-structural theories of the body and in fictive performance texts such as those I am studying. A guiding question then is to what extent the particularities of autobiographical content conform to the social body typology. In other words, the study directs focus toward the signifying impact of autoperformance and as a deconstructing practice of socialization, or socialized bodies. Additional questions that arise are whether the performance theorizes and constructs an individualized body, one that attempts to escape the intra- and inter-textual constructs that seek to define it. Or does the performance surrender all claims to individuation? Or is there a “gap between” individual and social gender roles in which we might perform?

#### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See Brecht (22-24, 33-42, 47-51, and 57-62). For general studies of how contemporary performance art makes use of presentational aesthetics, see Auslander, Battcock and Nickas; Carlson; Carr *On Edge*, Fuchs, RoseLee Goldberg; Kershaw; McNamara and Dolan; O'Dell; Russell; Sayre; Schneider; Ugwu; Wallace; and Wallis. For connections between Brecht and postmodern avant-garde theatre and performance, see Wright.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Butler, who offers a Marxist/Lacan based theory of gender and sexuality; Grosz, who uses a psychological perspective to advocate a focus on the corporeal body in feminist rhetoric; Kristeva, who applies semiotic and psychoanalytical theories to female performances of gender roles; Usher, who examines the relationship between women's self image and the body; Eisenstein, who offers a criminologist perspective on the female body in sex discrimination cases; Lee, who studies the political discourses that attempt to control the female body and its corporeal functions, such as menstruation; Grewal and Kaplan, who edit a collection of essays on the efficacy of feminism in different cultures; Layoun, who discusses how the trans-national reproduction of the female body is a form of rape; Liu, who examines the female body as

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nationalist discourse; Valdivia, who focuses on the effects of feminism on women in "third world" countries; Castelnuovo, who advances the image of the Amazon warrior as a model for feminism; Mary Russo, who studies the female grotesque; Sexton and Tobin, who edit a collection of essays on how women's bodies are represented in the literature of Virginia Woolf and Doris May Lessing; Wolf, who discusses the constraints of the beauty myth; Gaines and Herzog, who examine the performative and political potential of women's clothing; Mullins, who examines the female body as perceived and rendered in the visual arts; Suleiman, who edits a collection of essays on female nudes and erotica in the visual arts; Willett, who studies the diet, exercise, and menstrual (dis)function of female body builders; and Woods, who discusses the physiological impact of training on female body builders.

<sup>3</sup> A year after the publication of Iron John, Susan Faludi published Backlash in which she investigates the reactionary backlash of men who were threatened by the feminist movement.

<sup>4</sup> For masculinity studies that focus on hegemonic practices, aims, and effects, see Armstrong, who discusses hegemony as a male drive; Bhaba, who investigates the expectations and effects of a "true masculinity" on men; Fausto-Sterling, who uses a social-psychological perspective to discuss hegemonic drives; Fussell, who studies the hegemonic functioning of bodybuilding; Johnson and Finlay, who concentrate on the rhetoric of sports broadcasters; Knights, who studies masculine hegemony in literature; Lehman, who investigates the hegemonic performances of men in films; and Thompson, who also studies masculine hegemony in literature.

<sup>5</sup> For masculinity studies that explore complicit behavior and rhetoric, see Campbell and Griffith, who occasionally observe this type in their discussions of the male body in contemporary art; de Klerk, who discusses male profanity as a hegemonic and complicit rhetoric; Grievson, who focuses on cinematic manifestations; Grogan, who offers a psychological theory of male complicity; Luciano, who discusses how male preening connects with and empowers female preening; and Nixon, who studies body images of a complicit bent.

<sup>6</sup> For masculinity studies that focus on marginalization due to race, see Bell, who studies the effect of marginalization on the relationships of black men and women; hooks, who discusses the role of the marginalized black father in black culture; Johnson, who examines how white hegemonic rhetoric controls and constrains the black male body; and Wallace, who discusses the same effect but as due to the rhetoric of "political correctness." For studies that focus on the marginalization of Latino males, see Cantu, who explores machismo as a characteristic of Latino masculinity; Pujolar I Cos, who discusses how culture impacts the performance of masculinities; Rodriguez, who evaluates the status of Latino men by means of the U.S. Census; and Rodriguez and Ouelette, who explore the relationship between religion and Latino masculinity. For studies of marginalization due to sex and gender orientations, see Barrett, who studies working class gay males; Cameron, who examines the rhetoric of young homosexuals;

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Linneman, who studies the risks involved in "coming out"; Sedgwick, who discusses homosexuals in popular culture and as popular icons; Vorlicky, who investigates the effect of AIDS on the performance of masculinity; and Ward, who studies sexism and homophobia within the gay community.

<sup>7</sup> For masculinity studies that examine subordinate behavior, see Ehrenreich, who discusses the erosion of white male power; Kimmel, who examines the emasculation of men in the workplace; Thomas, who studies male anxiety; and Yudice, who observes the identity bind of straight white males.

<sup>8</sup> For key theories of the body as an ideological construct, see Butler; Foucault; and Jagger and Bordo. See Scarry for a theory of how the body in pain escapes language constructs.

<sup>9</sup> See Haraway's discussion of cyber bodies; and Halberstam and Livingston's collection of essays on posthuman bodies.

<sup>10</sup> Frank's term for this body type is somewhat misleading because all bodies are "communicative." I suspect he uses the term to imply what he views to be worthwhile or productive communication between people.

<sup>11</sup> In his recent survey of performance, Marvin Carlson does context autoperformance within its literary and theatrical traditions as well as track its relationship to the fine arts.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Alexander; Dillard; Gingrich-Philbrook; Lynn Miller; Miller and Taylor; Park-Fuller; and Spry. Also see Dailey's section on personal narratives in her collection of essays.

## CHAPTER TWO

### EPIPHANIES TOWARD A COMMUNICATIVE IDEAL IN WHOOPI GOLDBERG LIVE

Whoopi Goldberg Live<sup>1</sup> premiered in New York City on February 23, 1984 at the Lyceum Theater, which is an old theatre fashioned in the grand style of vaudeville houses and movie palaces of the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> The piece consists of a montage of five narratives and a curtain speech. A particular character delivers each narrative to the audience although, as is common in both literary and oral narratives, characters also include “in scene” conversations between themselves and those about whom they speak. Goldberg begins the show as the character Fontaine, a thief and junkie who also holds a doctorate from Columbia University. Goldberg then portrays a thirteen year old female surfer who tells the audience about her unexpected pregnancy. A seven year old African American girl who wants long blond hair follows the surfer. The fourth character is a Jamaican street Vendor who recounts her affair with a wealthy old man from the United States. The final character is a woman with cerebral palsy who talks about her relationship with her boyfriend. In the concluding curtain speech, Goldberg explains that Whoopi Goldberg Live is a significant piece of theatre because it uses performance art conventions in a Broadway venue and also because it stars an African American female performer. The main theme of the show is that the characters encounter and overcome prejudices to reach a point of self-acceptance. They learn to “live as they learn” and thereby they urge the audience to do likewise.

As audience members of Whoopi Goldberg Live, we find ourselves in a nine hundred seat auditorium, sitting before a grand curtain of purple velvet edged with gold

fringe. The curtain rises to reveal an empty stage. The back stage wall of the theatre is not painted or decorated. However, as no doors are visible, I infer that the back stage wall is a set piece, an illusion. Wooden crates are stacked in haphazard piles along the back edge of the playing space. The rigging for the curtains and the sandbag counterweights are exposed as there is no masking of the wings.

The contexting of the performance on a stage in a theatre suggests that the characters' fictive worlds co-exist with that of the audience's theatrical reality. The characters are in our presence, in the theatre space, although they may refer to and create other places and times by means of their narratives. Goldberg's costume reinforces the presentational mode. Throughout the show, she wears a base costume of black leather pants and a long sleeve, thermal shirt to which she adds costume pieces indicative of each character. The recurring base costume allows Goldberg to shift easily between the characters, maintains Goldberg's presence as the actress-creator of the characters, implies that the characters are constructs, and suggests a connection between them. The presentational situation also is facilitated by the elimination of the pit, which allows Goldberg and her characters to approach audience members in the front rows and interact with them at a close, personal distance, as Goldberg does in the first few moments of the show.

Lighting designer Jennifer Tipton uses washes when Goldberg strides the length of the stage or talks to the house and spotlights locked in tight on the performer when Goldberg delivers the more intense, introspective parts of the narratives.

When the curtain rises, the character of Fontaine is revealed. In addition to the base costume, Fontaine sports a flashy, oversized headband, gargoyle sunglasses, a blue

scarf, and gold cowboy boots. He crosses downstage with a bouncing strut, singing, “Around the world in eighty motherfuckin’ days.”<sup>3</sup> Upon reaching center stage, he stands with his feet a shoulder width apart and a casual bend in his spine. His shoulders are relaxed and his wrists, elbows, and knees are slightly bent. His mouth is slack jawed until he flashes a toothy grin, turns directly to the audience, and asks, “What’s happening?” As there is no response, Fontaine repeats the question. He waits for a moment and then addresses the audience, “Hey, look y’all, I say, ‘What’s happening,’ y’all say ‘everything’s everything,’ whatever the fuck you say. So, we gonna try this shit again.” Fontaine exits the stage and then re-enters as he did the first time, with a jaunty strut and singing his song. When he asks the audience, “What’s happening?” the audience responds in unison with the prompted line, “Everything’s everything.”

Having activated the audience as part of his performance, Fontaine crosses downstage to the front row, remarking, “That was the shit.” He then begins to greet the patrons, asking, “What’s happening, Slick? Looking good. What’s happening, Blood?” A white man in the audience moves to shake hands with Fontaine who scolds him for shaking hands incorrectly. Fontaine shows the man the proper handshake, which is that of bumping fists as if initiating a game of bloody knuckles. Dissatisfied with the man’s efforts, Fontaine quips, “I don’t know, maybe you shouldn’t visit my neighborhood.”

Fontaine laughs and moves down the row to address a female. “What’s happening, cutie? You looking good. Shit, my name is Fontaine and love is my game,” he coos in a manner reminiscent of a rock and roll singer of the nineteen fifties. He continues, “And when I kiss the girls, hey, they all aflame. Come on, let me kiss your hand.” The woman extends her hand to the sweet talker and he replies, “No, the one with

the diamonds on it.” He kisses her hand. He starts to walk away while still looking her square in the eyes, “Looking good, too. I’m glad to see you here.”

Fontaine then addresses the entire house, observing, “I’m glad you was cool enough to play. I notice you didn’t clutch your pocketbook. But, you know, a lot of people can’t handle me. I don’t understand it, ‘cause, like, I feel like I’m a friendly person. But, you know, some people’s attitude really drove me out of the country a while back.” Fontaine pauses as the audience chuckles. “No, they did,” he exclaims in answer to the audience. With a self-satisfied tone he intimates, “But I got the kind of gig that allows me the freedom to cruise, because I am a thief. It’s the all-American, traditional gig.” Fontaine explains that he is an eighties “Robin Hood” of sorts, stealing from the rich and giving to his favorite charity, himself. For example, he stole a set of gold forks, sold them to a fence and, with the proceeds of the sale, financed a vacation to Europe. In the rest of his monologue, Fontaine recalls a series of episodes regarding his trip.

To start, Fontaine recounts his altercation with an airline ticket agent at the JFK International Airport. In his story, Fontaine is aggressive with the male agent. He demands, “Hey, where’s my motherfuckin’ ticket to Europe at?” The agent hands the ticket to Fontaine reluctantly, after which Fontaine begins to leave without paying. The agent nabs him and threatens to call the police whereupon Fontaine pays for the ticket with nine hundred fifty six bucks in cash.

Fontaine relates that when he reaches the gate, a female attendant addresses him with a pinched, over friendly smile and giggle. Fontaine asks her, “Bitch, what are you grinnin’ at?” The attendant tells Fontaine that his flight has been overbooked and he has lost his seat. Addressing the audience as if they are his partners in crime, Fontaine

whispers that he reclaimed his seat by threatening the attendant that he would break into her home. “And needless to say,” Fontaine crows as he struts across the stage, “I got me a seat on the plane. That’s right man.”

Fontaine also recalls that on his way to the gate, he encountered a male abortion protester with a sign that read, “Stop Abortion.” Fontaine asked the man, “Motherfucker, when was the last time you was pregnant?” The abortion protester snapped back, “I don’t have to discuss that with you.” Fontaine countered by telling the protester that the answer to abortion is for the protester to stop having sex or, in Fontaine’s terms, “Shoot your dick.”

Fontaine crosses stage left and tells the audience that when he stepped on the plane, he encountered a stewardess. He moans to the audience, “And I hate stewardesses. I hate ‘em. Their legs’ too long and their hair’s too big and shit, and they always got their face up in yours.” As Fontaine continues his story, he demonstrates his attitude toward the stewardess by parodying her behavior. He uses a breathy and measured tone of voice to mimic her instructions to him that he should fasten his seat belt. Fontaine tells the audience he didn’t want to be bothered, so he ignored the stewardess. As a result, when the plane took off, he fell head-over-heels out of his seat. Fontaine confesses, “So, when the plane leveled out I creepy-crawled back, you know, buckled my seat belt, because I don’t want her to know she was right.” The stewardess then served dinner, an action Fontaine mocks by using mincing steps and pushing an imaginary cart that teeter-totters back and forth, as if a wheel is about to fall off. Fontaine continues to embody the in scene actions of the stewardess and himself. She wears two huge oven mitts to serve the tray of food, dropping it in front of Fontaine and hopping back quickly. As cued by



the stewardess' actions, Fontaine handles the container as if it is a hot lump of coal before he discovers that it and the food are cold. He sends the container back to be reheated. The stewardess returns and throws the tray at Fontaine. Fontaine mimes catching it, telling the audience, "I shocked her ass and caught it. That's right. And then I burnt my fingers off." Once he opens the container and tastes the food, Fontaine describes that "the meat was all chewed up" and "it was covered in this sauce that made it look like bum barf. You know, gooey shit covered in these green and red specs. And then they give you these string beans. The string beans are huddling in the corner looking at you like this." Fontaine demonstrates the huddling string beans by drawing back and hunching his shoulders forward, like someone about to be hit by a bully.

The first city Fontaine visits on his trip to Europe is Amsterdam. Upon his arrival, he looks at a map of the city and wonders if he should visit the Diamond Exchange, the Van Gogh Museum, or the ballet. Then, he recognizes the name Anne Frank and decides to visit the house where she and her family hid from the Nazis during World War II.

Situating himself stage left, Fontaine marks out the floor plan of the house as he describes its features. He recounts, "And, as I was perusing the area, I noticed a small staircase leading up to a big bookcase, and I'm into books, you know, I got a Ph.D. in literature from Columbia." The audience laughs. Fontaine crosses downstage and tells the audience, "I know you don't think I was born a junkie. I have an education. I got a Ph.D. I can't do shit with so I stay high so I don't get mad." He then crosses upstage and mimes pulling a book from the bookcase. Again, by means of in scene embodiment, Fontaine evokes the past situation in the present tense. Fontaine's pulling on the book

activates a lever that makes the bookcase slide back, revealing a hidden room. Fontaine enters the room, describing “a row of huge windows and all the window panes are blacked out so there ain’t no sunlight coming in. And, you look at the walls that are surrounding these windows and they are covered in this kind of wallpaper, got little flowers on it.” The wallpaper is peeling and on one wall are old black and white pictures of celebrities from the thirties and forties. Upon noticing a skylight, Fontaine realizes he is in the room where the Frank family hid. In an aside, he admits, “that kinda like threw me ‘cause this ain’t something I was really on top of in terms of history. It wasn’t. My forte is American history from the twenties to the present time.” The house is rocked with laughter.

Fontaine shakes his head and interrupts his story once again to cross downstage and address the audience.

Now why is that hard to believe? I mean, I’m a junkie, but I’m not stupid in some respects. A lot of educated people got what I got and that should not surprise you. And don’t let this skin tone get you in the trick bag here. See, don’t think that that’s all there is here. A lot of people are just like me. A lot of people, just like me—Betty Ford. So, in good company, I tell you my forte is American History. Assuming he has set the audience straight, Fontaine proceeds to contrast the civil rights movement in the United States and the Holocaust. Regarding the former, he tells the audience that although African Americans weren’t ready for “people getting blown away in cars or little girls getting blown up in churches . . . we knew it was gonna be a struggle.” The Jews, on the other hand, didn’t know what was coming because they had already been integrated into German and other European societies and cultures. They had

a “this is gonna pass” attitude toward the anti-Semitism of the thirties. By the time they realized the reality of the situation it was too late for them to escape or take collective action.

Fontaine extends the contrast by differentiating between living in the black ghetto and hiding from Nazi storm troopers in an attic such as that in which the Frank family hid. Regarding the black ghetto, Fontaine explains, “you get nineteen to twenty-five people in one bedroom, but they can all go outside, you know, cruise around. But the Franks were stuck in this room for two years. And it wasn’t like they was leaving. They got in there, they had twenty hours a day of non-movement.” In order to help the audience understand the Franks’ experience, Fontaine freezes for one solid minute in complete silence. Afterwards, he asks the audience, “Nerve wracking, ain’t it? Yeah, and I discovered just like you just did that I couldn’t do it.”

Fontaine confesses that the realization brought tears to his eyes and, in embarrassment, he ran from the room and into a sign that read, “In spite of everything I still believe that people are good at heart.” At first, he reacted angrily to the sign. In scene, with clenched teeth, he says, “I say what! I mean who put this up. Why would they put it in this room? I copped an attitude. I decided to write a letter.” Upon realizing the words are Anne Frank’s, Fontaine reconsiders the sentence and tells the audience, “of course [the message] sounds childish because Anne Frank was a child, and children can always see the good in the worst of situations.” Fontaine continues to ruminate on Anne Frank’s situation, her life in peril, and his own life of “trivial pursuits” where his daily worries concern finding a hairdresser. Fontaine’s epiphany leads him to adopt Anne Frank’s words as a philosophy for his own life. He relates, “So I decided

what I was gonna do, what I should try to do, was adopt this philosophy somehow, this in spite of everything.”

Fontaine’s story changes gears as he crosses downstage and details the other half of his European vacation, a trip to Germany’s *Schwartzwald* or the Black Forest. Here, Fontaine explains, “Some of these people ain’t seen no black people since Hannibal” and all they know of Americans generally is based on television reruns.

He then asks the audience what are the most popular television shows in Germany. When the audience does not respond, he crosses down to the lip of the stage and remarks, “Let’s take five. There ain’t no fourth wall here. That means, probably, if I’m posing a question, I’m talking to you. See, ‘cause you notice there ain’t nobody else up here but me. And these opportunities don’t present themselves very often in this area. This is not Dream Girls.”<sup>4</sup> As prompted, audience members begin to shout out names of popular television shows such as “Dallas,” “Dynasty,” and, in mockery of the former two, “Dallasty.” Then, someone in the middle of the house offers, “Cosby,” as in The Cosby Show.<sup>5</sup> Fontaine responds, “Don’t you wish?” He then informs the audience that the top three shows in Germany are indeed Dallas, Dynasty, and a surprise third, Bonanza. He tells the audience, “And you ain’t lived till you see Bonanza in German.”

Fontaine returns to his story and relates an encounter he had with a German woman. Imitating her accent he says, “We see how, on the American documentaries, how it is for the black people in the United States. Please tell us how it is for you to live in the ghetto and please eat this watermelon, we got it special for you.” Fontaine observes,

And you know, I have to say, I was really surprised to discover such ignorance, to hear those people say watermelon shit, kinda freaked me out to discover such rampant ignorance in the world, 1983-1984, especially coming from the United States where such a thing would never happen. I mean we're beyond that subject, right?

He then asks the audience, "Who was the last contemporary German you seen on American TV consistently outside of the Olympics?" The audience does not respond. He then reflects that both U.S. and German cultures are guilty of characterizing each other in terms of what they see on television. Whereas, for Germans, the U.S. is a land of oil tycoons and cowboys, for Americans, Germany is populated with Nazis and drug enhanced athletes.

Fontaine winds down his narrative by telling the audience that his experience of being a foreigner in Europe changed his way of viewing and treating foreigners in the United States. He admits that before his trip he felt that "if you don't speak English don't come up to me in the street and ask me where shit is." By means of his own experiences, he realized,

It is real hard to be that cold once you've been the alien. See, 'cause once you've been the alien you find out how hard it is to have to ask somebody where some shit it is and then you find out what it takes to tell 'em. It don't take nothing but a little bit of graciousness.

Fontaine closes his monologue with a coda. He offers, "that life is a constant thing, it's constant live and learn. Never get over that shit, not even a junkie. Not even a junkie." Fontaine then turns upstage and exits.

Goldberg reenters without the headband, sunglasses, scarf, and boots. She bounces up and down as she walks and tosses her hair from side to side, speaking in the high-pitched, singsong voice and cadence of a valley girl. The girl immediately informs the audience that she is a surfer and not a valley girl because she likes the beach and not the mall. She tells the audience that she met a “total hunkola” at the beach a while back. They went to a party and, afterwards, “did it.” She follows her confession with a question to the audience, “you know what I’m talking about, right?” With a dejected attitude, the girl relates that after the initial interaction, the hunkola never called her. Upon realizing that she was pregnant, she decided to speak to a priest about her situation.

However, when she confessed to the priest, he shut the “little zip lock door” of the confessional between the priest and parishioner. Although she knocked on the sliding door, the priest would not re-open it. She went outside the confessional and banged on the priest’s outside door. And, like a “priest-in-a-box,” he popped forth. Goldberg depicts the priest as standing very erect with his head cocked down. He turns his face from the surfer and whispers, “Don’t talk to me about this. Go talk to a nun because they are women and they would totally understand.” The priest then walks away quickly.

The girl proceeds to ask a nun about her pregnancy. The nun stands upright and speaks through clenched teeth as she calls the surfer a “Blasphemer,” and tells her, “You have sinned in the eyes of god.” The surfer explains to the nun that she “really had a good time,” to which the nun responds, “You did not.” The girl argues with the nun but realizing her efforts are in vain, she walks away, saying, “Forget it.”

The girl then confides in her mother, who promptly packs up the surfer’s belongings, throws her out of the house, and changes the locks on the doors. Being but

thirteen and seeing no other option, the girl decides to perform an abortion on herself, by herself, with a coat hanger. After describing the incident, the surfer says flatly, “I’m not freaked out about not having kids, I’m fine. I’m turning fourteen next week.” The girl then turns upstage and exits.

Goldberg re-enters with a long sleeve, white collared shirt draped over her head. In the squeaky voice of a child, she addresses the audience, “This is my long, luxurious blond hair. Ain’t it pretty?” The little girl asks the audience if they want to see her put her hair in a ponytail. The child turns around and gathers the shirt in her hands and lets it dangle down her back. She spins around, reveling in her long “pretty” hair. Then, by means of in scene stichomythia dialogue, the child relates an argument in which her mother told her that her hair was just a shirt. The child told her mother it was not, but her mother insisted. In response, and in both the telling and told situations, the child physically withdraws from her mother and the audience, as if she is guarding a secret. Then she bursts out,

But I don’t care, ‘cause when I get big, I’m gonna get fifty million trillion million million elephants and I’m lettin’ ‘em go in the house so they can trample on everybody and then she gonna want me to make ‘em stop, but she ain’t even gonna know I’m there because I’m gonna have blond hair, blue eyes, and I’m gonna be white.

The little girl then explains to the audience how she’s going to turn white. “They said on TV, all you got to do is go to the [op]tometrist’s office and he got blue eyes in his desk drawer, and, then, I’m gonna have a dream house and a dream car and dream candy and a dream horse and me and Barbie are gonna live together with Ken and Skipper and

Malibu Barbie.” The little girl explains that she doesn’t want to be black because she doesn’t want to be “like her mother who works long hours on Wall Street and isn’t near as exciting as The Justice League or The Smurfs.”<sup>6</sup>

The little girl takes the shirt from her head and shows the audience that her own hair doesn’t “blow in the wind” and it “don’t cascade [sic] down my back.” She crosses downstage and asks an African American male audience member, “You got hair like mine, huh? How come you don’t have your shirt on? You came outside without it? Nobody said nothing? No?” She asks another black male patron, “Can I touch your hair? Huh?” Before proceeding to do so, she picks her nose and reports, “Oh, look, a sticky one. I better use another hand.” With her other hand she reaches down and touches the man’s hair, telling him, “Your hair’s soft and my hair’s soft, too. Feel. It’s dusty, but it’s soft.” She turns her gaze on a white woman sitting next to the African American man and asks, “And your friend? You don’t care that he don’t have no shirt on his head?” The woman shakes her head. The girl surveys the rest of the audience and realizes that many people have hair like hers. She begins to swing her shirt in circles and tells the audience, “I’ll never put my shirt on my head again because maybe I’ll grow up and be cute and won’t need a shirt.” She qualifies, “But I’m gonna keep it just in case you lied to me.” The child winks and then exits.

When Goldberg re-enters she sports a Rastafarian cap, an easy going strut, and a Jamaican accent. The female character tells the audience that when she lived in Jamaica she used to own a cart from which she sold tourist knick-knacks. The Vendor recounts that one day “an old man, eighty-five to ninety years old, incredibly wrinkled and tan, an ‘Old Raisin’” approached her cart and tried to engage her in conversation but she ignored



him. The Old Raisin continued his advances and, upon being rejected repeatedly, he asked, "Is the only reason you don't talk to me because you got your cart?" The woman smiles mysteriously and informs the audience that the Old Raisin bought her entire stock of souvenirs that day and every day thereafter until, one day, he informed her that he was returning home and he'd like for her to join him. He said, "I want you to come back with me. I need someone to cook and clean and give me some nookie." The Vendor weighs the options with the audience. She can cook and clean and although she has no idea what "nookie" means she figures she can "wing" that one.

On the way to the United States, the Vendor asks the old man to tell her about his house. He describes a "great big house with great big columns and red soil and a big sky." According to the Vendor, his description makes his home sound similar to "Tara" in Gone With the Wind. The Vendor is skeptical of the old man's claims until she finds herself standing before a gigantic mansion replete with columns and a veranda. The Vendor then relates the comforts of living in a mansion, the most significant being watching soap operas on television. "Soap opera men is like dogs," she tells the audience. "He take every object in the house and hump it. If [the soap opera man] really had that many [encounters] that poor little thing fall off or whittle it down to about that big." The Vendor also observes, "Soap opera women are just as stupid as they can be. They sit around going, 'What is wrong with Phil? Where is Phil? Why don't Phil love me?'" The Vendor is amazed at the promiscuity of the men and is disgusted with the helpless attitude of the women.

The Vendor's observations regarding sex on soap operas anticipate a similar incident in her own life with the Old Raisin. The woman relates that one day the Old

Raisin asked her to “please, be so kind as to bend over.” Thinking she had dropped something, the Vendor obliged, until she felt two “cold clammy claws.” The Vendor then re-enacts for the audience what she did to the Old Raisin, exclaiming, “I whipped him over my shoulder and thumped him on the ground.” Afterwards she asked the Old Raisin to explain his behavior and he told her that he was watching television and saw a commercial that reminded him of her. The Vendor looks for the commercial on television and one day she sees a Jamaican tourism ad in which there are caramel colored “women wrapped in colored fabrics so tight that they look like they can’t breathe, much less move.” The ad cuts to a muscular caramel colored man, his “shirt opened to his pubic region,” who quips in a falsetto voice, “come back to fresh fruit.”

In another anecdote, the Old Raisin tries to seduce the Vendor by giving her lingerie. One day she finds a gift on the bed from Frederick’s of Hollywood. Although she doesn’t know anyone named Frederick she opens the box and inside discovers “many little pieces of see through material, very multi-colored with fuzz on it.” The old man explains to the Vendor that the pieces are a garment that she is supposed to wear. She tells him that there are too many holes in the garment and he tells her that’s the point; they are “easy access drawers.”

The Vendor sends the Old Raisin from the room and dons the garment, which she finds to look attractive. “I looked good,” she recalls. Then she hears a recurring “tippy-tippy-pause” sound approaching and stopping just outside the door. The door flies open to reveal the Old Raisin, “not a tooth in his head and not a stitch of clothing on his body, naked as the day he was born. Wrinkled. All I want to do is iron him.” The Old Raisin pleads for sex, and the Vendor acquiesces. Although the old man proves to satisfy her,

he “zeroed in and gone for the money,” his performance also excites a heart attack and he dies.

The Vendor attends the reading of the will with the old man’s family, “the raisinettes,” who show little interest in the proceedings until the executor begins to dole out the old man’s assets, all of which are left to the Vendor. Although now a rich woman, the Vendor tells the audience she misses the Old Raisin. He was a “good man.” She appears to ponder this realization as she crosses upstage and exits.

Goldberg re-enters with the crooked and seemingly off balanced posture and gait of a person with cerebral palsy. In a slurred voice, the female character tells the audience, “I met the most amazing man,” and then proceeds to relate the details.

One day a man visits the nursing home where the woman works. She shows him around the place and, at the conclusion of the tour, he says to her, “That was really amazing. What do you say we have a drink and go dancing?” She tells him no. He asks, “Is it me?” In response, she gestures to herself and says, “This is not a disco body.” The man queries, “Why not?” The two go out to a club and dance, the woman demonstrating for the audience how she learned to spin around in a tight circle.

The couple goes on several dates and one day the man proposes that they have a picnic lunch and go swimming. She tells him, “When I get in the water, I tend to sink.” He answers, “Do you think I’d let you sink?” The woman shops for a swimsuit and, despite the skeptical attitude of the sales clerk, settles on a two-piece suit. The swimming date proves a success, so much so that she invites the man to cook her dinner.

At this point in her narrative, the woman smiles and confesses to the audience, “He made a great meal.” However, when at dinner the man tells her, “I love you,” she

becomes defensive and tells him, “I am not a freak. I am not your freak of the week.” He responds, “No, I think you’re a very foxy chick.” Then, he asks her to marry him. Speechless, the woman does not answer. He asks her again and this time she says yes.

To conclude, the woman invites the audience to the wedding, tempting them with a smile and the promise of a “disco pool party.” As the woman exits upstage, the lights fade to black and the curtain falls.

After a brief pause, the curtain rises to reveal Goldberg standing center stage with her hands in her pockets and a humble smile on her face. The audience greets her with a standing ovation and a hearty round of applause. Goldberg gestures to the audience to take their seats. Once the audience is seated, Goldberg addresses them with a British accent. She observes how “special” this performance is to the audience. Goldberg articulates that she is part of the “avant-garde,” which she explains is what “they call you when they are not sure what you do.” She continues that conventional wisdom suggests that “Broadway is not a place for the avant-garde” but the presence of this audience proves that that notion is “stupid.” Goldberg praises the audience for their willingness to “support the arts” and “come out to see what they don’t know by heart.”

Without skipping a beat, Goldberg shifts into a Latina accent and thanks the technical crew for helping her present a one-person show that “runs smoothly.” In the next sentence, Goldberg uses a French accent to thank the ushers. She also cautions the audience to be patient the next time they have to wait for a seat, otherwise they might “end up sitting in the very back” of the house. In a Jewish accent, Goldberg offers, “From me to you thank you for coming. You could have come earlier. But, God willing, it’s fate, darling, that you are here.” In the same accent she tells the audience that the

show is “a dream come true” and, in conclusion, wonders who “in Chelsea would have thought the Whoop would have made it to Broadway?” Goldberg then salutes the audience as the curtain falls.

Whoopi Goldberg Live is a show that advances a seemingly simple philosophy and praxis, “live as you learn.” In light of my concerns, the show urges this way of perceiving and behaving by representing masculine character types that experience an epiphany or, due to how their behavior is constructed, they provoke the narrating character to experience an epiphany. In all cases, the realization is one of a communicative orientation, in Frank’s basic terms. That is, Goldberg’s performance rhetoric urges the audience to realize the value of a social and individual identity that desires to engage the particularities of others or, in Frank’s terms, is earnestly dyadic. Secondary traits of Frank’s communicative body type are evident in Goldberg’s promptings too. In order to engage the particularities of others, we need to relax our desire to control or fix our identity, those of others, and also the situations in which we find ourselves. Rather, Goldberg advocates a flexible orientation, aware of and welcoming contingencies. In this way, so Goldberg seems to imply, we will lead more fulfilling lives. In Frank’s typology, the fourth basic characteristic of a communicative body is that the subject is associated with his or her corporeal surface. As I detail below, this factor is a variable trait in Goldberg’s argument.

Below, I discuss my interpretation of Goldberg’s performance as outlined above, focusing on Goldberg’s construction of the masculine characters. Since, for the most part, Goldberg extends her message by means of her female characters, the masculine types are often used to contrast what we learn from the women. In other words, many of

the masculine characters serve as “straw men” in the narratives; they service but do not experience the key epiphanies themselves. I discuss the priest, the nun, and the mother, in the second monologue, in these terms. I also view the Old Raisin in the third monologue as a masculine type that, in Frank’s terms, is not a communicative agent himself. Rather, his brand of consumption functions as an agency of communicative possibility that regenerates the Vendor’s view of him and life generally.

However, in her construction of Fontaine in the first narrative and the “most amazing man” in the fifth narrative, Goldberg extends two masculinities that are or become communicative bodies. Fontaine experiences the key epiphany himself, within and also by means of the story he recounts. Thereby, he adopts and experiences Goldberg’s “live as you learn” philosophy. The amazing man is central to the narrative offered by the woman with cerebral palsy. As constructed by her, he embodies the communicative ideal from the start and it is his communicative agency that sparks the woman’s realization and validation of her own communicative possibilities, with him and also in the telling of her story to the audience.

As implied above, the “live as you learn . . . from others” realization that Goldberg appears to advocate operates on a number of levels. Characters realize it in their past experiences, in the told situation of their stories. They also (re-)experience the key epiphany in and by means of their present tense telling, or in the telling situation of the performance. Their storytelling is and evokes the epiphany. Similarly, by means of the construct as a whole, Goldberg performs and thereby advocates a communicative ideal. Her performance and rhetoric is open to others, flexible or contingent, and grounded in a fusion of corporeal and discursive agencies. While I am unable to say

whether Goldberg's desires are fulfilled by the message she embodies through the characters she enacts, as an audience member I find I am both persuaded and fulfilled by her message. In the final section of the analysis, I discuss this aspect of Goldberg's performance.

At the beginning of his narrative, Fontaine is a fusion of consumer and dominating body types, in Frank's basic terms. However, within and by means of the stories he tells, Fontaine displays a more communicative orientation. Below, I reiterate Frank's basic traits of consumer and aggressive bodies and then discuss their fusion in Fontaine's initial interaction with the audience. I then analyze Fontaine's progressive movement toward and acceptance of an identity and behavior that is more like Frank's communicative ideal.

According to Frank, the main trait of a dominating or an aggressive body is that it understands that it lacks what it desires and what it desires is to be in control and, typically, to be in control of others because it is threatened by them. To carry out the acts of domination, the body typically disassociates his or her identity from the corporeal substance and the acts it commits. Identity is based in others but only so as to silence or monopolize them. Dominating bodies are dyadic but for monadic aims and reasons. Likewise, a dominating body understands his actions as contingent but aimed at controlling the situation and those within it.

The main trait of a consumer body is its constant assimilation of products and images available for its consumption. The body finds the act of consumption predictable and it understands itself as in control of the images and products it consumes. The consumer's identity is not located in some transcendent ideal. Rather, it is located in the

material surface of the body and its ability to assimilate, reflect, mix-and-match the world's images or products as its own. For these reasons, the body understands its actions as monadic. The mirroring or consumer body does not need others to consume and, in the act of assimilation, the "outside" images or products become one's own.

When Fontaine first appears on stage, he displays a fusion of consumer and aggressive body traits. The fusion arises from his aim, which is to hustle or con the audience into interacting with him. The practices he uses to realize his aim are similar to those he uses in his everyday life occupation. He is a street hustler, con man and thief. While the purposes for the hustle differ, his performance on the stage is like that of his performance on the street.

In Confidence Men and Painted Women, Karen Halttunen observes that the confidence man defies "social definition; he [is] a man of shifting masks and roles, without fixed status or profession" (10). Calling on Mary Douglas, Halttunen links the confidence man to the generic trickster "figure who pervades the mythology of many cultures." As a "marginal man," he is

without a fixed place in the social structure. As such, he represents the threat of social disorder, the dangers of formlessness; and because he is socially marginal, great powers of contamination are attributed to him. To be more specific, the trickster is a source of contamination because he dwells in the less structured or inarticulated areas of the social system. (24)

Of course, it is by means of his shifting masks and roles that the con man trickster realizes his aim, which, in Douglas' terms, is the "'money to be gathered off from men's vices'" (quoted in Halttunen 25). In other words, the con man views his marks as bearers



of commodities he desires to make his own. Unlike a dominating body, he is not threatened by the marks. However, unlike a consumer body, the appropriation of the mark's valuables requires aggressive practices. In one way or another, the con man must instill the threat of lack in the mark and then advance himself as the agency who can remedy the lack. In a sense, the con man commodifies himself in order to gain the goods of others. Clearly, the strategy relies on a dyadic exchange and, in Fontaine's case, a use of the corporeal body as the means for instilling the lack.

When Fontaine appears on stage, he wears a flamboyant costume of gargoyle sunglasses, an oversized headband, a flashy scarf, and gold cowboy boots. He also struts in a stereotypical "cool" or "hip" fashion. Further, he extends his entrance to the lip of the stage, engaging and invading the audience's space. Fontaine's physical actions and costume suggest a number of common social types, such as a lounge lizard, pimp, or cool dude on the prowl. Whatever the case, the visual and physical signs code a "marginal man," a man of the urban streets, who appears confident in his control of the space in which he exists. Due to the open performance situation, the space in which Fontaine exists is the stage space. Or, more accurately, Fontaine brings the signs and codes of the street into the theatrical space of the audience. The less well articulated, or less familiar, culture of the lowbrow urban street invades or "contaminates" the middle to highbrow reality of the Broadway stage. In this way, Fontaine instills a threat in the audience.

Fontaine's discourse further substantiates the perceived signs and codes and also clarifies the threat he provokes. When Fontaine enters, he sings a song drawn from popular culture. "Around the World in Eighty Days" is the theme song of a film by the same name. However, Fontaine inserts the word "motherfuckin'" into the lyrics and

thereby fashions his own irreverent permutation of them. When the audience fails to respond to his opening question, “What’s happening?” Fontaine reprimands and then instructs the audience as to how they should respond to him. As if in a rehearsal for a show, Fontaine exits, re-enters, and gives the audience another shot at delivering their prompted line, which they indeed prove to do.

Fontaine then approaches the stage lip and directly addresses certain marks in the audience. He scolds and then tries to teach the white man how to bump fists, rather than shake hands. As Fontaine implies, the former gesture is indicative of the neighborhood in which he, Fontaine, lives. Changing strategies, Fontaine tries to hit on a woman, telling her, “my name is Fontaine and love is my game. . . . [W]hen I kiss the girls, hey, they all aflame. Come on, let me kiss your hand.” When the woman extends her hand, Fontaine corrects her, “No, the one with the diamonds on it.” The audience’s growing assumption that Fontaine might be a criminal of some kind is confirmed when Fontaine tells them, “I am a thief.” Fontaine specifies that it is “the kind of gig that allows me the freedom to cruise.”

Fontaine’s opening address of the audience is a shifting integration of various language styles and strategies, which indicate the diverse roles this con man thief is able to play. He sings, demands, instructs, intimidates, boasts, coos, and cajoles. His discourse is unpredictable and, coupled with his physical presence, it is threatening to the audience in so far as Fontaine controls the rules of the game in which they are expected to play.

On one level, the game represents Fontaine’s real life occupation as a con man thief. He invades the physical space of the mark, threatens their control by means of

cultural or sexual intimidation, and then puts them off their guard by supplying himself as the remedial agency. He teaches the white man how to bump fists and, in the case of the woman, embeds the sexual intimidation with smooth talking compliments. Once the mark is off-guard, the con man thief is able to take their goods.

On another level, the game is about performance and, specifically, about teaching the audience how to respond to Fontaine's (and, in turn, Goldberg's) tricky brand of performance. In contrast to the conventional norms of a Broadway show, such as Dream Girls which Fontaine mentions later in his monologue, the main trick of the game is Fontaine's insistence on an open and interactive performance situation. Not only is the fourth wall of illusionary theatre dispersed but Fontaine demands that the audience respond to him, literally. The con game, then, is double-coded as a game of performance. Fontaine invades the Broadway stage with the contaminating elements of reflexive rehearsal, direct physical engagement, and verbal interplay. Threatened by the unfamiliar elements or, as Goldberg mentions in her curtain speech, by "what they don't know by heart," the audience follows the rules as supplied by Fontaine. As a result of his diverse albeit aggressive strategies, Fontaine obtains what he wants. As he remarks at the end of his initial address, "I'm glad you was cool enough to play."

The double-coding of Fontaine as a con man thief and performance instructor implies Goldberg's many aims. For one, Fontaine's character and masculinity are informed by his occupation and the urban street culture from which it derives. While Goldberg celebrates Fontaine's roots, she also constructs the character so that his confident control of life is questioned and altered over the course of his monologue. Goldberg also constructs Fontaine in terms of stereotypical signs and codes of black

urban men and criminals, which she proceeds to deconstruct and problematize. Lastly, the double-coding of her performance as an urban street con game implies how Goldberg views her performance within the Broadway venue. Because Fontaine and his hustle are “socially marginal” within the context of the great white way, they are a “source of contamination” (Halttunen 24). The audience can reject the contaminating elements or, as Goldberg’s main message urges, they can adopt a flexible and responsive orientation toward the foreign elements. Thereby, they might learn something new or different from that which they already know.

When Fontaine first appears on stage, he is deliberately coded by Goldberg to read as a stereotype. His flashy dress, irreverent discourse, and his race—he is black—signify a criminal of the urban street. On the one hand, the outlaw code operates in the manner I discussed above. Fontaine’s trickster character and con are indicative of the performance game Goldberg prompts and, as such, they are intended as positive and instructive. On the other hand, the stereotype appears to substantiate and reproduce certain racist and class assumptions regarding black urban men.

In a 1981 study titled, Black and White Styles in Conflict, Thomas Kochman attempts to document the communicative patterns of urban African Americans, particularly males. Kochman’s aim, it appears, is to collect the dominant traits and thereby offer a fact-simile of how the noted culture communicates. The unfortunate result is a racist tract of essentialist traits that operate to fix the culture in social-historical terms. Many of these traits are at work in popular culture renderings of the same group and, in her depiction of Fontaine, Goldberg makes use of them too.

Kochman claims that young, black, urban males dress in flashy clothes so as to make a “powerful statement” about themselves and thereby claim control of the space and situation (132). Further, the desired “image—sharp, mean, bad—is designated to harmonize the threat of any force that might question one’s humanity” (Harrison quoted in Kochman 132). As regards discourse, Kochman found that the group distinguishes between verbal argument, or “woofing,” and physical action, or fighting (Kochman 46). Woofing is used to threaten others by various discursive means and it “generally requires that those woofing create an aura of drama surrounding themselves to keep people wondering if they are in fact serious” (50). Kochman also claims that black males and females draw on a “framework of patterns—like song, dance . . . or simply the speech channel” to allow for or manipulate “free and uninhibited emotional expressions” (110). According to Kochman, the latter aim is paramount in African American culture generally. He writes, that “while sensibilities also have a moral claim on other people’s consideration, feelings are seen to have a preemptive claim. The primary and independent status accorded feelings within the culture means that individuals must place their own feelings first . . . even if other people’s sensibilities might become offended by the process” (122).

In her construction of Fontaine, Goldberg draws on many of the traits Kochman assigns to black urban males and, in some cases, African American people in general. Fontaine is outfitted in flamboyant clothes that make a “powerful statement” about his seeming identity and his claim to space. He uses aggressive, unpredictable discourse that threatens and then cons the audience into accepting his rules of interaction. His speech acts are unruly and appear spontaneous and self-directed. Goldberg also draws on the

common, racist assumption that young black males are criminals . . . until proven otherwise.

In PowerNomics: The National Plan to Empower Black America, Claud Anderson observes that “[w]ealth inequality and inappropriate behavior are the two most fundamental problems facing Black Americans” (ix). To prove the disparity in wealth, Anderson draws on a 1993 census based study that shows that white Americans own 4700% more property than do African Americans (19). Another study, in 1998, documents that, on average, blacks make approximately \$10,000 less in mean income than do whites (Ciment 199). As a result of the discriminatory practices, some African Americans turn to “inappropriate behavior”—i.e., crime—because they feel they cannot advance financially by legal means. While Anderson is quick to observe that lower class whites and other minorities resort to crime too, the pattern is damaging to African Americans in particular because it perpetuates the stereotype that young black males are criminals.

Goldberg calls on this assumption in her construction of Fontaine. He is a thief and also a junkie. He cons others in order to obtain money for drugs and other commodities. Although, he has tried to hold down a legitimate job, his life of crime is more profitable. In fact, he makes enough money from his “inappropriate behavior” to fund a trip to Europe. The irony here is indicative of Goldberg’s broader aims. She constructs Fontaine as a stereotype in order to question the assumptions associated with the type. In this particular case, the simplistic code that maligns young black men as criminals is rewritten in terms of the economic and racial realities of the times: in the current system, Fontaine can live a far better life as a thief than if he adhered to legal

means. Likewise, Goldberg uses the flamboyant costume and irreverent discourse to call attention to our preconceived notions regarding a black male who might dress in such garb and use such language. Why, upon his entrance, did I associate him with a lounge lizard, a pimp, or a cool dude on the prowl?

Goldberg prompts reflexivity on the audience's part in three basic ways. As noted above, she uses and, by means of double-voice practices such as irony or parody, abuses the stereotype. Thereby, Fontaine's stereotypical traits become social gestures. They show "the habits and usages of the body" so that "the social laws under which they are acting spring into sight" (Brecht 45). Goldberg also aligns Fontaine's tricks with the trick of her performance. As a con man, Fontaine is a performer and, in the context of Goldberg's piece, he also teaches the audience how to perform. The double-code marks Fontaine as a performer/performance construct. His stereotypical traits are not essential or instinctual; they are constructed by him to fulfill certain purposes and, in turn, they can be de- and re-constructed. Lastly, Goldberg composes Fontaine so that over the course of his monologue he reflects on and re-experiences the epiphany that influenced a change in how he views and performs his life.

As Fontaine travels, his relationship to the world becomes less familiar. Accustomed to controlling others by means of his con game strategies, Fontaine finds that he is unable to call on these strategies once he enters unfamiliar contexts where people abide by different rules. For instance, when the stewardess tells the passengers to put on their seatbelts, Fontaine refuses and, when the plane takes off, he ends up head-over-heels in the aisle. His disregard for the rules of air travel mark him as a novice, a fool who "creepy-crawl[s]" back to his seat in embarrassment over his lack of knowledge and

control. Fontaine's liminal position—betwixt and between what he was and what he is to become—intensifies over the course of his travels.

When Fontaine enters the attic where Anne Frank and her family hid during the Holocaust, he finds himself at a loss. As compared to his customary loud and flashy style, the quiet of the attic and its loaded meanings overwhelm him. In an effort to understand the Franks' experience, he tries to embody it at the time of his visit. He enacts a completely still and silent body. Then, in an effort to share his experience with the audience, he asks them to try to embody the stillness too. A cavernous moment of silence is created in the theatre as both Fontaine and the audience attempt to better understand the Franks' situation by performing it. Afterwards, Fontaine reflects, "Nerve wracking, ain't it? Yeah, and I discovered just like you just did that I couldn't do it."

On the one hand, Fontaine's comment acknowledges that their mutual attempt to perform silence was unsuccessful in so far as it offered but a partial understanding of the Franks' horrifying circumstances. On the other hand, the performance indicates Fontaine's attempt to use performance for some other reason than a con. He assumes a body (of silence) that is not his own and, hence, the outcome is unpredictable. Fontaine cries. In embarrassment over his lack of control, Fontaine runs from the room and smacks into the sign that bears the quote from Anne Frank's diary, "In spite of everything I still believe that people are good at heart."

Coupled with his experience in the attic, the quote provokes an epiphany in Fontaine. He realizes that, despite her situation, Anne still saw the good in people. In broader terms, he discovers that his perspective on life is but one of the many ways people view and get along in the world. Fontaine's epiphany leads him to adopt Anne



Frank's words as a philosophy for his own life. The con man alters his orientation from that of a self-centered man constantly strategizing ways to control others to a man who empathizes with others and hence has a flexible orientation toward the issue of control. As Fontaine puts it, he realizes that "life is a constant live and learn."

Fontaine takes pleasure in telling the audience about the lesson in learned from Anne Frank. In recounting the story, he does not try to intimidate them. Rather, he talks with the audience, urging them to question their perspectives on unfamiliar or foreign peoples, practices, and situations. No longer threatened by unpredictable contexts, Fontaine relishes in the possibilities of the unknown.

Fontaine's new perspective is challenged by his experience with the Germans in the Black Forest. At first, he mocks the German's racist assumptions regarding his living in a ghetto and wanting to eat watermelon. However, his commentary serves as a starting point for an open discussion with the audience about the prejudices that both US and Germany people hold toward each other. Fontaine's chagrin arises from his view that the two cultures form their opinions based on television serials, World War II propaganda, and sporting gossip. In addressing the issue, Fontaine moves from being in control of the commentary to gaining input from the audience. They become part of the performance by answering the questions he asks.

Fontaine then reiterates an earlier point. He asks the audience to think about what it is like to be the "foreigner" in a given situation. Whereas he once felt that "everyone should learn English before they come to America," he now feels otherwise because "once you've been the alien you find out how hard it is to have to ask somebody where some shit is and then you find out what it takes to tell 'em. It don't take nothing but a

little bit of graciousness.” In so saying, Fontaine urges the audience to engage other people in a flexible and earnest manner.

Goldberg constructs Fontaine to highlight the main message of her show, which is to adopt a “live as you learn . . . from others” philosophy. By means of recounting and re-experiencing his stories, Fontaine embodies this message. When he first appears, Fontaine enacts an aggressive, consumer masculinity, specified in terms of a con man thief. In his selfish pursuit of material desires, he constantly aims to control others and the situation in which they find themselves. The rules of the con are his and they involve a physically threatening presence, aggressive discourse, and the savvy trick of offering himself as the remedy to the very lack he instills in others. Over the course of his monologue, Fontaine changes into a rather sweet guy who engages others in an earnest and gracious way and is flexible as regards issues of control.

Fontaine also embodies the message on the meta-level of performance. A stereotype to start, he proves to de- and re-construct himself over the course of his monologue. Thereby, the audience is prompted to learn deconstruction strategies themselves; to question essentialist assumptions regarding race, gender, and class. Significantly, it is by means of performance that Fontaine experiences his epiphany and teaches the audience how to question preconceived notions. In fact, over time, performance becomes the message. As Fontaine urges the audience to participate in the performance in various ways, they learn from Fontaine/Goldberg how to perform and Goldberg/Fontaine learns to adapt to the distinct audience assembled in the house each night. In the fictive reality of live performance, the regenerative potential of

communicating bodies is realized and, in this case, the agency is a multi-coded, African American confidence man/woman.

In the second monologue, the surfer girl tells a story in which four masculine characters, two masculine types, figure prominently. The “hunkola” represents the stereotypical dick or prick, a walking-talking phallus of aggressive male narcissism. The priest, nun, and the girl’s mother represent the institution and disciplinary discourses of the patriarchic Catholic Church. As is implied at the end of the girl’s monologue, in tandem, these two hegemonic masculinities prove to impact the girl’s life in a permanent corporeal way. She performs her own abortion with a coat hanger, which renders her barren.

As constructed in the girl’s narrative, the hunkola is his phallus. Given his “hunk-o-meat” label, the girl appears to view him as such and, given his behavior, so does he. After a brief exchange of greetings, the girl and he are “doing it,” after which he never calls her back. The hunkola’s identity is centered in his corporeal penis and the pleasure he derives from using it; an identity which is substantiated by the discursive mythology of the phallus as a symbol of “brute strength and size,” superior “will and conscious control,” and therefore “deserving of worship” and “even respect” (Bordo, “Reading the Male Body” 271).

Involved in the enactment and perpetuation of the self-as-phallus are aggressive and consumer/mirroring practices. On the one hand, the hunkola performs as a pure consumer. In control of the situation and as predicable as a cliché, he produces the self image he desires by making the girl into an object of the phallus, just as he might a car or truck. Once consumed, the girl herself is disposal while, as an object the hunkola now

owns, “she” reflects and confirms his desired image. On the other hand, this very image and those associated with it implicate aggression, brute strength, and control.

Aggression, then, is not only a means for producing the desired image in this case it is integral to it.

In his discussion of the male “conquest mentality,” Seidler observes a similar relationship between consumer and aggressive practices. He reflects that “[w]ithin a capitalist culture it becomes easy to identify happiness with material success” and to the extent that we accept “that goods alone can be trusted to bring happiness” (179). “Sex and love” become associated with this same “ethic” and, as a result, women (or the sexual partner) become goods to which one feels entitled. They serve as rewards for a job well done, whether performed in the board or bedroom (175).

Of intrigue in Goldberg’s construction of the hunkola concerns his race. While the performer, Goldberg, is black, the race(s) of the surfer girl and hunkola are not delineated. If interpreted as white, the hunkola gains the symbolic power attributed to the phallus by those, such as the hunkola, who desire it. However, if interpreted as black, the hunkola potentially becomes encoded with a racist discourse and mythology. Bordo explains that as associated with black men, the phallus becomes an “unconscious urge . . . devoid of [the] phallic will and conscious control” attributed to white men (270-271). In fact, the black man loses the symbolic (discursive) power of the phallus and is “turned into a penis. He is the penis” (Fannon quoted in Bordo 271). In similar terms, Eldridge Clever observes that the association of black man as phallus causes “blacks” to be “stripped of a mental life, which leaves them only a bodily existence” (Clever quoted in Johnson 123). While there is no doubt that such discourse has and continues to be

used to police the perceived threat of black men and their bodies, I find it intriguing that as contexted within Goldberg's performance the hunkola is advanced as a negative masculinity, regardless of his race. At best, man as phallus is a foolish mistake; at worse, a dangerous trap.

Goldberg's priest in a box metaphor implies how the priest is constructed and functions in the text. He is a masculinity whose corporeal and discursive practices are modeled in terms of the disciplinary constraints of the Catholic institution and patriarchy. In The Courage to be Catholic, George Weigel writes that a priest is governed by "the Church's sacramental vision of all reality—the conviction that the extraordinary lies just on the far side of the ordinary, through which the extraordinary is revealed" (159). In Frank's terms, a priest desires to achieve transcendence from gross materiality in order to access the sacramental vision and, thereby, lead his parishioners to a less sinful and more spiritual life. To do so, the priest enacts a predictable, controlled regimen that includes daily prayer, delivering homilies, hearing confession, and celibacy.

Weigel observes the importance of celibacy in Church doctrine when he notes, Every Christian is called to a life of chastity, which the Church teaches is one of the "fruits of the Holy Spirit"—those perfections that the Holy Spirit works in us that are anticipations here and now of eternal life with God. Chastity is the integrity of love, the virtue that allows a person to love in a way appropriate to his vocation. For the priest, chastity is lived through sexual continence. (156)

Since the priest's ideal is spiritual transcendence, he must deny the sexual desires of his corporeal body. He also is charged with communicating the Church's position on sex

and sexuality to his parishioners. According to Weigel, the position is less one of self-control than of self-mastery. He explains,

the Catholic sexual ethic is an affirmation of the gift of sexuality, insisting that sex reduced to another contact sport is dehumanized sex. The humanistic challenge embedded in the Catholic sexual ethic is best understood, not as a challenge to sexual self-control (a psychological category), but to sexual self-mastery, which is a moral category: the self-mastery that allows a couple to give themselves to each other in marital fidelity.(157)

Whereas self-control implies a denial of corporeal desires, self-mastery implies desire, a desire to discipline the body so as to master its corporeality.

The priest's disciplinary practices also include admonishing parishioners of the sin in their lives through confession, or reconciliation. The confessional is a large box, or free-standing closet, divided into two parts by a wall in which there is a screened window. The parishioner enters the box and sits on one side of the window and the priest enters through a separate door and sits on the other side. The rite of confession consists of a highly stylized repetition of predictable acts. The parishioner begins with the statement, "Forgive me father for I have sinned," after which she tells the priest how long it has been since her last confession. She details her transgressions and, then, the priest offers penance, or what the parishioner must do in order to cleanse herself of sin. The penance is a formulaic discourse and typically involves praying the Rosary, a literal repetitive act.

The priest's disciplinary regimen is both monadic and dyadic. On the one hand, he engages in monadic discipline in his lifestyle of prayer and celibacy. On the other

hand, the priest requires the corporeal presence of his parishioners to minister the scriptures and administer the sacraments. The dyadic discipline upholds the authority of the priest as a representative of the Church. In confession, the priest and parishioner are isolated physically from each other. Thereby, the sinful corporeal body is de-emphasized and mastered through the discourse of the confession.

The surfer girl's visit to the priest implies that she views him as a possible savior. He will help her resolve her dilemma regarding her pregnancy. Sitting in his half of the box, the priest is physically isolated from the girl and he enacts the fixed discourse of confession. However, the priest's control over the physical, corporeal world is upset by the girl's request that he help her with a corporeal problem, her pregnancy. Unable to think of an appropriate response, the priest closes the screen between the girl and himself and thereby attempts to regain control of the physical, corporeal world. He attempts to transcend it. The girl persists, invading his space through the front door of his side of the box. The priest in the box pops out and tells the girl, "Don't talk to me about this. I wouldn't understand," and sends her to speak with the nun.

Goldberg's use of the priest in the box metaphor emphasizes the institution in which the priest is situated. The place and practices of confession reproduce the doctrine of the Catholic Church and, in Goldberg's construct, the priests enactment of this doctrine is inflexible. He is unwilling to speak outside the box, to address the corporeal reality of a young girl who has engaged in premarital sex and is pregnant. Instead, he enacts the predictable, monadic, and corporeally-dissociated doctrine of discipline that fulfills his own transcendent ideal. A specific reason for his refusal to speak with the girl is that, according to the laws of the Church, he is not supposed to know about sex.

Within the context of the girl's story, the nun and her mother are reiterations of the priest and the institution he represents. Their practices reproduce the patriarchal "hard line" on premarital sex, pregnancy, and abortion. When the girl tries to engage the nun, the nun seethes and tells her that she has "blasphemed." Likewise, the mother casts the girl from their home. Like the priest, they attempt to control the unpredictable nature of corporeal reality by means of transcendent discourse and establishing physical boundaries. In sum, they enact "the box."

To start, the Vendor perceives and constructs the Old Raisin as a consumer masculinity. Just as he buys the Vendor's cart of knick-knacks, so too he assumes he can purchase her. At first, the Vendor resists but, upon hearing the terms of the exchange, she relents. In this way, both the Old Raisin and the Vendor commodify the other in order to fulfill their own desires. Over the course of the relationship, and upon having sexual relations with the Old Raisin, the Vendor's view of him changes. He becomes communicative in his desire of her and vice versa. The literal act of intercourse prompts a discursive understanding of the Old Raisin as unpredictable, dyadic, and fulfilled by his interactions with her.

In Looking Good: Male Body Image in America, Lynne Luciano observes, consumerism offer[s] ordinary Americans the ability to have leisure, beauty, and self-esteem at their fingertips, tailored to their individual needs. But consumption has another darker side: by creating insatiable desire, it also creates unappeasable discontent. Desire has become more than a craving for consumer goods. In our quest for the new, we search restlessly for new relationships, new love objects—even a new me. (206-207)



As constructed in the Vendor's narrative, the Old Raisin appears to have an "insatiable desire" for the Vendor as an object he can tailor to his individual needs and circumstances. He is rich enough to purchase not only her cart of items but the Vendor herself. He also is old and, while all consumers "quest for the new," his quest appears particularly urgent. To control or create the illusion of control over the inevitable decay of his body, he seeks a "new relationship," a "new love object," a new Old Raisin.

Like the prototypical consumer body, the Old Raisin engages in the repetitive act of consumption, purchasing cart after cart of items until he strikes a bargain for the Vendor herself. His practices are monadic in so far as he consumes so as to make the Vendor his own. His identity is located in the material objects and the image of a "new me" he seeks through their purchase. In so far as he is successful in tempting the Vendor to live with him—his purchase reliant on her purchase of him—he is fulfilled.

Once the two consumers set up house in the Old Raisin's mansion, his image of desire becomes clearer. He wants "nookie." On the one hand, his pursuit of nookie can be understood as just another act of consumption. He desires a "new me" through the purchase of the "new love object." On the other hand, his pursuit can be understood as earnestly dyadic. He puts his wrinkled, old body in an unpredictable, contingent situation in order to engage the Vendor as a companion. As the Vendor tells us, both she and the Old Raisin are fulfilled by the interaction.

After the Old Raisin's death, the Vendor expresses the pleasure she derived from his flirtatious pursuit of her, his playful humor, and his day-to-day companionship. The agency of her realization is the unpredictable, dyadic, and corporeally-associated act of

intercourse. It operates to re-function the Old Raisin's prior acts in terms of love and, in turn, she realizes her love for him.

The Old Raisin's age is important as it affects the agency of his consumption. As an old, wrinkled man near the end of his life cycle, his corporeal desires and presence are not threatening, except perhaps to himself. He never demands sex from the Vendor. Rather, he plays silly games in hopes that she finds in him her desire. In this way, the hard edge of consumerism, as narcissistic or indifferent toward others, is softened. Unable to reproduce the ideal masculine body, or love object, the Old Raisin plays with the image, reshaping it into a bittersweet subject of love.

The final masculinity constructed in Whoopi Goldberg Live is the nice guy, or as the female narrator puts it, the "amazing guy." In Frank's terms, the nice guy is a communicative masculinity. By means of his flexible and dyadic engagement of the woman, he helps her revise and celebrate her body and identity.

According to the speaker, a woman with cerebral palsy, the nice guy visits the nursing home where she works and, upon meeting her, pursues her. Despite her reluctance, the nice guy persuades her to go dancing and swimming with him and ultimately proposes marriage. Although it is not clear if the nice guy is indifferent or attracted to the women's corporeal body, it is clear that he is not threatened by it; by what, in our culture, is an unfamiliar, unpredictable body. Rather, he engages it, encouraging the woman to participate in activities she has avoided due to her own sense of lack, fear, or disgust. The nice guy's flexible orientation toward issues of control provokes the woman to accept and even celebrate the unpredictable aspects of her body and situations generally.

The nice guy, then, is associated with the woman's body, its possibilities, and also the possibilities of their bodies together. In abstract terms, the cultural coding of her body as degraded or monstrous is embraced and revised as regenerative by the nice guy. He finds her attractive and "foxy" and thereby his discourse calls into question assumptions regarding beauty, sex appeal, and normal/abnormal bodies in our culture. That an earnest dyadic exchange between the couple is integral to this process is evident in the women's growing trust and acceptance of his loving view of her. She disposes of the "victim" label and accepts his proposal of a future together.

Whoopi Goldberg Live is a multi-layered celebration of the possibilities that arise in the characters and in the act and agency of performance itself. In their monologues, the characters recount or experience an epiphany or provoke the same in others. Generally, the epiphany concerns the potential that lies in a "live as you learn . . . from others" philosophy. Such a philosophy requires flexibility as regards control and an earnest engagement of others. Fontaine's performance is a metaphor for what he has already learned. To start, he is a fast talking con man who works the audience as he might a mark on the street. However, as he recounts the epiphany he experienced in the attic where the Frank family hid, he re-experiences it. The effect of the experience, in the past and in the performance, is reflected in his attitude toward the audience. Fontaine engages them in a dialogue about ethnicities and, by means of the interactive dialogue, the "live as you learn" philosophy is advanced further. It is actually enacted in the space and time of the theatrical event.

The little girl who desires blond hair experiences her epiphany in her discussion with the audience. By means of the question and answer format, Goldberg prompts the

audience to teach the little girl to accept her black hair and race. They learn and enact the philosophy in and by means of the performance itself. The Vendor recounts her epiphany as she experienced it through her interaction with the Old Raisin. Just as he came to relate to her as a subject, so too she came to view and love him. The woman with cerebral palsy recalls how the “amazing” nice guy taught her to celebrate her body’s potential rather than be a victim to its limitations. Like Fontaine and the little girl, she encourages the audience to engage the unpredictable other(s) by inviting them to her wedding and the disco pool party that will follow it.

Goldberg’s message then is activated within the characters’ monologues and also between the characters, herself, and the audience. In the first few moments of his monologue, Fontaine tells the audience that they must respond to him and, later, reiterates the prompt when he teaches them about the conventions of the “fourth wall” (e.g., as used in Dreamgirls), and the lack of the same in this piece. In this way, Fontaine facilitates the interactive discussion regarding ethnicities that occurs near the end of his monologue. As noted, the question and answer format in the little girl’s address to the audience and the woman’s invitation to the audience to attend her wedding and pool party operate in a like manner.

Not to miss out on the interaction, Goldberg appears as “herself” in the final curtain speech. She greets the audience with a smile and then takes advantage of the rapport she established through her characters to discuss the show, her place in avant-garde performance, and the significance of a black woman staging a successful run on Broadway. By doing so, Goldberg acknowledges the show as a construct and her authorship of it. She also acknowledges the audience and lets them in on some of the

“backstage” politics involved in performance generally and performing on Broadway in particular. To avoid a pedantic address of these subjects, Goldberg assumes multiple and diverse character voices, just as she embodied a wide range of characters throughout the show. The vocal shape-shifting celebrates not only Goldberg’s versatility as an actress but, in light of her message, her flexible engagement of others through her corporeal body. To close, she thanks the audience for their “support of the arts” and for “coming out to see what they don’t know.” Thereby, Goldberg celebrates the part the audience has played in the show.

In and throughout her performance, then, Goldberg enacts practices of a communicative body so as to provoke similar practices in the audience. In other terms, she teaches her audience how to perform in a flexible, dyadic, and responsive way. Thereby, her message becomes the praxis of all those assembled for the performance.

In addition to the conventions discussed above, Goldberg draws on additional representational and presentational conventions to advance her message. The monologues are composed in a chronological or syllogistic sequence and hence are easy to access and follow. The characters are multi-dimensional in the expression of their thoughts and feelings. They also recount or experience an intense epiphany that further garners the audience’s empathy. They are rendered in a veris-realistic style and deliver their monologues in a spontaneous manner. In sum, they are composed in terms of stylistic codes the audience knows well and the general effect is that they are “real people.”

The intriguing exception to Goldberg’s use of realistic conventions is that the character’s exist within and in terms of the theatrical reality of the audience. They are on

stage, telling their stories to the assembled audience in the timeframe of the theatrical event. In this way, Goldberg can take advantage of the rhetorical effects of realism while avoiding the illusion that the characters exist in a time and space distinct from that of the audience.

A key advantage of this choice is that the audience must deal with the characters in terms of the social-historical reality they share—i.e., the here and now. While prompting audiences to respond to characters in this way can occur in terms of other social-historical realities, it seems Goldberg's strategy is the most direct and clear. It also is quite common among performance artists and autoperformers generally. Another advantage is that characters, such as Fontaine, the little girl and the woman with cerebral palsy, are able to interact with the audience in the ways I discussed above. By means of call and response and question and answer formats and by means of corporeal engagement, the characters entice the audience to perform the main message of the piece with them.

Goldberg's use of representational and presentational conventions imply trickster, boundary-crossing behavior on her part. Her trickster aims are stated explicitly in her curtain speech. She also uses them throughout the show. Interestingly, the characters who appear to embody her message and performance rhetoric most thoroughly are the male characters, specifically, Fontaine and the nice guy. On the one hand, we might read this choice as a subordination of female agency to the enhanced power of a male voice in the public setting. That is to say, in U.S. mass culture, men's voices are viewed as more persuasive, politically more powerful, in public settings than women's. In Gendered

Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture, Julia Wood substantiates this when she writes,

Language is not neutral. It reflects cultural values and is a powerful influence on our perceptions. Related to gender, language expresses cultural devaluation of females and femininity. It does this by trivializing, deprecating, and diminishing women and things defined as feminine. (117)

Goldberg's use of Fontaine and the nice guy may operate to "devalue" the voices of the female characters in so far as their voice and agency "book-end" the piece and because their practices epitomize the main message of the show.

On the other hand, we might understand Goldberg's choice as indicative of her view on gender. As Judith Butler might have it, she plays in the gaps of the gender binary. For example, given U.S. gender codes, Fontaine enacts a male-female character and gender when he engages the "silence" Anne Frank had to endure. The intersection of Goldberg enacting Fontaine enacting Anne Frank implies an overlap of gender experiences and practices. While performers have played opposite sex and gender roles throughout theatrical history, when coupled with Goldberg's main message, the enactment seems to imply a perspective on gender that is multiple rather than dual.

Goldberg also may realize that since she is a woman, a female perspective is privileged in her piece. Hence, to balance the gender scales and thereby further substantiate her message, she places the regenerative masculinities in strong positions in her piece and grants them the same potential she assumes herself.

In Whoopi Goldberg Live, a range of masculinities are offered. Most are constructed through the discourse of the female characters. Some of these, such as the

hunkola, priest, nun, and mother are quite fixed in their construct. Likewise, their behavior toward the female speaker is inflexible regarding issues of control and highly monadic in orientation. Other masculinities, such as Fontaine, the Old Raisin, and the nice guy, serve as examples of Goldberg's celebratory message that we should live as we learn . . . from others. By acknowledging that men can be the agency of this message, Goldberg enacts the very point of the message itself. She listens to and restores to the many good men of the world, their identity, place, and practices in it.

#### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> In its San Francisco debut, the performance was titled The Spook Show. Goldberg toured the show in Europe and the U.S. before the Dance Theater Workshop produced it in New York City under the new title.

<sup>2</sup> The Lyceum Theater is located in New York City's theater district at 149 West 45th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. The auditorium seats 924 patrons. In addition to seating in the orchestra section, mezzanine and balcony sections, there also are box seats available. Given the particular seat, there is a distance of zero to approximately fifty yards between the audience member and the performer.

<sup>3</sup> All quotations are drawn from the video, Whoopi Goldberg Live.

<sup>4</sup> Dreamgirls is a Broadway musical about a black women's singing group, similar to the Supremes. The libretto follows the women from their humble beginnings to their lives as superstars. The production is characterized by extravagant production numbers, consisting of elaborate scenery, lavish costumes, and complex choreography.

<sup>5</sup> The Cosby Show is a popular television sitcom that aired between 1985 and 1990 on NBC. The sitcom focused on a wealthy African American couple who live and raise their children in New York City.

<sup>6</sup> The Smurfs and The Justice League are cartoon shows that aired between 1976 and 1984 on NBC. The Smurfs are a group of small blue creatures that live in toadstool houses. The Justice League are super heroes from around the universe who use their superpowers to fight for justice in throughout the galaxy.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE HEGEMONIC AND MARGINALIZED MASCULINITIES IN THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE

In the fall of 1984 through the spring of 1985, writer and director Jane Wagner and performer Lily Tomlin previewed The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe in cities such as Seattle, Denver, San Diego, and Atlanta. On September 26, 1985, the show made its Broadway debut at the Plymouth Theater in New York City. The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe is a play about the absurdity of life. The characters seek to know why they exist and the nature of their relationship to others. They lament their failures and also pat themselves on the back for their individual successes. In regards to masculinities, the show finds fault with hegemonic males of an aggressive or disciplinary bent but builds a case for the benefits of a communicative if marginalized masculinity.

Tomlin began performing at nineteen as a stand-up comic at the Improvisation, a comedy club in New York City. Her skillful creation of characters landed her a part in Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In where she created the well known characters Edith Ann, a five year old hellion, and, Ernestine, the telephone operator. In 1977, Tomlin was awarded a special Tony award for her performance in Appearing Nitely, a one-woman show written by Wagner. She also earned four Emmy awards for television specials. According to Cynthia Carr, "Tomlin was inspired by performers like Ruth Draper, whose one-woman character dramas from the 1930s and 1940s she [Tomlin] heard on records." Her work also was influenced by the female comics of the fifties and sixties, such as Imogene Coca, Bea Lillie, and Lucille Ball (Artforum International 83).

Once inside the Plymouth Theatre, audiences for The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe sit in a spacious one thousand seat house before a proscenium stage graced with a red velvet curtain. According to John Gentile, the curtain rises to reveal a “few set pieces: two chairs, a stool, and a freestanding series of steps, all of which [are] of a slick contemporary design. The stage itself [is] draped in black” and a black cloth covers the floor (172). Susan Borey adds, “the set looks like the inside of a large black box. Minimally furnished . . . its starkness spotlights Tomlin’s ability to transfer a multidimensional, colorful, emotional, and noisy world from her imagination to the theater” (36).

Designed by Debbie Van Poucke, Bruce Cameron, and Ottis Munderloh, the light and sound cues help the audience distinguish between the characters as they come and go in the different scenes. The lighting also enhances the various settings in which the characters appear. For instance, one character takes a shower in a pool of flickering blue lights. While imitative of real life, the sound cues are exaggerated for comic and metaphoric purposes. For instance, when Tomlin pretends to push a shopping cart, the sounds of squeaky wheels are heard. When she stops to deliver a line, the squeaks come to a screeching halt.

The play is divided into two acts. In the first act, Tomlin performs a collage of monologues and dialogues that are loosely connected by the recurring appearance of a bag lady, Trudy. In the second act, Tomlin enacts the drama of three close friends over the course of fifteen years. Embedded in their story is the history of the contemporary women’s movement from 1970 to 1985. Also woven into the lives of the trio are the characters from the first act. To represent the various characters, Tomlin retains a

“neutral” costume of black dress slacks, a black blouse with a white collar, and flats.

According to Carr, the characters are what Tomlin and Wagner refer to as “culture-types” (Artforum International 81). Below I summarize the characters in the order in which they appear in the performance.

Following Trudy’s first appearance, Tomlin enters as Lily or herself. She is followed by Judith Beasley, a television spokeswoman for sexual gizmos. Chrissy is a dyslexic exercise enthusiast. Paul is a middle-aged bodybuilder. Kate is a wealthy socialite. Agnus Angst is a punk rock performance artist. Lud and his wife, Marie, are Agnus Angst’s grandparents. Brandy is a white prostitute. Tina is a black prostitute. Lyn is a divorcee with two kids. Edie is a black lesbian feminist, and Marge is a feminist who owns her own plant store. Other characters are constructed within and by means of the monologue and dialogues offered by the main characters. In my description, I focus on the male characters, Paul and Lud, and the men about which the female characters speak.

The performance opens with Trudy, a bag lady and the narrator of the show. She walks with a slump in her spine and a shuffle in her step. She “can’t walk too good” because she wears her “panty hose . . . roll[ed] . . . down to her ankles” (Wagner 20).<sup>1</sup> In her first appearance, she carries imaginary shopping bags whereas, later in the play, she pushes an imaginary cart. With pursed lips and squinty eyes, Trudy speaks directly to the audience at all times.

Trudy claims to send and receive transmissions from extraterrestrials that are in search of intelligent life in the universe. As she sees it, other characters in the play are people in the transmissions. Her task is to show the extraterrestrials “the variety of life

on Earth, and she feels uniquely equipped for the job: her umbrella hat picks up signals from everywhere. Trudy is a living TV set, with lots of channels and great reception” (Rafferty 104). As narrator, Trudy also serves to provide transitions between each of the scenes. She offers a general description of the characters and the setting in which they appear. This information is inflected through the transmissions she sees and her conversations with her space chums. She offers but two direct comments about men and both are in the form of a joke. At one point, she quips, “When a man gets hanged, he gets an erection, but when a woman gets hanged, the last thing on her mind is sex” (131). Later, she observes, “We got new evidence as to what motivated man to walk upright, to free his hands for masturbation” (133).

The second character on stage is Lily [Tomlin] who welcomes the audience and offers a few comments regarding the themes of the show. During her introduction, she reflects,

I think you should know I worry a lot. Like the Nobel Sperm Bank. Something bothers me about the world's greatest geniuses sitting around reading pornography and jerking off. I worry that humanity has been “advanced” to its present level of incompetency because evolution works on the Peter Principle. (25; emphasis in original)

The “peter,” of course, is a euphemism for the penis.

Upon completing her introduction, Tomlin switches into the character of Judith Beasley. Judith stands erect with eyes wide open and speaks in the even paced and enthusiastic manner of a commercial spokesperson. Her monologue is a sales pitch for a line of vibrators called “Good Vibrations.” Judith describes one of the gizmos and

contrasts it to her husband's sexual performance, saying, "As a love object, it surpasses my husband Harold by a country mile." She clarifies that until she used the product she was a "semi-nonorgasmic woman" (33).

Next to appear is the character Chrissy who engages in an aerobics workout routine as she speaks to a friend located on stage with her. Executing exercises, such as dog kicks and arm circles, Chrissy tells her friend about her failures and frustrations. She can't hold a job and has problems dating.

Chrissy then steps downstage right into a pool of blue light. The sound of a shower fades in. Chrissy takes a quick shower, towels off, and then dresses. As she puts on her makeup, she tells her friend, "At the Phobia Institute once, this guy in group told about a friend who was terrified of driving on the freeway. But finally she conquered her fear and got so she thought nothing of driving on the freeway. And guess what? She died in a freeway accident" (39). As Chrissy packs her makeup into her gym bag, she laments further, "How about this health club! Talk about false hopes. The place to get thin and meet good-looking men. The good-looking men here are mostly looking at themselves" (47). Chrissy tells her friend she is running off to an interview and then skips off stage left.

A male equivalent to Chrissy, Paul, a middle-aged bodybuilder, is featured in the next scene. He walks with the "confident knees-bent stance of someone carrying what he knows he can carry" (Carr, Artforum International 80). He also displays squared shoulders and an extended chest as if he is quite muscular. Like Chrissy, he speaks "in scene" to a friend, Ted in this case, while he exercises. To start, he punches a speed bag and then he works with a set of dumbbells. In a low and husky voice, he asks Ted, "This

bodybuilding bit, Ted: lately I've been thinking what's the point a lot? Like what's the point being a health nut by day if you're a coke head at night? What worries me, I'm getting burnt out on both" (48). Paul wipes his brow with his forearm and then executes alternate curls. He says, "I used to get a charge knowing my body was so great I could turn heads. Now, when I see some girl digging me, I don't get turned on; instead I get this trapped feeling" (48). Paul takes a chug of water, wipes his brow again, and performs another repetition of curls as he reflects, "I blame a lot of what I'm going through on Penny—the divorce thing sure threw me for a loop. Took the wind outta my sails" (48). As he struggles with another set of curls, he recalls his relationship with Penny. "Penny and I, we had a romance something like Lionel Richie might sing about. Then one day, I'm in the den, waiting for the game to start, I see this magazine quiz that Penny's been filling out: 'On a Scale of One to Ten, How Do You Rate Your Man?' She'd given me a three on everything" (48). Paul puts down the free weights and rubs one of his biceps as he queries, "Hell, who knows what's considered a good lover these days anyway? Every time you turn around there's a new erogenous zone you gotta explore: clitoris, vaginal, X marks the G spot, the back of the knee" (50).

Paul rises and runs his hands through his hair as if he is washing it. He then opens his locker and retrieves a photograph of his son, Paul, Jr., which he shows to Ted with pride. Then, as he shaves, he admits to Ted he was not faithful to Penny. "Okay, all right, I was no angel. One night—Penny was pregnant; she wasn't feeling well. We'd just moved; there was a lot of tension. So I pop into this disco to decompress. I see this hot-looking chick, Marge. I'd seen her there before—a real knockout" (50). Although he

did not have sex with Marge, when he told Penny about Marge, their marriage was never the same again.

Paul applies after-shave and then pulls on his underwear, snapping the waistband and adjusting his package. As he puts on his pants, socks and shoes, he recalls, “Marge starts asking me all kinds of questions about my family background—my talents, my IQ. She loves it that I have these eyes like David Bowie. Turns out she wants me to be a sperm donor to these two friends of hers who want a baby. Then she gives me this turkey baster and wants me to ejaculate into it” (50). Paul then ruminates,

Lately I been thinking . . . that maybe I’ve got this secret kid. Chances are I have, ‘cause I probably got a sperm count like the national deficit . . . There was one time on TV I see this genius—child prodigy or something—playing the violin like he was possessed. I almost switch channels, when it suddenly hits me like a karate chop—the kid looks like me when I was *his* age. I just about freak. I try to get a close look at his eyes. I could swear one was blue and one was green. (51; emphasis in original)

Paul pulls on his jacket and adjusts his necktie as jazzy music fades in. Paul says, “I can’t stop thinking about it. I ask myself, ‘What’s he like?’ ‘Is he happy?’ ‘Does he have the proper male role model?’ ‘Did the bonding thing happen, I wonder?’” (52). Paul begins to sing the lyrics to the music playing in the background and then he struts off stage not to be seen again.

Tomlin re-enters as Kate, who sits down and flips through the pages of a magazine. Her attitude is confident, even arrogant, and when she speaks her voice is tinged with the condescending air of an upper class socialite. She directs her monologue

to her friend Lonnie who is positioned on the other side of an imaginary partition in what we learn is a beauty salon.

As Kate scans the pages of the magazine, she complains about her prior hair appointment, "That's what comes of letting Bucci 'the arrogant' do our hair, I suppose. I am here hoping Anouck can do something to undo the harm he's [Bucci's] done" (53). Kate recalls the exchange between Bucci and herself, "Oh, I said to him, 'Please, Bucci, nothing too radical.' But by that time this side was already too radical" (53). Kate stops reading the magazine to inform Lonnie, "I'd like to say to him, 'As long as you insist on calling yourself an artist, then go to Palm Beach and do oil portraits.' Well, no, no, I have never actually talked to him that way; can you imagine what I would look like if I ever actually talked to him that way?" (55).

Kate complains of ennui and informs Lonnie that a person can actually die of boredom, after which she confesses, "I am having an affair. But not for long, I think. It's one thing to tolerate a boring marriage, but a boring affair does not make sense. I am talking about it because I think I want Freddie to hear about it and get upset. Of course, it has occurred to me he might hear about it and not get upset" (55). She complains that Freddie, her husband, ignores her, recalling, "Last year, I lost the tip off my little finger . . . in a dreadful Cuisinart accident. To this day, he has yet to notice" (57).

Lud, Marie, and then Agnus Angst appear in the next scene. Lud and Marie are the grandparents of Agnus Angst who is a fifteen year old punk performance artist. Due to the wild ways of Agnus and her mother, and a series of failed financial ventures, Lud and Marie are "flabbergasted" as well as "old-fashioned" grandparents (Kroll 66). They live in Greenwood, Indiana.



Trudy introduces the scene, telling the audience, “In suburbia, an older couple sits watching TV. They’re watching that woman who used to sell Tupperware” (66). The woman Trudy refers to is Judith Beasley who is now selling vibrators. Lud lowers his newspaper and addresses the focal point that references Marie, “Talkin’ about vibrators that way! The things you see on TV these days. What kind of crazy world do we live in?” (66).

Legs crossed and at work on her cross-stitch, Marie asks Lud a question about a quotation she can’t remember by a person she can’t recall. After Lud chugs his coffee, he berates Marie for not being able to remember the quote or the person who said it. As he picks at his teeth with a toothpick, he says, “Well, if I couldn’t think who it was said somethin’, or what it was they said, I simply would not bring up the subject. Marie, I’d simply keep my mouth shut. Somethin’ I wish you’d consider more often” (67). Marie reproaches him and, gesturing at her with his toothpick, Lud replies, “You can’t concentrate. You’ve got a brain like a hummingbird . . . . Makes you appear dense and at the same time flighty. Did you ever see a hummingbird try to make up its mind which flower to land on? Well, picture your brain in place of that bird and you have a clue as to what I have to put up with” (70). Lud wheezes and snickers. Marie retorts that some people “have the brains of a male chauvinist pig,” punctuating her assessment with “Oink. Oink” (70). Lud rolls the toothpick in his mouth and asks, “Now who’s being hateful?” (70).

The sound of an electric garage door interrupts the happy couple. Lud hops out of his chair, ascends the small stair unit, and cups his hands as if looking out of a window. He observes, “I see somethin’ glowing out there. Somethin’s comin’ up the driveway

. . . . I never seen anything like it” (70). The unexpected visitor is their granddaughter, Agnus, whom Tomlin embodies at this point. She bangs on the door and demands to be let in. As she enters and slams the door shut, the lights black out abruptly. Trudy then appears and offers a few words, after which she returns us to Greenwood.

Rock and roll music fades in as Lud spins up from one of the chairs and shuffles in a small circle. He points his toothpick in the direction of the music and screams, “Agnus! Turn that junk music down! You better learn some manners, young lady, or else . . .” (79). Marie observes that Agnus is different. Lud agrees and then sits down and pulls a pack of cigars from his shirt pocket. He retrieves a cigar and then remarks, “You know what your problem is, Marie? Too negative” (81). He lights the cigar and continues, “You’re negative about ninety-two percent of the time.” Marie assures Lud that she is right ninety-two percent of the time. Lud taps his cigar on an ash tray and launches into an explanation of why Marie is wrong:

Oh, hell, if you’re so damn right all the time, how come we have a daughter we don’t understand too good, and a pink-haired punk granddaughter got the manners of a terrorist? Leaves dirty fingerprints in the cheese? Wears somethin’ makes the garage door flap up? Old man Sanders stopped me today; says he saw somethin’ odd-lookin’ in the yard—says it was downright eerie! Worried we might have poltergeists. I had to say, “No, that wasn’t no poltergeist, that was my granddaughter.” (81)

Lud rises and tries to break down Agnus’ door with his shoulder. It won’t budge and Lud complains of his bursitis. Agnus opens the door intending to leave. Lud and Marie ask her where she is going. Lud threatens her, “Young lady, you tell me where

you're going or you can march that little Day-Glo fanny back in the bedroom and stay there till the paddy wagon comes" (82). Agnus leaves and Marie starts to cry. She reminds Lud of the times when they would make chocolate milk mustaches to make Agnus laugh when she was young. Lud tells Marie that when Agnus comes home, "We'll get up. Have some chocolate milk. You and me make little milk mustaches, see if she remembers" (83).

After a blackout, the lights rise to reveal Brandy, hunched over as if she is leaning through a car window. She stands upright, chewing gum, and calls out to Tina that the guy in the car wants both of them. The pair sit down, as if in the backseat of a car. Over the course of their dialogue it is clarified that they are prostitutes. Their customer however is a journalist, not a "John," and he is interested in collecting their story. Brandy speaks very quickly and sits upright in her seat whereas Tina slumps and has a low voice. Brandy is white and Tina is black.

Brandy tells the customer, "You're the second guy this month want to take out trade in this bizarre fashion. Last one was more normal. He ended up wantin' my life history and a blow job" (119). The prostitutes tell the journalist about a dog named Princess who traveled with a bum named Jim. Then they discuss a gay hairdresser by the name of Bucci. This is the same Bucci who cuts Kate's hair. Brandy tells the journalist that Bucci is a "sensitive type, soft" and talks to her as if she were his sister (128). It turns out that, in need of money for his beauty school education, Bucci came to the two women for advice on how to become a male prostitute. However, as Brandy explains, the women realized that he would never make it on the street. Brandy recalls,

So we're walkin' across the pier to this bar when this car pulls up and this guy yells, "Hey sweetie, could I get a ferry here?" I go over to the car, I come back, and the kid's standing there with this look on his face like if you was to see right before your very eyes, all at once, every sad movie that was ever made. This is the look he had. (128)

Brandy explains that Bucci thought the man in the car was making a crack, "you know 'ferry'—'fairy.' He was gay, and it hurt him" (128). Bucci told the women that the shame he felt in response to the "fairy" comment was just like the shame he felt when his "macho he-man father" discovered him wearing his mother's bathing suit (129). The women decide Bucci is too sensitive to be a prostitute and they offer to fund his education in return for free hairstyles for the rest of their lives. Bucci ends up being a top hairstylist at a Fifth Avenue salon.

When Tina and Brandy exit the car, they realize they should have asked the journalist to pay and credit them for their story. As Tina claims, "We can write as good as he can write if what he's writing is what we're talking. We should've got co-credit, or something. When the article comes out, it's gonna say, written by him. It should at least say, 'Lived by Brandy and Tina'" (130).

In the second section of the show, Wagner interweaves the story of Lyn, Edie, and Marge with the feminist movement as it played out between 1970 and 1985. The "herstory" is composed to alternate between Lyn reading her journal in the present and corresponding scenes in the past. Lyn then serves as the narrator and protagonist of the story. She is an upper middle class white woman with a blossoming career and two kids. She also is in the process of getting a divorce from her husband Bob. Edie is a black

lesbian militant feminist. Marge is a white middle class woman who embraces both femininity and feminist ideals. She seeks the love of a man and, when unfulfilled, she turns to alcohol and eventually suicide. In my description, I focus on the scenes in which the women discuss men directly.

In the opening scene, Lyn is holding a garage sale on the front lawn of her Geodesic Dome home. Among the items, she finds her journal. She opens and reads the first entry, and then comments, “I can't believe Henry Kissinger actually said ‘Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac’” (140). Then she reads a timeline of events, such as “Boy Scouts of America allow girls into its Explorer Scouts Division” and “Girls are appointed as Senate pages for the first time in history,” (140, 141). Edie enters and the scene shifts to a Consciousness Raising Session where the women are reviewing major events in the women’s liberation movement. Lyn exclaims, “And oh, is this a breakthrough, or what? Since 1920, the Big Ten has had only men in their marching bands during football season. This season, the University of Minnesota has decided to let women march with the men during football games” (141). At another session, Edie suggests, “Let's have champagne. This is a night for celebration. Not only did the Sisters get to watch Billy Jean [King] beat Bobby Riggs’ chauvinistic butt, but guess what? I got a job at The Free Press doing my own feature” (143).

At the same meeting, the women debate the merits of femininity. When Lyn compliments Marge for having good taste, Edie remarks, “Oh, Marge has great taste in everything, except when it comes to men. Marge, the "Lib" in Women's Lib stands for Liberation not Libido. I mean, what good is it, Sis, to have sexual freedom if you become a slave to it. You've got Cosmo damage” (145). Marge supports her position by

contrasting Lyn's breasts with her own, "I'm looking at my breasts, I'm looking at Lyn's, and they do not point upwards like they're 'supposed to.'" Lyn replies, "Marge, I just don't give a shit anymore," and Edie adds, "Hey, and mine aren't big enough to point in any direction, and I never did give a shit, and who says we need to shave under our arms? Ta-dah!" Edie shows her underarm hair in response to which Marge exclaims, "Oh, no! What is that? Spanish moss? How did you manage that much growth? I mean, the Women's Movement is still young." Edie ends the argument, "Your plant food, Marge . . . and a Gro-Lite." Lyn then editorializes, "Body hair! A sure way to tell the radicals from the middle-of-the-roads like me. Maybe I could let hair grow a few days on my legs, but under the arms? Edie, you're probably on some FBI list of the politically dangerous" (146).

The next scene focuses on Lyn's relationship with one of her early boyfriends, Peter. In her journal, Lyn writes,

I'm just going to have to tell her [Edie] I'm sorry about the Jo Ann Little thing, but I promised Peter I'd go skiing and I'm keeping that promise. I cannot be what Edie wants and still be all Peter needs me to be. Edie's right when she says Peter's suppressive. He is. But no more than Edie (I'd like to tell her). Why do I always put myself in a place where I'm trying to please people who seem impossible to please? I saw a Mary Tyler Moore rerun tonight and I couldn't help seeing how much I'm like Mary, and Peter is self-involved like Ted Knight, and Edie is just like Lou Grant. (147)

After the ski trip with Peter, Lyn confides in her therapist,

So, Doctor, we started fighting on the ski lift and Peter let slip he didn't think a woman could make a good President and that the feminist movement was making a monster of me. It was the worst fight we ever had. He said Edie was poisoning my mind. That my CR [Consciousness Raising] sessions were making me conscious of everything but his dissatisfaction with the relationship. And he said . . . and this is what really hurt . . . he said that I used to be so sexy, but now I'd even lost my sex appeal. (148)

In addition to feeling pressure from Peter to abandon her feminist concerns, Lyn also is injured on the trip. She tells her therapist, "I bolted off that ski lift so mad. Halfway down, I slammed smack into a pine stump. I know he saw it, but he skied right past me" (148).

The doctor suggests that Lyn try a role-playing exercise in which she enacts both Peter and herself. Lyn agrees and, as herself, screams, "Peter, I am sick of this suppressive, you-do-as-I-say macho number you have been putting me through" (148). As Peter, she replies, "And I am sick of this suppressive feminist trip you've been dumping on me. I'd like a glimpse of the nurturant female you and your butch/rad/fem friends harp on so much. I want a woman, not a feminist!" Lyn reproaches Peter, "Ah ha! All it is with you is sex, sex, sex!" Peter replies, "And all it is with you is sex, sex, sexual politics! I have had it!"(148-149). The exercise results in Lyn realizing Peter and she have failed to meet each other's expectations and she decides to end the relationship.

Later in the year, Lyn tells her doctor about her new boyfriend, Bob, who she met at a transcendental mediation center.

I met somebody, Doctor . . . . I'm at the TM center in Santa Monica waiting to get my mantra and I meet this really great looking guy who's waiting to have *his* mantra checked. He was wearing Indian cotton drawstring pants, Birkenstock sandals and a T-shirt that said "Whales Save Us." I liked him right off. He has a kind of a, I don't know, a post-psychedelic air about him like somebody who maybe in college one time had read Gurdjieff or the Tibetan Book of the Dead on acid. We split to this vegetarian place nearby, the Golden Temple. I had something that tasted like a tofu melt. Talking with him was such a high. He listens with an intensity most other people have only when talking. Doctor, I knew he was "getting" me on so many different levels. He could just look at me and it was like I could feel all my chakras opening. I remember our exact conversation—word for word. I felt so totally comfortable talking about myself. (153; emphasis in original)

Lyn also tells the therapist that Bob "told me he was building a Samadhi flotation tank [and] that I should use it when he finished it because it was good for creative blocks. He invited me to his place" (156).

Lyn proceeds to tell her friends, Edie and Marge, about Bob. She relates, "Next to you, Edie, Bob is the truest feminist I've ever met. He's the only man I've ever known who knew where he was when Sylvia Plath died. He has a master's in Business, but what changed his life: he read The Wall Street Journal on acid. Bob has this dream: to be a holistic capitalist" (158). Edie replies, "Well, I'll believe this Prince Charming when I see him," and Marge complains, "'How come I never meet a guy like that?'" Edie responds to Marge's complaint, "Because you go to the discos instead of the TM center,



Marge.” Marge admits, “You’re right. The last guy I went to bed with, I woke up in the morning, I practically had the imprint of his coke spoon on my chest” (158).

Bob and Lyn go on a second date, which Lyn records in her journal.

In the hallway, outside his apartment, I heard New Age music. I smelled musk-scented candles. When he opened the door, his face was flushed; I knew that he’d just come down from his anti-gravity boots . . . . We talked about E.S.T. I joked and told him I got several things. I got whatever you get even if you’re not sure what it is you got or even that you got it, then that’s what you’re supposed to get. I also got that he was the kind of person I could share what I got with . . . even if we weren’t sharing it in bed. Bob showed me the Samadhi isolation tank and then I stretched out on his water bed. He gave me a shiatsu massage. He knew I had seminar stiffness. We smoked some paraquat-free Panama Red and then we made love. Afterwards, we talked into the night. Bob poured out all his feelings about things that concerned him: mega-vitamin therapy, solar energy, the ecosystem and ending world hunger through tofu consciousness. We made love again. And then stopped and had a Trail Mix snack. We talked till dawn, exchanging Patti Hearst theories, and then we fell asleep. By morning we were in love. Bob is a dream come true . . . a New Age Ward Cleaver. (162)

The couple fall in love and eventually marry.

Following their marriage, Lyn realizes that the “New Age Ward Cleaver” comes with some flaws. For one, he is not mechanically inclined although he wants to build a “Geodesic Dome” home. Lyn reminds Bob that he’s “been working on that isolation

tank since before we met and it still leaks” (166). Bob is hurt by Lyn’s remark and, from here on, their marriage begins to sputter.

In one instance, Marge shows up at Bob and Lyn’s home after she has been raped. She is drunk. Rather than showing sensitivity toward Marge, Bob says, “I’m glad to see you looking so good” (171).

Lyn’s friends are a constant source of tension between Bob and her as well. Edie is especially critical of Bob. On a visit to their Geodesic Dome home, Edie asks,

Bob, does this tank still leak, ‘cause listen, now it squeaks, too. Lyn, you know, you should sign up Bob for Pam’s next seminar, “Anima, Animus, Animosity.” I got to commend you, Bob: Your solar thing you’re into is admirable, but his catalogue here, “Karma-Krafts.” Some of this stuff you’re selling is . . . New Age kitsch, now admit it. Look at this—aura goggles. . . . pyramid salt and pepper shakers, “Key to the Universe” key chains. (173, 174)

Edie taunts him further,

Bob, what yellow brick path are you on? Trying to mix consumerism with higher consciousness, you’re liable to have a big karmic debt to pay. Hell, Bob, I recall how you used to say how we all had to look at success in a new way or we’d never be truly successful. I used to dig you talkin’ like that ‘cause it felt like you meant it. I thought you were one of a handful of people left who cared about not selling out. Remember all that shit about “only wanting to do well if you could do good?” (174)

Bob replies, “You’ll be interested to know I’m not doing either. Now, isn’t there a Flo Kennedy lecture or something you have to rush off to?” (174).

Lyn's perception of Bob changes when their twin sons, McCord and Robert, are conceived and eventually born. Bob responds to the news of Lyn's pregnancy by singing Paul Anka's "Having My Baby" all day long (175). Lyn objects to the song's lyrics because she considers the twins theirs, not his. Further, after the twins are born, Bob expects Lyn to take care of them, him, their house as well as hold down her job. To balance the responsibilities, Lyn suggests, "Bob, quick—take one of them! Honey, we have our hands full! We can do it. We'll get super-organized; this time we'll split the chores right down the middle. We can have it all. We already have it all. We just got it all at once, that's all" (176). Bob proves unresponsive to her suggestion as indicated in a call Lyn makes to Bob from her office. She asks, "But, Bob, how could you forget that you have the twins tonight? But you finished your sensitivity training last week. Why would you sign up for an advanced class? Honey, I don't think I can take you being any more sensitive. Oh, I'm sorry. Listen, you're not tearing up, are you?" (177).

Eventually, Lyn has her fill of Bob and she lets him know how difficult it is to be a wife, mother, and working woman:

Please don't complain about the cleaning not being back; I can't take one more complaint! I'll tell you why the cleaning's not back. I forgot to take it, okay?  
Bob, you expect too much of me. It's one thing to be a modern housewife, career woman, mother. I could handle being modern. Modern is popping a frozen dinner into the microwave, but modern isn't good enough for you. No, I have to be organic, holistic, learn millet recipes, grow wheat grass, make beet juice, wait around for sourdough to rise. I'm so sick of your disappointment in me; I'm disappointed too. I see now you're not so damn Zen, after all; you're passive

aggressive. Somehow, we both mistook that for spirituality. And your acting like you've transcended your ego is the biggest ego trip of all! (185-186)

In a conversation with Edie, Lyn realizes that the main problem with her marriage is that neither Bob nor she wants to assume the duties of a homemaker. She tells Edie, "It's clear what Bob and I both need: a wife!" (186).

Lyn and Bob's marriage dissolves when, after having quit her job to care for the home, Lyn discovers Bob has been unfaithful to her. She exclaims, "How could I not have known you were involved with someone. I can't believe it" (189). They divorce and Bob becomes a part-time father.

In her journal, Lyn also discusses her boss, Sindell. While her job with Sindell "isn't all that great," Lyn rationalizes that since Sindell "has a great job . . . there's lots of growth potential . . . for him and then for me, I'm sure" (166). However, as time passes, Lyn realizes that Sindell is not easily impressed. She recounts, "he still thinks I'm not a good team player, that I do things my own way, but he's less threatened by that now, I think" (173). Further, when she becomes pregnant, she is afraid to tell Sindell because "it might affect my job" (175).

Lyn decides she needs an "assertiveness training" course in order to "confront Sindell about [getting a] raise" and also to "confront my assistant, Tom. He made a pass at me. In front of everyone else. I think he really meant it as a put-down—like some kind of perverse power play" (177). Instead, Sindell suggests that Lyn take a course in corporate behavior, designed by men for women. Lyn tells Edie, "Sindell really wants me to do this seminar/conference thing. I'm embarrassed to tell you: 'Woman on the Way Up.' I felt insulted at first, but it's just his way of telling me he wants me to be a

corporate clone” (181). At the seminar Lyn learns how to keep plants on her desk, wear scarves, and dress in other non-threatening ways. Despite or because of the plants and scarves, Lyn is not promoted by Sindell. She confronts him, arguing,

I really have to say to you I was sure you were thinking of me for that promotion. I mean, for you to hire someone from outside the company to do a job you *know* I can do because I have been *doing* it . . . *and* my own job . . . . But I’m really glad it’s all out in the open. You’ve been holding out this new position, making me try to prove myself to you over and over and over again by outperforming everybody else, staying late, taking work home. (188-189; emphasis in original)

Amidst the turmoil of her life, Lyn decides to see a doctor who dismisses her anxieties as PMS. Lyn asks the doctor,

You’re sure, Doctor? *Premenstrual* syndrome? I mean, I’m getting divorced. My mother’s getting divorced. I’m raising twin boys. I have a lot of job pressure—I’ve got to find one. The ERA didn’t pass, not long ago I lost a very dear friend, and . . . and my husband is involved . . . not just involved, but in love, I’m afraid . . . with this woman . . . who’s quite a bit younger than I am. And you think it’s my period and not my life? (191; emphasis in original)

After the visit to the doctor, Lyn visits with Edie. She tells Edie about her new job with an import/export firm based in South Africa.

To close the show, Trudy reappears and observes that the audience has experienced an “electromagnetic field day” (201). She tells the audience that she and her space chums have waxed “philosophic” about the day and then she shares her insights:

All this searching. All these trances, all this data, and all we *really* know is how *little* we know about what it *all* means. Plus there's the added question of what it *means to know* something. Scientists say for every deep truth discovered, the opposite is also true. So when we get the feeling we're going around in circles—no wonder, we *are!* (201; emphasis in original)

Trudy closes the show by observing that the meaning of life is not as important as the way people behave and that “if life is meaningless—this is the greatest mystery of all!” (203). Lastly, she remarks, “at the moment you are most in awe of all there is about life that you don't understand, you are closer to understanding it all than at any other time” (206).

The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe is about the meaninglessness of searching for a finite meaning in life. Instead, the show urges that meaning lies in how we behave toward others and that intelligent behavior is flexible and responsive to those with whom we interact. In large part, the show advances this message by means of irony. That is, the characters are not intelligent in these terms. Whether male or female, they search for a finite place and set of practices that confirm their own being in the world.

In Frank's terms, the characters are predictable in their search, aiming to control their “being” behavior and, in many cases, the behavior of others. They also are monadic to the point of narcissism and dissociated from a corporeal identity and agency. They think in abstractions and aim for an ideal place of being as the meaning of life. Lastly, as a lot, they are desperately unhappy and unfulfilled by the lives they lead. It would appear then that they are bodies of discipline and, specifically, bodies ruled by and

aiming to obtain their own individual place in the world. In light of the feminist concerns of the piece, the rule and aim of individuality is double-edged. In the battle for equal rights for women, one of the core questions is whether a woman should concentrate on asserting her own rights, specific to her case, and thereby aid the movement. Or, should a woman focus on the collective struggle, despite the particularities of her life? Or might a woman fuse the two and thereby avoid the ideological enactment of manifest individuality or essentialism? It is in light of these concerns and questions that I analyze masculinities that arise in The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe. While, as a whole, the play constructs characters disciplined to enact the ideology of individualism, taken separately, variations arise.

Paul and the men Chrissy constructs in her monologue are disciplined bodies. They engage in the regimen of bodybuilding in an effort to realize the corporeal ideal of male strength and fitness, which it appears is a substitute for what they (really) lack: namely, a healthy relationship with another person. Chrissy characterizes the men at her gym as narcissistic. They are so centered on “looking at themselves” that they have not engaged her (47). While Chrissy’s evaluation may tell us more about her and her view of the club as a “place to get thin and meet good looking men” (47), her criticism is not unfounded. In “Bodybuilder Americanus,” Sam Fussell observes that the bodybuilder’s “performance lies in being looked at, ogled, appraised. For the modern-day coxcombs . . . the stare is the ultimate award” (45). In other words, according to Fussell, the aim of the bodybuilder is not to build a body so as to engage others. Rather, the aim is to build a body that others view as art and as an art object. Fussell connects this aim of men with the “traditionally female role: body as object” (45; emphasis added). Given Fussell’s

own comparison, between the modern male and the practices of dandies, rakes, and coxcombs throughout the centuries (43-45), one might question just how “female” the tradition is. Likewise, one might question Fussell’s alteration of a gendered female role to a gendered male aim, where agency is allowed if also not assumed. Nonetheless, the alteration is at work in Chrissy’s monologue too. The men at the club choose to look at themselves rather than Chrissy whose aim of meeting men goes unfulfilled.

Like Fussell, John Miller focuses on the aesthetic principles and aims of men in the US and what they might tell us about contemporary masculinities. The “list” form Miller uses to identify the principles is indicative of the principles themselves: concrete, pragmatic, and painfully partial.

1. Bigger is better.
2. More is better than less.
3. The obvious is always superior to the subtle.
4. Louder is better.
5. The inappropriate is usually preferable to the appropriate.
6. Aesthetic values are an intolerable abstraction.
7. Art and the appreciation of aesthetic values are forms of work.
8. Art and aesthetic values are mysterious.
9. Art and notions of the beautiful are incredible. (75-79)

Miller’s critical aim here is negative of course, directed at what the “new man” in America appears to like and how those preferences mirror his own self image and identity. In other words, the big, obvious, loud, inappropriate, concrete workhouse image of an SUV, or a towering skyscraper, or a bulging bod offer the reflection of self that men desire. Further, the constant production and consumption of such imagery (in material products) has reduced the American landscape to a narcissistic reflection of men and their aesthetic.



In The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe, the bodybuilder Paul is emblematic of this male aesthetic although he appears less than fulfilled by it. Paul's aim is a big, muscular body that proclaims itself as such. In order to achieve this body, he engages in the physical labor, the sweat, and grit, of bodybuilding. As Michael Korda observes of masculine ideals generally, Paul's ideal is "formed around the image of strength and work" (57). It is based in the concrete material body, not an abstraction, and therefore it is able to be objectified, "ogled, appraised" (Fussell 45). In Paul's terms, it is a body that "turn[s] heads" (48).

However, Paul does not find the experience satisfying. When a woman looks at him, he feels "trapped" (48). The objectifying gaze assimilates his body as its own. The feeling of commodification is compounded when Marge asks him to donate his sperm to her friends. As an object, the body is able to be fragmented into pieces, the desired bits used and the rest disposed. Having made his body into an art object and placed it on display, Paul loses control over the body image and hence the masculine ideal. This lack is literalized in the failure of his marriage, the loss of his son and the children conceived through artificial means. The irony is that Paul continues his disciplinary regimen and, at the end of his monologue, locates his identity in the same fragmented bits desired by Marge and her friends. He "can't stop thinking about" the children of his sperm he will never know (52).

Paul is evocative of narcissism at its most complex. Stephen Frosh writes, "If you are narcissistic, it is claimed, you are struggling to preserve a shaky selfhood through the grandiose gratifications achieved by manipulating others; you also protect that self by avoiding dependency and real interpersonal

relationships. Narcissism is not simple self aggrandizement born out of overvaluation of the self, but is more likely to be a desperate set of strategies for survival in a setting in which the self seems to be in danger of breaking down. (3)

In Frosh's terms, Paul's bodybuilding regimen, cocaine use, womanizing, and sperm obsession are strategies he uses to build a self image he desires (e.g., the body as art object) but in light of the same image breaking down. In other words, Paul's narcissistic strategies contribute to his fragmentation.

Seidler addresses a similar notion when he observes that narcissism leads to failed relationships because it prevents a full engagement of others. In sum, one sees one's self when one looks at others. A related consequence is that narcissists are unable to negotiate authority because the self is premier. In bodybuilding terms, relationships falter because others prove unwilling to be a bicep or tricep that one assumes to control through a series of repeated acts.

The characters of Lud, and the men in Lyn's life are constructed as various types of dominating bodies in the performance. In general, the men perceive others as a threat to their rightful place and practices within a given context. To minimize or silence the threat, they call on hegemonic discourses of gender and sexuality.

Lud is threatened by the "crazy world" in which he lives (66). Specifically, it appears he is threatened by the craziness of women—selling vibrators on television, wearing pink punk hairdos, and thinking like a hummingbird. To gain control over the unpredictable world of women, he uses insults and aggressive gestures. He polices his granddaughter's movements, attempts to break down her door, and threatens to call "the paddy wagon" (82). He calls her music "junk" (79), and maligns her as a "terrorist" and

a “poltergeist” (81). Likewise, he picks at his wife with his toothpick of insults, calling her “dense” and “flighty,” “hateful” and “negative” (70, 81). But Marie will not be silenced. As she sees it, Lud is a “male chauvinist pig” (70).

In Male Chauvinism! How it Works, Michael Korda observes that the “male chauvinist is not the proud figure that men take him to be, insisting on his legitimate superiority over women, but rather a man who cannot accept responsibility for the failures in his own life and therefore assigns them to women” (47). Lud’s failed financial ventures, marriage and, as he sees it, the failures of his daughter and granddaughter are not his fault; rather, women and, specifically, Marie are to blame. Korda explains male chauvinists not only transfer their failures to women but “classify . . . people by biological function, as if this were a determining factor in entirely nonbiological activities and situations” (48). In other words, Lud assumes that because Marie and Agnus are women, they are naturally “flighty” and “eerie” whereas, because he is a man, he has the natural right to demand their compliance in the rule of his domain.

Korda also observes that while “[m]asculine ideals “are formed around the image of physical strength and work . . . the modern male chauvinist does not possess or require this strength.” Rather, “chauvinists tend to be aggressive in their relationship to women, at least in the verbal sense. They want to impress, seize, capture, and subdue women” (51). While Lud enacts such characteristics, it appears he is unsuccessful in fulfilling his aims. Agnus comes and goes as she pleases, indifferent to Lud’s threats, and Marie is far from subdued by his insults. In fact, in the final moments of the scene, she gains control of the situation, reminding Lud of the chocolate milk mustaches the couple once made to

make young Agnus laugh. He complies with her desires and suggests they do the same when Agnus returns.

In recalling and acting in terms of a past memory, both Marie and Lud attempt to re-function the crazy, unpredictable world in which they live. Such a strategy might be understood as nostalgic, or the desire for an idealized past that never existed. While, upon returning home, Agnus may not appreciate her grandparents' efforts, at the very least the couple have negotiated a truce based on a shared experience rather than in perpetual opposition.

The national figures and events that Lyn and Edie list at the beginning of the second section of the play represent patriarchal institutions, such as the Boy Scouts, Big Ten Football, the US Senate, and professional sports. Lyn finds such institutions epitomized by the Kissinger statement she reads, "Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac" (140). In other words, men are fulfilled by their control of social and cultural institutions and their ability to exclude minorities, women in this case, from participating in them. The "aphrodisiac" high arises from hegemonic discourses and practices. However, in her piece, Wagner implies that women are complicit with the patriarchal institutions that regulate social life. According to Wagner, one key way women enact complicit practices is by adhering to norms of feminine beauty, or the beauty myth. By means of how they view and treat their corporeal bodies, women conserve the institutions and discourses of men.

In The Centerfold Syndrome, Gary Brooks explicates the beauty myth as it is constructed by men's desires. He writes,

Men are very excited, very turned on, by looking at a woman—a certain type of woman, presented in a certain way, doing certain things, or giving off certain messages. Men are aroused by “sexy” women, that is women who fit into a certain physical category—women who men describe as “buxom,” “shapely,” “comely,” “fetching” or “alluring;” women who have “supple bodies,” “full, swelling breasts,” “long tapering legs,” or “firm, rounded bottoms.” (111)

Whether such desires are actual or a construct of the media designed to sell products to a certain market, women comply with men’s desires. Marge worries about the upward lift of her breasts and both Lyn and Marge shave their legs and underarms. The ideology of the beauty myth is embedded in their critique of Edie’s body hair. Marge maligns it as “Spanish moss” and Lyn aligns it to “the politically dangerous” (146). Edie’s opposing view highlights the media’s role in perpetuating the beauty myth. She tells Marge, “You’ve got Cosmo damage” (145).

Following the review of gender relations in the US, Wagner sets her sights on the specific men in Lyn’s life. As constructed in Lyn’s journal or by means of the scenes the women enact, Peter appears to be a ““suppressive, you-do-as-I-say macho”” male (148). He is aggressive in his demands. According to Lyn, he “needs” for her to attend to his desires (147). Peter’s desires are sexual as evidenced by his telling Lyn that she “*used* to be so sexy, but now [she’d] . . . lost [her] sex appeal” (148; emphasis in original). Peter Blames Lyn’s problems on her ““sexual politics,”” claiming “the feminist movement” had made “a monster” of her (149, 148). She is no longer ““a woman”” but ““a feminist”” (148). By means of sexual discourse, then, Peter instills lack in Lyn and thereby controls

the relationship. His discourse polices her practices, implying the damage they have done to her sex appeal as a woman.

Lyn's reflections on Bob reveal that he changed over the course of their relationship. Her term, "New Age Ward Cleaver" (162), epitomizes the changes. To start, he enacts practices associated with a communicative masculinity. In his new age way, he listens to and empathizes with Lyn and gives freely of himself. Bob "gets" Lyn and apparently the reverse is true too. Indifferent to control, fulfilled, and dyadic, Bob is a "Prince Charming" in Lyn's eyes (158).

After they marry, Bob displays oversensitive behavior. He is hurt by Lyn's remark about his leaky flotation tank, cries easily, and takes advanced classes in sensitivity training (177). Mary Chapman and Glen Hendler argue that sensitive men use sentiment to control women (2). Because sensitivity is gendered as female in US culture, an oversensitive male poses a threat to a woman's understanding of herself and him (4). In a sense, the woman's sensitivity/femininity is tested by means of how she responds to the man.

However, Bob's sensitivity is short-lived. Over the course of the marriage, he becomes more like Peter, self absorbed and insensitive. For example, when Marge is raped and she seeks comfort from Lyn and Bob, Bob dismisses the incident by assuring her she looks "so good" (171). In this case, Bob calls on the discourse of beauty to rewrite Marge's ravaged body so that he does not have to deal with it. His discourse is embedded with his desires and his fears of the female body and, in this way, he performs a discursive rape. He controls Marge's corporeal reality through his (mis)representation of it.

Bob becomes a dominating, hegemonic male. When he learns that Lyn is pregnant, he sings “Having My Baby” (175). Lyn is upset because the lyrics imply that he views the baby (or babies) as his, not theirs. After the birth of the twins, Bob’s claim to a “Ward Cleaver” place in the household is evident in his expectation that Lyn fulfills the roles of mother, wife, maid, and working woman. Susan Bordo critiques this common expectation of women when she observes,

the feminist ideal of an egalitarian domestic division of labor . . . appears no match for an ideology that insists women must continue to bear the major responsibility for cooking, cleaning, and child-care even when they are also working full-time in jobs and professions formerly reserved for men. (“The Sexual Harasser” 71)

The multiple expectations of women operate as a threat. Either the woman fulfill her duties or she will lose her husband and/or her job. In an effort to save her marriage, Lyn quits her job but nonetheless loses her husband too.

In Lyn’s characterization of her boss, Sindell, he is an aggressive, hegemonic male. He appears threatened by her competitive drive, her lack of team work, as he puts it (173). As a result, he sends her to a seminar to learn how a woman should behave in a corporate institution. At the seminar, Lyn learns how to display plants and accessorize with scarves. Sindell’s aim is to make Lyn into a “corporate clone” (181), by (re)shaping her consciousness so that she enacts practices that conserve the corporate patriarchy (Cockburn 82). In other words, the seminar redirects the energy of aggressive women—a trait valued in men—to domestic concerns of household décor and fashion. Thereby, the dominant place and practices of men in the corporation are retained.

In her study of women in corporate institutions, Cockburn was surprised to find that many women comply with the gendered system, as indicated by the many women who prefer not to be called a feminist. Cockburn gained a better understanding of the women's position when she spoke with the men. Cockburn recounts,

I met few men in the company who did not use the term in a frankly prerogative way. Some felt, yes, there were a few "feminists" in the firm and they were notable mainly for carping about minor details of behavior (rejecting little courtesies). Such feminists were distinguished from the great majority of "reasonable" women. "Women's libbers" out there were portrayed as harsh, strident, demanding, uptight, aggressive, vociferous, dogmatic, radical, and overly ambitious. They "can't take a joke" and they are zealots who wear crusading badges. (84)<sup>2</sup>

In his attempt to reform Lyn by sending her to the seminar, Sindell reveals his fear of feminism. Threatened by it, he attempts to silence it, fully backed by the institution in which he and Lyn labor.

Lyn's assistant, Tom, pursues a different tactic than Sindell to gain control over Lyn; namely, sexual intimidation or, as Lyn puts it, "a perverse power ploy" (177). Since Lyn is Tom's boss, he cannot demand her acquiescence as can Sindell. Instead, Tom calls on the male chauvinist view that he has essential, biological needs and hence the right to "come on" to Lyn. By asserting his sexual dominance as natural, Tom implies that a refusal on Lyn's part is unnatural. Tom's tactic then is to instill lack in Lyn and thereby gain the upperhand in their relationship.



When Lyn reflects on her doctor, she constructs him as a dominating male also in so far as he dismisses her problems as a result of PMS. Thereby, he draws on the “factual” discourses of science and medicine to dismiss on-going social and cultural problems as temporary and physiological. From his perspective, Lyn’s corporeal body is at fault here, nothing more or less. On the other hand, as Esther Rome explains,

[t]he medical treatment of premenstrual syndrome, or PMS, is one more step in the continuing medical treatment of women’s lives, that is, the labeling of increasing numbers of normal events as appropriate for medical “expertise” and treatment. Katherina Dalton, the world’s foremost proponent of progesterone therapy for PMS, who has run a PMS clinic in London for thirty years, claims about half of all women become “ill” with PMS. She calls it “the world’s commonest disease.” We need to recognize there are cycle changes which can be very uncomfortable and debilitating. Recognizing this as a fact of life for some women and not a defect in their characters is helpful and freeing. This does not mean the cycle changes are an illness. The illness label reflects a strong anti-woman bias. Treating women with strong cycle changes as ill is similar to treating pregnant and menopausal women as ill. (145)

Whether used to perpetuate the medical institutions or minimize other possible causes, the diagnosis and discourse of PMS are aimed at creating an illusion of control, of scientific mastery, over the unpredictable bodies of women.

In contrast to the disciplined and dominating masculinities, a communicative masculinity is offered as an alternative in The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe. As constructed by Brandy and Tina, the hairdresser Bucci represents this type.

Brandy relates, he “just wants to talk. Talks to me . . . like I’m his . . . sister” (128). Apparently, the three friends are fulfilled by their talk and, thereby, they build a relationship that is flexible and responsive to their individual and group needs and desires.

In Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture, Chapman and Hendler observe that “sentimentality and the public display of emotion are conventionally seen as feminine characteristics. Nonetheless, [t]here is space in American public life for sentimental men: big boys do cry, even when they become president” (1). According to Brandy, Bucci is a “sensitive” man (128). His sensitivity is due to the verbal abuse he received from his “macho he-man” father (129). Further, precisely because Bucci displayed his sensitivity in public, Brandy and Tina were able to help him. Or, more accurately, the three friends figured out a way they could help each other. Unlike all the other men in the show, Bucci is portrayed as loyal and a man who keeps his word.

In Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone, Martin Levine claims,

one cannot speak of a singular definition of homosexuality any more than one can speak of a singular monolithic gender identity for all males or all females. There are many homosexualities, variations of homosexual identity and behavior that are dependent upon different race, ethnicity, age, and of course, gender [factors].

(1)

The diversity of gay types include “gay liberationists,” “Twinkies,” “drag queens,” “leather men,” and macho “clones” (Levine 1-25). Based on Brandy and Tina’s

characterization of him, Bucci appears to be a “Twinkie.” The term implies a man who is physically attractive and feminine to a degree. He is sweet, pretty, and lightweight, like a Hostess Twinkie.

Nonetheless, Bucci has a healthy sense of his own masculinity. In Seidler’s terms, his relationship with Brandy and Tina is fulfilling because his identity is based in supporting, rather than controlling, others. Due to his marginalized status as a gay Twinkie, he relies on Brandy and Tina for their advice and support and returns their generosity with his own.

In The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe, Tomlin uses a combination of both representational and presentational practices to construct masculinities that are broad “culture-types” (Carr, Artforum International 81). As familiar types, the male characters are able to be accessed easily by the audience and hence their function in the play accessed too. Whether the prototypical narcissist, reactionary grandfather, or New Age guru with a transcendent ego, all the men service the feminist agenda of the piece. Given the period in which the play was written, the agenda is proffered in a didactic, if also understandable, manner. The men are veris-realistic cartoons, such as was Archie Bunker in the popular sitcom, All in the Family. They speak and behave like “real” people but are limited in their complexity.

While the culture-types aid access to the characters and message, the dense collage form Wagner uses to compose the scenes operates differently. The absence of a chronological syllogistic story line and the unexpected interweaving of the characters throughout the piece create the “crazy world” that Lud observes, in the theatrical reality of the audience. Like many of the characters, the fragmented form threatens to break

apart at any moment. In this way, Trudy's message regarding the search for meaning in life is advanced.

To lend some coherency to the chaos, Wagner draws on narrative frames. Throughout the show, Trudy offers a descriptive context for each scene and, in the second half of the show, Lyn reads from her journal. The narrators, Trudy and Lyn, also function to prompt critical reflexivity on the audience's part by commenting on the characters and asking questions the audience might ask. While an answer often is implied, it rarely is stated directly.

In The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe, Wagner and Tomlin do not presume to prescribe meaning to the audience. Rather, they offer a theory regarding meaning and its relationship to how we behave toward each other. By means of showing how the various culture-types behave, they leave the final verdict to us. As I see it, Wagner and Tomlin criticize hegemonic masculinities in favor of a marginalized communicative ideal. In other words, a bodybuilder and a hairstylist do battle and the latter surfaces as "dominant" in this fictive performance text about intelligent life in the universe.

#### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> All direct quotations from the performance are drawn from the published script. See Wagner.

<sup>2</sup> In Breaking With Tradition: Women and Work, the New Facts of Life, Schwartz and Zimmerman support Cockburn's claims when they reveal how corporations in the early nineties asked women to choose between their careers and motherhood. All of the women the authors interviewed were not planning to have children because "they all assumed [it] would jeopardize their careers" (86).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF MASCULINITY IN SEX, DRUGS, ROCK & ROLL

Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll is a solo performance text written and performed by Eric Bogosian and directed by his wife Jo Bonney. It was first performed on February 8, 1990 at the Off-Broadway, Orpheum Theatre in New York City. In the performance, Bogosian portrays eleven male characters in various contexts reminiscent of the late eighties and early nineties. According to Bogosian,

“At its deepest level the show is about responsibility, guilt, and impotence. These are the real pillars of the contemporary climate. It used to be people heard, ‘sex, drugs, rock and roll,’ a pink cloud would come over them. They would think fun! fun! fun! But that idea has changed. Sex per se carries the stigma of AIDS, and drugs are another epidemic, and rock and roll is in a very sour stage right now as we watch these geriatric bands hobble around stage trying to squeeze one last droplet of meaning out of that which has essentially become meaningless.” (quoted in Rose 8)

Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll calls for men to take responsibility for the consequences of their consumption and perpetuation of “meaningless” images and products. Bogosian urges men to claim the guilt associated with casual sex, drug abuse, and violence. The performer also prompts men to reconsider their relationship to power in order to evoke change in the world in which they exist.

Bogosian, an Oberlin College graduate, began his career as a performer in the late 1970s in avant-garde performance spaces like The Kitchen in New York City. He made a

name for himself among the early performance art monologists as the obnoxious club meister, Ricky Paul, in The Ricky Paul Show. The show illustrated Bogosian's interest in and ability to play morose, manic characters. With his Drama Desk Award winning piece, Drinking in America, Bogosian demonstrated his ability to portray characters like alcoholics, derelicts, and suburbanites with a critical edge. His second solo drama, Talk Radio, is about the life and eventual murder of abrasive radio host Barry Champlain. In an interview with Joel Rose, Bogosian articulated four common characteristics of his shows: "they are energetic, funny, not too light, and are emotionally taxing to do" (quoted in Rose 7).

Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll is a montage of eleven first person monologues: "Grace of God," "Benefit," "Dirt," "The Stud," "Stag," "Bottleman," "Rock Law," "X-Blow," "Live," "Dog Chameleon," and "The Artist." In both open and closed performance situations, the characters offer a range of stories and anecdotes. In some, the economic class of the character is emphasized, as is the case with the wealthy, has-been Rocker in "Benefit" and the panhandler in "Grace of God." In "The Stud," "Stag," and "Rock Law," callous sexualities define the characters. Others, such as "Dirt," "X-Blow," and "Dog Chameleon," feature characters on the edge of insanity. For the most part, Bogosian models his characters in the style of psychological realism. The actions, costume, props, and sound effects are verisimilitude to real life. The characters speak in "in scene" time and in a manner that appears spontaneous. They are cast in the representational rather than presentational mode. Bogosian wants the audience to perceive them as actual people, not performed or artificial constructions.

As noted above, Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll premiered in the Orpheum Theater, which is an old proscenium style theater that seats approximately seven hundred fifty audience members. A simple velvet curtain masks the stage and, when raised for Bogosian's show, it reveals a minimalist set composed of a scrim, irregularly shaped flats made out of pipes and chain-link fencing, a modern style chair, and a small side table. The simple set design substantiates the show's emphasis on characters.

Likewise, Jan Kroeze's lighting design seems to enhance the psychological dimensions of the characters. For example, in one scene, a character babbles about wanting to be normal while he is dimly lit with a single spotlight. The created effect suggests that the character is isolated from the rest of the world as he sees it. In another instance, an urban street rapper stands before a large blue scrim. Stark and abstract, the resulting image implies the rapper's desire to dominate the world.

Jan Nebozenko designed the few sound cues in the show, which are largely verisimilitude in effect. When a character throws a beer bottle, the crash of a bottle against a metal garbage can is heard. In another scene, a busy lawyer's office is created by the sound of three ringing telephones. The aim of the sound design is to support the representational reality of the characters in scene.

The play opens with the sound of a blaring guitar and the image of Bogosian standing behind the scrim in the pose of a person playing an air guitar. The music fades out and the scrim rises quickly as Bogosian crosses downstage and launches into the first monologue of the play.

In "Grace of God," Bogosian plays a bum who we learn has just been released from Rikers Island, a penitentiary near Manhattan. Pacing along the curtain line of the

stage and speaking directly to the audience throughout the monologue, the bum's main aim is to panhandle money from them. He wants money for drugs although he claims he is "not a drug addict" (Bogosian 5).<sup>1</sup> The bum uses three strategies to curry favor with the audience: self-pity, guilt, and intimidation. The bum claims that he has a medical condition that his insurance will not cover so he uses street drugs to dull the pain. He offers multiple reasons why the audience should pity him, such as a dysfunctional family and inadequate social systems. When self-pity fails, the bum attempts to arouse the audience's sense of social guilt. He tells them that he is a human being just like them and deserves their help. Angered by the audience's lack of response, he tells them that they have the chance to help someone right in front of them instead of someone in "South fuckin' Africa ten thousand miles away" (6).

Having completed his pitch, the bum attempts to collect money from the audience. He walks along the edge of the stage and extends a paper cup as he repeats, "Thank you very much, God bless you." If one of the theater patrons gives him money, he replies, "Stay guilty." If the patron withholds money, he says, "I really feel sorry for you man" (7).

In the next scene, "Benefit," Bogosian plays a commercially successful British rock and roll singer who is being interviewed on a television talk show. Bogosian uses a closed focus during the monologue, directing his character's responses to an imaginary host on stage.

The scene is a parody of commercialized British bands and rockers of the 1960s, such as the Rolling Stones, who, in the last twenty to thirty years, have returned to the commercial stage for one last hurrah. For the most part, the Rocker talks about the drug



culture. He raves about how much fun it was to do drugs in the sixties but encourages people not to do drugs now. The Rocker explains,

I was a bona fide drug addict. I used drugs every single day for five years . . . . I used to get up every morning, before I even brushed my teeth, I would smoke a joint. While I was smoking the joint I'd pop a beer. While I was sipping the beer, I'd cook up a spoon of cocaine, heroin—whatever was lying around. Shoot it right into my arm, get completely wasted . . . . Flip on the telly, get high some more . . . maybe order up some lunch . . . have some girls over, get high with them . . . fool around with the girls, get high some more. I did that every single day for five years. (10-11)

The Rocker then reveals his drug epiphany, “You see, Bill, that’s the insidious thing about drugs—you don’t realize . . . uh . . . I mean, you’re having such a good time, you don’t realize what a bad time you’re having” (13). A slight pause follows and then the Rocker tells the host about the events that led him to kick the habit. He was in a hotel room with women, drinking and doing drugs, when he turned on the television and was saved by Phil Donahue. Donahue’s rant against drugs inspired a change of heart in the rebellious rocker. He tells the host that he is so strongly against drugs now that he might report drug users to the police.

The Rocker also tries to cast himself as a politically correct philanthropist but, as it turns out, he is a self-aggrandizing racist. The Rocker intimates, “I mean, I can understand if you’re talking about some Negro guy or Puerto Rican guy in the ghetto on drugs—I can understand that. But in my case it was such a tragedy when you think about it. Such a waste of human potential. Such a waste” (14). The Rocker tells the host that

his band is working on a benefit for the Amazonian Indians. After an offensive remark about the ways the Indians lead their lives, he relates that the band is going to buy them things they “really need,” such as “digital wristwatches, Sony Walkmans, cigarettes, and cigarette lighters” (17).

The Rocker stands and flashes the peace sign to the audience. He then exits as taped applause echoes through the auditorium.

Bogosian contrasts the wealth and hypocrisy of the Rocker with a bum in the next vignette, “Dirt.” The bum is hunched over at the neck and stands with a slump in his spine. He speaks to the audience in a gruff voice with an accompanying cough and spit reminiscent of a Scotch drinker with a three pack-a-day cigarette habit. He scratches his hair repeatedly and picks at the crack in the seat of his pants. He moves in circles with large arching steps that sometimes result in him speaking with his back to the audience. The derelict complains of “Shit on the ground, shit in the air, it’s a bunch of shit if you ask me” and indicts the human race for the polluted state of the rain, rivers, and oceans (21). He rants, “The rivers are polluted . . . . And where do the rivers come from, huh? They come out of the mountains, and the mountains are full of hikers and hunters and cross-country skiers. What are they doing? Pissing on every tree, shitting behind every bush” (22). The bum punctuates his utterance of the words “pissing” and “shitting” by pretending to defecate and urinate.

The bum further explicates how human beings are the cause of water pollution when he ruminates,

And then the river gets bigger and it goes by the city, where they got even bigger pipes choked with all the slop from millions of toilets and garbage disposals and

hospital bed pans and laundromats and car washes and fried chicken places and pizza parlors and whorehouses and Ukranian restaurants . . . . And all this goes into the river, and the river goes down into the ocean. (23)

People's pleasure crafts and garbage scows also are to blame. Then, in a grotesque bit of visual enhancement, the bum notices something on his shoe and walks over to the edge of the stage and scrapes his foot on the stage lip. The innuendo is confirmed when the bum mumbles, "Flush the toilet, that's what I say" (25). The bum's statement has far reaching connotations, which are further manifested in his closing actions. As if trapped in the toilet bowl of his creation, the derelict "everyman" walks in circles, hobbles upstage and then, as the lights fade to black, vomits.

Bogosian re-appears in a stage right spotlight as "The Stud." He stands with one hand on his hip and with the other holds a longneck bottle of beer from which he takes an occasional swig. The Stud speaks in a slow, easy-going Texas drawl as he explains,

Sometimes, when I'm in a bar, having a drink with some fellas, one will make an idle comment like, "How does that guy do it? He always gets the girls!" I remain quiet when I hear such remarks. I like to keep a low profile in regard to my "extracurricular activities." I don't need to advertise. I know what I've got. I'm endowed. (27)

After explaining that he has average looks, an average build, an average intelligence, and a menial job, the Stud narrows his focus to explicate his god term and trait, "endowed."

The Stud believes that "sex is what everyone is basically interested in, great sex with great looking, great fucks" (30). He takes a sip of the beer and then holds the bottle with the base at his crotch, visually referencing his endowed status, and says, "I've got a long,

thick, well-shaped prick.” He then claims that men who work out and dress in expensive clothes are compensating for what he has between his legs and that, although he is average in every other way, his sexual prowess gets him the prettiest girl in the bar every time.

The character then tells the audience what it is that women really want. Although they may speak of their boyfriends’ and husbands’ gentle or dependable attributes, women actually prefer his “wonderful cock . . . so big, so hard, so unlike anything they’ve got at home” (29). He explains that he can make women cry tears of joy, beg him to tear off his clothes, and faint because of his ability to excite such intense orgasms.

In a moment of self-reflexivity, the Stud anticipates and counters the audience’s suspected view of him. “I know what you’re thinking. This guy is pretty screwed up. He’s lonely. He’s obsessed. He’s got no love in his life. Don’t tell me about love. I got love. I always keep the choicest for a daily visit . . . that’s love. Right?” (30). In other words and as the Stud implies, love for him is sex without commitment and although he may “sometimes . . . feel guilty,” his guilt like his organ is an endowment. “It’s like I’m living in a color movie [and] everybody else is in black and white” (30). In a likewise cocky conclusion, the Stud admits that his organ is a tough burden to bear but bearing such an endowment might as well fall upon him.

In the next scene, “Stag,” the scrim is lit royal blue and Bogosian appears in a gray T-shirt with the sleeves scrunched up to his shoulders. He stands in the middle of the stage, legs spread, and one arm poised as if he is in the act of throwing something. In the other hand, he holds a beer bottle. When Bogosian begins to speak, the character and situation are defined further. In a closed performance situation, Bogosian enacts a street

tough with a Bronx accent who is playing football with his friend Terry who is located “in” the audience. After beaming Terry in the head, the Tough apologizes and then begs his friend to go buy him a pack of bargain brand cigarettes. After his friend leaves, the Tough greets a new character, Joey, who is his drug dealer and to whom he relates a story about a bachelor party he attended the previous night.

In telling the story, the Tough alternates between comments directed at Joey in the present and re-living the events of the past. He uses in scene loci to talk to Joey and to create the conversations between the characters at the bachelor party. He physically embodies the characters as well.

The story begins with his friend Frankie arriving at the party with the reluctant groom Louie. To celebrate Louie’s upcoming nuptials, they have five cases of beer, three cases of champagne, four bottles of Jack Daniels, an ounce of heroin, half-a-pound of pot, and two prostitutes they have hired for the night. They also have a porno flick in which a milkman has sex with a housewife. “I don’t think it was a real milkman,” explains the Tough to Joey. The Tough makes pumping gestures with his fist when he describes the pair “screwing on the ironing board” (33), and further explicates the plot when he explains that the housewife also has sex with a UPS man and a dog.

The Tough tells Joey that the groom Louie seemed to enjoy the party although, as the Tough sees it, “Guys get married and they never have fun anymore. Might as well shoot ‘em in the head and bury ‘em” (35). He explains that, unlike a bachelor, a husband cannot hang out with his friends, get stoned, and sleep with a different woman every night. According to the Tough, Louie had a similar epiphany at the party and the Tough had to restore him to his marital intent: “Louie, Louie, you gotta get married, they already

hired the hall . . . . You gotta get married, Louie—ya grandmother made lasagna for four hundred people” (37).

The Tough, Frankie, and Louie go to McDonalds where they end up in a fight with some members of the Hell’s Angels. According to the Tough, one of the members “isn’t even a human being, he’s just this side of a mountain, sitting there. Guy’s got a shaved head, a tattoo of like Satan or Jesus or some fuck on his forehead, big bushy beard, ring through his nose. Guy’s just sitting there” (39). The “inhuman” biker and his friends grapple with the Tough and his friends who escape when Louie vomits on the biker.

The trio shows up late to the wedding and it has to be rescheduled, which motivates the Tough to plan another bachelor party. As a coda to his story, the Tough turns his back and “pees” and then turns around to zip up his pants. As he makes a quick exit stage right, the Tough throws the beer bottle into the wings.

Bogosian reappears as “The Bottleman” who we learn is a homeless man who collects bottles and cans to make his way in the world. The character faces the audience but talks in a detached way as if something else is on his mind. He seems suspicious of everyone. He constantly hitches up his pants and pats his hair. He talks quickly, “I don’t like to complain. I like to stay positive. Stay on the sunny side of the street. You give me a pack of cigarettes, egg salad sandwich, cup of coffee, a newspaper, someplace to sit, and I’m happy—I’m happy” (45). The irony in his claim is palpable.

Although the Bottleman claims he needs little to survive he appears desperate, as when he describes, “Back in the old days, I used to weigh a lot more than I do now . . . . I don’t have that problem anymore. I’m on the egg salad sandwich diet now. One egg

salad sandwich every two days . . . you lose weight every day.” The Bottleman’s stutter and halting delivery further enhance his frail condition and confused state of mind.

Jumping from topic to topic, the Bottleman explains that he has no companions and, due to safety concerns, cannot afford to sleep since “the guys on the street, they like to fight. I don’t get that luxury. I’m on my second set of teeth, I’m missing a kneecap, I can’t hear in one ear. I’m like the bionic man without the hardware. I’m no Cassius Clay. I’m no Cassius Clay” (49).

As with the class contrast between the the Panhandler and the Rocker, Bogosian contrasts the Bottleman with a corporate Rocklawyer in “Rock Law.” The scene begins with the noted character jumping out of his chair as he yells into a telephone,

Frank. Frank. Frank. What did he say? He’s gonna sue me? Did you tell him who he’s fucking with here, Frank? He’s fucking with God, Frank—did you tell him that? Did you tell him what God does when he gets fucked with Frank? Ever hear of Sodom and Gomorrah, Frank? That’s what I’m gonna do to his face. I’m gonna blow him away, Frank, I’m gonna peel his skin off, I’m gonna chew his bones, I’m gonna drink his blood, I’m gonna eat his children, Frank! And I’m gonna enjoy myself—you wanna know why? Because he’s a schmuck, a schlemeiel, and shit head for fucking with me, that’s why? (56)

Due to the lawyer’s preferred means of communication, the phone, he is able to remain physically and emotionally detached from those with whom he interacts. Empowered and emboldened by the distance, the lawyer’s verbal engagement is self-serving and aggressive throughout.

The Rocklawyer takes a call from his wife, which turns into an argument regarding her latest expenditure. They also discuss their son's behavior at school. The boy has bitten a classmate and, as it turns out, he has done so at his father's prompting. "I told him, 'the next time a little boy does something to you, do twice as much back to him,' that's what I told him," the lawyer explains to his wife (57). The lawyer then returns to the topic of money, berating his wife for hiring incompetent help and complaining of the long hours he works for her benefit. In fact, he tells her he will arrive home late that night because he has to work, after which he ends the call quickly.

The lawyer paces the room impatiently and then makes another call in which he argues with a subordinate, Dave, about firing an employee. He explains to Dave, "the man is fifty-eight, near retirement and . . . going in for surgery the next week." Further, "the guy . . . the guy is not performing anymore. He's not hustling anymore. He's easy listening and this place is rock and roll! I need heavy metal here, Dave—I need production—I need performance" (61-62). The corporate monster ends the conversation by threatening Dave's job as well.

Then, in intimate tones, he talks to his mistress, Yvette, as if all she is good for is sex. When she speaks to him about her "conceptual art," he appears bored, yawning and checking his shoes for smudges. With a cliché avowal of love, "No one was ever loved before the way that I love you," he hangs up on Yvette and turns on his secretary, Diane, whom he berates as "sub-human" and inefficient. When his lunch is late, he suggests she "put her hand in the microwave, grill it," and bring it to him to eat (64). The scene fades to black.



In the next scene, “X-Blow,” Bogosian stands center before a blue-lit scrim. Leaning on one hip with his shoulders cocked, he raps,

I’m a child of nature, born to lose  
People call me “Poison” but that’s no news.  
When I wake up in the morning, I see what I see,  
I look into the mirror, what I see is me:  
A player, a winner, an unrepentant sinner  
If you mess with me, I’ll eat you for dinner. (69)

Bogosian’s accent suggests that the character is an urban, black male. Upon completing his rap, the character speaks directly to the audience, telling them that he is in jail for murdering a man who was disrespectful to him (70). The key theme in the speech is that violence equates to power. Earthquakes, tidal waves, war, nuclear bombs, poison gas, dynamite, rockets, and bombs are evidence of God’s nature, which the Rapper desires to embody. In a flat monotone, he explains, “I want to get closer to the power, I want to get more and more spiritual, get closer to God. That’s why next time I gets out, I’m gonna get me some new wheels and an Uzi, man” (74). Attracted to other powerful figures, the Rapper celebrates them in his rant, “Ronnie Regan, he was my main man. He had that cowboys-and-Indians shit down” (71). He explains that George Bush is more like a super hero than a cowboy. He calls him “Batman.”

Batman! Batman is my man! Gonna be beaming around like Kirk and Scotty,  
like the Jetsons, man! Just beaming around, beaming around. Jump into my  
Batmobile, get behind some smoked bulletproof windshield, stick in the CD, flip  
the dial to ten, rock the engine, burn the brakes. (71)

The Rapper's association of power with violence, violence with God, and God with cartoon characters is reiterated in a real life anecdote he offers. The story concerns a friend who worked at McDonalds. A responsible and diligent worker, the friend was promoted to assistant manager, which enabled his renting half a duplex and buying his own economy car. One day, however, the friend was shot in the head during a freak robbery at the Restaurant. The incident leads the Rapper to reflect,

See, you wanna play the game, you gotta think about the big guy, you gotta think about God! God made man same as hisself [sic]. You wanna learn how to live, live like God! Check the big guy out! God, man, he gets up every morning, he don't smoke no crack, he don't shoot no dope. God don't flip no burgers. No, man—he gets up and he looks down on the world and he says, “World, what am I gonna do with you today?” (71-72)

The Rapper's reflection clarifies that, for him, the notion that God's will determines our lives, not our own, unless we learn to “live like God” and exercise indiscriminate violence.

Bogosian exits, re-enters, and crosses to the edge of the apron to begin the next scene, “Live.” In a closed performance situation, he enacts an overweight Italian Businessman who is in his backyard talking to his friend Jimmy about his philosophy of life.

There are people all over the world, starving to death, in Africa and Asia, Armenia, they sit around all day starving . . . just sitting in the dirt. Those people, all they got is dreams. They dream, “What would it be like to live in America? What would it be like to have a car, a house, food, a swimming pool.” Jimmy, I

can't let those people down . . . . I'm here, I'm living it, I might as well enjoy it.

(78)

The Businessman catalogs his successes, boasting of his Olympic size swimming pool, enormous gazebo, BMW, and Havana cigars. He contrasts his lifestyle to that of a mutual friend who works a nine-to-five job and has no time for leisure. The Businessman, on the other hand, consumes leisure. He boasts, "They open a new casino down in Atlantic City, I'm there the first day it opens . . . . They make a new TV set, ten feet wide, two stories high, I buy it. 'Cause it's my life, Jimmy, it's my life. If I don't live it, who's gonna? I'm gonna live until the day I die, then I can rest" (79). He then invites Jimmy to take a dip in his pool, bending over the edge of the stage as if testing the water with his hand.

In the final two scenes, "Dog Chameleon" and "Artist," Bogosian contrasts two types of artist. In "Dog Chameleon," he portrays a stand-up performance monologist. Poised in a spotlight before a microphone, the character uses a pleasant tone of voice to initiate his rant against "normalcy," as epitomized by the bourgeoisie and their mundane worries "about the price of cigarettes," gaining weight, and finding quality family time (82). He then addresses the upper class wealth and fame that he covets and equates to commodities such as a car, a mansion, a television set with a remote control, and potato chips (84). He tells the audience that he wants to use upper class wealth and status to get even with childhood bullies, school administrators, unemployment agents, the IRS, and the police. He also wants to buy a certain store so as to fire a sales clerk who was rude to him once. Further, he plans to hire bodyguards to beat up street toughs. His rationale for his behavior is simple: "I hate people . . . . But I want you all to love me. Even though I

hate all of you. Just to confirm my deep-seated feelings that you're all scum compared to my beneficence" (84). Late in the monologue, his verbal assault of the audience reaches its peak when he asks, "You think I should be ashamed of myself? I HAVE NO GUILT! Because I am not a man. I am a dog" (87). The artist then barks and howls.

A long, uncomfortable pause follows in which the character tries to regain his composure. Upon doing so, he concludes with a self-reflexive and nihilistic claim to truth.

I know I'm negative. I know I'm not a nice guy. I know you all hate me. But I don't care. Because at least I realize I'm a shit and for that tiny fragment of truth, I respect myself. That's why normalcy is so far out of my reach. Because you have to be blind to be normal. You have to like yourself, and the thought of that is so repellent to me that I'm ecstatic to be in the depressing place that I am. (89)

In contrast to the angry performance artist, Bogosian plays a pot-smoking poet in "Artist." Bathed in a pool of light, the character sits in a lotus position smoking a joint. He passes the joint to an imaginary person sitting next to him and opens his address to the audience with the observation, "It's like if a tree falls in the forest—you know what I'm saying, man? It's like if everybody already knows everything, then nothing means anything. Everything's a cliché. That's why I stopped making art" (91). He develops his argument regarding the mechanization of man by citing the conflict in television. According to the artist, television dictates human thought. Viewers buy "microwaves" for instance because the "television" tells them to do so (92). The artist furthers his claims by arguing that musicians in rock bands are robots. He explains, "They gotta be robots. Listen to the music. The old bands, what did they sing about? Love, Peace,

Anarchy, Freedom, Revolution, Get High . . . . What do the new bands sing about? Fear, Paranoia, Work Harder, Buy a Microwave oven” (95). The change in music reflects a change in everyday life where spontaneity has given way to an automaton routine (96). In an alert, forthright manner, the artist posits that the homeless are the only ones who have escaped the numbing effects of mechanization because they don’t live by machines. They “don’t go crazy, man” and they start to see the truth. You start seeing the truth, you start telling the truth, you start talking about the way things really are” (97).

The Artist concludes the monologue and the show by observing that the only way to escape the system is to avoid making and consuming material products. He offers, “That’s what I do. I want to paint a painting. I want to write something, I do it in my head, where they can’t see it. If they ever knew what I was thinking, man . . . I’d be dead” (98). Then, the pool of light in which the artist sat and spoke fades to black.

In Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll, Bogosian critiques various masculinities, leveling his aim at prevalent types he observed or experienced during the nineteen eighties. In light of the economic excess and lack of the period, Bogosian charges men with irresponsibility and observes a corresponding ““guilt”” and ““impotence”” in their behavior (quoted in Rose 8). In the piece, the dominant analogy for this behavior is “sex, drugs, rock and roll.” While in the nineteen sixties, the phrase alluded to alternative or radical lifestyle choices, in the eighties and for Bogosian, it alludes to the irresponsible production and consumption of physical or material wealth. In other words, “sex, drugs, rock and roll” is an illusionary commodity, an image that men consume in various ways but all for the same purpose of gaining power through the image. In Bogosian’s piece, the exceptions to this pursuit are men who either refuse it altogether or are victims of it.

In “Cultures of Discourse: Marxism and Rhetorical Theory,” James Aune calls on Robert Heilbroner to summarize Karl Marx’s understanding of the relationship between modes of production, power, and class.

“‘Labor’ is a central, if not the central, characteristic of human beings. The mode of production in a given social totality is a determining factor in establishing that totality’s social ‘being.’ All hitherto existing societies have been characterized by a class struggle over the control or allocation of the surplus from production. The level of development of the productive forces determines, in the sense of setting boundary conditions for, the sort of class structure and class struggle in a given system. That class which controls the mode of production in a given society tends to repress, either through the threat of violence or through promoting a particular set of beliefs in the legitimacy of the existing order, radical alterations in control of the productive forces.” (quoted in Aune 541; emphasis in original)

In Heilbroner’s summary, two main class categories arise and a third is implied. There are those who labor to produce the goods of a society and those who control and benefit from the production. A third class consists of those who neither control nor labor within the system of material production and, as a result, are indigent.

In Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll, the characters who control and, in material terms, benefit from the mode of production are those of the wealthy corporate class. The British Rocker, Rocklawyer, and the Italian Businessman fall into this category and, like those who benefited from Reagan’s “trickle down” economy of the eighties, their claim to power and wealth is aggressive and excessive. The characters show no shame regarding

how they attain their wealth, the products they produce and consume, and the self/social image they represent.

The Stud and the Tough in “Stag” represent the middle to blue-collar working class of the nineteen eighties. While Bogosian does not show the characters at work, the way the two characters play is significant. Their discourse highlights corporeal prowess and pleasure or it articulates an escape (from labor) through sex and drugs.

Also reminiscent of the eighties is the relatively large group of indigent characters who appear in the piece. The Panhandler, bum in “Dirt,” Bottleman, and Rapper represent the disproportionate increase in poverty, homelessness, and crime that arose in the eighties as a result of Reagan’s economic policies. The Dog Chameleon and Artist represent those who attempted to critique the sad state of affairs through their art.

In my analysis, Connell’s as well as Frank’s typology help me specify further how the various masculinities function. Hegemonic masculinities figure prominently.

Attracted to the idea that men are the determining agents of power and its modes of production, the hegemonic male enacts practices that articulate his right to the dominant place in gender and, in this case, class relations. To claim and maintain his position, the hegemonic male attempts to elide and thereby control the identities and rights of others. For example, the Rocker uses a hegemonic discourse when he describes the tribe of rain forest Indians.

The bum in “Dirt” is a complicit masculinity. He understands that his class and gender place and practices are determined by the prevailing mode of production. The Bum’s recognition of his complicity makes him angry and frustrated as he realizes he is as much a cause of the problem as those he berates.

A subordinate masculinity sacrifices his claim to power and production modes and thereby propels the advancement of other members of society. The Artist, for example, refuses to produce a material art object. While his (in)action upholds the romantic critical tradition, it also dislocates him from the prevailing modes of production in the US. By dissociation, then, the Artist becomes subordinate to those modes.

In addition to class factors and Connell's masculinities, I draw on Frank's typology to analyze the consumer, aggressive consumer, and communicative bodies that arise in Bogosian's critique of U.S. masculinities during a period of economic excess, for some, and lack for many others.

In Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll, the Italian Businessman, the Rocker, the Stud, and the Tough character in "Stag" enact consumer/mirroring masculinities. Given their economic place and status, they each engage in the repetitive and predictable consumption of material products so as to lay claim to the "sex, drugs, rock and roll" image they desire. In particular, the wealthy Italian Businessman desires the image of leisure. He is conspicuous in his display of leisure products, such as "an Olympic size pool, the fastest BMW . . . and Havana cigars" (78). Once an "every day" consumer of "a joint, beer, a spoon of cocaine, heroin . . . and girls" (10-11), the Rocker now consumes "digital wristwatches, Sony Walkmans, cigarettes and cigarette lighters" so as to produce the image of a wealthy rocking benefactor of the poor (17). The Stud consumes and produces the image of the phallus, his predictable aim being to have "great sex with great looking fucks" (30). A working class version of the Rocker of the sixties, the Tough fulfills his desired image with "five cases of beer, three cases of champagne,



four bottles of Jack Daniels, an ounce of heroin and a half-a-pound of pot, and two prostitutes” (32). While the Italian Businessman, the Rocker, and the Stud understand that they are in control of the products they consume and the self image they produce, the Tough’s desired image is one of no control. His contingent lifestyle is reminiscent of the classic rebel youth who seeks to reject societal norms, such as marriage, by enacting the norms of his youth sub-culture.

The excessive and conspicuous consumption of leisure is produced by the excessive, boasting language that the Italian Businessman uses to catalog the products he owns. Likewise, Bogosian depicts the Businessman as if he is a large man, his corporeal body inflecting his discourse as excessive and vice versa. Like leisure itself, the corporeal and discursive body spread out and take up space in and by means of the Businessman’s monologue. Of course, supporting the “spread” of leisure in this case is the institution of corporate capitalism and its ideology of aggressive individualism, which the Businessman appears to take quite seriously. The “task” of leisure it appears is to advertise the economic system that enables it. The Businessman does so by speaking of and enacting the American dream; that “dream” which others, “starving to death in Africa and Asia,” can only dream about (78). In sync with the mythology of the American Dream, the Businessman understands that one realizes it on their own, by the sheer grit of their individual efforts. “[I]t’s my life, Jimmy, it’s my life,” the Businessman tells his friend. “If I don’t live it, who’s gonna? I’m gonna live until the day I die, then I can rest” (79).

Although the Businessman seems fulfilled by his actualization of the dream, it appears that it takes some effort to maintain. The constant flow of new products into the

marketplace requires constant attention. In Foucault's terms, the Businessman not only must survey the marketplace constantly but also survey himself and the image of leisure he "labors" to produce, over and over, "until the day [he] die[s]" (79).

In Connell's terms, the Italian Businessman is a hegemonic masculinity because he assumes that his dream, the American Dream, is better than and desired by those who live in Africa, Asia, and Armenia. Likewise, he has a patronizing view of those in the US who work a standard nine-to-five job and apparently have no time for leisure or money for the products that signify it. The Businessman's limited view of others and their dreams perpetuates the system that supports his place and practices within it.

Bogosian constructs the Rocker as a parody of the commercially successful rock and roll stars of the sixties who continued to tour and make videos during the nineteen eighties. Within the commercialized context of a talk show, the Rocker assures the audience of his former "naughty boy" image by recounting his excessive consumption of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. In tune with the more conservative eighties, he also assures the audience of his physical and moral reformation. And, like other celebrity philanthropists of the period, such as Bob Geldoff and Willy Nelson, the Rocker attempts to produce an image of himself as a politically correct citizen of the world by performing a benefit concert to aid those less fortunate than himself. Unlike Bob Geldoff, the Rocker's ethnocentric, racist discourse marks his efforts as insincere and self serving. Whether it be the "Negro" and "Puerto Rican" guys "in the ghetto" or the Indians of the Amazon (14), their culture and imagery is appropriated by the Rocker so as to advance his own self image.

In large part, the Rocker's discourse focuses on his corporeal practices, which in turn reveal the institutions in terms of which he behaves; namely, the rock and roll music industry, the mass media, and commercial capitalism. The rock and roll industry and the mass media that promotes it demand that the male performer evoke a "bad boy" image through his on and off stage performances. Thereby, he reflects the desired image of his largely male teenage audience—i.e., his market. Typically, the Rocker's lyrics address sex and his appearance ranges between that of a sloppy teenage boy and a hardened miscreant sex fiend. As perceived by his audience, the Rocker embodies counter culture values. The institutions allow, promote, and benefit from the Rocker's enactment of the bad boy image off stage as well as on. Under the ever watchful eye of the media, the Rocker proves himself to be a womanizer, boozier, pill popper, and non-stop partier. The Rocker does not shop for groceries at the local Piggly Wiggly or take his kids to school or go to Church with his family. Rather, the Rocker and the products associated with him are constructed as extraordinary. He is an image of masculinity that has been elevated to the status of a god. Women want to be with him and men want to be just like him because he can do what mere mortals cannot.

However, in the Rocker's discourse, a distinction arises between young and old enactments of the promoted image. As a young man, the Rocker engages in literal corporeal excess for his own self satisfaction and fulfillment. As an older man, the Rocker displays the results of his lifestyle. He is a wealthy man and able to purchase whatever material products he desires. However, to retain the counter culture allure, the Rocker must dissociate himself from the conservative/corporate upper class. Thus, the Rocker becomes a philanthropist, feigning concern for others in order to conserve his

own rock and roll image. The Rocker's self orientation is epitomized in the products he gives the Amazonian Indians. The digital wristwatches and Sony Walkmans reflect him and his culture, not the culture of the Indians. The Rocker's performance becomes a pathetic display of hegemony.

The Stud's masculinity is defined in and by means of his corporeal body, specifically his penis. In figurative terms, he consumes the imagery and symbolic power of the phallus. The relationship between the corporeal penis and the symbolic phallus is epitomized by the Stud holding the long neck bottle of beer at the site of and as if it were his penis throughout his monologue. Further, his own discourse is phallic-centric. As he states, "I don't need to advertise. I know what I've got. I'm endowed" (27). His penis is his god term and trait and it compensates for his being average in every other way.

Apparently, the Stud's phallic identity and practices are gleaned from mass media imagery. He associates "great sex with . . . great fucks" with "living in a color movie" (30). By attributing the status of motion pictures to his own phallic identity and practices, the Stud enhances his sense of control and power. As he sees it, his corporeal endowment is superior to those who rely on their appearance, intelligence, profession, or showing a commitment to women. Such contrivances are "black and white" compared to his "wonderful cock . . . so big, so hard, so unlike anything [the women have] got at home" (29).

Like the hunkola in Goldberg's piece, the Stud is monadic in the consumption and production of his phallic masculinity. While women are necessary to the maintenance of the desired image, they are but objects in the construct. The Stud consumes and makes women into his own self image; they reflect the image of the Stud himself. In this way,

the Stud is a hegemonic masculinity. He views his phallus as “deserving of worship” and “even respect” (Bordo, “Reading the Male Body” 271). To perpetuate his own self image, he objectifies women and belittles men who are not endowed like him.

The Tough in “Stag” lives the sex, drugs, and rock and roll lifestyle that Bogosian’s piece investigates. Drinking cheap beer and champagne, smoking bargain brand cigarettes and consuming illicit drugs, watching porno flicks and having sex with prostitutes mark this character, the Tough, as a masculinity of excessive consumption. While the product may vary the fact of consumption is a certainty.

The Tough appears to be fulfilled by the image of “toughness” he constructs, as he recounts his experiences with zeal and claims that his bachelor lifestyle is fun. In his own terms when “[g]uys get married . . . they never have fun anymore. Might as well shoot ‘em in the head and bury ‘em” (35). Like the Stud, he is highly associated with his corporeality. In his narrative, he highlights the physical sensations of the wild night, reveling in the defilement of his body through acts of debauchery. For him, the bachelor lifestyle is not a spiritual endeavor or ideal. Rather, it is corporeal and it is realized through physical activity.

While, for me, the Tough’s masculine construct is as predictable as a teenage flick, it appears that part of the Tough’s desired image is lack of control. His story is filled with contingent situations that he encodes as valuable, as worth telling, precisely because they show him in wacky, out of control situations, such as when he battles the Hell’s Angels at McDonalds. The imagery here is ironic of course since the unpredictable “dangerous” fight occurs within the context of the McDonalds institution. The fight is as predictable as fast food. So too is the Tough’s bachelor lifestyle of

hanging with his friends, getting stoned, and sleeping with a different woman every night (35).

The four consumer masculinities in Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll behave in a distinct fashion depending on their economic class. As representatives of the blue-collar working class, the Stud and the Tough use discourse that features the corporeal body. Their discourse is embedded with the physicality of their labor. The Italian Businessman and the Rocker represent the white-collar corporate class and their discourse emphasizes their material wealth and product consumption. In other words, in Bogosian's piece, those who labor to produce the goods of the marketplace cite their masculinity in the corporeal body while those who control and benefit from the physical labor of others cite their masculinity in the products they are able to consume.

All four consumer masculinities appear to be monadic in orientation. If they involve themselves with others, it is to benefit their own self image. However, in the very act of telling their stories to an "in scene" friend or the audience, they imply an engagement of a listener. In the case of the Stud and Tough, such a relationship appears to contradict the images of masculinity they aim to construct. The Stud elides the contradiction by speaking to the audience in a cold even tone as if daring them to find fault with his narrative. The Tough is so engrossed by his own exploits that, if he lacked an audience, it appears he would tell the story anyway. In light of his braggart discourse and disposition, the Italian Businessman appears to need a listener, as if his possessions (and hence his identity) are validated by their display in front of others. The Rocker's image not only requires a public showing but also the public's approval of it. His

production is dependent on their consumption and, in these terms, the Rocker is no more or less a product than the music he makes and markets.

All four characters state or imply that they are fulfilled by the masculine image they produce. In subtle ways, Bogosian prompts the audience to question the characters' perceptions of fulfillment. For instance, over the course of the Italian Businessman's monologue, "new" becomes a problematic concept since "new" becomes "old" upon the introduction of newer products. In the Stud's monologue, Bogosian prompts the audience to question the Stud's perspective on love by having him mock what he assumes is the audience's perspective. He says, "I know what you're thinking. This guy is pretty screwed up. He's lonely. He's obsessed. He's got no love in his life" (30). In this case, the double-voice of mocking turns back on itself and questions the mocker.

Another group of characters in Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll are aggressive consumer masculinities. The attorney in "Rock Law," the Panhandler, and the Rapper in "X-Blow" are part of this second group of masculinities. These bodies enact a fusion of consumer and aggressive practices within the milieu of consumer capitalism. Unlike the characters discussed above, the aggressive consumer masculinities are not satisfied by the monadic consumption and production of a self image. Rather, the self image they desire is constituted by the threat of others and the practices they enact to silence that threat. In other words, this group desires masculine images that are agnostic. While the ultimate aim of dominating bodies is monadic control, the particular aim of aggressive consumers is the constant engagement of the agnostic scenario. Like competitive athletes, compulsive gamblers or professional soldiers, one's identity lies in engaging and claiming victory over the perceived threat. Bogosian critiques the agency of his

aggressive consumers by depicting one of their victims. No longer a threat and hence disposable, the Bottlemans is a character who exists in the wasteland of aggressive consumption.

The attorney in “Rock Law” epitomizes the aggressive consumer masculinity. He is the empowered “rock and roll” masculinity in Bogosian’s text and in the social reality of the nineteen eighties. In Testosterone Inc.: Tales of CEOs Gone Wild, Christopher Byron articulates the difference between corporate executives of the nineteen eighties and those of other periods.

For most of American history, the leaders of big business and Wall Street seemed able to control themselves in these matters—at least when it came to their deportment in public. Yet in the blowout decade of the twentieth century, things changed, and with the sap of prosperity rising on Wall Street as never before in the country’s history, American business began to pulse with a new kind of public figure: The Celebrity CEO. And as the money grew, and along with it the fame, the behavior of CEOs gone wild began to seep into the news, and at times even to dominate it. (xiii)

Bogosian creates his “celebrity CEO” by contexting the Rocklawyer within the private citadel of his office. Thereby, Bogosian publicizes the “wildly” aggressive behavior the lawyer enacts in both his personal and professional relationships. The Rocklawyer’s practices epitomize the Rock Law institution of which he is a part.

Like many corporate executives of the nineteen eighties, Bogosian’s attorney is accomplished at the aggressive game he plays. Physically protected within the walls of his office, he battles discursively, through the telephones and intercoms he uses. He is on



the phone constantly, policing his employees and intimate relations through his demands and threats. While physically removed from those he engages, his discourse is loaded with corporeal images of eating, of consuming others. For instance, in his conversation with Frank, he threatens to peel off the skin of the man who wants to sue him. He's "gonna chew his bones . . . drink his blood . . . eat his children" (56). He teaches his son to bite his classmates and intimidates his secretary by demanding that she "put her hand in the microwave, grill it," and bring the macabre sandwich to him so he can eat it (64). By means of his cannibalistic discourse, the lawyer inflects the threat of his physical presence; that is, his discourse implies his ability to police and punish others despite his seeming (corporeal) absence.

The Rocklawyer's tactics of corporeal detachment and a cannibalistic discourse also serve to objectify those with whom he relates. They become the images of threat that he requires to play the agonistic game and therefore are but images of himself. They are an illusion the lawyer constructs so as to rationalize his aggressive practices and guarantee his place as victor.

While the Rocklawyer is disassociated from his corporeality, the Panhandler uses his corporeal body as well as aggressive discourse to threaten the audience into giving him money. Direct engagement of the audience is part of his ploy. He approaches the stage lip and, with cup extended, moves from one audience member to the next. His disheveled appearance and personal proxemics are intimidating. He invades the comfort zone of the audience. Thereby, the Panhandler hopes to incite disgust or fear in the audience to the extent that they give him money in order to get rid of him. The

Panhandler then draws on cultural taboos regarding bodies and/in space to realize his aims.

Likewise, the Panhandler's discourse of self pity, guilt, and intimidation instills a lack in the audience in so far as their sympathy, generosity, and equity are questioned. The Panhandler's discourse carries the threat of their inhumanity, and to silence the threat they give in to the Panhandler's demands.

Unlike the lawyer, the Panhandler does not view or construct the audience as a threat to himself. Rather his corporeal and discursive rhetoric operates to instill the noted threat of disgust, fear, or lack. Simultaneously, the Panhandler offers himself as a representative object the audience can purchase to remedy the perceived threat. In Connell's terms, the Panhandler displays himself as a marginalized or victim commodity. Thereby, he complies with and takes advantage of the consumer ideology that money can purchase anything; in this case, the disposal of another human being.

In "X-Blow," the Rapper is threatened by his lack of control over his own destiny. He cites the threat in two opposing groups of people: those who control the world, such as God, and those who do not, such as his friend who worked at McDonalds. His aim and ideal is to be like God, whom he perceives as powerful because he is violent. The Rapper calls on earthquakes, tidal waves, war, nuclear bombs, poison gas, dynamite, rockets, and bombs as evidence of God's violent nature. He wants to "get closer to the power, I want to get more spiritual, get closer to God. That's why next time I get out [of jail], I'm gonna get me some new wheels and an Uzi, man" (74). The Rapper, then, associates certain commodities and physical violence with the control he desires. However, due to his confinement in jail, the Rapper is unable to realize his aims. In lieu

of material products and physical enactment, he fashions aggressive control through the discourse of rap poetry. His discourse incites corporeality as the agent of violence.

In Hip Hop America, Nelson George contextualizes rap as part of the hip hop culture “that sprang off the uptown streets of New York City” in reaction to other forms of music and the chaotic events of the world (xi). While some barriers to the American Dream had been surmounted by African Americans, other and more subtle forms of discrimination remained. Further, as George explains, practitioners of rap

grew up with the Vietnam War. Their fathers came back with drugs and bad dreams—if they came back at all. As they grew up, both the black middle class and the black lower class expanded: they grew up with Wall Street greed, neo-con ideology, crack, AIDS and Malcom X as movie hero, political icon, and marketing vehicle. They saw Nelson Mandela walk out of jail and Mike Tyson walk in. Some say this is the first generation of black Americans to experience nostalgia. And it all showed up in the music. (xi)

George characterizes rap as a “loud, scratchy, in-your-face aesthetic” (xi).

Since subtle barriers of discrimination prevent the Rapper from realizing his dream in legal ways, he plans to use physical violence to secure control. As he implies in his rap, aggression is not an uncommon strategy among the most powerful of cultural icons, such as Reagan, Bush, Batman, Kirk and Scotty, and the Jetsons (71). Like these “big guy[s],” the Rapper wants to “get . . . up every morning” and decide what to do with the world” (71-72). He wants to control, rather than be the victim of, the contingent will of others.

The Bottleman is a victim of aggressive consumer masculinities, such as the Rocklawyer and Rapper represent. As a victim, he is on the receiving end of the practices they enact. The Bottleman exists in a constant state of contingency. In order to survive, he must make a daily search for bottles and cans. As he tells the audience, there are days when he is unable to find enough of them to buy his daily ration of an egg salad sandwich and a cup of coffee. He cannot afford to sleep because he might be attacked by the “guys on the street” who “like to fight” (49). The Bottleman’s references to a “second set of teeth,” a “missing knee-cap,” and not being able to “hear in one ear” suggest that he has been the victim of many attacks (49). His fear is imprinted on his gestures as he averts his eyes and talks in a detached manner.

Although he is alone, the Bottleman is dyadic in his body orientation. His identity is based in his fear of the threat of others. He also is dependent on others to dispose of the bottles and cans he collects for his livelihood. Lastly, it appears he desires a companion desperately.

A moral irony that arises in the case of the Bottleman is that he is reduced to a homeless position of fear precisely because he is not aggressive. In other words, in the fictive reality of Bogosian’s piece, aggression is needed to acquire wealth and wealth is power. None the less, the Bottleman tries to convince himself that he is fulfilled by his minimal existence. He reflects, “I don’t like to complain. I like to stay positive. Stay on the sunny side of the street. You give me a pack of cigarettes, egg salad sandwich, cup of coffee, a newspaper, someplace to sit, and I’m happy—I’m happy” (45). The Bottleman’s observation can be understood as ironic in that he is not happy at all. Or, in the abstract, the Bottleman’s practice can be understood as a model for an alternative

masculinity, one whose identity is not based in the excessive consumption of products and the aggressive practices required to obtain them.

The institution of consumer capitalism and its discourses govern the practices of all four characters. Likewise, their position in the economic system determines whether they benefit from the marketplace or are slaves to it. The aggressive consumer masculinities in Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll reveal that their identities are based in an agonistic game of control, which they associate with acquiring wealth and power. To play the game, they construct and then silence the threat in others. While the threat is an illusion, their aggressive practices are not. The latter is rendered through discourse, which is used to incite the threat of their corporeal bodies. Images of eating, of consuming others, are common. The Rocklawyer threatens to “chew . . . bones” and “drink . . . blood” (56) while the Rapper taunts, “If you mess with me, I’ll eat you for dinner” (69). Contrasting the agonistic players is the seeming victim, the Bottlemán, who claims happiness in a simple egg salad sandwich and a cup of coffee. Given Bogosian’s fictive world, and our own social reality, the possibility arises that he may be right.

The third group of masculinities in Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll consists of variations on the communicative body. The “Dirt” Bum is a fusion of aggressive and communicative traits. “Dog Chameleon” interweaves aggressive, consumer, and communicative traits while “The Artist” is a nihilist communicative masculinity. The aim of all three characters is to persuade the audience of their particular position and in this way they are dyadic in their orientation. However, both Dog Chameleon and the Bum view the audience as their adversary and, committed to their causes, they aim to charge and thereby control how the audience thinks. Their rhetoric is inflexible and

prescriptive. The Artist, on the other hand is contingent in his relationship to the audience. He seems aware that desiring control over others runs contrary to his philosophy. Whereas the content of his discourse implies an immaterial, transcendent relationship to the corporeal body, the discourses of Dog Chameleon and the Bum are grounded in corporeality and material products.

In his tirade, the Bum articulates his belief that consumption is ruining us. Specifically, the US mode of consumption and production is nothing but “shit and piss” waste that is polluting the literal and figurative waterways of America. The Bum lambast those who drive their motorboats, puke into the river, and sell food that causes people to “shit” and “piss.” In so far as the cities are full of “pipes choked with slop from millions of toilets and garbage disposals,” it appears we all are to blame (23).

To advance his critique, the Bum uses profane corporeal practices. He picks and pulls at the seat of his pants, suggesting he produces “shit” too. He punctuates his utterance of the words “shit” and “piss” with imitative actions. He steps in “shit” and scrapes it off on the lip of the stage, vomits, and walks in circles to physically represent the idea that the environment is nothing but a toilet. Grotesque realism, then, is the agency of the Bum’s critique. He calls on imagery related to the lower domains of the corporeal body, specifically the bowels and bladder, to criticize the excessive waste of our consumer society and culture. An agency of excess is used to critique excess.

The Bum’s strategies might best be understood in terms of the Dada tradition of criticizing the “nonsense” of institutions by means of “nonsense” art and rhetoric. The Dadaists attributed World War I and the resulting devastation of Europe to the reactionary logic and rationale of those in power. To critique such systems of thought

and the language used to convey them, the Dadaists turned to chance processes to create and perform their various forms of art. At the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, performers such as Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, and Tristan Tzara held collaborative performance events consisting of “nonsense” manifestos, simultaneous and other forms of chance poetry, and inventive noise compositions. Of their work, Hugo Ball wrote, ““We now have driven the plasticity of the word to the point where it can scarcely be equaled. We achieved this at the expense of the rational logically constructed sentence.”” The point, Ball explained, is ““that this humiliating age has not succeeded in winning our respect. What could be respectable and impressive about . . . grandiose slaughters and cannibalistic exploits? Our spontaneous foolishness and enthusiasm for illusion will destroy them”” (quoted in RoseLee Goldberg, Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present 62).

While Dog Chameleon appears to defile fame and wealth, it also appears that he wants to be famous and wealthy in order to exact revenge on famous and wealthy people. His aggressive disposition, rhetoric, and aim are reminiscent of the stand-up monologist, Lenny Bruce, and also the poem “Howl” by Allen Ginsberg.

In “Howl,” Ginsberg reflects on the repressive values and beliefs at work in post World War II America. Jonah Raskin offers that “Howl” is a horrifying, funny, surreal, and prophetic poem” (xviii). Formulated in a spontaneous way and as a “spontaneous work,” it “brought [Ginsberg] and the world out of the closet of a repressive society” (xix). Raskin explains, “For Ginsberg, howling was a way to express his deepest concerns” (117). Likewise, Ronald Collins and David Skover observe that “Howl” uses words of “rage and indignation. It was a poetic declaration of discontent, decay, and debasement, coupled with dreams of mystical survival” (40). Collins and Skover add,

“Relentless. Merciless. Wondrous. It was the manifesto that broke the barrier between culture and dissent. Life itself—with its mortals, gods, and weaponry—had been ‘outed.’ The unspoken had been spoken” (41).

In the venue of live performance, Lenny Bruce also “spoke the unspoken,” addressing taboo issues of his era in irreverent ways. In the “Introduction” to Bruce’s autobiography, How to Talk Dirty and Influence People, Bogosian observes,

Lenny discovered . . . that full-blown idealism in his art was his secret weapon. People wanted to hear more of the New Attitude. They wanted to question capitalism. The economy was expanding yearly and people wanted to shake off their dusty clothes and take a bath of idealism. Lenny set the all-time standard for an entertainer observing and dissecting his own society and culture. Like a surgeon he probed and sliced, always on the lookout for inconsistency or misguided emotion or greed or vanity. (ix)

Bruce confronted his audiences with obscene language that he hoped would defamiliarize the “dusty” norms of the period as obscene and thereby excite alternative attitudes and ideals.

In a similar fashion, Dog Chameleon attacks the bourgeoisie of the nineteen eighties for worrying about “the price of cigarettes, gaining weight, and finding quality family time” (82). He also lays siege to the upper class and their trappings of wealth and fame as cited in “cars, mansions, television sets, remote controls, and potato chips” (84). While Dog Chameleon rebukes excessive materiality, he also desires it, a contradiction that gives rise to a self-reflexive howl of nihilism. In his own terms, “I know I’m negative. I know I’m not a nice guy. Because I realize I’m a shit, and for that tiny



fragment of truth, I respect myself” (89). Like Ginsberg, Dog Chameleon expresses his discontent by “outing” himself and, like Bruce, his ultimate aim is to “dissect” and thereby defamiliarize societal norms he finds obscene. “Normalcy” comes under attack when he observes that “normalcy is so far out of my reach. Because you have to be blind to be normal. You have to like yourself, and the thought of that is so repellent to me” (89). Thereby, Dog Chameleon implies that he finds the audience “repellent” since he assumes they abide by the conventions of “normalcy” and self-respect.

While, like Ginsberg and Bruce, Dog Chameleon uses aggressive discourse, it is not directed back at aggression itself. That is, unlike Ginsberg and Bruce, Dog Chameleon wants to exact revenge on others, such as childhood bullies, unemployment and IRS agents, the police, and a store clerk who was rude to him. To realize his ends, Dog Chameleon desires the wealth and status of the upper class. The Chameleon’s appropriation of the rebellious “howl” is a perversion then. He not only enacts a conventional strategy of aggressive consumerism (i.e., appropriation), he enacts the most conventional norm of the US social psyche (i.e., wealth is power).

The main aim of the Artist is to communicate to the audience why he does not make art anymore. As he explains, “It’s like if everybody already knows everything, then nothing means anything. Everything’s a cliché. That’s why I stopped making art” (91). Further, by refusing to produce a material art object that people can purchase, the Artist protests the commercialization of art by art academics and museums and, on a broader level, the institution of consumer capitalism.

To support his position, the Artist observes how rock and roll has fallen victim to the commercial machine. Whereas “old bands” sang about “Love, Peace, Anarchy,

Freedom, Revolution, Get High,” new bands sing about “Fear, Paranoia, Work Harder, Buy a Microwave Oven” (95). The Artist cites specific examples in the Dire Straits’ song “Money for Nothing” and Donna Summer’s switch from the song “Love to Love You, Baby,” in the nineteen seventies to “She Works Hard for the Money,” in the eighties.

As the Artist sees it, the homeless escape the mechanizing effects of consumer capitalism because they cannot be duped by the illusion of fulfillment advanced by commercial imagery. Their literal hunger tells them otherwise. As a result, the homeless “start to see the truth” and they “start telling the truth” and they “start talking about the way things really are” (97). The Artist admires such “truth talk” and adopts it as a model for his own art. Just as the homeless are without material goods, so too his art is immaterial. It does not participate in the capitalist enterprise and its illusions of fulfillment. Once he articulates this notion, the Artist is blacked out, literally, by a black out of lights.

The Artist is a public body representing many and reliant on those like the Bottleman for his rhetoric. The Artist also represents other artists who like him have decided not to produce material objects. One such group are live performers who argue that the ephemeral nature of live performance escapes commodification. While a consumer might purchase a script or video of the performance or a seat in the theater, she cannot purchase and own the live event itself.

The Artist embraces the purpose of those he represents and creates art “in [his] head” only (98). Thereby, he understands that his art cannot be reproduced and as such its exigency sapped of its power. It also cannot be “blacked out” by the institutions that

control and market it. The irony here is that for the audience to know what the art is, the art must be shared, and once it is shared, it can be blacked out, just as the Artist in the venue of the Orpheum Theatre.

As the performer of Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll, Bogosian enacts a masculinity of a communicative orientation. Specifically, he constructs a performer presence that offers a nihilist variant on the carnivalesque body or bodies. Grotesque realism is evident across the range of masculinities Bogosian performs. Imagery of the lower domains is integral to the corporeal identity of the Dirt Bum, the Stud, and the Tough while such characters as the Rocklayer, Rapper, Panhandler, and Dog Chameleon use it in their discourses to control others. By means of his veris-realistic embodiment of the various characters, Bogosian's body becomes grotesque too. His physical and vocal enactment draws on the critical power of the grotesque to advance his position.

Bogosian's rhetoric also effects an aspect of carnival laughter. There is no doubt the masculinities he constructs mock and deride the social types (institutions and discourses) they represent. The consumer masculinities are indicted for associating fulfillment with their excessive and self centered consumption of commodified "sex, drugs, rock and roll." The aggressive consumers are self-parodies of the agonistic game of wealth and power they play. While the "Dirt" Bum, Dog Chameleon, and Artist critique the institutions and practices the others represent, they do not offer regenerative alternatives. If they do, the models exist in absence, in opposition to "shit and piss," appropriation, and transcendent isolation.

Once exception to the nihilistic landscape of masculinities in Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll is the Bottleman, who I understand as the moral center of Bogosian's fictive world.

In the social reality of the US the marginalized homeless are typically ignored, pitied at best. By granting the Bottleman moral authority, Bogosian suggests that power is not in the boardroom but in the ability to step outside the consumer capitalist mindset and “see the truth” and “start telling the truth” (97). As substantiated in the Artist’s monologue, the Bottleman and other marginalized individuals avoid ideological indoctrination because they are tangential to the system. The trade-off is a lonely existence on the streets where happiness is associated with an egg salad sandwich, a cup of coffee, and someplace to sit.

For the most part, Bogosian uses representational conventions to advance his message in Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll. Most evident is Bogosian’s use of in scene dramatic monologues in which vivid, multi-dimensional characters express their stories, thoughts and feelings in language that is appropriate to the character and accessible to the audience. Likewise, the characters physical actions are verisimilitude to real life and appear spontaneous, not rehearsed.

Bogosian also uses properties facilitate the “real life” effect of the characters and the performance as a whole. The Rocker sits in a chair that faces another chair, which helps the audience read the situation as an interview they might see on television. The Stud holds and drinks from an actual bottle of beer while the Rocklawyer sits in an office chair and speaks into actual telephones and an intercom. While the properties enhance the illusion, they also function metaphorically. Bogosian’s placement and use of the Stud’s beer bottle implies phallic connotations. The telephones and intercom suggest the mechanization of communication within the prevailing system of production. The use of veris-realistic conventions lulls the audience into the illusion that they are watching real

people in real life situations. When, as the Italian Businessman, Bogosian bends down to test the water in the pool, the conventions of realism are so complete that I, at least, see the water, not the surface of the stage.

Although Bogosian emphasizes realistic aesthetics, he also imprints his characters with signifiers that signal a social type or *gest* and, in this way, he implies a broader critique of social norms—rather than attributing them solely to the individual character. In Brecht’s terms, Bogosian builds characters from a social point of view and also uses social *gest*. Of the social point of view, Brecht writes

modes of behaviour shown by the [actor have] transparent motives of a social-historical sort. It was not the “eternally human” that was supposed to emerge, not what any man is alleged to do at any period, but what men of specific social strata (as against other strata) do in our period (as against any other). (100; emphasis in original)

The masculinities in Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll represent social types specific to the nineteen eighties. For instance, the Italian Businessman represents the yuppie, the Rocklawyer represents corporate raiders such as Michael Milken, and the Bottlemann represents the homeless. Bogosian’s choices are specific and rely on the audience’s knowledge of the times.

Bogosian uses specific social *gests* to broaden the critical significance of his characters and to imply the social laws in terms of which they behave. For instance, in “X-Blow,” the rap of the Rapper is a social *gest*. As an oral form of poetry created by the Rapper it provides him with a way to exercise control over the contingent world in which he exists. On the other hand, the content of the rap implies the social laws and norms in

terms of which the Rapper creates his rap, such as spiritualized aggression and the very desire for control.

Bogosian uses both representational and presentational performance choices to critique the irresponsible, guilty, and impotent masculinities he observed in the US in the nineteen eighties and represented in *Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll*. He uses the consumer, aggressive consumer, and hybrid communicative masculinities to advance an argument against consumption and control and for masculinities that do not desire to take part in these processes.

#### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> All direct quotations from the performance are drawn Bogosian, *Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll*.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MASCULINE RITE OF PASSAGE IN JOHN LEGUIZAMO'S FREAK: A SEMI-DEMI-QUASI-PSEUDO AUTOBIOGRAPHY

John Leguizamo's Freak: A Semi-Demi-Quasi-Pseudo Autobiography ran at the Cort Theater on Broadway during the 1996-1997 Broadway season. Freak is a play about Leguizamo's life, from his birth to the beginnings of his acting career. In each of the nineteen scenes, Leguizamo narrates and enacts a story from his developmental years. The show highlights the traumatic experiences that contribute to Leguizamo feeling that he is different from other young male Latino actors. He is "a freak."

Leguizamo is a performance artist who resides in New York City's Alphabet City. His stage work is characterized by his vivid representations of the diverse people and characters he has observed and collected in his memory. According to Peter Stack, a writer for The San Francisco Chronicle, Leguizamo cultivated his talent during his years as a class clown. At the urging of a teacher, he auditioned for Juilliard but was not admitted. Instead, he decided to study the people he saw in Manhattan's Washington Square and Little Italy (E1). He rose to public notice with his one-person shows Mambo Mouth and Spic-o-Rama. He also appeared on MTV's House of Buggin' and in the films, To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar and Spawn (E1).

As noted, Freak is divided into nineteen scenes or, as Leguizamo identifies them, "chapters." In the first, "Meeting Womb," Leguizamo recounts his birth. In "Third World Logic," he relates his family's emigration and early experiences in the United States. "Dad Drunk" is a chapter about one of the few conversations Leguizamo had with his father concerning their relationship. In "First Orgasms," Leguizamo discovers

masturbation and the humiliation of being caught in the act while in “Fellas on Sex” he and his friends talk about sex. “Fresh Air Funk” is about Leguizamo’s experiences in a summer program in which he lived with a wealthy, white, suburban family. In “Jewish Resort,” John’s father attempts to pass the family off as Jewish. In “Surrogate Moms,” Leguizamo introduces his Uncle Sanny to the audience and recounts Uncle Sanny’s efforts to acquaint the boys with culture. In “French Passing—Not!” Leguizamo discovers that his father is a dishwasher and not a waiter. “Black Irish” and “Guido-Rama” are stories in which Leguizamo is beaten up by Irish and Italian bullies, respectively. In “First Love—Black Venus” and “Kentucky Fried De-Virginizing,” Leguizamo recalls his first sexual experiences with women. “Domestic Violins” is about John confronting his father for the first time. In “College Fiasco,” Leguizamo tries to pass himself off as white. “Juilliard,” “Agent,” and “Director” concern the beginnings of Leguizamo’s acting career. In “Pyro-Technix Climatic Finale,” Leguizamo finds success on the stage while still seeking acceptance from his father. In my fuller description of Freak below I retain the chronology of the chapters, although my description is more thorough in some cases than in others. Thereby, I focus on my particular interest which is Leguizamo’s representation of the key male characters, namely, his father, Fausto, his Uncle Sanny, and himself.

In Freak, Leguizamo narrates each chapter and performs all of the characters. Leguizamo’s style is reminiscent of stand-up comedy routines in which the comic tells a story and periodically imitates characters for effect. Leguizamo performs each character with specific gestural codes that help the audience envision the physique of the characters. For example, when Leguizamo performs his father, he pushes his head



slightly forward, squares his shoulders, and bows up his chest. Whereas the major characters are developed as complex, multi-dimensional figures, the minor characters, such as the Irish bullies, are constructed as broad social types—i.e., stereotypes. Throughout the performance, Leguizamo wears a single costume of black jeans, a New York Met's jersey, and silver chains around his neck. The particularities of the one costume operate to uphold Leguizamo's presence as the constructing storyteller of the chapters of his life.

As audience members for Freak, we sit in a nine hundred seat house before the Cort Theatre's velvet curtains. When the curtains rise, we see a large twelve by fifteen foot screen located center stage.<sup>1</sup> Another screen, approximately eight by fifteen feet, is left of center. The image of a book cover with the title "Freak" spelled out in bright yellow capital letters is projected on the center screen. Broad waves of pink and blue form the background of the image and super-imposed across the book cover is an orange lithograph of Leguizamo. His eyes peer up at the word "Freak" and his mouth is wide open, suggesting a full belly laugh.

Projections are used throughout the piece. Designed by Wendell Harrington, the images are largely realistic photographs that correspond to the particularities of Leguizamo's narrative. For instance, when the performer refers to the neighborhoods in which he grew up, photos of various homes in which he lived are projected. Jan Kroeze's lighting design evokes the appropriate mood for each of the chapters. For example, when Leguizamo launches into a frenetic break-dancing sequence, red and blue police lights flash across the stage while a mirror ball scatters light fragments on and around Leguizamo. In addition, there are several sound cues in the show that are

imitative of the sounds Leguizamo describes. At one point, for example, Leguizamo tells the audience that every time his father yelled at his family the sound of a subway train drowned out his father's words. Leguizamo proceeds to depict his father and, just at the moment he starts to yell, the sound of a subway train fills the auditorium.

As the curtain rises on Freak, upbeat hip-hop music booms through the theatre. Leguizamo bursts on stage from the wings and performs an energetic dance in sync with the music. He then stops and begins to talk to the audience, recounting the first "chapter" of his life.

In "Meeting Womb," Leguizamo relates the details of his "freaky" birth. The setting is a delivery room in a US hospital and the main characters are his parents and a doctor. The doctor, who cannot pronounce Leguizamo's last name, encourages his mother, Lala, to push the baby out. In a stern voice, he urges, "Push! Ms. Liquidzamo. Ms. Legs and amo, leg of lamb . . . Just push ma'am" (3).<sup>2</sup> In a heavily accented voice, his father, Fausto, barks at the doctor, "I'm paying you, doctor! Why don't you pull?" (3). After a number of unsuccessful attempts, Fausto tells Lala, "Get up, woman, we're leaving" (3). Leguizamo then relates, "So they walked out and my first view of the world was upside down between my mom's legs. And they wonder why I have problems?" (3). Understood as a narrative abstract, the scene emphasizes the importance of family to Leguizamo's life and, as a Latino, his topsy-turvy relationship to US society and its customs.

In "Third World Logic," Leguizamo back tracks to an incident before his birth and recounts his family's immigration from Columbia to the US. He then offers various anecdotes regarding how the family adjusted to US culture. The setting for the first scene

in the chapter is the US Customs office at the airport in New York City. As Leguizamo describes the official in charge of the family's case, he also embodies him. The official walks with his shoulders squared and his knees bowed and drawls, "Come now, strip naked! Deep cavity search time. Last week we found five Nicaraguans inside of one you." Leguizamo tells the audience that the official put on a rubber glove and welcomed his parents to the US with a full body search. Bending over, Lala asks her husband why he never touches her in the way the official is touching her. Fausto replies, "Cause I'm not looking for anything" (4). Bending over himself, Fausto yowls, "No, mister, please no! ow, ow, ow!" and then, after a slight pause, Fausto begins to sing "America the Beautiful" in a high pitched, strained voice (4). The comic-ironic aim of the vocal innuendo is clear.

Leguizamo tells the audience that his family settled in Queens at which point an image of row houses appears on the center screen. Regarding the neighborhood, Leguizamo recalls, "When I walked through the streets I'd see every ethnicity under the sun" (5). Leguizamo illustrates his observation by offering brief depictions of various ethnic types. A Hindi merchant asks the young Leguizamo, "You want curry candy? It burn the shit out of your buttocks. Ring of fire" (5). A Jamaican rastafarian tells him, "You people [i.e., Latinos] multiply like roaches go back." When Leguizamo approaches a neighborhood news stand the Korean owner tells him, "This is not a library, little punk. You buy magazine or [I] kick your ass" (5).

In the same chapter, Leguizamo develops the characters of his immediate and extended family by recounting a family picnic. At this point, the projected image shows people gathered in a park. Having established the setting, Leguizamo recalls, "my

gramps was there on his life support system. We were keeping him alive against his will.

Because my pops wanted him to live long enough so he would suffer what he had made my pops suffer” (7). Leguizamo embodies his grandfather by stiffening his spine and bending his arms at his elbows as if holding onto the arms of a wheelchair. Eyes wide and speaking in a raspy tone, the grandfather says, “Pull the plug. No one’s looking, John, pull the plug!” With a child’s voice and pleading facial expression, Leguizamo answers the old man, “But abuelito, you know I’m not supposed to touch your iron lung.” “Just do it. Just do it Mother”#\$%\*!,” the grandfather demands. “Okay. Goodbye Gramps,” the young John answers (7). In a sad voice, Leguizamo tells the audience, “I’d give him a kiss, then pull the plug. But my dad had an uncanny ability to sense my grandfather escaping. He’d rush over just in time.” Leguizamo mimes his father re-inserting the plug and then, with a shake of his finger, he reprimands his child, “Hey, you know you’re not supposed to put your grandfather out of his misery” (8).

At the same picnic, Leguizamo recalls playing with his cousins, Speedy and Boulevard, whom he “always tried to avoid . . . ‘cause the games they played with the police by day, they reenacted on me by weekend” (8). To depict Speedy, Leguizamo hunches his shoulders and holds his arms in a boxing pose as he dictates the rules of the game in Spanglish, “Johnny, ven, mira, ven, quiero hablar contigo. Let’s play police brutality. I’m a cop and tu eres un criminal. Aqui, take this gun!” (8). Speedy throws an imaginary gun at the young Leguizamo who whimpers, “I don’t wanna play!” His cousin counters, “Take him down, he’s got a gun” (8). Leguizamo starts kicking as he describes his cousins’ actions. “They would jump on me and kick me and sing, ‘We’re playing with Johnito, Johnito’”(8). Leguizamo concludes the tale with an aside to the

audience, “You might know my cousin Speedy—he’s the shirtless Latin guy you see on Cops each week” (8).

After his cousins whoop him, the young Leguizamo runs to his grandmothers for comfort. One grandmother hisses, ““Ay, what are you, a little girl? Come here, come here let me put a dress on you, you little pussy”” (8). The child quips, ““I am what I eat,”” where upon the grandmother slaps him (8). He tries to explain the retort but his efforts are in vain. She responds, ““Like I care what a little fag thinks of me. Oh, look everyone, look at my little granddaughter. Speedy, Boulevard, come here, come here. I’ll hold her down while you kick her ass”” (9). Leguizamo approaches the second grandmother, Grama Dulce, and asks her for comfort. In an aside, Leguizamo explains that Grama Dulce is an alcoholic who is convinced that the young Leguizamo is Satan incarnate. She tries to perform an exorcism on him and, not wanting to “disappoint her,” the young Leguizamo begins to speak “in tongues and turning into Satan. I’d start jumping around and shaking and muttering in Hebrew and Arabic, Italian and ancient Chinese. Then I’d say, ‘I am Satan the cloven-hoofed. I’ve come to claim you as my wife. Come here, crusty old lady’” (10). Grama Dulce slaps her grandson, too.

The next scene in the chapter is introduced with projections of everyday domestic items, such as a coffee table, mint green lamps, and a huge console television set. Leguizamo tells the audience that the television, “was sacred to [Fausto], because my pops would Latinize everybody in America; we would let the screen get real dusty so that everybody looked nice and dark and Spanish. And my father was the only one allowed to watch TV, ‘cause he thought the more you watch it, the more you wear it out. Dad was operating under some kind of third world logic” (15). Leguizamo then shifts to portray

his father who is giving orders to his sons. “Don’t use my television and don’t sit on my furniture unless we have important guests. Use the floor for sitting and the kitchen sink for eating. And we’re not gonna buy any more food if you keep eating it! Food, I repeat, is for the guests and the animals. And I just brushed the dogs, so don’t pet ‘em! And get the hell off of the rug, I just vacuumed it. And stop sucking up all my oxygen—I’m breathing it.” (15)

The only time Fausto’s sons were allowed to watch TV was with their father or when he was not at home. Leguizamo focuses on one particular conflict in which he and his brother, Poochie, break the TV antennae and, in fear, try to conceal the mishap from their father. Leguizamo recalls,

Pops turned on the TV. “What the hell’s all the static? I can’t tell Sonny from Cher.”

“I’ll fix it! I’ll fix it!” I offered, right away. So I moved the goof piece of antennae for all I was worth. “Like this, Dad? Or this? Here?”

“Move the other one!” Pops barked.

So I pretend to move the broken antenna. *Trompe l’oeil*. I frantically shifted my body around while holding the broken antenna in place. “There? Like so? Perfect?” I was using up all my available cuteness.

“Move away from the television,” Pops ordered.

“Okay, I am away,” I said, inching over a bit.

“Get the hell out of the room, you little shit!” Pops yelled. I stayed in the same place but moon-walked.

“Okay, I’m leaving the room, the neighborhood.” And as I head for the door, I trip. He sees the antenna come off in my hand. “It’s a spear and I’m a hunter?” I offer meekly, but I know what’s coming next. (19)

Leguizamo blames the broken antennae on his brother. His father drags Poochie into a back bedroom for a beating as Poochie wails, ““No! Don’t! Anything but that. I’m your favorite. Remember, Dad”” (20). Between each word and phrase, Poochie jumps as he is being kicked or hit by his father. Leguizamo continues this action as he crosses down stage. He then pauses and addresses the audience, “But I don’t want to leave you with a bad impression of my pops ‘cause he wasn’t always this brutal. No, sometimes he drank, too” (20).

In the following chapter, “Dad Drunk,” Leguizamo elaborates on his father’s alcoholism and how it affected their relationship. A projection of a fire escape sets the scene. Leguizamo recalls sitting on the fire escape with his dad who is drunk and singing Columbian tunes, although he is unable to remember all the lyrics. In the forced enunciation of an intoxicated person trying not to slur his words, Fausto asks his son, ““Having a good time? You enjoying this? Good, ‘cause I’m gonna take it all away from you. Then you’ll really know how miserable life can be. You know, it’s time you start providing for this family.”” In the high pitched voice of a child John responds, ““But I’m only ten, Pops.”” Fausto chuckles, ““Oh, so now it’s time to sit back and rest on your laurels, Mr. Big Shot? C’mere, I love you. What are you cringing at? Afraid of a little affection? I’m your father, you little faggot. Come on, give me a kiss. You kiss me or I’ll punch the shit out of you.”” Leguizamo breaks from the closed focus of the scene and tells the audience that he kissed his father. He returns to the in scene action and mimes

kissing his father who snaps back, “Not on the lips, you little freak! You’re so lucky to have a dad like me who comes home at all, when I could be out, but am I doing that? No, because I’m right here spending quality time with my loser of a son” (25). Fausto then prods his son to take a sip of alcohol. The young Leguizamo resists at first but, after his first sip, he asks for more.

An affectionate tone characterizes the next few moments of the story in which the elder Leguizamo shares one of his dreams with his son. He says, “I’m gonna tell you my secret scheme. And if you tell anybody, I’ll have to kill you. Bobo pendejo, I’m gonna rent every room in this apartment till I own the building, the block. I’m gonna be the King of Tenements, the Latino Donald Trumpo” (26). After Fausto shares his secret, Leguizamo reflects on the irony of the situation, his present thoughts inflected through the thoughts and voice of the child. “You’re a regular genius, Dad. I’m so glad we could be this close. I always pictured it like this. You and me and the stink of alcohol. Dad, I got a secret, too. It was me who broke the antenna. See, I knew you’d understand” (27). Leguizamo then acts as if he is fending off his father’s blows and, in conclusion, he blames the accident on his brother again.

In “First Orgasms,” Leguizamo recalls his first experiences masturbating and his family catching him in the act. At the beginning of the chapter, Leguizamo observes in a flat monotone,

I was about twelve the first time I tried to masturbate. I thought I broke it, ‘cause something that wasn’t pee actually leaked out and I was like, “Ahh!” I actually thought I spilled the glue that kept it together. But it felt so good that pretty soon I was becoming unglued every chance I got. (30)



Leguizamo tells the audience that he tried to experience the world through the sensations in his penis. For instance, he would masturbate with a sandwich, or test the strength of his penis by trying to lift a pillow, a chair, and a telephone book with it. After miming his unsuccessful attempts to lift objects, Leguizamo circles the stage, walking as if he has a necktie dangling between his legs.

Leguizamo then recounts the time his entire family “discovered” him masturbating in the bathroom. Fausto stands outside the door wriggling the lock and screaming, “Come on, you little punk. You’re not doing what I think you’re doing, are you? Not in my house, you don’t!” (31). Fausto pushes open the door and yells, “What the hell are you doing in here?” Leguizamo answers, “See, I was about to take a shower when I decided I needed to change the light bulb” (32). Incredulous, Fausto asks why John was changing the light bulb with his penis and his mother’s underwear on his head. Poochie chimes in, “What’s this goo on my toothbrush, John?” (33). John lies and says it is toothpaste. Fausto barks, “Then prove it! Brush your teeth. Now.” Leguizamo cringes and reaches out to take the toothbrush as the scene ends.

“First Orgasms” is followed by “Fellas on Sex.” In the chapter, Leguizamo recalls a house party where he and his friends, Bobo, Lollipop and Xerox, talked about sex. To set the scene, three slowly flashing police lights bathe the stage in red, yellow, and blue while the reflections of a mirror ball speckle the scene with patches of light. Disco music thumps in the background. Leguizamo depicts Bobo grooming his hair with an imaginary pick. Given the high height of the picking action, Bobo appears to have an afro. In a deep voice, Bobo informs his friends, “Yo, you have to pork a girl as fast as you can or it’ll close up on you and lock up on your wood. And there’s a bitch attached

to you wherever you go and what not. I'm serious. No joke, kid.” Lollipop speaks with an Italian accent, and taps his foot to the music, as he adds, “Yo, a wet dream can be dangerous if you sleep with an electric blanket. Word ‘em up.” Xerox, dances to the music and, with a Queens’ accent, advises, “Yo, pulling on your dick makes it biggerer [sic]. Not that I need to know this info—this is for ya’lls benefit. You know what I’m saying, John?” Leguizamo addresses an aside to the audience, “So, I’ve got to hop in and show ‘em I know what’s what,” after which he tells his friends, “A menstrual cycle has three wheels.” Bobo responds, “Yeah, whatever, John. Yo, let’s have a ‘who dick bigger’ contest. My dick is five fingers plus a small X-men Wolverine action figure. Ha ha.” Xerox takes the bait, “Dag, mine’s the size of a Devil Dog with the end bit off. Ha ha. You know what I’m sayin.” And Leguizamo boasts, “Mine’s like a can of tuna.” Leguizamo tells the audience that his friends “look at me weird ‘til I continue, ‘cause you know it’s the width that counts!” (37).

In the next chapter, “Fresh Air Funk,” Leguizamo recounts his summer stay with a New England family. Leguizamo explains that the Fresh Air Fund is a summer program in which children “from the inner city” are “given the opportunity, like it or not, to spend a summer with a rich, Caucasian, New England family” (40). Leguizamo also explicates, “they [the Family] expand your horizons, show you how great and fun life can be, and then just when you’re getting comfortable—three meals a day, lead-free paint chips—they snatch it all away. So if you don’t know how poor you were, now your ass really knows!” (41). Leguizamo mocks the patronizing attitude of the program and surrogate family when he recalls the father scolding his children for teasing John. The father says, “Now, now. Don’t make fun boys. Little John comes from a primitive land

where they don't have the benefits of running water" (41). Later that evening, the father condescends directly to John, "'You see, little brown man, people of good breeding sip cognacs and talk about Lacrosse, and pet their golden retrievers'" (42). The entire experience contributes to John feeling like a freak.

While staying with the Fresh Air Fund family, John hides under the parents' bed "hoping for some wild adult porn." Instead, he hears, "real quiet squeaks," and then the father says, "'Oh, oh, thank you, dear.'" The Fresh Air Fund mother clarifies the exchange when she says, "'No, let's not make it worse by talking. Good Night'" (43).

In contrast, Leguizamo relates that "it was a whole 'nother ball game at my aunt Anisette's up in Spanish Harlem with her and her lover/mechanic guy, and they'd be like, 'Take this and that and some of this. Take it all, you whore, you slut, you bitch.'" Leguizamo slaps his buttocks and humps the air as he delivers this line. The intended affect is that Leguizamo is enacting the boyfriend. The joke is on us, however, as Leguizamo concludes the story with the following shift, "And then he would say, 'I know I can't never truly satisfy you'" (43; emphasis added).

In "Jewish Resort," Fausto is separated from Lala and dating a Jewish woman. To impress her, Fausto pretends that he and his sons are Jewish too. To represent the Jewish woman, Leguizamo pivots sideways from the waist, executes high hand gestures around the face, and smiles broadly. In a nasal voice, similar to that of the TV actress Fran Drescher, the woman asks, "'Who are these lovely children? You little bubbala. You must be kvelling. Their names?'" Fausto tells his girlfriend, "'This is Abraham. This is Moses. Say thank you, Abraham!'" When his father tells the boys to smile "'more Jewish,'" the boys smile wider (47).

In “Surrogate Moms,” Leguizamo introduces his beloved Uncle Sanny to the audience. Leguizamo crosses upstage to stand next to the center screen. The screen goes blank as Leguizamo explains, “And since my moms was working so much, my Uncle Sanny became our surrogate moms. Now my uncle Sanny was a little unconventional. He was what you’d call a triple threat: Latino, gay, and deaf” (53). To communicate with the children, Sanny invents a form of sign language that only Poochie and John can understand. Leguizamo demonstrates Sanny’s sign language in silhouette in front of the screen. As Sanny, he draws a triangle in front of him, which, means, ““At Christmas.”” Then, he pulls on his chin, which signifies, ““I always made a lousy Santa.”” Next, he makes a stretching gesture and mimes pulling on a thigh-high nylon, which means, ““Instead of filling the stockings.”” Then, Sanny rolls the nylon up his leg to indicate, ““I was always trying them on”” (53).

Uncle Sanny introduces John and Poochie to culture by teaching them how to sneak into Broadway show during the intermissions. At this point, the lights flash on and off in the Cort Theater. Leguizamo runs down the aisle and then climbs up to an empty box. He takes a seat and hangs his arm over the box rail. Spot lit, Leguizamo returns to the past told situation by explaining, “I wasn’t sitting with anyone I knew and I’m ascares [sic] of being clocked and I’m peeping at this ridiculous musical Chorus Line thing when I hear somebody called Morales on stage.” The song “Nothing” by Marvin Hamlisch fills the theater. Leguizamo continues,

There was a Latin person in the show. And she didn’t have a gun or hypodermic needle in her hand and she wasn’t a hooker or a maid and she wasn’t servicing anybody so it was hard to tell if she was Latin and everybody’s respecting and

admiring her . . . I was lost in this amazing moment, singing as loud as I could . . .  
. And I'm like, "She's singing to me, she's singing to me!" (54).

Although Uncle Sanny and the children are caught and thrown out of the theatre, Leguizamo reflects happily, "And that's how I got culture" (53).

Leguizamo's love for Uncle Sanny is made explicit when he tells the audience, "I loved him and I told him so. 'I wanna grow up and be just like you, Uncle Sanny, except for the liking men part.'" Uncle Sanny responds with his fist on his head and his forefinger and pinky raised, "I know your father doesn't respect me." "But that's bullshit," Sanny exclaims as he makes bullhorns with one hand and, beneath, opens and closes the other as if expelling something. "Because feature this: many highly respectable individuals of ancient," Sanny pretends to walk with a cane, "and modern times," Sanny poses like a runway model, "have been homosexuals." For examples, Sanny strikes the pose of Rodin's sculpture "The Thinker," which Leguizamo translates as "Plato." Standing like the sculpture "David," he indicates "Michelangelo," and two fists atop the head reference "Walt Disney" as a third example. Sanny then apologizes, "Oops, I outed him" (53).

In "French Passing-Not," Leguizamo relates another instance in which his father tried to pass for something he was not. In the story, Fausto tells the family that he is the headwaiter at a premiere French restaurant in Manhattan. Everyday Fausto leaves for work dressed in a tuxedo, as a headwaiter might do. One day the boys decide to visit their father at the restaurant. Upon being seated, the boys look for their father but he is no where in sight. Then, with a classic double take, Leguizamo whispers, "And I'm looking around for Dad . . . and the kitchen door swings open long enough so I can see a

guy that looks a lot like my dad, but I know it can't be him, 'cause that guy's bending over a sink washing dishes. But when the doors swing open again, I look real close. We had to get outta there" (60). The chapter ends with a long silence evocative of the boys' speechless realization that Fausto lied to them about his occupation.

In "Black Irish," the family moves to Sunnyside, Queens and, in seeming imitation of his father's ploy, Leguizamo tries to pass himself off as Irish. A photograph of a two story green house introduces the chapter. Upon establishing the scene orally, Leguizamo executes a parody of clog dancing as he "River Dances" up to an Irish lass. With a thick Irish accent, he introduces himself, "'Toy, hello, lassie, how's the Emerald Isle? You ever fuck a leprechaun? Erin go bragh and begorrah. Why are you looking at me like that? Is my shillelagh hanging out? Are my shenanigans banging about?'" The woman looks at him dumbly and then asks if he really is Irish. He replies, "'Oh, but I am, black Irish.'" Leguizamo mimes lifting a mug and continues, "'I'm parched above, lassie. Are you moist below?'" After a slight pause he admits to the audience, "Okay, so I didn't say that. I said how much I respect Irish culture and what contributions they've made: U2, whiskey, cops, and, of course, Scotty . . . . The heath, the moor, you know you got to go see Trainspotting, Braveheart. You sit through the whole movie and you can't understand a word even if you see it forty times" (65). Leguizamo's charade is unsuccessful and results in fifteen of the young woman's brothers pummeling him.

In general content and form, the next chapter, "Guido-Rama," imitates the former. The projection of another and similar looking house anticipates the family's move to the Italian neighborhood, Corona. There, Leguizamo tries to make friends with his neighbors but they insult him. In response, Leguizamo mocks them.

“Yeah, yeah, I know; we Latin people are the bacteria of the universe. We’re lazy, we fuck too much, and look what I bought with my welfare check—a Guido joke book! And to think I almost wasted it on crack. Here’s one I’m sure you’ll like. How can you tell if your baby’s a Guido? Give up? He won’t use a pacifier unless it’s got hair on it. That means that your mother has hair on her nipples. I like that one. That shit can’t be true. You’re the Guido, you tell me.” (71)

Just like the Irish brothers in Sunnyside, Queens, the Italian toughs beat up Leguizamo.

In “First Love—Black Venus,” Leguizamo tells the audience that in his late teens he fell in love with a black Muslim girl named Yaschica. In anticipation of meeting her father, he puts on a suit, bow tie, and tries to straighten his hair. His “Muslim” ploy is unsuccessful however and Yaschica’s father rejects him, saying, ““You don’t fool me, boy. You don’t look like a Muslim with that bow tie—you look like Pee-Wee Herman, and when I look at your white skin I wanna kill you”” (77). Nonetheless, the couple decides to sneak a meeting in Yaschica’s bedroom. At this point in the narrative, Al Green’s “Let’s Stay Together” fades in and Leguizamo starts to dance as the stage lights dim. He undresses down to his underwear as he narrates, “And it was so romantic—we put on some Al Green, she turned on the black light, we took off article after article of clothing till we were in our underwear only and I was about to finally lose my virginity. I looked at my black beautiful Venus. She looked at me” (78). Leguizamo then laughs out loud. He stands with one hand on his hip and he rolls his neck and eyes in syncopation. He specifies the laugh and gestures as those of Yaschica when she remarks, ““Oh, my God, you are the whitest motherfucker I ever saw. You glow in the dark. You

don't get it, Translucent Man. Hold on, hold on, I want my sister to see your blue veiny ass, guppy boy" (78). Leguizamo then redresses himself.

As the title implies, Leguizamo loses his virginity in the next chapter, "Kentucky Fried De-Virginizing." In the anecdote, Fausto drives John to the local Kentucky Fried Chicken. The young Leguizamo goes into the kitchen of the restaurant where he meets a middle-aged German woman who proceeds to undress. Holding his hands at his waist as if steadying the woman in front of him, Leguizamo pumps his hips and then moans, "You like that street dick. That nasty Latin seed." Leguizamo tells the audience that he "started working her right there in the fried chicken batter, this way and that way, up and down." His boasting is interrupted by the woman who kindly suggests, "No, over here honey" (84). He apologizes, "Oh, I'm sorry. It's my first time." The scene builds to a crescendo as he describes, "Breasts and thighs are flying up in the air—not hers, the chickens. We're in a cloud of flour" (85). The episode climaxes when the woman does, drenching Leguizamo.

In "Domestic Violins," Leguizamo recounts the demise of his parents' relationship and the first time he stands up to his father. According to Leguizamo, Fausto's job in the French restaurant "made my pops all stressed out, so he became the Grinch who stole Christmas" (91). One night Leguizamo's mother arrives home singing, in response to which Fausto puffs out his chest, furrows his brow and, like the Seussian villain, barks, "Who said you could sing that thing? I am the king and nothing is what I say you should sing-sing-sing! And you're late. That I really do hate. To be made to wait I don't appreciate. I just hate hate hate" (92). Lala dismisses her husband's rant but he continues to complain about her late arrival and the welfare of the children. She



then mocks his job, which thoroughly enrages him and he tries to choke her. John and Poochie hear the argument through the kitchen door and, at this point, the young Leguizamo grabs a butcher knife and “run[s] out there like a little Jean Claude Goddamn. I give my Pops my best kung fu crouch and hold up the knife. ‘If you touch my moms or anyone in this house ever again, you’re a goner’” (94). Fausto hits the boy and then his wife. Lala is undeterred and launches into a rendition of Gloria Gaynor’s “I Will Survive.” In the calm after the storm, Fausto apologizes and cautions his son that “‘if you don’t pursue your dreams you’ll end up like me’” (95). He then leaves the house and abandons his family.

In “College Fiasco,” Leguizamo attends The Learning Annex in New York City. There he tries to conceal his racial heritage because “I was worried that I wasn’t gonna fit in so I cleverly passed as a white boy, stayed out of the sun, straightened my hair, told people I was from California” (101). In service to the deception, Leguizamo abstains from drinking, afraid he might disclose his ethnicity if drunk. One night, a militant Latino student confronts him regarding his identity and his use of the word, “Hispanic.” The student seethes, “‘Shut up, stupid! Stop talking shit! It’s Latino, you colonized eunuch. Hispanic is the slave name given to us by the Spaniards in Iberia, and Iberia is Phoenician for land of the rabbits. And do I look like a rabbit to you, mother fucker? Do you think you look like a furry rabbit, ese?’” (102). Some of Leguizamo’s white fraternity brothers appear at the point and they ask John if the militant student is a friend. Leguizamo pauses and then tells the audience, “I looked them right in the eyes and muster up all my strength and will of character and say, ‘No. Oh, Jesus . . . I’m just directing him to his Affirmative Action booth.’ As [the militant student] walked away, I

saw a tear coming down the Chicano's face like the Indian in the sad garbage commercial" (103). Leguizamo leaves the encounter with a feeling of "freakishness" and self loathing.

In "Juilliard," Leguizamo recalls his entrance audition for The Juilliard School of the Performing Arts. While the audition is a bust, he meets a young woman, Boo Sanchez, there and they strike up a relationship. Boo's recurring complaint, however, is that John is unable to say "I love you" to her. In response, he explains,

"I'm not afraid of saying it. I just think I've proven myself through action. I mean, what could words possibly add? And I experience my emotions on a preverbal level. To refine them through language is to change and pollute them. Now you don't want me to say 'I Love You' and stop our relationship dead in its tracks, do you?" (110)

In an ironic moment, Boo blames Fausto for John's problem and, when John denies it, Boo yells at him just like Fausto does. John finally tells Boo that he loves her and he proposes marriage. In conclusion, he reflects, "I know, I know. See, they tell you your whole life that you always marry your moms. Well, not me—I was gonna marry my pops" (111).

Leguizamo's negotiation of race is complicated further in "Agent" and "Director." In the first, Leguizamo is turned down by a white casting agent because the agent wants an actor who can play a stereotypical "Hispanic" rather than more diverse Hispanics (118). The director in the next chapter is looking for Leguizamo to play a stereotype too; namely, a Latin junkie. For the director, such a type is "more Latino" and he coaches Leguizamo to express "the agony of your people" through his depiction

of the type (119). Leguizamo submits and he lands the part. In recounting the scene in Freak, Leguizamo parodies the stereotype, speaking lines such as “I need a fix, man—come on, take my kid, anything” and “I’m outta veins, I’ll stick it in my neck, how about my eyeball? La metadona esta cabrona” (119).

In “Pyro-Technix Climactic Finale,” Fausto appears backstage after Leguizamo’s first show. Fausto qualifies his visit by explaining that his “new kids wanted to see the show” (123), and then he compounds the insult by saying, “My Junior is so much better looking and funny, more talented, more intelligent than you ever were. That’s why he’s the best in his acting class” (124). A back-handed compliment follows, “I always said if anybody can make something out of nothing, it’s you John. Let’s be honest. I know you never liked me” (124).

Reeling from the verbal blows, Leguizamo imagines how he might respond to his father but, in the reality of the situation, his father beats him to the punch.

“John. You know I’m not too crazy about you, either. We were never meant to be father and son, but then who really is? We’re probably never gonna get along.

But that doesn’t mean I don’t love the shit out of you. Now go out there and be the best junkie you can be and give me a kiss.” (124)

Leguizamo then reflects on the “living without” of Latin people. A photographic montage of Latin American actors, such as Priscilla Lopez, Carmen Miranda, Rita Moreno, Desi Arnaz, Cheech Marin and Tommy Chong, is projected on the screen as he speaks. In sync with the slow rhythm of the changing images, Leguizamo ruminates,

And all of a sudden I allowed myself to want more for myself, to be more and do more, master of my own destiny, never wait for anyone, take life into my own

hands, like my father once wanted for me and like all the Moraleses, Morenos, Arnazes, Puentes, Cheechs and Chongs before me; who had to eat it, live it, get fed up with it, finesse it, scheme it, even Machiavelli it, to get out from under all the ills that Latin flesh is heir to and who dug right down to the bottom of their souls to turn nothing into something. (125)

Leguizamo closes Freak by dedicating the show to his father. As he speaks, another photographic montage appears on the screen. The images show Fausto holding Leguizamo as a baby, the father teaching his son to walk, the pair on the street together walking to school, and then at a family gathering, through Leguizamo's adolescence and up to the early days of his acting career.

In Freak: A-Semi-Demi-Quasi-Pseudo Autobiography, Leguizamo recounts and sequences his anecdotes in ways that reflect a masculine rite of passage common to many men as they pass from childhood to adulthood. In most cases, the general aim of the passage rite is to conserve gender roles and their associative values so as to preserve the structure and culture of the given society. As boys pass through and enact the various implicit and explicit rituals of manhood, they show, if not their absolute acceptance of, their obligation to their particular society and its maintenance.

In US society, there are a number of rituals that serve as key markers of the passage. Typically, they deal with sex and relationships, competitive play and achievements, and age markers where, upon reaching a certain age, one is legally sanctioned to engage in adult activities, such as driving at sixteen and drinking in public at eighteen or twenty-one. However, unlike some cultures, there is no one event in US culture as a whole that marks the young man's permanent change in status—i.e., to an

adult male. Rather, due to the heterogeneous mix of class, race, religion, and gender cultures of which the young man is or has chosen to be a part, his passage is ambiguous and usually extends over many years. For instance, in terms of his religious culture, a young man of the Jewish faith becomes an adult at age thirteen when he performs his bah mitzvah. However, in terms of class, he may not achieve the same status until he graduates from college and, in terms of gender-sex roles, until he loses his virginity.

In light of Victor Turner's studies of ritual and performance, the learning and successful enactment of masculine behavior occurs in what Turner calls the "transitional phase" of the passage rite.<sup>3</sup> In the transitional phase, the boy-adolescent-young man is "betwixt and between" social identities, or liminal (Turner, Forest of Symbols 199). Since, in US society, the passage rite is long, beginning at birth, and ambiguous, so too is the transitional phase and the liminal masculine identity. In turn, specifying the initial separation and closing incorporation phases of the rite proves difficult too, unless we separate each explicit ritual from the others. While studying the boy's bah mitzvah or college graduation as an isolated event is productive, it does not address growing up in a heterogeneous society with multiple and often contradictory cultures, cultural values and expectations. As I discuss below, it seems to me that, in Freak, Leguizamo aims to express the latter experience: the integrated rather than isolated affect of the multiple cultures that impact his (masculine) rite of passage.

It is in the transitional phase that the young man learns to enact the masculine behavior that his Elders value and teach him. He rehearses or practices the behavior in various ways, takes diverse "tests" regarding it and, at some point or not, the accumulation of transitional activities adds up to his being an adult male. Crucial here is

the understanding that, in rituals generally, the social role and its associative values are taught and learned by means of symbolic actions, corporeal and discursive. That is to say, the body is the site where a culture marks, conserves and perpetuates itself and its values.

Of course, discipline or the disciplining of bodies is integral to ritual functions and hence Frank's basic traits regarding disciplined bodies are helpful ways to understand what might be involved in ritual enactment. Primary to Frank's understanding of disciplined bodies is that the individual or group "lacks" some ideal or, in ritual terms, lacks the "sacra." The lack then gives rise to the purpose for performing the ritual (Turner, Forest of Symbols 65). In this case, adult masculinity is the ideal and it becomes the implicit reason for engaging in the transitional activities, which usually involve repetitive actions of some kind. The young man trains to compete in events that mark his athletic or intellectual prowess. He practices to take and pass his driving test. He rehearses for his first sexual encounter by accumulating information over the years from his buddies, parents, and popular culture and by experimenting with his own body and dating. For Frank, enacting a regimen of some kind so as to achieve an ideal that the individual understands he lacks are the key traits of disciplined bodies. The other two traits, a monadic orientation and corporeal dissociation, are variable. For instance, as Leguizamo implies in his stories, learning male sexual behavior may well involve monadic masturbation. However, while pleasurable, the activity is viewed as but a poor substitute for dyadic intercourse with another. And, in both cases, the individual's identity is highly associated with his corporeality.

As in most rituals, in the masculine rite of passage there are clearly delineated Elders who are empowered by institutions and their supporting discourses to teach and judge the passage rites. For example, in schools, coaches oversee the training of young men for competitive sports and, by means of the practices they design and the discourses they use to teach them, the associative values of rigorous training, physical prowess, aggressive team competition, individual will and success are taught. While the successful enactment of these values contributes to success on the field of sport, the enactment also contributes to and conserves the economic foundation of US society, where aggressive individualism within corporate structures forms the backbone of consumer capitalism.

As Foucault observes in Discipline and Punish, the structures of discipline are not always explicit. Rather, by means of ideological indoctrination, individuals enact disciplinary regimens on their own, without the presence of an explicit disciplinary figure. For Foucault, our enactment of self-disciplinary regimens arises from our fear that we will be punished in some way should we not enact them (33). In other words, long after leaving the field of sport, we carry the “coach” in our heads, enacting aggressive competitive practices out of fear of what will befall us should we not. Foucault’s understanding of how self-discipline interrelates with economic systems, consumer capitalism in our case, suggests that the masculine rite of passage in the US involves the disciplining of the body to mirror or consume product imagery that reflects masculinity. In other words, the discipline of masculinity is taught through and entails the consumption of product imagery and material items. Likewise, traits of aggression,

specifically aggressive individualism, are part of the masculine bodies we learn to perform.

Leguizamo's performance contains and critiques the general masculine rite of passage I have outlined above. In this way, Leguizamo's stories speak to a broad and ethnically diverse audience. However, Leguizamo also crafts aspects of his stories so as to address Latin American culture in particular. As regards the masculine rite of passage, Leguizamo's specification can be understood in terms of the concept and practice of machismo and its variant macho. In Hombres y Machos: Masculinity and Latino-Culture, Alfredo Mirande observes that while macho behavior has been "incorporated into American popular culture" and is applicable to many men, it also is specific to the history and cultural practices of Latin America and Latin American communities within the US (66). It plays a key part in the masculine passage rite of Latin American men and, also, a key part in how Latinos are depicted in US mass media, such as television and films.

Mirande defines machismo as "an obsessive concern with masculinity and hierarchical gender relations" (16).<sup>4</sup> According to Latin American men interviewed by Mirande, a man who enacts positive traits of machismo is "brave, courageous, responsible, protective, and self-defensive" (78). A negative model shows "bravado" and is "violent, irresponsible, selfish, loud, boastful, abusive, and chauvinistic" (78). Within Latino culture, machismo is associated with arrogance, an exaggerated aggressiveness, an intransigence in male-to-male relationships, and sexual aggression in male-to-female relationships. In Latin American communities, then, machismo is viewed negatively for



the most part, although Mirande claims characteristics of macho are passed down to Latino men as part of their cultural heritage.

In Freak, Leguizamo crafts his chapters so as to recount his rite of passage from birth through his present adulthood. Machismo plays a significant part in the rite. It is the “sacra” his Elders, particularly his father, enact and he learns to imitate or mirror. While the disciplining of bodies to enact machismo provides the broad framework for the rite of passage Leguizamo relates, the practices of discipline fade into the background as particular aspects of machismo are enacted in and through specific rituals. Rituals of aggression and sexual prowess arise and recur throughout Leguizamo’s chapters and affect how he and others view and perform masculinity.

While Fausto appears to be the main Elder-teacher of machismo, other characters participate too. One such Elder-teacher is the popular consumer marketplace where, as Mirande observes, machismo is coded as both positive and negative depending on who embodies it. Because of its association with “superstars” (Mirande 66), some macho imagery reinforces Leguizamo’s enactment of it. Other images mark his enactment as negative because, “when applied to Mexicans or Latinos, ‘macho’ remains imbued with such negative attributes as male dominance, patriarchy, authoritarianism, and spousal abuse” (66). To deflect the negative associations, Fausto and then Leguizamo himself try to pass as something other than Latino when in “non-Latino” contexts. Leguizamo’s performance of passing becomes part of the masculine rite of passage he learns to enact.

Throughout and by means of Freak, Leguizamo interweaves an alternative rite of passage that teaches a different understanding and enactment of masculinity and thereby it critiques the “sacra” of machismo. As taught by Uncle Sanny and the Latino

performers Leguizamo mentions in the last chapter of Freak, the alternative rite of passage features a communicative body in Frank's terms. In Leguizamo's terms, however, it might be best understood as a passage rite that highlights performance and the "freak" it engenders.

Fausto is the main Elder in Leguizamo's masculine passage rite. Fausto's enactment of the aggressive aspects of machismo serves as the example Leguizamo is to learn to enact himself. Leguizamo highlights Fausto's macho behavior in several anecdotes. For example, in "Third World Logic," Fausto resorts to verbal and physical abuse when his authoritarian rule of the household is upset or challenged. In the same chapter, Fausto prolongs his father's life not because he loves him necessarily but because he "want[s] him to live long enough so he would suffer what he made my pops suffer" (7). Mirande's understanding that macho behavior is passed down to Latino men as part of their cultural heritage is implied in this incident. However, the enactment appears to be more of a chore than a celebration of culture in so far as Fausto must police the plug of his father's life support constantly.

The young Leguizamo's acceptance of machismo is tested in the chapter "Dad Drunk." First, he is asked to show his allegiance to the patriarch of the family when Fausto demands that he kiss him. If he fails, Fausto will "'punch the shit out of [him]'" (25). Second, the young boy's macho sexuality is measured and re-aligned when he is reprimanded for trying to kiss his father on the lips. Fausto snaps, "'Not on the lips, you little freak!'" (25).

Fausto's performance of machismo is so repetitive that it becomes a corporeal and discursive model of behavior that Leguizamo cannot help but learn. Bravado and

exaggerated aggression are evident in the fights he has with his Irish and Italian neighbors. The learning of machismo through imitation is most clearly displayed in “Domestic Violins.” When Fausto tries to choke his wife Lala, the young Leguizamo pulls a knife on his father. Simultaneously violent and brave, this act of aggression and protection signifies the complexities of machismo as it plays out in Leguizamo’s life, his Freak performance, and intra- and inter-culturally.

Such complexities are experienced by Fausto. As a Latino and a member of the blue-collar working class in US society, Fausto’s access to a well-paying job and financial security is limited. In turn, his enactment of the “responsible” and “protective” patriarch—i.e., positive traits of machismo—is difficult in so far as these traits are associated with providing for one’s family. In other words, his role as patriarch and hence his masculinity are threatened by the social realities of class and race in the US. The results of the bind are investigated throughout Freak but come to a head in “Domestic Violins” when his wife Lala mocks his job as a dishwasher and, given the cultural codes of machismo, mocks his masculinity. In defense of machismo, he enacts it, or he enacts aspects of it. By means of physical violence he attempts to silence those who threaten him and the code by which he lives. Leguizamo’s treatment of the incident in Freak re-engages the battle. By constructing his father as a Dr. Seuss villain, he parodies his macho behavior as childish and by having his mother sing “I Will Survive,” he asserts the voice of those so frequently silenced by abuse and, in this case, the practice of machismo.

Other Elders in Leguizamo’s family practice and thereby teach aggressive aspects of machismo to Leguizamo. The most telling example is in “Third World Logic” when

Leguizamo's cousins, Speedy and Boulevard, teach Leguizamo how to play "cops and robbers." Again the machismo code proves complex in this anecdote. On the one hand, the violent game is a symbolic test of Leguizamo's ability to enact an aggressive male, a test common in many cultures besides Latino and Latino American. On the other hand, the ritual play is specified by the cousins enacting police who brutalize the Latino thief—i.e., young John in this case. As Leguizamo implies, his role as thief is actualized by his cousins in everyday real life. "They play . . . the game . . . with the police by day," Leguizamo tells us. Further, his "cousin Speedy" is "the shirtless Latin guy you see on Cops each week" (8). In symbolic terms, then, as thieves by day and cops in play, Speedy and Boulevard brutalize themselves: macho beating up on macho is macho, it appears.

An additional explanation is provided by Coramae Richey Mann when she observes that in some low economic Latino households masculine and criminal behaviors are associated, and deemed of value (266). That is, having experienced discrimination in housing and employment, the male members of the family resort to crime in order to provide for their family. Thereby, they also meet an expectation of the machismo code. That this same scenario plays out in other cultures and, to a lesser extent perhaps, across economic classes should not be ignored since it illustrates the extent to which machismo—"an obsessive concern with masculinities and hierarchical gender relations" (Mirande 16)—infiltrates US society generally. In the boy's play, then, the macho behavior of the cops comes as no surprise. More intriguing is that their brand of macho dominates and yet the reasons for enacting it are unclear. What family does their machismo serve?

The grandmothers who render the final verdict on Leguizamo's performance in "cops and robbers" substantiate the symbolic purpose for the ritual play. When Leguizamo seeks their comfort, one grandmother's string of epithets pronounces him a failure. He is a little girl, a pussy, a fag, and a granddaughter who should have his/her ass kicked (8). The little boy's failure to whoop the cops, much less take a beating, renders him feminine in the grandmother's eyes and directs further attention toward how sexuality plays a part in the machismo rite of passage.

In The Meaning of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City, Matthew Gutmann observes that "sexuality is considered . . . a discrete category" in Latino cultures. It "is never simply subsumed by consideration of masculinity and/or femininity, and indeed plays as much of a role in the constitution of gender categories as gender plays in forming ways of thinking about and acting on transformations of sexuality" (129). The importance of sexuality that Gutmann observes is prevalent in Freak and plays out in the many discrete rituals that Leguizamo recounts. Further, the accounts regarding sex are sequenced in a chronological order that infers the progression of transitional activities that guide many a young man's sexual experimentation and his growing sense of a sexual identity. In light of the machismo code, it appears that it is assumed that a young man's experimentation and identity is heterosexual, which in turn equates to being masculine or, in Gutmann's terms, "being a man." The one "freaky" sexual identity in Freak is Leguizamo's Uncle Sanny who is gay. While Leguizamo adores his Uncle, he also references him as a "surrogate mom," a woman not a man. In other words, Freak advances a fairly predictable, hetero-normative narrative. The intrigue, then, lies in how Leguizamo relates his accounts. For the most part, they are delightfully grotesque,

Leguizamo reveling in the low domains of corporeality and discourse that arise in sexual experimentation generally and his assuming of a heterosexual masculinity in particular.

In “First Orgasms,” Leguizamo experiments with masturbation. At first, he thinks he breaks his penis, “spill[s] the glue that [keeps] it together” (30). However, as he experiences sexual satisfaction and gains confidence, he becomes inventive in his masturbatory play. He masturbates with a sandwich, pillow, chair, and telephone book.

While we might understand masturbation as a disciplined act in so far as it services the ideal of sexual prowess and, for many, becomes a repeated regimen that is performed alone, other aspects seem to violate the disciplinary code. For one, the activity centers identity in a corporeal body experience and sensation rather than an abstract ideal. Temporarily, at least, identity is based in corporeality more so than discourse and institutional rules, which may suggest why masturbation is marked as “profane” by numerous religious cultures. Also, while Leguizamo’s experimentation becomes obsessive in its repetition, Leguizamo is not “in control” of what happens and it is this very lack of control that fulfills his corporeal desire. Lastly, inventive play is part of the experimentation. The irony then is that in the beginning stages of gaining sexual prowess or machismo, a somewhat “out of control” body, highly associated with its corporeality, and temporarily fulfilling its desires is performed. That all three traits are characteristic of Leguizamo’s Freak performance and a good bit of performance generally should not go unnoticed.

A similar, though also dyadic, body orientation arises in “Fellas on Sex.” In Frank’s terms, the boys enact communicative bodies as they exchange (mis)information regarding sex. Due to their minimal experience and knowledge, their discourse is

unpredictable and surprising. As a group, they improvise their knowledge through imaginary situations and quirky penis metaphors. Bobo's dick becomes as long as "five fingers plus a small X-men Wolverine action figure" while Leguizamo's dick is as wide as "a can of tuna" (37). While their discourse is competitive, the boasting operates in a collective way. They boast to share and thereby gain knowledge and expertise.

In later chapters, Leguizamo explores the ritual of dating and the expectation that he prove himself a man by having intercourse with a woman. For Leguizamo, the dating ritual is complicated by race because he seeks partners who are not Latino. The problem is not the young women's ethnicity but their desire for boyfriends from within their ethnic group. Understanding this, Leguizamo tries to pass as Irish or Muslim when he courts the Irish girl and Yaschica respectively. He is rejected in both cases. His discourse appears to be at fault in the case of the Irish girl. Whether due to his ethnic fumbblings or the frankness of his purpose, Leguizamo fails to persuade the girl that he is Irish. His race is at fault in the case of Yaschica. Stripped down to his underwear, Leguizamo's corporeal (given) race is blatantly apparent to Yaschica. She exclaims, "you are the whitest motherfucker I ever saw" and refuses to have sex with him (78).

To insure that his son passes the test of heterosexual prowess and proves himself a man, Fausto takes him to visit a prostitute in the chapter, "Kentucky Fried De-Virginizing." The setting associates sex, or the specific de-virginizing ritual, with consumerism. Sex can be bought and, as a commodity, it is predictable as fast food. However the scene includes a chance factor; namely, the inexperienced and frightened young man, the "chicken." While the consumer institution "fries" sex in order to make it palatable, the entrance of the "raw" chicken recalls the unpredictable potential of sex.

This tension between cooked and raw, control and chance, plays out in Leguizamo's narrative. On the one hand, the young man attempts to control the sexual exchange by means of his macho discourse and corporeality. He stands behind the woman, placing her in a subservient position, and voices aggressive sound bites gleaned, it seems, from porno flicks and Latino clichés. ““You like that street dick,”” he says, ““That nasty Latin seed.”” (85). On the other hand, due to his inexperience, he is unable to control the encounter and it becomes a raw, unpredictable event of flying chicken “breasts and thighs” (85). By means of grotesque imagery, Leguizamo celebrates his sexual initiation while also mocking its macho implications. Thereby, he re-imagines the construct or product of sex within the commercial venue of his performance and the marketplace at large.

As implied throughout the above discussion, Leguizamo's masculine rite of passage is impacted by the mass media and its depictions of Latinos and the signifiers of machismo. In Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of Ethnicity in the United States, Clara Rodriguez explains, “[i]n a content analysis of news stories presented on the three major broadcast television networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) during 1995, researchers found that only [one] percent of the news stories focused on Latinos and issues related to Latinos” (15). Further, Rodriguez found

Hispanics are virtually absent as characters in the entertainment media and as correspondents and anchors in the news media. When Hispanics do appear, they are consistently and uniformly portrayed negatively more than other race and ethnic groups. Latinos are more likely than other groups to receive portrayal in



the media that reinforces crude and demeaning cultural stereotypes. Positive media portrayals of Latinos are also uncommon. (21)

Drawing on a report by The National Council of LaRaza, Rodriguez specifies that for every one hundred “good” white characters, there were thirty-nine villains, yet for every one hundred “good” hispanic characters, there were seventy-five villains (27). “When cast, Hispanics tend to wind up in stereotypical roles, ‘usually as crooks, cops, or comics,’” Rodriguez reports (27). In sum, the mass media constructs and markets Latin Americans in terms of the negative characteristics of the machismo code or it ignores the culture and its diversity altogether by failing to represent it.

In Freak, Leguizamo addresses the problems Rodriguez observes through the stories he tells. He interrogates the impact of the machismo code as enacted by the male members of his family and himself. He also investigates the relationship between these enactments and mass media representations, the negative portrait giving rise to his attempting to pass as an ethnicity other than Latin American. This inclination toward invisibility is countered by his father’s mild subversion of it, Leguizamo’s celebration of Latin American performers, and his own performance of Freak.

In “Third World Logic,” Speedy and Boulevard’s performance of machismo is impacted by mass media representations of it. While Leguizamo acknowledges that the code is part of his cultural heritage, he also highlights how the code has been appropriated by the mass media to categorize Latinos and thereby market violence in an economical (i.e., simple) way. The lesson of Cops and other mass media products is not lost on Speedy and Boulevard: crime is marketable and, as criminals, Latino men are marketable too.

In the early part of his career, Leguizamo proves to enact the same lesson. When the agent and director ask him to perform “Hispanic,” he does so, enacting a junkie criminal who will do anything for a fix. In recounting the incidents, Leguizamo parodies his performance of the stereotype and thereby critiques the commodification of Latin American men and machismo generally.

As a result of the negative coding of Latino males, Fausto and then Leguizamo attempt to pass as ethnicities other than Latin American when they find themselves in contexts outside their Latin American community. Laura Browder writes, “the ability to cross ethnic [and other] boundaries is not only possible but is necessary to successful survival in America” for minorities who engage and are expected to learn “the ways” of the dominant culture (236). Passing is an attempt by a minority to be perceived as one of the majority within a certain culture and context. In the US, passing was first associated with mulattoes who attempted to pass as white due to the stigma associated with being black. Reginald Daniel observes that ““despite their patent Eurocentrism,” strategies of passing ““may be legitimately viewed as diverse tactics of resistance to oppression . . . . While some individuals may seek to confront oppression head-on, passers and pluralists seek to turn oppression on its head by subverting the racial divide”” (quoted in Rodriguez 40). In terms of race, then, passing requires a split between a person’s corporeality and their discourse. The individual understands his or her skin color as negative within the culture and context and decides to dissociate their identity from their corporeality by using their discourse as a disguise.

In Freak, Leguizamo learns passing from his father. In “Jewish Resort,” Fausto hopes to impress his date, a Jewish woman, by passing off his boys and himself as

Jewish. To do so, he enacts clichés associated with Jews. In his performance of his father and the Jewish woman, Leguizamo does likewise. As a cliché of clichés, his performance functions to parody and thereby critique itself, his father's performance, and also the mass media representations of Jews that generated the clichés in the first place.

In "French Passing—Not," Fausto dresses in a headwaiter's tuxedo in an attempt to hide his actual occupation from his family. The "passing" culture and context, in this case, is not the French restaurant where Fausto works as a dishwasher. Rather, it is his assumption that his family will view him more favorably, as patriarch and provider, if he is a French waiter and not a Latino dishwasher. It appears then that machismo code results in Fausto denying his ethnicity in this case and thereby passing into invisibility.

Leguizamo imitates his father's passing strategies in a number of situations. In his attempt to date the Irish girl, he tries to pass as Irish. As with Fausto in "Jewish Resort," his passing strategies consist of a series of clichés, which are as transparent as his aims. His performance is deemed a failure and he is pummeled for it by his critics. In "First Love—Black Venus," his passing strategies prove more successful until he removes his clothing. Due to his corporeal givens he is unable to subvert the "racial divide."

In "College Fiasco," Leguizamo tries to elide his corporeal givens by straightening his hair and keeping his skin light by staying out of the sun. He also polices his discourse by avoiding idioms that would mark him as Latino. Leguizamo's attempt to pass as white is successful among his white fraternity while his act of passing is deemed a failure by the militant Latin American student. He confronts Leguizamo, calling him a "colonized-eunuch" and a "slave" (102). From his perspective, the tactic of passing

does not “turn oppression on its head by subverting the racial divide” (Daniel quoted in Rodriguez 40). Rather, it is an impotent, subservient act of denial. It perpetuates the invisibility of a culture. While Leguizamo persists in his passing ploy, he is aware of the ramifications. Like the polluted wasteland that the Native American regards with such sadness in the well-known public service ad, his act marks his race and culture as disposable. Thereby, Leguizamo reproduces the ideology of the dominant culture in this context; a disposable culture where things are cast aside with apparent ease and disregard for what they are and where they end up.

In Freak, there is one incident where Fausto attempts to refunction US culture and thereby render his own culture more visible. In “Third World Logic,” Leguizamo recalls how Fausto would “Latinize everybody in America” by letting the television “screen get real dusty so that everybody looked nice and dark and Spanish” (15). In this way, Fausto addresses the absence of Latin American representations on television. Indeed, within the culture and context of his living room, Fausto insists that the “minority” images of whiteness pass as Latino.

The lesson is not lost on Leguizamo who, in the context of Freak, celebrates his race and culture. While his performance as a whole insists on Latino visibility, he addresses the issue directly when he recounts Priscilla Lopez’s performance in A Chorus Line and, in the final chapter he reflects on the contributions of other Latin American performance, “nothing” can be turned into “something” (54, 125). The “nothing” may refer to a sense of individual lack or, more to the point, to the absence of possibilities that results from cultural stereotypes. In her performance of “Nothing,” Lopez redresses the absence by refusing the stereotypes. She is neither a criminal, junkie, “hooker,” nor

“maid” (54). Rather, she is a respected and admired Latino woman who claims the spot light and, on the meta-level of the performance, sings of her culture. As Leguizamo relates she was “singing to me” and “that’s how I got [my] culture” (54, 53).

In “Pyro-Technix Climactic Finale,” Leguizamo reiterates the lesson he learned from Lopez by celebrating the Latin American performance culture of which he is a part. By means of the photographic montage of celebrities, he makes the culture visible on the Broadway stage. By means of his reflections, he pays homage to those Elders who paved the way for him and taught him “to want more . . . be more and do more”; “to turn nothing into something” (125). Performance, then, becomes the subject and means for imagining alternatives to cultural stereotypes and for making the diversity of a culture visible within a context controlled by the dominant or manifest culture. Freak is not a performance of passing. Rather it confronts oppression head-on by means of inventive play and/in performance.

This same lesson applies to the alternative masculinity Leguizamo recalls in Freak and also enacts by means of his performance. In “Surrogate Moms,” Leguizamo introduces us to his Uncle Sanny who is “Latino, gay, and deaf” (53). In terms of the machismo code, Sanny’s homosexuality is at best “unconventional” (53). However, despite the code, Sanny does not attempt to pass as straight. Rather, he performs a gay masculinity that insists on its agency. Significantly, because he is deaf, Uncle Sanny’s agency entails his invention and use of a Spanglish sign language. In literal and figurative terms, then, Sanny’s “Latino, gay, and deaf” masculinity insists on its visibility.

Sanny's performative insistence is most apparent when he enacts the “many highly respectable individuals” who “have been homosexuals,” such as Plato, Michelangelo, and Walt Disney (53). Performance and performativity also figure forth in the cross-dressing Santa Claus he enacts, in his taking the boys to the theatre, and in his teaching the boys the interactive sign language. Underscoring these activities throughout is Uncle Sanny's performance of “Surrogate Mom.” In direct opposition to the code of machismo, he enacts the “female” role of providing love and support to his nephews.

In Gender Trouble, Judith Butler writes, “[t]he effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (179). Butler's claim here is that, in order to construct a coherent gender identity, we model our behavior in terms of gender norms, particularly those associated with the male/female sex binary. Thereby, our representations reproduce and perpetuate the illusion of two fixed genders. To redress the illusion. Butler argues,

If gender is the cultural meaning that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of “men” will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that “women” will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and

constitution, there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two. (Gender Troubles 10)

Butler theorizes multiple genders. Further, she understands that men and women can perform different genders over time. She states, “Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (179; emphasis in original). Butler’s view of gender implicates the particular notion of queering gender.

In “Is This Theater Queer?: The Mickee Faust Club and the Performance of Community,” Donna Nudd, Kristina Schriver, and Terry Galloway define queering as the subverting of barriers posed by dichotomies, such as masculine and feminine or male and female. By refusing the “either/or binary,” multiple genders are imagined and able to be performed. A like analogy is offered by Eve Sedgwick when she constructs masculine and feminine as “orthogonal: that is instead of being at opposite poles of the same axis, they are actually in different, perpendicular dimensions, and therefore are independently variable” (16). Because the masculine and feminine dimensions are perpendicular, they also intersect and thereby gender variations arise. Rather than a one-dimensional linear model, Sedgwick imagines a matrix of gender possibilities.

Regardless of the model, Uncle Sanny performs a masculinity that refuses the gender binary. In the matrix of possibilities, he “queers” gender, inventing a flexible, dyadic masculinity who revels in the communicative agency of his corporeal body and the signs it produces. In Frank’s terms, Uncle Sanny epitomizes the “communicative” ideal; in Leguizamo’s terms, Uncle Sanny is a “freak.”

While Fausto and the machismo code are integral to the rite of passage Leguizamo recounts in Freak, the agency and the message of the performance are modeled after Uncle Sanny and also the Latin American performers Leguizamo honors. The message is that by means of performance one can embrace, critique, and invent alternatives to the limitations imposed by intra- and inter-textual norms. Specifically, one can acknowledge and revise the gender “sacra” one learns in their rite of passage. The defiled “freak” can be refunctioned in terms of his or her generative potential. The agency of course is performance and, like Uncle Sanny’s performance, Leguizamo’s is communicative in orientation. In his embodiment of the diverse masculinities that influenced his life, Leguizamo enacts a flexible and dyadic body that celebrates the low domains of corporeality and discourse. As illustrated in “Kentucky Fried De-Virginizing,” Leguizamo’s use of the corporeal grotesque allows him to celebrate his sexual initiation while also parody his macho assumptions.

While the message and agency of Freak appear indebted to Uncle Sanny, Leguizamo dedicates the show to his father. One reason for this seeming contradiction may be Leguizamo’s qualified allegiance to the machismo code. He honors the patriarchy of his family by means of his dedication. Also, as I discussed earlier, in terms of sex, Leguizamo’s narrative offers a fairly predictable hetero-normative account. Another possibility may be that Leguizamo intends the dedication to gently mock his father and the code of machismo he lives by and impressed upon his son.

In Freak, Leguizamo uses the realistic conventions of a coherent chronological storyline to infer the rite of passage he recounts and to make it accessible to the audience. He renders both his father, mother, and Uncle Sanny as complex, multi-dimensional



characters, which implicates their importance as individuals in Leguizamo's life story. Many other characters, such as Speedy and Boulevard, Yaschica, the agent and director, are depicted as broad social types, clichés actually. Thereby, Leguizamo extends his critique in a clear and direct manner. He uses the same techniques to mock his very use of clichés, as in the chapter "Jewish Resort."

A key difference between Freak and the others I have discussed is Leguizamo's use of the epic mode as the main genre of the piece. The mode allows Leguizamo to acknowledge himself as the storyteller of his life, of his semi-demi-quasi-pseudo autobiography and its rhetoric. It allows him to revisit the past in the present without trying to convince the audience that they are viewing the past events for the first time. Thereby, Leguizamo highlights the past as part of his present identity construct. The stories constitute his life. He also is able to depict both his present and past selves. In so doing, he compares and contrasts the similarities and differences between them and he implies what he learned by means of the rite of passage he presents to the audience. He also is able to evaluate his past selves by means of the double-voice of narrative discourse generally and double-voice forms of contradiction, parody, and irony. For instance, in his dialogue with his father in the dressing room, he distinguishes between what he did say and what he would have liked to have said to his father. As the narrator in the present telling situation, he is able to express feelings he did not express at the time of the event he recounts.

In Freak, Leguizamo tells the story of his masculine rite of passage, from being a young boy to engaging a freak performative body. Rather than reproduce the machismo

code enacted by Fausto and others, Leguizamo enacts an alternative model by the freaky fusion of stories, people, places and practices that have contributed to his life.

#### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> All descriptions of projections and stage action are drawn from the video taped performance of Freak. See Katz.

<sup>2</sup> All direct quotations from the performance are drawn from the print version of the play. See Leguizamo and Katz.

<sup>3</sup> The transitional phase is framed by the “separation” and “incorporation” phases. Signified by space, time and other markers, the separation phase operates to remove the participants from their everyday life while the incorporation phase marks their re-integration into everyday social life and, in rite of passage rituals, with a permanent change in social status (Turner, From Ritual to Theatre 24-5).

<sup>4</sup> For an additional discussion of machismo, see Gutmann. Gutmann defines machismo and macho as competing drives within Latin American culture. Machismo carries an overarching negative value while macho is descriptive of men. Macho is how machismo is operationalized in a culture and it is used to measure how masculine or feminine a man appears to be.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS: MODELS OF MASCULINITY

In this study, I used a critical approach to examine the constructions of masculinities in four performance art monologues presented to Broadway audiences. I was prompted to do this study because I believe there is not a monologic construct of masculinity in US society. Walking down the streets of Baton Rouge, I have seen street toughs, businessmen, bodybuilders, nice guys walking with their girlfriends, hairdressers, and a plethora of other masculine types. On any street in this country, a person is likely to see proof that there are multiple ways to perform the male body.

The performance texts I examined are filled with a variety of masculinities. Whoopi Goldberg, Lily Tomlin, Eric Bogosian, and John Leguizamo advance and critique specific masculine types in their performances. My aim was to determine how the performer-composers chose to inscribe and critique constructions of US masculinities in their respective pieces. To do so, I drew on the masculinity theories of Connell and Seidler and Frank's sociology of body types and practices. I also explored the inter-relationship of representational and presentational conventions as used by the performers to advance their messages. I argued that, within each performance, the performers offer idealized masculinities to suggest alternative ways we might perform masculinities on stage and in real life.

In Whoopi Goldberg Live, Goldberg constructs masculinities that help her advance a "live as you learn . . . from others" philosophy. She constructs masculinities that experience an epiphany, regarding the philosophy, or urge an epiphany in other

characters. In her performance, she presents masculinities that are both unique individuals and indicative of social types.

Fontaine is a fast talking con man who begins his monologue with an aggressive approach to other people but experiences an epiphany when he finds himself in unfamiliar territory. In his aggressive con, Fontaine operates in terms of the rules of the street, which call for him to get what he wants from a mark and then move on, indifferent to the person he robbed or hustled. On a trip to Europe, Fontaine discovers that his street rules are relative to his situation; they do not apply to all. He is changed by the experience and desires to interact with people in ways that are flexible and responsive to their various perspectives and practices.

The hunkola is a reflection of his desired self image, which is the phallus. He seeks out others only so as to confirm his phallic-centric identity. The hunkola enacts a conquest mentality. He consumes sexual experiences without regard for the other person's feelings.

The priest, the nun, and the surfer girl's mother represent the Catholic patriarchy in the US and its disciplinary doctrine regarding sexuality. Their belief in God is their ideal. The ritual and rhetoric of the confession and other Church practices pervade their identities and prevent them from addressing the corporeal concerns of the surfer girl.

The Old Raisin approaches the Jamaican Vendor with a barter she understands and accepts in terms of the consumer marketplace. He objectifies her as a desirable commodity and she does the same to him. However, after a corporeal sexual encounter, the Old Raisin dies. Left to consider her memories of the old man, the Vendor realizes

that he actually sought a relationship with her that was appreciative of her presence. He was a good loving man.

The “amazing” nice guy helps the woman with cerebral palsy understand herself as “foxy” and desirable. As a communicative masculinity, he encourages the woman to accept and celebrate the potential of her body rather than remain a victim to its limitations.

In her performance, Goldberg demonstrates a communicative body too. Like Fontaine, she finds power in performance and takes pleasure in the presence of the audience. As an alternative to the aggressive consumer and disciplined masculinities, she offers a performative body that imagines and advances hybrid performances of the self. Goldberg uses inventive physical and verbal choices to advance her message to the audience. She encourages them to live as they learn, not only by watching the performance but by participating in it, as social performers and critics. In this way, Goldberg implies what she understands her “avant-garde” performance to be and in comparison to the typical fare offered on the big white way.

In The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe, Lily Tomlin evaluates the intelligence of masculine body types from a feminist perspective and finds them lacking. She enacts masculine behavior associated with disciplined, dominating, and communicative masculinities. By means of her performance, she articulates that a communicative body is the most fulfilled of the three.

The men at Chrissy’s gym and the character, Paul, engage in the disciplined regimen of body building, which leads to a sense of dissatisfaction when it comes to interpersonal relationships. In performing his workout, Paul demonstrates superior

control over his corporeal body but finds that he cannot control other people as he does his muscles. His disciplined performance results in isolation and a lack of fulfillment.

Lud perceives his wife, Marie, and his granddaughter, Agnus Angst, as a threat to his sense of hegemonic power. He enacts aggressive practices in a vain attempt to control them and the “crazy world” generally. In the end, however, he reverts to a nostalgic approach to his family in hopes of communicating with them. At Marie’s prompting, he recalls an ideal memory and advances it in hopes that it will fulfill his desire for successful family relations.

In the second half of the show, Lyn recounts a number of masculinities that use both overt and passive strategies of aggression to stop women from making advances in their personal and professional lives. In this way, Wagner and Tomlin critique masculine institutions and discourses designed to silence the threat posed by women. In the rhetoric of the performance, such practices are coded as unintelligent.

The one intelligent masculinity in Tomlin’s performance is Bucci, a gay hairdresser. By means of Brandy’s and Tina’s narrative, Bucci is constructed as a gay and sensitive masculinity, a Twinkie, who operates from a communicative orientation. He is not threatened by asking his female friends for their help and guidance and, in return, he proves to be a loyal and responsive friend to them.

Tomlin is the most intelligent body in her performance. She uses a communicative orientation grounded in performance to construct and criticize masculine practices. Her main vehicle is Trudy, the crazy bag lady, who seems to understand more about intelligent life than all the other male and female characters combined. Tomlin constructs “culture-types” who are familiar and accessible to her audience. Once she

introduces the culture-types, Tomlin injects mild contradictions or contrasts so as to problematize the type and our understanding of it.

In Sex, Drugs, Rock-and-Roll, Eric Bogosian performs characters that represent masculine social types from US society in the nineteen eighties. His performance is a critique of the capitalist system of production and consumption, particularly as manifested during the Reagan years of trickle-down economics. Bogosian constructs consumer, aggressive consumer, and hybrid communicative types to advance his critique.

In his performance of the British Rocker, the Italian businessman, the Tough and the Stud, Bogosian interrogates excessive consumption by parodying the vanity of consumer practices. The four characters consume images so as to fulfill their desired self image. The Italian Businessman desires the biggest, best, and newest products associated with images of wealth and leisure. The British Rocker and the Tough consume material products, discourses and practices that fortify a “sex, drugs, and rock and roll” image, whether it is realized in actual or virtual terms. The Stud seeks the image of the phallus by pursuing “great sex with . . . great looking fucks” (30).

Bogosian critiques the Rocklawyer, the Panhandler, and the Rapper as masculinities who consume in aggressive ways. The characters thrill in the image of the agonistic warrior, who requires, indeed manufactures, the threat of others only so that he can control or silence that threat.

Bogosian calls on the “Dirt” Bum and two performance artists, Dog Chameleon and the Artist, to advance nihilist communicative masculinities. Each character investigates problems associated with the current economic system but, in large part, they fail to offer redemptive solutions. One exception is proposed by the Artist who claims

that people who are outside the system, such as the Bottleman, provide a viable alternative. As marginalized people, they see and speak the truth because they are not immersed in the manifest system of production and consumption.

The Artist also implies that ephemeral creations, such as the ideas he keeps in his head and the medium of live performance, escape commodification. His notion gives rise to a two part irony. As a live performing artist himself, Bogosian performs his piece on a Broadway stage before an audience who has paid high-end ticket prices to see him and his show. His livelihood relies on the very consumer marketplace he condemns in his piece. However, unlike the Artist, Bogosian acknowledges that an artist cannot critique social policies and practices, such as consumerism, without entering the social marketplace and making the message available to others. Bogosian, then, is aware of the irony and makes it evident in the final moments of the show. When the Artist says, “If they ever knew what I was thinking, I’d be dead” (98), a black out occurs. The question arises whether the Artist and his message have escaped commodification or whether they have been subsumed by it.

In Freak: A Semi-Demi-Quasi-Pseudo Autobiography, John Leguizamo recounts his own masculine rite of passage while at the same time using fiction and hyperbole to critique machismo, which was an integral part of his passage rite. His performance advances a “freak” communicative body as an alternative to the machismo body represented by his father.

One of the key Elders Leguizamo recounts in his performance is his father, Fausto. Fausto is the embodiment of machismo as it operated in Leguizamo’s childhood. Fausto is expected to be the patriarch and provider of the family. However, due to his



race and economic class, he finds it difficult to perform that role. He works as a dishwasher and transfers his lack, his inability to control the world, to his family. He enacts threatening discourse and beats his wife and children. In certain contexts, Fausto also tries to pass as an ethnicity other than Latino due to the negative Latino stereotypes perpetuated by the mass media.

The other key Elder in Leguizamo's passage rite is Uncle Sanny, who offers an alternative masculine model and set of practices. Sanny is a loving and nurturing man who uses inventive performance strategies to communicate with the boys. Sanny also is gay and, while Leguizamo reciprocates Uncle Sanny's love, he also qualifies his acceptance when he says, he wants "to be just like . . . Uncle Sanny, except for the liking men part" (53).

During his liminal phase, Leguizamo imitates his father's machismo masculinity when he fights with the neighbors and tries to pass as Irish, Moslem, and white in various contexts. In performance, however, Leguizamo appears to take Uncle Sanny as his model. He is flexible and dyadic, reveling in his "freak" discourse and corporeality just as Uncle Sanny revels in his "queer" take on gender. On the one hand, then, Leguizamo appears to comply with the code of machismo and, on the other hand, he is critical of it. His both/and orientation and practices suggest another model of masculinity Latino and other males might perform.

In comparing and contrasting the shows, a notable intrigue is the difference in how Goldberg and Tomlin approach the subject of masculinities. In Whoopi Goldberg Live, Goldberg frames her performance with male characters who enact communicative practices. For example, the nice guy approaches the woman with cerebral palsy with a

flexible and dyadic disposition that celebrates the potential of the corporeal body, both his and hers. Likewise, Fontaine adopts and teaches a communicative orientation toward unfamiliar people, perspectives, and practices. He urges us to imagine (to perform) what it is like to be the foreigner in a strange situation before we seek to control what we don't know. Goldberg, then, not only performs masculine types but grants men the ability to change, over time, and in light of their experiences. She presents masculinities who are, or who learn, not to be threatened by a lack of control. They welcome the unpredictable input of others and, as with Fontaine, invite them to perform along with them.

In contrast, Tomlin takes monologic control of the masculinities in her show and denies them the potential Goldberg allows Fontaine, the Old Raisin, and the nice guy. The heterosexual masculinities in Tomlin's performance are trapped in routine practices that secure their dominant place in society. They do not exhibit the potential to change their sexist ways. The significance of Tomlin's work within feminist performance art is articulated by Catherine Elwes when she observes,

“When a woman speaks within the performance tradition, she is understood to be conveying her perceptions, her own fantasies, and her own analyses. She combines active authorship and an elusive medium to assert her irrefutable presence (an act of feminism) with a hostile environment (patriarchy). (quoted in Carlson 164)

From her critical feminist perspective, Tomlin suggests that masculine egotism and hegemony are the biggest obstacles to feminism. While men may not be fulfilled by such “unintelligent” practices, they continue to enact them in fear of the fragmented self that may arise should they surrender control or look into a mirror that does not reflect their

own self image. Just as men reproduce narcissistic and hegemonic practices in real life, so too Tomlin reproduces these “unintelligent” types in her performance.

Another intrigue is Leguizamo’s use blatant clichés and stereotypes to critique the individuals and social types he recounts in his performance. However, Leguizamo also demonstrates an understanding that identity, masculinities in particular, are social-cultural constructs and, by means of highlighting the political gest in clichés and stereotypes, constructs can be de- and reconstructed. In other words, for Leguizamo, masculinity is performative. Further, as evinced by Leguizamo composing his performance in light of the “queer” model Uncle Sanny proffers, performance is not a means to an end for Leguizamo; it is the means and the end which is always a beginning too.

An intriguing twist in Leguizamo’s performance is his dedicating the show to his father. Throughout the piece, Leguizamo is harsh in his criticism of Fausto and hence the dedication seems odd. Once again it seems to me that machismo rears its ugly head and, in fear of appearing queer himself, Leguizamo dedicates the show to his father. I reconcile this seeming contradiction with the understanding that in his performance Leguizamo pays homage to Uncle Sanny and the Latino performers. On one level, the dedication is a way of suggesting to his father that I wish you had found a way out of the machismo trap.

The shows advance critiques of masculine social types operating in the US by means of integrating representational and presentational conventions. The recurring representational strategies are the rendering of veris-realistic characters who, by means of monologues and narratives, offer chronological or syllogistic accounts in a seemingly

spontaneous manner. Accustom to seeing these strategies used in films and on television, audiences find them familiar. They are able to access and understand content without much trouble. Also, the veris-realistic characters are “believable” and evoke empathy in the audience. By using representational conventions, the performers trick the audience into accepting the characters and their situations as true to life while, simultaneously or subsequently, they use presentational conventions to imply that the characters are constructs, composed in certain ways to conserve, defile, or question the social norms that impact them.

By means of presentational strategies, the performers highlight their perspectives on the characters they perform. One presentational strategy that helps advance critique is the constant presence of the performer’s body on the stage. Rather than use complete costumes to create the various characters, Goldberg, Tomlin, Bogosian, and Leguizamo wear basic costumes. The performers inflect characters through their physical and verbal choices and, oftentimes, the gesticulations they create. The basic costumes also insist on the presence of the performer as an authorizing agent and, potentially, the characters are viewed as constructs of that agent.

Another presentational strategy that is quite effective in advancing the gender critique is the use of an epic mode or a combination of epic and dramatic modes. In his piece, Leguizamo uses the epic mode and it allows him to both reflect and reflex on his characters, his narrative, and his critique of machismo. The epic mode also affords him the opportunity to suggest alternatives to actual events by means of imagined scenarios. For instance, when Leguizamo recounts the dialogue with his father in the dressing room,

he tells the audience what, in an ideal conversation, he would have said to his father but, in reality, did not.

Wagner and Tomlin pepper the character, Trudy, throughout the performance. As tour guide, narrator, and Greek chorus, Trudy sets the scenes and facilitates coherency between them. She also functions to advance Wagner's and Tomlin's feminist critique in a clear and explicit manner. Trudy comments on the lack of intelligence that some of the masculine characters exhibit and also advances what she sees as a preferred course of action for human behavior generally.

Goldberg uses the dramatic mode to present her characters. Her main message and critique is offered in more explicit ways when characters, such as Fontaine, the little black girl and the woman with cerebral palsy, engage the audience in direct dialogue by means of call and response and question and answer formats. Fontaine, in particular, demands that the audience participate and clarifies the distinction between Goldberg's performance and standard Broadway fare when he explains how the metaphoric fourth wall operates. By means of his performance, Fontaine insists that Whoopi Goldberg Live is a performance that undertakes social issues that involve the audience and, hence, he asks them to play a part in the performance too. His agency is double-directed because it not only interrupts his performance but Goldberg's performance too. In a similar manner, Goldberg uses her curtain speech to advance an explanation regarding her performance and what the audience has experienced.

The four pieces suggest that the masculinities, as represented in performance, are reflective of social types. The performances teach us that there are hegemonic masculinities that engage in disciplined rituals, conspicuous consumption, and aggressive

practices so as to fortify their place as the dominant agents of power in US society.

These masculinities are governed by diverse institutions but those that recur in the four pieces are the institutions of consumer-capitalism, the popular mass media, the health club or gym, the Catholic Church, and the domestic home site.

At the meta-level of performance, the engagement of disciplined practice is far more complex in light of the virtuosity exhibited by Goldberg, Tomlin, Bogosian, and Leguizamo. The execution of such tour-de-force performances requires months of rehearsal, routinized memorization and the repetition of physical choices. The multi-voiced protean bodies at play in the performances do not just happen. They are worked on and hence a body of discipline is at the core of each of these shows. While the performances advance an empathetic communicative agency, they do so by means of a disciplinary praxis; one that understands that in the very use of verbal and nonverbal languages a disciplined framework of social signs and codes is at work and is crucial to the act of communication between people.

On another level, while the four performers seem to say, “Watch me so you can learn how to be more empathetic and understanding in your everyday performance of masculinities,” their performance act suggests, “Watch me because you can’t do this.” One way to understand the hubris of the performers is to consider the narcissism involved in performance. Frosh defines narcissism as a “struggle to preserve a shaky selfhood . . . through grandiose gratifications achieved by manipulating others” (3). In these terms, the protean versatility of Goldberg, Tomlin, Bogosian, and Leguizamo are but “a set of strategies for survival in which the self seems to be in danger of breaking down” (3). In other words, the very strategies of self survival are embedded with the signs of the self

breaking apart—e.g., as into many diverse characters. This notion of the self and/in performance is based on the assumption that the performer values a coherent, unified self and, hence, the playing of diverse characters operates both to gratify and threaten the perceived self. However, for a performer who does not believe in or value an autonomous self, the strategy and signs of fragmentation are not a threat.

A consumer or mirroring orientation is at work in the four performances. The performers mirror individual and social types they have observed. For example, to compose Freak, Leguizamo draws on his own family and the other people he has collected in his memory. Many of his characters are based on people he observed in Washington Square. Tomlin, Bogosian, and Goldberg perform fictive characters but they acknowledge the characters are recurring social or cultural types drawn from everyday life in the US.

One such type is the male chauvinist. Common to all the performances is the depiction of the male chauvinist as a man who uses aggressive, hegemonic discourse and, in some cases, physical threats to fulfill his desire. What the male chauvinist desires most is to silence and thereby control the threat posed by women. Of course, some interesting variations arise in the various pieces. For instance, Fontaine, Lud, and Fausto police their hegemonic position of authority when confronted by women. Fausto and Bucci's father attempt to pass on chauvinism to their children as part of the masculine rite of passage. They do so by means of discourse that degrades masculine models they dislike, such as when Fausto calls young John a "freak" and a "faggot." A third variation is male chauvinism as practiced by the priest, Sindell, Tom, and the Rocklawyer. They represent an institutionalized male chauvinism that situates the ideology in and as

legitimized by the doctrine of the institution, be it the Catholic Church or a business corporation.

An additional social type represented in the performances is the consumer or mirroring masculinity. This masculinity consumes material products and product imagery so as to satisfy his desired self image. Sometimes, the act of consumption is pathological and indicative of the man's hegemonic place in society, as is the case with Bogosian's Italian Businessman, the Rocker, and Stud, and Goldberg's hunkola. These four masculinities consume because they can and it seems to be their sole aim. They reference the acts of consumption as an identifying characteristic.

Other masculinities are engaged in aggressive consumption to achieve their aims. Some, such as the Rocklawyer and the Rapper, consume imagery of aggression. Their self image is reliant on the repetitious play of the agonistic game within or in terms of the consumer marketplace. Others use aggressive practices solely as a means to gain commodity products. They do not view (or need to view) others as a threat; rather, they instill the threat of lack in others and offer themselves as a remedy to the lack. In this way, characters such as Fontaine and the Panhandler con others of their money and thereby support themselves.

Another social type all four performers advance is a performative, communicative masculinity. This type is flexible as regards issues of control and also seeks dyadic relationships. He takes pleasure in the presence and input of others, be they a single individual or an auditorium full of people. This sensitive masculinity is not only offered as an alternative to the ego-ridden macho man but is offered as an ideal masculinity.



Some of the communicative masculinities that arise in the performances are gay men who also enjoy playing betwixt and between the normative gender binary. Uncle Sanny, in Freak, and Bucci, in The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe, are offered as positive alternatives to the “macho he-man” who is represented in force in both shows. Sanny and Bucci queer gender in Butler’s terms and in the fashion elucidated by Nudd, Schriver, and Galloway. By means of their inventive play with gender signs and codes, they imagine and “bring about” alternative gender possibilities.

Others male characters also are performative in their practicing of masculinity. Rather than insist on a fixed identity, place, and set of practices that confirm their autonomous place in the world, characters such as Fontaine, the Old Raisin, the nice guy, Leguizamo, and, to a certain extent, the Bottleman, create their masculinities based on the contingencies of others or the situation. In this way, these characters are earnestly dyadic. Their practices are in response to the practices of others.

In the context of masculinities scholarship, the four performances prove to deny the idea of a core masculine such as that advanced by Robert Bly in Iron John: A Book About Men. Instead, the performances confirm and specify the various types of masculinities offered by Frank and Connell. The pure and hybrid representations also uphold the importance of class, race, gender, sexuality, and age in the construction of masculinities and, further, as factors that exist on intersecting planes rather than on separate lines of action.

My study has taught me that the performance of masculinities in performance art monologues is a performative venture. This finding is substantiated by Marvin Carlson who locates the performance art monologue in the context of performance art. Carlson

proceeds to observe that performance art concentrates on the “exploration through performance of alternative, imaginary, even mythic selves” (163). Such performances rely heavily on performativity as the agency that articulates alternative constructions of the self. Practitioners like Goldberg, Tomlin, Bogosian and Leguizamo play “with the nature of human reality, specifically with the transformational nature of the self” (Carlson 163). In this way, the performers also play with the transformational nature of performance itself, which thereby invites us to play too.

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## VITA

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Goins entered the doctoral program in performance studies at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in January 1997. He staged four performances in the HopKins Black Box Theatre: Within the Realm (in October 1997), Back from Below Ground Zero (in January 1998), Kentucky Triangle (in October 2000), and Cartomance (in October 2001). He served as Director of Forensics for LSU's Mixon Lyceum and as an instructor in the Department of Communication Studies.

He currently lives in Baltimore, Maryland. He is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mass Communication and Communication Studies at Towson University where he also is the Director of the Speech and Debate Program.