

CINEPHILIC BODIES: TODD HAYNES'S CINEMA OF QUEER PASTICHE¹

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[The question is] to what extent a homosexual sensibility in film is articulated in a radical form. (...) Are we simply radical or homosexual in relation to the dominant mainstream – as if the dominant mainstream was in turn some homogenous whole from which we have departed? Perhaps the greatest value in the assembling of experimental work by gay filmmakers is in discovering the heterogeneity of such terms, and perhaps, one day, in exhausting them.²

Todd Haynes

Drawing on the emergence of a new attitude among gay and lesbian filmmakers on the 1990s American festival circuit, Ruby Rich, while defining New Queer Cinema (NQC), implies that a narrative shift of political emphases took place in gay and lesbian cinema from an affirmative minority identity politics to a much more skeptical critique of shame and stigma 'unit[ing] discrete communities of outsiders under the commonality of perversion'.³ In this regard, NQC appears to be defined according to its stylistic affinities with modes of performative re-appropriation within the queerable histories of cinema:

Of course, the new queer films and videos aren't all the same, and don't share a single aesthetic vocabulary or strategy or concern. Yet they are nonetheless united by a common style, call it 'Homo Pomo': there are traces in all of them of appropriation and pastiche, irony, as well as a reworking of history with so-

1 A part of this paper ('[Safe]: Queering/Abjecting the Body in Todd Haynes's Cinema of Queer Pastiche') was initially delivered at the conference Cultural Memory: Illness, Memory and the Body organized by the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, University of London on 12 May 2006. I am also very grateful to the intellectual spark and motivation of Elif Akçalı whose recently finalized PhD research at the Department of Media Arts, Royal Holloway University of London, focuses on the contemporary functions of style-as-narrative in film. A much more extended version of my discussion here on Todd Haynes's films has been presented in my doctoral dissertation entitled *Disidentification, Mimicry, Melancholia and Image: Queer Reconfigurations in Contemporary Visual Arts* (PhD thesis, University College London, UK, 2008).

2 See Todd Haynes, 'A Gay Kind of Film', *Afterimage*, December 1988, p. 3.

3 B. Ruby Rich, 'New Queer Cinema', *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*, edited by Michele Aaron (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 21.



cial constructionism very much in mind. Definitely breaking with older humanist approaches and the films and tapes that accompanied identity politics, these works are irreverent, energetic, alternately minimalist and excessive.⁴

Derek Jarman's *Edward II* (1991), Christopher Munsch's *The Hours and Times* (1991), Tom Kalin's *Swoon* (1992), Gregg Araki's *The Living End* (1992), Laurie Lynd's *R.S.V.P* (1992), Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), Isaac Julien's *Young Soul Rebels* (1991), Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied* (1990), Todd Haynes's *Poison* (1991), Cheryl Dunye's *She Don't Fade* (1991) and *Vanilla Sex* (1992), Jean Carlomusto's *L is the Way You Look* (1991) are the primary examples which, Rich argues, have mobilized her urge to classify this new attitude in 1990s' alternative filmmaking.⁵ Jarman, Araki, Gus Van Sant, Julien and Haynes could be considered as the directors whom one would at least argue in terms of a well-defined authorial statement – a queer project – which operates as a recurring 'signature' in their cinema practice. However, I would claim that only Jarman and Haynes, having created an identifiable cinematic *auteur*-project present throughout their films, fit into the queer agenda of what has been symptomized as NQC.⁶ Although Jarman's *Edward II* can be considered as what Rich calls the 'epiphanic moment'⁷ in NQC, I would argue that Jarman is one of the most significant *auteurs*, a performative author-function, whose artistic career and thus pre-AIDS generational status make him not belong to but mobilize the NQC generation's performative agenda. What leaves Todd Haynes 'as the only member of the first wave of queer filmmakers still visible as a queer filmmaker'⁸ is directly related to the ways in which not only NQC but also Queer itself has been hitherto theorized, contested and revised. Though varying to a considerable extent throughout the last

4 Ibid., p. 16.

5 Jennie Livingston's *Paris Is Burning* (1990), John Greyson's *Zero Patience* (1993), Todd Verron's *Frisk* (1995), Todd Haynes's *Safe* (1995) and Dunye's *Watermelon Woman* (1996) can also be added to the list of the first wave of 1990s NQC.

6 I also want to underline that the issue of 'whiteness' is, inherently or explicitly, dominantly present in NQC. Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied* and Isaac Julien's *Attendat* and *Looking for Langston* could be regarded as strong queers-of-color critical supplements to white queer visual artistic cultures. In addition, Julien could definitely be situated, in terms of its aesthetically and politically performative visual methodology, as a queer *auteur*. I excluded him of the territory of NQC mainly because its affinities his conceptual and curatorial contemporary video art is much stronger than its cinematic *oeuvre*. The main point in my argument concerns a possible *cinematic* project. See José Esteban Muñoz, 'Dead White: Notes on the Whiteness of the New Queer Cinema', *GLQ* 4:1, 1998, pp. 127-38. For a very thorough analysis of Julien's *Attendat* in terms of its queerly temporalized, *erotohistoriographic*, visual narrative, Elizabeth Freeman, 'Turn the Beat Around: Sadomasochism, Temporality, History', *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 19:1, 2008, pp. 32-70.

7 Ruby Rich, 'New Queer Cinema', p. 18.

8 David Pendleton, 'Out of the Ghetto: Queerness, Homosexual Desire and the Time-Image', *Strategies* 14:1, 2001, p. 48.

two decades, there are some highly recognizable patterns in thinking and theorizing NQC.

NQC has been primarily argued in terms of an AIDS sensibility. Arroyo claims that 'AIDS is why there is New Queer Cinema and it is what New Queer Cinema is about'.⁹ While the narrative content in these films might be said to contain AIDS as a theme in either referential or allegorical levels, the performative mimicry in their enactment of parody/pastiche has also been discussed in terms of a Baudrillardian vision of a contemporary post-AIDS 'viral economy' in arts: 'art is everywhere beset by questions of falsehood, authenticity, copying, cloning and simulation (there is a positive contagion here, destabilizing aesthetic values, which are also losing their immune defences)'.¹⁰ By mimicking and re-incorporating, via queering, the proper genre subjects in dominant visual cultures, NQC appears to infect, or contaminate, the normative narrative body within its rhetoric of pastiche/parody: 'The lack of coherent narrative, or genre recognition, or familiarly fulfilled cinematic expectations of NQC, is partly a representational, or 'artistic', reaction to the nature of retroviral behavior. In other words, representation mimics the 'narrative' of the virus'.¹¹ The virality, here, echoes a perverse engagement with heteronormative canons of image-making.

NQC has been imagined as constitutive of moments of allusion and critical reanimations of the cultural memory with queer attachments, which might contain a camp film historic sensibility, gay and/or lesbian cinephilia, and a memory of historical figures for queer/able subcultures.¹² Araki's engagement with camp and punk imageries, Haynes's with 70s glam scene and the cinemas of Fassbinder, Ophüls, Sirk, and Welles, and Kalin's with Hitchcock can be given as examples in this respect. This 'creative anachronism'¹³ in NQC, however, functions as not what Jamesonians would call a blank schizophrenic mimicry but a political strategy of reinventing and 'controlling history'.¹⁴ Recalling War-

9 José Arroyo, 'Death, Desire and Identity: The Political Unconscious of "New Queer Cinema"', *Activating Theory: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Politics*, edited by Joseph Bristow and Angela Wilson (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), p. 90.

10 See the essay 'The Viral Economy' in Jean Baudrillard, *Screened Out*, translated by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2002), p. 27.

11 Monica B. Pearl, 'AIDS and New Queer Cinema', *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*, p. 24.

12 This also demonstrates the critical role of Jarman in NQC. His avant-garde cinema comments on and disrupts the dominant narratives of history and religion, their constructed truth-telling of queer figures, figurations and feelings.

13 This notion is used by Gorfinkel in her discussion of the aspects of cinephilia with Todd Haynes's *Far From Heaven* (2002), to which I return in a later section of this article. See Elena Gorfinkel, 'The Future of an Anachronism: Todd Haynes and the Magnificent Andersons', *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, edited by Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 153-67.

14 Ruby Rich, 'New Queer Cinema', p. 31.

ner claiming that 'queer politics does not obey the member/non-member logics of race and gender',¹⁵ I would argue that the queerness of NQC comes from its particular focus and visual commentary on acts, relationalities, potentials rather than identities. As Pendleton also states, NQC attempts to defer rather than fix the meaning of homosexuality.¹⁶

The gay/queer distinction is always problematic in various regards, particularly when it comes to the issues of authorship in NQC. I would argue that a gay- or lesbian-identified directorial signature does not necessarily guarantee a queer critique resonating with that of NQC, whereas a specifically gay or lesbian content might possibly cause a queer intervention to modes of so-called cinematic norms of representation. Neither Araki's dramatization of pedophilia in *Mysterious Skin* (2004) and his enjoyment of the philistine junkie in *Smiley Face* (2007) nor Gus Van Sant's imagination of the abused traumatized childhood sublimated into a pseudo-proletarian masculine genius in *Good Will Hunting* (1997) and melancholic adolescence exposed to alienation and violence in *Paranoid Park* (2007) contain a queer critique that NQC has once been conceptualized to claim. Furthermore, though not having been discussed within this territory, Bruce LaBruce's depiction of skinheads and homosexuality across the ruptures of class relation in *Skin Gang* (1999, also known as *Skin Flick*) and *No Skin Off My Ass* (1991), his narrative of queer/ed Reichian utopia, fascism, masculinity and homosexuality in *Raspberry Reich* (2004), his intergeneric mélanges between horror and porn within an avant-gardist reclamation of a gay zombie in *Otto: Up with Dead People* (2008) could be regarded as gay and queer. Hence, I would argue that LaBruce, much more persistent in his queer critique than Araki or Van Sant, could have been situated within the agenda of NQC.

On the other hand, any attempt unconditionally to include a film or a director into the category of NQC, or to undebatably deny from this category any artwork with a GLBT story and/or director, remains questionable. Ruby Rich's later unease while re-evaluating the highly problematic category she invented a decade ago appears to be based on the ways in which NQC has been consumed by both the 'pink economy' and the niche market: 'Lacking the concentrated creative presence and focused community responsiveness of the past, the new queer cinema has become just another niche market, another product line pitched at one particular type of discerning consumer'.¹⁷ Drawing on Kaufman's 'stylization of gender stabilization' in *Being John Malkovich* (1999), Pierce's victimization of Brandon Teena and her casting of Hilary Swank in *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) and Minghella's depiction of 'the perverse criminal in the closet' in *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999), Rich argues that the queer content, once mainstreamed, always

15 Michael Warner, 'Introduction', *Fear of a Queer Planet*, p. xvii

16 David Pendleton, 'Out of the Ghetto', pp. 47-62.

17 B. Ruby Rich, 'Queer and Present Danger', *Sight and Sound*, March 2000, p. 24.

risks being subject to normalization within what she regards as niche market. Therefore, NQC comes to be an ontologically problematic category as it simultaneously bears an over-permeable account of performative mimicry (parody/pastiche) and an over-dependence on the highly debatable and un-fixed meaning of queer. The only distinguishable characteristic of NQC is its critical stance towards any cultural and visual constructs of heteronormativity and its performative gesture to memory and history, which is to be performed by a reflex what Rich considers as 'a new queer historiography',¹⁸ or similarly, by the rhetoric of what Freeman calls 'temporal drag'.¹⁹ I thus strongly believe that Jarman and Haynes are the most influential figures of queer cinema which resonates with such a critical agenda. This article will investigate the extent to which Todd Haynes's cinematic project contains the most persistent and perpetual proximity to a possibly queer critique in cinematic representation, which, perhaps, the impossible ontological claim of NQC bears: a critical but cinephilic play with the canonic trends of visual representation in film via strategic perturbations of the identificatory markers of gender and sexuality. I shall particularly focus on his films *Poison* (1991), *Dottie Gets Spanked* (1993), *[Safe]* (1995) and *Far From Heaven* (2002). My analyses of these films will target at questioning Haynes's critical relationship with gender, genre, and the canons of film aesthetics.

Poisonous Acts: Shame, Affect, Joy and the Masochistic Impasse

Mary Ann Doane suggests that most of Haynes's films are dominated by what she calls two 'signature shots'. The first one reveals a constantly moving vision tracing a series of suburban houses which Haynes represents, in Doane's words, as 'a kind of meta-stereotype' of middle-class, overwhelmingly repressed, white, heteronormative domesticity.²⁰ Departing from but attempting to extend Doane's emphasis on the recurring theme of a child being spanked, I would argue that the second moment of signature in Haynes's films comes from a dominating presence of shame and shaming which the protagonists as the queer embodiments of disidentification are forced to bear. The characters of Haynes's films either convert this into a masochistic and/or narcissistic joy, an enactment of divinity (*Poison*, *Dottie Gets Spanked*, *Velvet Goldmine* (1998)), or end up with untreatable 'illnesses' and seem to embody, as a nullified surface and a blank mediator, Haynes's queer critique, i.e. his pastiche, which problematizes the politics of rea-

18 B. Ruby Rich, 'New Queer Cinema', p. 22.

19 Elizabeth Freeman, 'Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations', *New Literary History* 31, 2001, pp. 727-44. Freeman conceptualizes 'temporal drag' as a 'disruptive anachronism', or, 'a crossing of time, less in the mode of postmodern pastiche than in the mode of a stubborn identification with a set of social coordinates that exceeded [the author's, the filmmaker's] own historical moment ... with all the associations the word "drag" has with retrogression, delay and the pull of the past upon the present.' (pp. 728, 733.)

20 Mary Ann Doane, 'Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes', *Camera Obscura* 57, 2004, pp. 1-2.

soning the body (*Superstar* (1987), *Poison*, *Safe*, *Far From Heaven*). In this section, I want to discuss Haynes's two early films, *Poison* and *Dottie*, by means of an investigation of the ways in which Haynes's representation of queer in these films (i) creates relations with childhood, politics/poetics of shame, masochism and AIDS as the function of an allegorical excess, and (ii) *performs* these inter-sections with a persistent, queerly temporalized, narrative of pastiche/parody.

In *Poison*, inspired by Jean Genet's novels *Our Lady of Flowers*, *Miracle of the Rose*, and *The Thief's Journal*, Haynes narrates three stories *Hero*, *Homo* and *Horror*.²¹ Each story is filmed and narrated within different generic languages and the film progresses through their intertwined segmentation in triadic forms. In *Hero*, as in his film *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*, Haynes invites the spectator to a documentary drama, a generically simulated reality TV show, on the short life of Richie Beacon, who murdered his father at the age of seven and suddenly disappeared by flying up through a window. The real protagonist, Richie, is not on the stage. The spectator watches the problematizations of Richie's queer acts, through the interviews with the mother, the teachers, the neighbors, the school staff and his schoolmates ('The quiet residential community of Glenville was stunned to learn the strange death of ...'). *Horror* is about a scientist, Dr Thomas Graves, who invents the liquid essence of sexual drive and accidentally digests it. This causes a serious epidemic since the infection in the form of wart-like wounds on the doctor's face can be easily spread by skin contact. By using a very hybrid narrative language containing genres of B-horror and melodrama, Haynes depicts in *Horror* the 'othering' of his character as the criminal queer followed by his (self-)abjection and suicide. Finally, in *Homo*, Haynes narrates the homo-erotic relationship between two prison inmates where the kleptomaniac protagonist, John Broom, voices over the story, as the figure embodying Jean Genet and his erotic universe, by sharing with the spectator how he embraces his homosexuality, kleptomania, sexual violence and shaming through acculturating into his life of exile.

Poison opens with a statement referring to a plague spreading: 'The whole world is dying of a panicky fright'. Haynes's generic simulation of this 'fright' is narrated by means of visualizing the infected hand of a woman found dead by the police, and the suspect (Dr Graves) being chased. Then the film suddenly shifts to the 1980s American suburban setting and introduces the spectator to its mockingly curious, mimed documentary concerns about Richie Beacon: 'What really happened the night of June 3rd [1985]? Who was Richie Beacon and where is he now?'. These two introductory segments are followed by a child's hand wandering curiously by touching the objects in his parent's bedroom. This perverse and what Christian regards as an 'extraordinarily tactile' shot is interrupted with a

21 Jean Genet, *Miracle of the Rose*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (London: Blond, 1965); *Our Lady of the Flowers*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (Paris: Olympia, 1957); and *The Thief's Journal*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Grove, 1964).

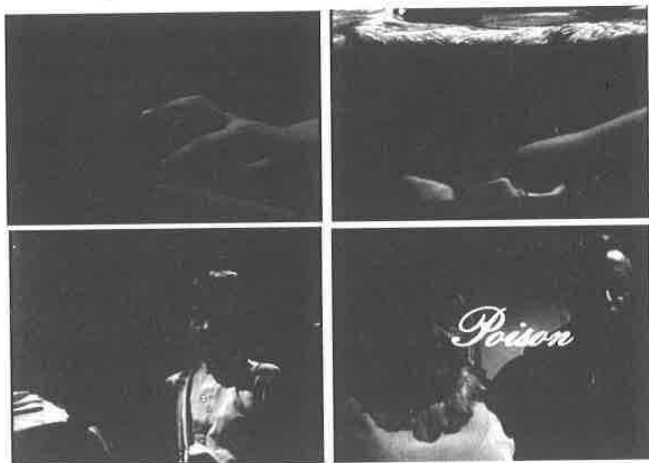


Figure 1. Curiosity and Shaming in *Poison*

slap.²² The spectator hears the verbal attacks of the parents: 'You are a beggar! A bandit! A thief!' Music becomes tense as the mediator of the child's increasing shame and fear while the film title *Poison* gets closer to the screen (Figure 1). The marriage ritual of two boys in Haynes's phantasmatic setting of a Genetian reformatory of boys is followed by the character John Broom's appearance in prison. The clues for the viewers to recognize the film's two-fold politics of temporality are, indeed, given from the start. First, the filmic-generic fragmentation interrupts any possibility of experiencing a spatiotemporally uniform pace of narrative progression and the temporal lack in-between serves the author's performative/allegorical excess. Second, each of the three stories refers to the psychosexually queer temporal specificity of the childhood. The film presents Richie Beacon as the strangely social, divinely queer child rising to the sky after killing his father, whereas it reincarnates Jean Genet in the bodies of a perverse child shamed for his criminal curiosities, the adolescent "bride" of the Baton reformatory school and John Broom in the Fontenal prison. Thomas Graves, however, appears to embody the imprint of his queer curiosities in childhood and sublimates it to a scientific one: 'ever since he was a child [he] had been hungry to discover all those secrets of the universe ... science, man's sacred quest for truth, was his *first and only* love ... years of hard work and research led him to the mysteries of sex drive and its potential for the betterment of the mankind'.

Although the generic/stylistic and narrative fragmentation in *Poison* contains a doubly inter-temporal, even extra-temporal, effect, it paradoxically ser-

22 Laura Christian, 'Of Saints and Housewives: Abjection, Transgression and Impossible Mourning in *Poison* and *Safe*', *Camera Obscura* 57, p. 98.

vices the film's own narratively coherent performative agenda by creating a common denominator which is, primarily, about not specifically gay but queer desires and curiosities. The B-horror quality of *Horror* (i) reveals its implicit allegorical excess in terms of AIDS when the imagery shifts spatially and temporally to *Hero* and (ii) gains a certain form of gay sensitivity when interrupted by *Homo*. Furthermore, the queer critical imprint within the generic mimicry in both *Horror* and *Hero* accesses a meta-visibility and triggers *punctum*-effects due to both their entangled segmentation and the commentary which *Homo* seems to perform on them in the context of Genet's 'art of life'. In this regard, I claim that these intra-, inter- and extra-temporalized segments in *Poison* not only complement but also supplement each other. Excess, enacted via performative mimicry, can operate as a queer attachment to the narrative. Through this affective momentum, it triggers a cinematic *punctum*. It disrupts the mechanism of monolithic signification of both the generic and the gendered. It queers.

It cannot be regarded as a coincidence that Thomas Graves's accidental digestion of his newly invented liquid essence of sex drive takes place due to the moment of infatuation with the sexually inviting swish-walk of Dr Nancy Olson who is depicted as an admirer of his work. The liquid, the outcome of Graves' lifelong scientific quest, 'his first and only love', becomes ironically the cause of his bodily destruction, and that of others. The narrative, throughout the film, seems to incorporate, partially and critically, what Graves's disease provokes in public: that the side-effect of this liquid – the sexual drive in its purest form – causes not only a contagious skin-infection but also an uncontrollable sexual promiscuity. Although the viewer sees only Graves's first encounter with a prostitute, the moment of transmission and the act of killing out of anxiety, the 'Leper Sex Killer' sensation in the media triggers a suspicion that Graves, depicted as overly sad and self-shamed, might be going on transmitting the disease and 'killing' people he infects. 'Atmospheric toxins changed the magnetic field. That's what spread the disease. Don't blame yourself', says Nancy, infected in her deathbed, to Graves. Devastated by Nancy's death and tired of being chased by the authorities and stigmatized by the society, Graves decides to commit suicide. I think his 'pride-speech', just before his suicide, at his balcony uttered towards the stigmatizers gathered around his apartment, is significant in terms of understanding the inter-temporal reference and the critical index, of Haynes's pastiche allegorizing AIDS. Graves says to the crowd:

You think I'm scum. You think I'm dirt. Don't you? ... Well, I'll tell you something. Every one of you down there is exactly the same. Only you never know it because you never know what pride is. Pride is the only think that lets you stand up the misery ... with this kind of misery the whole of the stinking world is made of. (Figure 2)



Figure 2. Dr Thomas Graves in 'Horror', *Poison*

I agree with Laura Christian who argues that 'the curiously hollow quality [of Graves's speech in which the term *pride* is] taking on an extradiegetic resonance' could be read as Haynes's 'indictment of the politics of pride to the extent that the latter often give rise to their own foreclosures'.²³ This rejection is uttered, cinematically, via Haynes's rhetoric of what Freeman would call 'temporal drag'. The temporal and generic ambivalence gains a critically performative excess in Haynes's cinematic pastiche simply because he does not incorporate the abjected, the stigmatized queer into a moralistic diegetic unity. Graves, as the figure of the scientist infected by his own perverse curiosity and affected by loss(es) that he – his injured and guilty consciousness – is not able to mourn, definitely functions as a critical gesture to AIDS. What makes Haynes's cinema truly queer, as I shall discuss with further examples, is his rejection of any rhetoric mode of redemption, or in other words, his ethical resistance against an un-grievable life:

[His] films insist[s] on the necessity of registering psychic pain, of carrying out the vital political work of mourning, lest the losses foreclosed by normative (and many counter-normative) discourses return with an even more violent force. They testify to the generative (if sometimes destructive) performative possibilities born of condition of abjection – and to psychic and corporeal wages of blind adherence to a normative ideal. ... They present a forceful critique of any political program that promises to restore the deject to her or his "clean or proper self" via rituals of self-purification and the negation of grief.²⁴

23 Laura Christian, 'Of Saints and Housewives', p. 118

24 Ibid., pp. 120-1 Christian uses Crimp's discussion of mourning-militancy problematics with reference to the post-AIDS activist and political consciousness of gay politics. Crimp states: 'the fact

The story, in *Homo*, about the intense relationship between the prison inmates John Broom and Jack Bolton, can be regarded as one which is strongly inspired by Genet's *Miracle of the Rose*.²⁵ Broom's encounter with Bolton at the Fontenal prison reminds him of his memories of Baton reformatory school for boys. Broom and Bolton know each other from Baton: while the former, due to his sexual desire for the latter, wants to remember and remind, the latter attempts to forget and despise those years the memory of which, as the film narrates in its segments of Baton, is overwhelmed by queerly homo-erotic personal histories of shame, pleasure, pain and joy. Broom's love for Bolton is literalized in the film just after he catches a moment of sadomasochistic enjoyment in Bolton's facial expression watching the humiliation of one of the inmates (Botchako's, in Genet's *Miracle*) and his physical assault on a prisoner despised as queer:



Figure 3. Broom and Bolton: Sadomasochistic Triangulation of Gaze in 'Homo', *Poison*

that our militancy may be a means of dangerous denial in no way suggests that activism is unwarranted. There is no question but that we must fight the unspeakable violence we incur from the society in which we find ourselves. But if we understand that violence is able to reap its horrible rewards through the very psychic mechanisms that make us part of this society, then we may also be able to recognize – along with our rage – our terror, our guilt, and our profound sadness. Militancy, of course, then, but mourning too: mourning *and* militancy'. See Crimp's 'Mourning and Militancy' (1989) in *Melancholia and Moralism*, (London: MIT Press, 2002), p. 149. For a further detailed analysis of *Poison* in relation to queer, shame and abjection, see Norman Bryson, 'Todd Haynes's *Poison* and Queer Cinema', *In Visible Culture: An Electronic Journal of Visual Studies* 1, 1998, n.p. and Kathy Burdette, 'Queer Readings/Queer Cinema: An Examination of the Early Work of Todd Haynes', *Velvet Light Trap* 41, Spring 1998, pp. 68-80.

25 In Haynes's script, Broom and Bolton are substitutes for Genet and Bulkaen in *Miracle of the Rose*, respectively. The name of the prison, Fontenal, in *Homo* refers to the Fontevault in the novel.

[Bulkaen's] smiling lips were parted. From his mouth came a breath which could only be perfumed. ... Botchako's face exaggerated disgust. ... I looked at Bulkaen. He was smiling and shifting his gaze back and forth from Botchako to the jerk. Amused perhaps. But I dared not think I was in the presence of two guys (Bulkaen and the queer) who were basically identical. I was watching Bulkaen to see his reactions to the queer's gestures. I tried to detect a correspondence between their gesticulations. There was nothing mannered about Bulkaen. His excessive vivacity made him seem somewhat brutal. Was he carrying with him an abashed and quivering fag who resembled the pathetic jerk that everyone despised? ... Would he love me? My spirit was already flying off in quest of my happiness.²⁶

Haynes's interest in the sadomasochistic and queer moments fluidizing pain/pleasure and identification/desire binaries, represented as the queer momentum of the child's fantasies of spanking and/or getting spanked in the *Hero* section and in *Dottie*, is expressed in *Homo* via Genet's eroticization of violent male-bonding rituals. Haynes's maneuver from this scene to the intertitle of an authorial declaration of queer love, 'Love comes slyly like a thief', referring to Genet's poetics of theft in *The Thief's Journal*, can be considered as a sign of what initiates a sexual tension between two rough masculine egos throughout *Homo*: that of Broom's stubborn desire to steal more out of the queer in Bolton. Bolton's collaboration in Broom's curious touch of arousal, which is performed by his pretending to sleep and which he interrupts due to an outdoor noise, is followed by his alienation from Broom. Broom seems to answer back to Bolton's act of (self-)shaming by raping him. Rather than reducing Genet's ethics, and aesthetics, of the self to a criminalized anarchy and violence, Haynes's film comments further on the ways in which Genet's universe converts shame into a practice of divinely sexual joy. I want to speculate further in arguing that Haynes's eroticization of the rape scene, its chiaroscuro, and its narrative quotation of Genet's Bulkaen render ambivalent whether the act of rape is practiced as a gift to endure, explode and inhibit Bolton's hypocritical shame or as a revenge or as a mutually enjoyed sex ritual or both. 'In submitting to prison life, embracing it, I can reject the world that had rejected me', says Broom, which resonates not only with the section *Hero* in the film but also with what I would regard as Genet's masochistic *jouissance* in incorporating abjection:

To every charge brought against me I shall say yes. I kept no place in my heart where the feeling of my innocence might take shelter. ... Within myself, with a little patience, I discovered, through reflection, adequate reasons for being named by these names. And it staggered me to know that I was composed of impurities. I became object.²⁷

26 Jean Genet, *Miracle of the Rose*, pp. 23-4.

27 Jean Genet, *The Thief's Journal*, p. 145.

Saintliness means turning pain to good account. It means forcing the devil to be God. It means obtaining the recognition of evil. ... Saintliness is individual. Its expression is original. ... I call saintliness not a state but the moral procedure that leads me to it. ... Saintliness will be when the tribunal ceases, that is, when the judge and judged merge.²⁸

The relationship between shame and Genet's 'saintliness' is dramatically at work in his *Miracle of the Rose*. In the novel, Genet regards Bulkaen as 'the very picture of shame' and he narrates the shameful experience Bulkaen had gone through at the Mettray but resists remembering, by using an "I", or in Genet's words, by 'tak[ing] suffering upon myself ... tak[ing] upon myself this added horror with which Bulkaen was burdened'. Haynes reanimates Bulkaen's memory of what I would call 'spit-shaming', by visualizing Bolton's body *within* Genet's phantasmatic supplement of masochistic joy. Rose leaves seem to rain from the sky to where Bolton, as the young boy, is spat on. Haynes ends the scene with the photograph of a rose. Genet reveals this scene as follows:

I received the spit in my distended mouth, which fatigue failed to close. Yet a trifle would have sufficed for the ghastly game to be transformed into a courtly one and for me to be covered not with spit but with roses that had been tossed at me. (...) I waited for roses. I prayed God to alter his intention just a little, to make a false movement so that the children, ceasing to hate me, would love me. They would have gone on with the game ... but with their hands full of flowers (...) As the big shots grew more and more excited, their gusto and spirits began to gain on me. They moved closer and closer until they were very near me, and their aim got worse and worse. I saw them spread their legs and draw back, like an archer stringing a bow, and make a slight forward movement as the gob spirted. I was hit in the face and was soon slimier than a pricklehead under the discharge. I was then invested with a deep gravity. I was no longer the adulterous woman being stoned. I was the object of an amorous rite. I want them to spit more and thicker slime. Deloffre was the first to realize what was happening. He pointed to a particular part of my tight-fitting pants and cried out: 'Hey! Look at his pussy! It's making him come, the bitch!'²⁹

Genet's 'saintliness' strongly affects the story of Richie Beacon in *Hero*. The temporal and generic shift supplements Haynes's performative agenda by securing further the allegorical imprint of AIDS. *Hero* situates the story of Richie Beacon, disappeared after killing his father, to an American suburbia of the year 1985 and it is narrated in the form of a mock bio-documentary drama. 'He was a meek soul. People pick on meek souls', says Felicia Beacon, the moth-

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 170-4.

29 Jean Genet, *Miracle of the Rose*, pp. 267-8.



Figure 4. Being Spat At in *Poison*

er, in the interview. She adds that she ‘didn’t realize that he was a gift from God’, which, throughout the film, persists in order to foreclose her own shameful act, her ‘sin’, via masquerading as the mother of a strongly sacramental religious consciousness. The reporter reveals that Richie made ‘47 visits to the nursery’s office’ due to his bodily injuries he had from the fights with schoolmates but the witnesses in the film admit that he, interestingly, ‘didn’t fight back’. The gym instructor talks about his discovery at the instrument room that a slightly older boy, Gregory Lazar, was spanking Richie. ‘He kept bugging me, he made me do it ... it was a stupid game ... I spanked him just to make him shut up’ says Lazar, however. Richie’s masochistic queerness (‘he likes controlling people, watching them boil over’) is implied by the film as originating from the perverse enjoyment in S/M role-playing accessed via practices of reversing shame in public onto others. The erotic/sexual content in Richie’s mysterious story is further confirmed by his operator doctor MacArthur: ‘his parents said he’d been hurt by the other kids at school but frankly I doubted it. I thought they were being purposefully vague with me. There were other strange circumstances surrounding the case. I found an infectious discharge. It was genitally secreted. Sharp yellow color’.

After the confession of her affair with the gardener (‘My child was an angel of judgment and I sinned against the Lord!’) causing her husband to beat her and Richie to kill him, Felicia Beacon tells in her interview that there was a strange facial expression of his son addressing her:

When I saw his face, it reminded me of this time, years before, when Fred was spanking Richie, and I was watching... And I swear he looked at me with the exact same expression. It was like some oath in some other language, his face was so weird. It made me feel ashamed (Figure 5).

What interests me particularly here is that Haynes’s interpretation of the childhood, as can also be seen in *Dottie* and even in the first moments of *Velvet*



Figure 5. Richie Beacon in ‘Hero’, *Poison*

Goldmine, does not ignore but celebrates – cinematically – the polymorphously perverse tendencies of the child which can, indeed, be regarded as a deliberately enacted dissonance with the heteronormative phantasmatic figure of the Child.³⁰ I thus want to claim even further that Haynes’s cinematic flirtation with Freud’s text ‘A Child is Being Beaten’ and Deleuze’s re-articulation of it demonstrates the director’s emphasis on the constitutive temporal significance of childhood in terms of regulation, prohibition and abjection of queer acts, desires and pleasures via shame. What makes Felicia feel ashamed is the pseudo-incestuous, queerly shame-less enjoyment in Richie’s look that seems probably to celebrate his mother’s ‘sinful’ act and confront her with her own queer desire. Haynes’s reference to spanking, here, I think, comes from the momentum Freud seems to situate in the child’s primary masochistic fantasy:

This being beaten is now a convergence of the sense of guilt and sexual love. It is not only the punishment for the forbidden genital relation, but also the regressive substitute for that relation, and from this latter source it derived the libidinal excitation which is from this time forward attached to it, and which finds its outlet in masturbatory acts. Here for the first time we have the essence of “masochism”.³¹

What is to be regressed and made unconscious, in Freud’s argument, is the transitory stage of male fantasy where the boy’s ‘being beaten also stands for being loved [by the father]’. If the homoeroticism in this repressed unconscious transitory stage is what the heteronormative structure of the so-called positive

30 For Lee Edelman’s situation of his queer discourse as being against the ‘the pervasive invocation of the Child as the emblem of futurity’s unquestioned value [which] marks the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity’, Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

31 Sigmund Freud, “A Child is Being Beaten”: A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions’, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, p. 189.

Oedipal complex prohibits to be fantasized by the boy, Haynes's representation of the masochistic queer boys, Richie (and Dottie's Stevie), can be regarded as '[his] canny version to rewrite patriarchal law enunciated from the gay male point of view'.³² Richie's enjoyment in being beaten by his father resonates with his enjoyment in witnessing Felicia's affair with Jose. The strange similarity of Richie's glances in these two moments, which Felicia suddenly realizes in the interview, comes from what I would regard as his masochistic climax in feeling the urge to expel the father from his universe via the union with mother. This verifies, to a certain extent, Richie's criminal motive.

Haynes's *Dottie Gets Spanked*, a relatively shorter feature filmed for television, narrates the story of a boy, Steven Gale, whose spectatorial obsession with the TV star Dottie Frank clashes with his father's discontent and triggers a queer dream universe of spanking. The film's early revelation of the mother's conversation with her friend, 'We just don't believe in hitting', witnessed by Stevie, seems to operate as the perverse catalyst implanting a sort of 'curiosity' in him which he phantasmatically invests in to resolve the socially enforced guilt and shame in watching Dottie. The Dottie Show, with its excessively versatile, even *drag*, performance of Dottie, appears to allow only a middle-class, female-specific culture of spectatorship, which makes Stevie's fascination transgressive and queer in terms of the compulsory gendered identifications the child is subject to. Steve's outcast position makes no room for sharing his passion for Dottie. When he attempts to do so, he confronts either an injurious speech act – 'my sister says you are a feminino!' – or the father's prohibitory frustration.

The potential of queer re-appropriation that is to come from the autobiographical, and gay-specific, sensitivity in Haynes's film, which has also been declared in Haynes's commentary, exemplifies to a considerable extent Patricia White's notion of 'retrospectatorship'.³³ White's retrospectatorship acts here as a culturally extended conceptualization of that which is experienced by a performatively enacted cinephilia or cinematic pastiche. Problematizing the usually ignored importance of temporal and experiential aspects of spectatorship, White defines 'retrospectatorship' as a significant tool to 'theorize the phantasmatic in the cultural and the cultural in the phantasmatic'.³⁴ Haynes's self-reflexive cinematic enactment of his retro-spectatorship in 1950s American female TV icon Lucille Ball of *I Love Lucy* services a further encounter with the masochistic and the homosexual momentum in the male child's beating fantasy that Freud's hypothesis argues to be normally repressed and made unconscious.

32 Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 199.

33 Patricia White, *Uninvited*, pp. 194-202.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

'Please, Your Highness, come to see my show' says Dottie to Stevie in his first dream scene. 'I can't leave my kingdom', he replies. The conversation is interrupted by a scene, where Stevie's father is spanking a girl's bottom, referencing explicitly what Freud identifies as the first conscious and sadistic stage of the beating fantasy: 'My father is beating a child whom I hate'. The spanked child here can be regarded as an embodiment of the female mockers of Stevie's so-called 'sissihood' ('feminino'). Having won a visit to see Dottie's show live, Stevie encounters Dottie's performance of getting spanked by the male co-star. The shifts, in the spanking scene, between Dottie and her stand-in Eleanor, controlled by Dottie herself, enables Stevie to activate the masochistic 'power' in his own phantasy: 'positions of power are spatialized in ways that transgress boundaries of fantasy and reality, public and private, by showing the apparatus of the domestic sitcom's production'.³⁵ What follows this is Stevie's drawing of the spanked Dottie which his father discovers. In his second dream, Stevie appears to be dethroned from his kingdom, judged and imprisoned for killing the previously spanked girl, and spanked by a moustached, gaoler-like man. The sudden shift of the spanker's face into Dottie's moustached face awakens Stevie. Recalling Freud's third conscious and regressive stage of beating fantasy, 'A child is being beaten by a substitute for the father' or 'I am being beaten by my mother', I would argue that Haynes performs a form of queer re-reading of this scene via Dottie's drag transvestism. His visual desublimation of the homoeroticism in Freud's theoretical scenario resonates with and is accompanied further by Deleuze's positioning of the father and the mother in masochistic fantasy. Whereas the father, missing in Freud's formulation, as White also argues, seems to be 'hidden in the spanked and spanking Dottie', her status as 'the female/feminized authority of cultural production ... [which] exceeds the father's law' refers to Deleuze's account of the mother as the child's medium of masochistic expression (Figure 6).³⁶

The film ends with Stevie wrapping his drawing, shamed by his father, and burying it in the garden. The burying ritual ends with mild spankings of Stevie's hand on the soil. Haynes states: 'It is so much more honest to bury a controversial bit of your desires. The suggestion is that when things are safer you can dig it up later. But it doesn't disappear. It's not destroyed, he sort of spanks it into the future'.³⁷ In my view, the director's gay-conscious retro-spectatorship of visual culture and his retro-readership of Freud seem to embody what Stevie wishes to 'spank to the future'. Supplementing childhood with a queer momentum, Haynes's practice, here, interweaves Stevie's own sense of temporality with his entire cinematic project of a visual *erotohistoriography*, which Free-

35 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200. For Deleuze's formulation of masochism, see Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Beyond Coldness and Cruelty*, trans. Jean McNeil (London: MIT Press, 1989).

37 See Haynes's DVD commentary in *Dottie Gets Spanked*, Zeitgeist Films, 2004.



Figure 6. Stevie's Beating Fantasies in *Dottie Gets Spanked*

man conceptualizes as a deviant chronopolitics 'counter[ing] the fantasy of castration ... [and] foreground[ing] attachment rather than loss'.³⁸

[Safe]: Comments on a Queerly Anorexic Ontology

The film *[Safe]* focuses on an upper-middle class 'homemaker', Carol White, living in Southern California, a white suburbia of the San Fernando Valley, who suddenly starts to suffer from environmental illness. The film treats Carol's illness as an undiagnosable and untreatable phenomenon of an immuno-deficient over-sensibility of the body towards its environment, which Haynes allegorizes further as a failure of bodily agency. Thus, fixing the resistance of the protagonist's body against medicalization or any kind of spiritual redemption, the whole story turns out to be Carol White's experience of a process of disidentification and alienation through the institutions of knowledge in order to find a safe place within which to survive and equally a safe discourse in which she can achieve her self-realization through her illness, get treated and healed.

Schorr argues that Haynes's film could be considered as an inversion of the director's strategy in *Poison*, which 'serenades the archetypal gay male dystopian utopia: the Genet prison', to a performance of 'casting the utopian locale – the suburban home – as a wife-killing entity'.³⁹ I would also argue that the gay-conscious AIDS sensibility of the film *Poison* shifts its queered indexicality, created out of performatively mimed generic conventions, towards an allegorical effect by means of penetrating this consciousness into the white upper middle-class heteronormative family unit. 'Bracketing the AIDS crisis by im-

38 Elizabeth Freeman, 'Time Binds', p. 61.

39 Collier Schorr, 'Diary of a Sad Housewife: Collier Schorr Talks with Todd Haynes', *Artforum International* 33:10, Summer 1995, p. 87.

planting danger and susceptibility within the heterosexual orbit, without posing the "virus" as antagonist', Haynes attempts 'to discover illness in the most unlikely place on the planet: in the safest, most protected, most comfortable, most sealed-off kind of life'.⁴⁰ In contrast to the recognizable generic fragments entangled into each other with a performative agenda of queer temporalization in *Poison*, the cinematic conventions in *[Safe]* are contested and negotiated differently. The viewer is allowed to enter a filmic narrative whole but the visual language of the story is continuously interrupted with various generic citations such as melodrama, *film noir* and horror. As Landy states, the film 'jams the spectator's sensory-motor apparatus, as Carol's sensory-motor apparatus is jammed through an undermining of conventional cinematic images that might guarantee comprehension'.⁴¹ Hence, the enacted extra-generic effect enables the viewer to 'look to another mode of perception, the aphoristic, conjectural, or nonsystematic approach'.⁴² The ambivalence in genre is made to resonate with the ontological crisis of Carol's body. The practice of cinematic detachment creates a filmic *punctum* and offers a space for the spectator to comment.

[Safe] opens with a representation of what Doane considers as Haynes's signature shot: a night view of suburban residences from a car driving back home. What follows is Carol White's 'asubjective' face without any trace of emotion while having sex with her husband and her pseudo-affectionate tapping and kissing him after his orgasm.⁴³ This blank presence persists when the spectator is invited further to Carol's daily routines as the housewife/'homemaker': the arrangements for the house being redecorated, the gym practice, dialogues with the best friend Linda about the 'fruit diet', parties, dinners and so on. In these early scenes, Haynes uses Carol's body as a mediator in order to depict, critically, the white American heteronormative middle-class rhetoric, its phantasmatic ideal of the 'safe house', or, that of the individual security presumed to be guaranteed via an atomizing enclosure. There are significant early moments in the film where Haynes renders visible the class-specific aspects of such an idealism. The viewer is invited to witness the immediate frustration of Carol with the arrival of the new black couch ordered originally as 'teal' ('it doesn't go

40 Ibid, pp. 87-8. A similar argument with a particular emphasis on racial politics of *[Safe]* considered as a profoundly conscious critique of white heteronormativity, can be found in José Esteban Muñoz, 'Dead White: Notes on the Whiteness of the New Queer Cinema', *GLQ* 4:1, 1998, pp. 127-38.

41 Marcia Landy, "'The Dream of the Gesture": The Body of/in Todd Haynes's Films', *boundary* 2, 30: 3, 2003, p. 137.

42 Ibid.

43 This 'asubjective' facial expression also informs Haynes's cinematic language. The shot/reverse-shot dynamics of the film, when encountered Carol's blank dis-affected face, appear to undo 'the dramatic depth and [any mode of] promised hermeneutic satisfaction'. See Roddey Reid, 'Un-Safe at Any Distance: Todd Haynes's Visual Culture of Health and Risk', *Film Quarterly* 51:3, 1998, pp. 32-44.

with anything we have!') and her lack of charge as a housewife in comparison to her housemaid Fulvia ('any *telephono* while I was gone?'). The white heteronormativity in which the ideal of 'safe house' appears to be embedded is represented by Cathy's stepson Rory's essay about why 'black and Chicano gangs in LA is a big American issue' the inherent narrative excitement of which Carol regards as unnecessarily 'gory' and the elliptic conversation about the unutterable fatal illness (AIDS) of her best-friend Linda's brother ('No... that's what everyone keeps ... not at all ... 'cause he wasn't married?') suddenly interrupted by Linda's complaints about her newly fitted kitchen den.

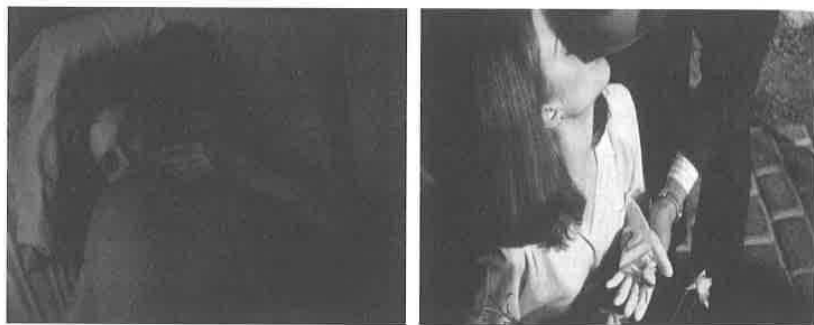


Figure 7. Carol White in the introduction of the film [*Safe*]

Throughout the film, Haynes refuses to depict any specific form of emotion and thus minimizes the facial close-ups. This, though intended to block any mode of fetishism and spectatorial identification, offers the viewer a paradoxical, politically ambivalent, identificatory possibility with regard to Carol's emergent condition. Her blankness, supplemented by Haynes visually, appears to be narratively affirmed by means of Haynes's mocking application of performative excess to the spaces, figures and characters embodying the rhetoric of 'the safe house' and/or 'the safe self'. Carol's house, being newly decorated, is presented as a visually overwhelming and suffocating space into which Haynes deliberately merges his character's distant body in order to nullify Carol's domesticity.⁴⁴

In the first half of the film, Haynes narrates Carol's disease in forms of symptoms such as asthma crises, nasal bleeding, insomnia, dizziness, sensitivity to fumes and vomiting. The protagonist's bodily struggle with these symp-

44 For a detailed analysis with reference to the issues of space in the film, see Susan Potter, 'Dangerous Spaces: *Safe*', *Camera Obscura* 57, pp. 125-54. Potter argues: 'Within domestic space, Carol is continually subjected to the possibility of surveillance ... far from being closed, or unseen, the feminine space of the home is open and always potentially public' (p. 130-1).

toms enables the spectator to witness the gradual process of her bodily shrinking. It could be argued that most of the attacks emerge when Carol is supposed to engage with an other or to be subject to perform as an identity, as an "I", participating in the outer world. Asthma-like attacks take place when Carol is driving in a congested traffic and polluted air, listening to a radio talk-show of an apocalyptic discourse of religious fundamentalism. Another similar attack occurs when she is in a 'Sunday party'-gathering of women celebrating the birth of a new baby. Her nose bleeds after she has her hair permed 'for a change' and looks at herself in the mirror. Her vomiting happens after she apologizes to her husband for 'not being normal' and not wanting sexual intercourse lately.



Figure 8. Visual Treatment of Space and Carol's Body in [*Safe*]

Greg, comforting Carol in her arms, supposes that his apologetic wife is crying due to her self-guilt for being inadequate to respond to his sexual desire, until she pushes his body and vomits onto the floor. The act of vomiting interrupts pathos. After the failure of her doctor to medically identify her illness and that of the psychotherapist who implies that she should self-reflexively problematize and communicate her condition ('we need to be hearing from you, what is happening in you'), Carol decides to try the New Age 'technologies of self' what the film identifies as 'holistic approaches' or 'deep ecology'. The film's shift to the Wrenwood Center's discourse of self-indulgently caused immunodeficiency, or 'chemical sensitivity', is significant *not* in terms of giving the viewer a possibility of redemption; rather, Haynes uses Wrenwood in order to expose his critical performative agenda, and thus, to stress that [*Safe*] is about the ethical burden of power, knowledge and representation in reasoning the body and in regulating its excess.

Wrenwood's discourse of rehabilitation via self-love and 'feeling inward' starts with Claire's welcome speech. In her talk, she explains the 'community wishes' that must be obeyed by the fellow inmates: 'Silent meals with separate seats for men and women, moderation in dress, restraint in sexual interaction... We ask that you try to focus these feelings inward toward your personal growth and self-realization'. What follows Claire is the talk of the Center's guru-like head, Peter Dunning, whom the film addresses as 'a chemically sensitive person with AIDS', thus, as a figure with an 'incredibly vast perspective'. The hypocrisy of Peter's speech comes from his discursive formulation of a narcissistic self-reflective misrecognition of the inside and the outside, on the one hand, and his deliberate catalysis of the inmates' self-guilt towards their condition as a healing strategy, on the other. Peter's rhetoric blocks, by insisting on the discourse of 'safety-as-enclosure', any mode of engagement with an other:

We're feeling good, huh? We're feeling warmth. We can look each other's eyes and actually see rejuvenation and personal transformation happening. Why? Because we left the judgmental behind. And with it, the shaming condition that kept us locked up in pain... What I want to share with you tonight, what I want to give you tonight, is an image to reflect. An image of the world outside as positive and as free as the world we created here. Because when you look out on the world from a place of love, a place of forgiveness, what you are seeing outside is a reflection of what you feel within. Does that make sense? So, what do I see? ... What I see outside me is the growth of environmentalism and holistic study. I see a decline in drugs and promiscuity. I see sensitivity training in the work place, the men's room, ... and multiculturalism. I see all these positive things outside the world because what I'm seeing is the global transformation identical to the transformation I revel at within (from *[Safe]*).

Naismith regards Wrenwood's holistic rhetoric as a 'site of confusion', as 'the most closed of all the discourses presented in the film', which collapses the boundary between exteriority and interiority.⁴⁵ However, as can clearly be seen in Peter's later speech in the film which justifies his stopping to read the papers overwhelmed by a 'fatalistic negative attitude', the broken-down distinction between inside and outside is immediately reinstated by Peter through a narcissis-

45 Naismith states that *[Safe]* 'investigates the extent to which we depend on distinctions between inside and outside and between self and other, both as a society and as individuals, in creating a sense of order and control and in maintaining coherent belief systems. Not only how such distinctions are sustained but also become muddled or can no longer be applied'. Gaye Naismith, 'Tales from the Crypt: Contamination and Quarantine in Todd Haynes's *[Safe]*', *The Visible Woman: Imaging Technologies, Gender and Science*, edited by Paula A. Treichler, Lisa Cartwright and Constance Penley (New York: NYU Press, 1998), p. 364. For Haynes's own commentary which resonates with Naismith's argument, see Oren Moverman, 'And All Is Well In Our World – Making Safe: Todd Haynes, Julianne Moore and Christine Vachon', *Projections 5: Filmmakers on Filmmaking*, edited by John Boorman and Walter Donohue (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p. 200.

istic negation and re-enclosure. Thus, Wrenwood's enforcement of mourning via self-love turns out to become paradoxically an accelerator of a pathological melancholia as an effect of fearful self-imprisonment in the narcissistic self. Peter says:

I finally realized once and for all I don't need it. And so I transformed that negative stimulus into something that will not do harm to me. Because if I really believe that life is that devastating, that destructive, I am afraid my immune system will believe it, too. I can't afford to take that risk. Neither can you.

Nell, one of the most stubborn figures among the patients at Wrenwood, deserves a specific attention in this regard. Nell's disease and aggression accelerate when his husband also got sick and died at Wrenwood. In one of the group-sessions, Peter asks: 'Why did you become sick?' All answers, except Nell's response and Carol's refusal to speak, seem to affirm Peter's discourse of guilt and enforced mourning: 'The person who hurt you the most was you for not forgiving'. Nell, however, resists:

Peter: How were you feeling when you got sick?

Nell: I just wanted to get a gun and blow off the heads of everyone who got me like this.

Peter: Nell, nobody out there made you sick, you know that. The only person that can make you get sick is you, right? Whatever the sickness ... our immune system is damaged because we allowed it to be through exactly the kind of anger that you are showing us now. ... Which is why you need to remember your affirmations and figure out how to love Nell a lot more and even Nell's disease and to put that gun of yours away.

In Wrenwood, any militantly aggressive outcry is treated as a sign of self-hatred and expected to be annihilated by taking the blame and sublimating it to a higher ideal of self by an unconditional self-forgiving. Nell first expresses her rejection by diverting her eye from Peter to the desert landscape outside Wrenwood and then re-addressing her angry look toward Peter at the moment when he further affirms his critical gesture to Nell in adding: 'Sometimes all I see is the hatred and frailty, people's cruelty to one another, to themselves and I realize how lucky I am, how blessed!' The presentation of Carol's look at Nell's condemning eyes, I contend, secures an empathy between the two characters in terms of their difficulty to incorporate Wrenwood's rhetoric. In addition, Carol's worsening bodily condition is an indication of the fact that 'Wrenwood is itself yet another symptom, an expression of her overall identity or, more accurately, her lack thereof'.⁴⁶ As Grundmann puts aptly, the Wrenwood Center is

46 Roy Grundmann, 'How Clean Was My Valley: Todd Haynes's *Safe*', *Cineaste* 21:4, 1996, p. 22.

'ultimately only a mirror image of Carol's life in the San Fernando Valley ... in which such buzzwords as "emotional maintenance" don't signal postmodern creativity but political amnesia, social isolationism, and cultural myopia typical of the American upper middle class as a whole, and in which elliptical conversations between housewives no longer reflect time-honored intimacy but social interaction at a dead end'.⁴⁷

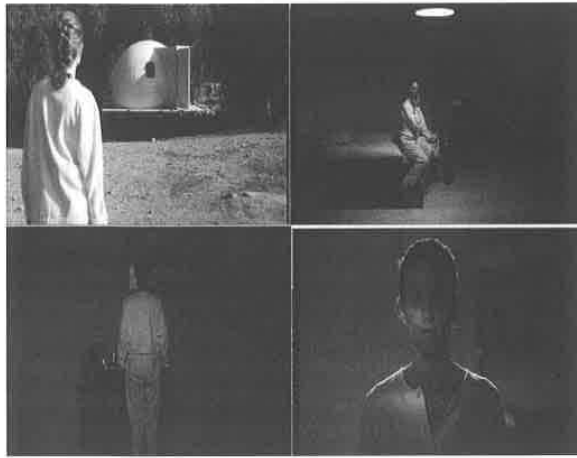


Figure 9. Carol's Igloo and Her Utterance of 'I Really Love You' in *[Safe]*

The failure of Wrenwood is affirmed in the film not only by the emergence of a lesion on Carol's forehead and the shrinking of her body but also her decision to move into a more controllable space: a porcelain-lined igloo. Haynes closes the film with Carol inhaling from her oxygen tube and then facing the mirror in her igloo. Carol's considerably weak and uncannily unpersuasive utterance of 'I love you, I really love you, I love you' towards the mirror ends the film. I would argue that this demonstrates Haynes's deliberate choice of rejecting any form of redemptive closure and exposing, instead, to the spectator the protagonist's subjugation depicted through an extreme self-enclosure, a vanishing sense of other, thus a melancholy narcissism never allowed to be mourned. As Naismith also argues, the film, though its politics of generic and narrative ambiguity, 'suggests that retreating to places that seemingly resolve the chaos than can arise around illness and identity can be more dangerous to the individual and to society than engaging fully with the messy contradictions of the late twentieth century'.⁴⁸ Before examining briefly a mode of queer 'retro-

47 Ibid.

48 Gaye Naismith, 'Tales from the Crypt', p. 385.

spectatorship' to read the allegorical excess of Haynes's film with reference to AIDS, it might be helpful to recall Kawash's discussion of *[Safe]*'s ending and its contribution to the film's discourse of safety and identity which I regard as a form of summary of my argument:

The analogy of safe house and safe body explored by the film points toward a meditation on security in the ideological context of liberal individualism. Perhaps because it refuses to take up a position outside the world of Carol White, *Safe* does not attempt to resolve the apparent paradox whereby efforts to establish better security lead only to greater destruction. Rather, *Safe* pushes to its deadly conclusion the atomizing logic of the individual, whereby the relation of body to environment, or self to other, is fundamentally opposed and therefore potentially dangerous. ... The failure of the safe house exposed in Haynes's dystopian suburb and repeated in the prophylactic igloo ... is an indictment of the logic that begins from the assumption of the necessity and desirability of enclosure, of separation and distinction. Despite the range of practices and techniques employed to further security, there is finally no possibility for safety in the world of *Safe*.⁴⁹

By intertwining the upper-middle-class white American heteronormative idealism of 'safe house' into the paranoid narcissism of the predominantly queer-phobic figuration of the 'safe body', Haynes's story performs simultaneously a critique of AIDS. In this sense, Haynes's double temporality marks the filmic chronotope as '1987 San Fernando Valley' and thus *re*-marks the earliest possible time of its experience in *[Safe]* as 199. Departing from this, I want to claim that the film within its overwhelmingly queer performative excess – which could surely be extended to Haynes's whole *oeuvre* so far – is a text of queerly temporalized mourning, or in Freeman's terms, melancholia in 'temporal drag'. *[Safe]*'s discourse of critical ambivalence refers to but transcends *Horror*. The pride-speech of Thomas Graves and the 'I love you' of Carol White can be regarded as the two false extremes of militancy and self-enforced self-subjugatory attempt of resolving mourning. While the former alludes to the exclusionary fallacy of post-AIDS identity politics and economies, the latter seems to catalyze a commentary on the risk of, and the impasse in, the 'bad readings' of post-AIDS post-Foucauldian queer theory, queer ethics and queer politics, i.e. those which articulate the ideal of resistance to the imageries of a form of narcissistic individualism relying on 'stylistics' and 'technologies of self'. In this regard, *[Safe]* inevitably triggers a 'retrospectatorship' and allegorizes what Crimp also problematizes as the urgency of a political discourse cohabiting both militancy and mourning. In this regard, Muñoz's discussion of Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* in terms of a queerly historiographic sensibility can also be applied to

49 Samira Kawash, 'Safe House?', p. 213.

Haynes's cinematic attitude. Embodying a form of what I would regard as a black disidentificatory 'retrospectatorship' towards the historical imageries of queers-of-color – through Langston Hughes as the queer figure of the Harlem Renaissance – and Mapplethorpe's politics of photographic/pornographic ambivalence, Julien, according to Muñoz, *visually mourns* the history of the black queer by 'destabilizing of traditional cinematic possibilities [and thus] mirroring the destabilization and ambivalence of identification that are to be found at the center of the communal mourning scene'.⁵⁰ Haynes's generic destabilization in depicting the collapse of Carol's immune system and his emphasis on the fallacy of Carol's unpersuasive blank 'I love you' similarly operate as a critical cinematic melancholia towards AIDS, which 'map[s] the ambivalences of identification and the conditions of (im)possibility that shape the minority identities' and seems to embody, aesthetically and artistically, 'a productive space of hybridization that uniquely exists between a necessary militancy and indispensable mourning'.⁵¹ The un-mourning militancy in Graves's pride and the narcissistic failure of the demilitarized faked mourning in Carol's 'I love you' call for an urgency of that cross-fertilization. [*Safe*] queers the contemporary post-AIDS unconscious of safe sex, which Muñoz regards as 'the gay male normative imprint' within an intersection of 'whiteness as a cultural logic'.⁵²

Far From Heaven: Cinephilia and Queer Temporality

In his investigation of gay cinephiliac modes having emerged from the first two decades of the AIDS epidemic, Roger Hallas argues that queer films 'articulate gay structures of feeling .. through their affectively charged relationship to cinema and its history'.⁵³ According to Hallas, these works of gay cinephilia point to 'a cinema of moments' which comes to bear a 'dynamics of gay spectatorship including fantasy, appropriation, fragmentation and reconstitution'.⁵⁴ Identifying this aesthetic sensitivity as a melancholic practice of articulating the AIDS-related loss of queer communities, Hallas argues that such a mode of gay cinephilia appears to celebrate 'a fetishistic preoccupation with the moment, the detail, the fragment; and a performativity that contributes to identity formation'.⁵⁵ Furthermore, it comes to 'invest form with greater significance than narrative, relying on the expressivity of cinematic forms to address their audience rather than on the conventional identificatory functions of narrative and

50 José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, p. 73.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

52 José Esteban Muñoz, 'Dead White', pp. 131-4. Muñoz further unpacks this by arguing that Haynes's film demonstrates 'the normalizing rhetorics of desire that situate whiteness as the law also fortifies the myth of the tragic and dying white homosexual' and the film 'death as a persistent and continual trope that haunts white gay male culture' (*ibid.*, pp. 131-2).

53 Roger Hallas, 'AIDS and Gay Cinephilia', *Camera Obscura* 52, 18:1, 2003, p. 87.

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 92.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

performance'.⁵⁶ Although I would claim that the issues of temporality, pastiche/parody/allegory, 'retrospectatorship' and cinephilia are common denominators of the agenda of New Queer Cinema and that of a significant mode of queer criticism, I will restrict my territory to Haynes's cinema and continue with his film *Far From Heaven*. I want to examine the ways in which his queer enactment of cinephilia articulates further his aesthetic strategy of 'discorporation', or what Anat Pick regards as 'anorexic poetics' where the filmmaker's 'gestures tending towards stillness and exteriority' situate meaning on the surface via what I would identify as a simultaneously employed rhetoric of copy, 'temporal drag' and excess. Haynes's pastiche is a disidentificatory, thus partial, incorporation without assimilation; or, a fake pregnancy.⁵⁷

While *Far From Heaven* is a pastiche, a meticulously intertextualized mimicry of 1950s melodrama, in which Sirk's films stand as the main inspiration, the film's story develops around two axes of transgression, namely interracial love and homosexuality, which often remain closeted in melodramas but operate as modes of founding repudiations or 'constitutive outsides'. The film narrates the oppressed lives of Cathy Whitaker (Julianne Moore) and her husband Frank (Dennis Quaid) in an American suburbia of 1950s, Hartford, where the upper-middle-class protagonists, as the perfect couple of the town, seem to be the central attraction of both the local media and high society. Whereas the viewer witnesses Frank's depression – a man with a successful career: the sales executive of television manufacturing company Magnatech Inc. – with an accelerating aggression toward his irrepressible homosexuality, Cathy Whitaker appears to be the perfect mother and housewife whose sexual/emotional dissatisfaction with her husband leads her to fall in love with her black gardener Raymond Deagan. Cathy's accidental encounter with her husband's homosexuality, the cruel gossip about her friendship with Raymond and thus Frank's doubled tension with regard to his masculinity are the main elements through which Haynes constructs his melodramatic atmosphere and his re-temporalized melodramatic pathos in the film. In *Far From Heaven*, there are complex, diverse and hybrid levels of citation and allusion at work. The film contains references and gestures – in terms of both cinematic form, narrative and story – to Sirk's films *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Written on the Wind* (1956), *Imitation of Life* (1959), Fassbinder's *Angst Essen Seele Auf* (1973, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*), Ophüls' *Reckless Moment* (1949) and *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948).

While Haynes explicitly refers to the relationship between the widow Cary Scott and her gardener Ron Kirby in Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows*, whose transgressive aspect comes from issues of class and age, the interracial status of sexual desire between Cathy and Raymond in *Far From Heaven* is character-

56 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

57 Anat Pick, 'Todd Haynes's Melodramas of Abstraction', *The Cinema of Todd Haynes*, edited by James Morrison (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), pp. 145-55.

ized as the core of transgression which alludes to the shamed and abjected relationship between German Emmi and the Arab worker Ali in Fassbinder's *Fear Eats the Soul*. Haynes's narration of Frank's homosexuality contains a historically specific playful gesture to Rock Hudson's star persona and the later contradiction with his homosexuality. I also regard this as an ironic gesture to a possibly homophobic mode of contemporary retro-spectatorship which, Klinger argues, could easily resonate with 'mass camp responses' to melodramatic narrative. Haynes disrupts and blocks this by making homosexuality a visible, constitutive part of the story.⁵⁸

Frank Whitaker also bears certain references to the protagonist Kyle Hadley in Douglas Sirk's *Written on the Wind*. Sirk depicts Kyle as the self-destructive husband whose traumatizing past of the castrating father- and sibling-effects are represented to have led him to drinking problems, anxieties of sexual impotence and a never-ending homosocial rivalry with his best friend Mitch Wayne (Rock Hudson). What Frank appears to embody in Haynes's imagery, however, refers neither to the crisis of Kyle's sadly aggressive masculinity justified psychoanalytically by the revealed clues from his childhood memories, nor to a critical love-triangle, but to Kyle's repressed homosexual desire for his best friend Mitch. The latent desire in the passionate tension between the two friends is implied by Kyle's utterances at certain moments in Sirk's film. In the declaration of his love to Lucy (Lauren Bacall), he says: 'I found myself talking to you like I never talked to anyone before, not even Mitch'. Further, his last words before having died from an accidental gunshot are also addressed to Mitch: 'I'll be down at the river, waiting'. What seems to enable Haynes's character (Frank, the sad queer *loiterer*) to resonate with Sirk's is Haynes's formulation of Frank's drinking problem and the masculine aggression and violence he performs towards Cathy as an effect of not only the homosexual closet but also his anxiety with regard to sexual impotence. He hits Cathy who tries to comfort him after his failure in erection. He threatens Cathy when he hears the gossip about her friendship with the gardener. What Haynes seems to comment further, extrapolate and divert from Sirk, however, is his act of supplementing – and interrupting – the generic territory with the excess that the visual cultural memory of that genre would only accommodate as latencies or embed, as retrospectorial possibilities, within the chromatically and musically orchestrated surfaces of emotional climax. Gorfinkel's argument implies the queer/able

58 Klinger argues: 'Given mass camp's availability to many as a sensibility, how spectators read the artifice of the past depends substantially on their already established, heterogeneous, lived political positions. With a Sirk film, they may respond homophobically to Hudson, with a postfeminist consciousness to gender, or with uncommitted enjoyment of cinematic anachronisms. In this way, the contemporary ideological meaning of Sirk's films is far removed from his intentions; it is dependent on the whims of the mass camp imagination as a specific kind of social and historical vision'. See Barbara Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture and the Films of Douglas Sirk* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press), p. 156.

temporality in Haynes's pastiche: 'this sort of presentation [in Haynes], as an opening into a film historical imaginary, inserts the historically and socially possible into the film historically impossible'.⁵⁹ Haynes's enactment of anachronism thus operates as a '[re-]inscription of queer meaning' into the 'cultural and cinematic normalcies'.⁶⁰

While Haynes creates the protagonists of *Far From Heaven* by means of hybridized references to Sirk and Fassbinder (Cathy to Cary and Emmi, Frank to Kyle and Hudson-as-star, Raymond to Ron and Ali), the supporting characters also turn out to be the bearers of the filmmaker's pastiche. As in the intertextual reference between *Far From Heaven*'s Mona Lauder (Celia Weston), the initiator of stigma as the bitter female agent of gossip, and Sirk's character Mona Plash (Jacqueline deWit) in *All That Heaven Allows*, Cathy's best friend Eleanor (Patricia Clarkson) in Haynes's film is also a re-animation of Cary's friend Sara (Agnes Moorehead) in Sirk's. Although both Eleanor and Sara seem to emotionally support and fight for the protagonists to protect them from any possibility of exposure to gossip and abjection due to their transgressive relationships, they differ in their threshold of tolerance. Sara approves of Cary's relationship with Ron Kirby and formulates ways of introducing him to the upper middle-class society whereas Eleanor's fight against Cathy's victimization transforms into self-regret and frustration after she listens to Cathy's utterance of her affection for Raymond. Eleanor's homophobia and racism is implied throughout the film in various forms in which she sustains her sarcastic attitude towards Cathy's highly publicized image which the local *Gazette* regards as her 'kindness to Negroes'. 'She's always been liberal, ever since she played summer stock at college with all those steamy Jewish boys, that's why they called her "Red"', says Eleanor. In another scene before the opening of the local 'modern art exhibition' takes place, Eleanor comments, to Cathy, on Mona's art-dealer uncle without explicitly referring to his homosexuality but by implying and judging it:

Eleanor: A bit flowery for my taste . . . a touch light on his feet? Yes, darling, he's one of *those*. Of course, I could be mistaken. It's just an impression I got.

Cathy: You don't care for them particularly?

Eleanor: Not particularly. Call me old-fashioned; I like all the men I'm around to be all men.

59 Elena Gorfinkel, 'The Future of Anachronism', p. 158.

60 Kathy Burdette, 'Queer Readings', pp. 69-70. In one of his earlier interviews, Haynes also underlines the narrative regimes of 'normalcy' that his cinematic practice departs from and attempts to disrupt: 'I think that it has been documented in film theory that conventional narrative form adheres to and supports basic ideological positions and structures in society and enforces heterosexual closure and romance in films. For me, it's the way the narrative is structured, the way that films are machines that either reiterate and reciprocate society – or not.' Justin Wyatt, 'Cinematic/Sexual Transgression: An Interview with Todd Haynes', *Film Quarterly* 46:3, Spring 1993, p. 8.

Since Haynes's mimicry of melodramatic form locates its critique onto the 'surface', the visibility of the interracial coupling is presented to be stigmatized more dramatically than the closeted invisibility of Frank's homosexuality and that of the domestic unhappiness of the Whitaker family. In this respect, I want to underline the fact that Eleanor's disappointment transforms into stigma not when she learns and responds to Frank's 'outed' sexual dissidence but when she senses a mode of desire in the precarious ambiguity of Cathy's declared emotions for Raymond. I would thus argue that Eleanor is one of the key figures, which demonstrates Haynes's deliberate emphasis on the precedingly hegemonic status of whiteness in white heteronormativity.

The figure of the maid as racialized other in Haynes's films, namely Fulvia in *[Safe]* and Sybil in *Far From Heaven*, deserves a particular attention mainly because it supplements and punctuates the practice of marking radically the racially unmarked whiteness in the director's queer critique. I would argue that the character Sybil, of *Far From Heaven*, who takes her name from the black maid in Ophuls's *Reckless Moment*, oscillates, in terms of her *figural*ity, between Fulvia in *[Safe]* and Annie in Sirk's *Imitation of Life*. Bouchard and Desai argue that Fulvia bears in her racial otherness a 'Queer presence within the white heterosexual marriage and gated community [which] suggests the important role that gender, class and sexuality play ... in the formation and maintenance of a respectable white bourgeois domesticity'.⁶¹ Recalling Haynes's cinematic treatment of Carol's body with distant and long shots as if the domestic space envelops and swallows her, I claim that Haynes stresses, visually, that Fulvia operates as an embodiment of the non-white liminal subject and even as a viral effect within the profoundly white 'safe house'. In one of the scenes of *[Safe]*, the overwhelming voice of the radio reporting in a Latin American language accompanies Carol's hailing Fulvia ('Fulvia? Any *telephono* while I'm gone?') that is narrated visually by her hardly distinguishable body which seems to be contained by the 'relative excess of the interior space'.⁶² What follows is Fulvia's cynical facial expression responding to Carol's frustration about the arrival of the new 'black' couch ordered as 'teal'. Annie, however, in Sirk's *Imitation*, is a loyal loving friend and maid of Lora. Reiterating the stereotypical figure of the maternal affectionate black maid, Sirk also uses Annie to render visible the racialized dynamics of this friendship. Haynes's Sybil in *Far From Heaven* refers to Annie's loyalty and domestic command, and also her social agency. The scene in which Cathy appears to be surprised when she learns Sybil's engagement with community work is a reanimation of Lora's surprise over Annie's well-respected agency in black community. Sybil, however, differs

61 Danielle Bouchard and Jigna Desai, "There is Nothing More Debilitating than Travel": Locating US Empire in Todd Haynes's *Safe*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 22:4, 2005, p. 364.

62 Susan Potter, 'Dangerous Spaces', p. 130.

from Annie in that she 'regularly exhibits an active interpreting gaze'.⁶³ The moments when this active gaze appears to 'deploy hostility'⁶⁴ come from her disapproval of the friendship between Cathy and Raymond. Sybil's negative attitude contains not an injurious performative but an anxious consciousness of it within the mimed narrative. What Fulvia and Sybil share, I would argue, is that they *know too much* and the expression of this excess of knowledge – in their active and interpreting gaze – resists the 'monopathic' figures of melodramatic narrative 'lacking psychological depth'.⁶⁵

As mentioned earlier, Haynes's pastiche not only refers to characters in 1950s melodrama but also mimicks the cinematic style to a considerable extent. The cinematic excess in the economy of looks, the use of camera and the strategic treatment of color contains strong references to Sirk, Ophuls and Fassbinder, which I want to briefly discuss.



Figure 10. Sybil in *Far From Heaven* and Fulvia in *[Safe]*

The camera motion, framing, cutting and montage operate within a genderable logic. The Magnatech cocktail party scene in the film depicts considerably the gender-tension of vision. Whereas the camera moves and spans the domestic space, panoramically and dynamically, around Cathy and Eleanor, the fluidity of the female's motion is interrupted when the conversations start: the camera gains a visual fixity and operates, with shot/reverse-shot dynamics by upper and lower angles, imposing a gendered hegemony-scheme to the dialogues visualized. Cathy appears to be either forced into the fixed frame of her drunken husband or visually dominated by the upper angle camera, the reverse-shot of which embodies Cathy's view from lower angle towards the male guest performing a brief racist speech followed by his cynical reference to Cathy

63 Sharon Willis, 'The Politics of Disappointment: Todd Haynes Rewrites Douglas Sirk', *Camera Obscura* 54, 18:3, 2003, p. 141.

64 Ibid., p. 142.

65 John Mercer and Martin Shingler, *Melodrama: Style, Genre and Sensibility*, p. 94.

as a 'pro-integration type'. Willis argues that, in the two-shots of *Far From Heaven*, 'angles of view predominate significantly over the points of view'.⁶⁶ Haynes's practice of replacing the subjective shots 'by distinct angles on the characters and their interactions—the view of a deeply interested and always interpreting third party'⁶⁷ is fertilized by the cinemas of Sirk and Fassbinder.



Figure 11. The Party Scene and the Camera in *Far From Heaven*



Figure 12. The Party Scene and the Gendered Spatiality in *Far From Heaven*

The most evident Fassbinder-effect in the film is that Haynes uses the profoundly strong close-ups of the hostile looks, which operates in an alienatingly hyperbolic fashion and appears to shame and abject the queer exchange it detects. The visual economy of 'looks of abjection' in Fassbinder's *Angst Essen*

66 Sharon Willis, 'The Politics of Disappointment', p. 154.

67 Ibid.

Seele Auf operates within the territories of not only white heteronormative gaze embodied, for example, by Emmi's neighbors but also the reversely discriminatory gaze embodied by Ali's Middle-Eastern friends including Barbara, the owner of the 'exotic' bar. Haynes makes a similar gesture in *Far From Heaven*. Cathy's curiosity with regard to how it feels for Raymond 'to be the only man in the room' results in Raymond's inviting her to Eagan's Restaurant – a black club – for lunch. The 'bitter' attitude of the barmaid Esther towards the couple, and her ambiguously erotic passes at Raymond, alludes to Barbara's unease which functions at the level of not only discriminating the interracial exchange but also a woman-ly 'catty' jealousy for the white woman.

What is constitutive of the affective imprint in melodrama, in Elsaesser's well-known discussion, is 'a system of punctuation giving expressive color and chromatic contrast to the story-line, by orchestrating the emotional ups and downs of the intrigue'.⁶⁸ This structural approach, according to Elsaesser, 'formulates the problems of melodrama as problems of style and articulation'.⁶⁹ I agree with Rodowick's argument that 'melodrama can only understand sexuality as a kind of violence and a threat to narrative stability' and it can be 'characterized as a centripetal form which directs these forces [of violence and sexuality] inward'.⁷⁰ I would thus argue that stylistic elements, such as music and color, in melodramatic narrative operate to inscribe into the imagery that which is ideologically and linguistically inarticulate; or, to mark what is located inward as emotional excess.

In this regard, Haynes appears to embrace and enact the melodrama's strategies of punctuation not only in his use of music but also in his treatment of color. Higgins argues that Haynes uses 'color as a referential element [whose] double function abets affect and critique'.⁷¹ Beside its camp effect hyperbolizing, in re-creating, the surplus value of the mimed genre, the excessive visual presence of red, orange, blue, green and lilac operates as conscious attachments to the narrative. The green lighting, in Haynes's exploitative use while depicting space, signifies a consciousness towards the tension between transgression and discipline embodied by the characters' body and the space it occupies. The green light's emergence when the viewer is exposed to Frank's 'closet-depression' at his office, to his uncomfortable presence at the movie theatre (presented as a queerly charged space of sexual meetings) and in the gay bar, to the tense encounter of Cathy and Raymond with the black club, Eagan's, and to Frank's homosexual en-

68 Thomas Elsaesser, 'Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama', *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Women's Film*, edited by Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), p. 50.

69 Ibid.

70 David N. Rodowick, 'Madness, Authority and Ideology: The Domestic Melodrama of the 1950s', *Home is Where the Heart Is*, p. 272.

71 Scott Higgins, 'Orange and Blue, Desire and Loss: The Color Score in *Far From Heaven*', *The Cinema of Todd Haynes*, pp. 101-3.

counter at the hotel in Miami where he goes with Cathy to celebrate his 'recovery'. The green surface, then, marks transgression within 'disciplinary or *disciplined* spaces ... zones of semiprivacy carved out from the public sphere provid[ing] a certain privatized sanctuary at the expense of a protective segregation that consolidates difference in a site that is readily policed'.⁷² Whereas green supplements the characters' confrontation with their 'sinking into sexual crisis'⁷³, the blue light seems to mark moments of melancholia, yearning, cruising, loneliness, sorrow, emotional conflict and even violence where the film gains generic affinities with *noir*. Cathy's lonely wandering presence by her window, moments of Frank's loitering, the first confrontation of the couple after Cathy's discovery of Frank's homosexuality, Frank's attempt and failure to make love with Cathy (followed by his slapping Cathy's face), the scene of Cathy crying on her bed over the missed chance of being with Raymond (containing a strong reference to the scene in Ophuls' *Reckless Moment*) are examples of Haynes's use of artificially enacted blue lighting. Willis regards Haynes's hyper-accentual use of the autumnal red-orange color palette, with which the female characters' outfits occasionally rhyme, as 'an exaggerated replica of a common Sirk effect ... keying a woman's clothing into her setting ... merging her into her environment'.⁷⁴



Figure 13. The use of green light: The gay bar and Eagen's in *Far From Heaven*

Cathy's outfit, however, embodies a resistance to this body-space harmony, and even a camp-effect, in various levels throughout the film. Haynes always locates 'a visual discordance or a cacophonous note'⁷⁵ to Cathy's appearance, where the color is the primary catalyst to reveal this camp-effect. Her lilac scarf and the lavender-red-green-blue spectrum of her outfit not only mark her latent transgressive desire (for Raymond) but also signify the distance from

72 Sharon Willis, 'The Politics of Disappointment', p. 152.

73 Scott Higgins, 'Orange and Blue', p. 105.

74 Sharon Willis, 'The Politics', p. 149.

75 Ibid.



Figure 14. The politics of the lilac scarf in *Far From Heaven*

the Hartford gender/ed culture of upper-middle-class white femininity. Recalling Eleanor's sarcastic attitude towards the younger Cathy's 'Red'-ness (her friendship with 'all those steamy Jewish boys') her memory of which is triggered by the local *Gazette's* remark on Cathy's 'kindness to Negroes', I would argue that this scene of four female friends chatting in the yard demonstrates one of the strongest examples where Haynes re-visits the politics of color in melodrama. All the ladies' costumes rhyme with the autumnal palette except Cathy's lilac scarf: El's sarcastic gesture to Cathy's marginalized encounters resonates with the scarf punctuating difference as the visual detail. The scarf blown off over the roof, found and returned later by Raymond to Cathy operates as a queerly metonymic object throughout the film.⁷⁶

The unitary aesthetic quality of the pastiche genre in *Far From Heaven* is interrupted by hyperbolized moments in artifice. As Hawkins puts it aptly, the hyperbolic excess in Haynes's cinema-in-drag contains a camp sensibility in which 'elements of high and low not only coexist in a twin relationship but tend to coalesce into a synthetic taste culture'.⁷⁷ Haynes plays with Cathy's naïve heteronormative hope for Frank's 'full heterosexual conversion' by means of exaggerating her outfit to a profoundly camp sleazy pedigree. Haynes depicts a happy Christmas atmosphere in the over-adorned Whitaker household with sharp reds and sharp greens throughout the frame. The hyperbolic character of the mise-en-scene is supported by that of the family's outfit. Cathy's red dress with

76 A similar discussion on the role of Cathy's lilac scarf in the film and the strategic use of color in the scene of four female friends chatting on the yard has already been carried out by Willis and Luciano. See Sharon Willis, 'The Politics of Disappointment', pp. 149-56. For a further discussion informed by queer theories, see Dana Luciano, 'Coming Around Again: The Queer Momentum of *Far From Heaven*', *GLQ* 13: 2-3, 2007, pp. 249-72.

77 Joan Hawkins, 'The Sleazy Pedigree of Todd Haynes', *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style and Politics*, edited by Jeff Sconce (London: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 189-218. See the essay 'Uses of Camp' in Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 135-70.

a green apron rhymes with Frank's cardigan which attaches a fake domestic fatherhood to his body (Figure 15). Supplementing the narrative with his gender-normative presentation of the Whitakers' children, David playing with his train and Janice with her ballet shoes, Haynes queers further this unconvincingly heterosexual family romance with the couple's enjoyment and laughter in Frank's joke over his homosexuality. Frank opens his present and sees a box full of leaflets of holiday resorts:

Frank: What have we here? Bermuda, Rio, Miami?

Cathy: Take your pick. It's your choice.

Frank: I don't know. Stan was always raving about Miami.

Cathy: Oh, Frank! Miami would be a dream. El says it's just darling. Everything's pink!

Frank: Oh, really? Maybe we ought to consider Bermuda.

Cathy: Oh, Frank, I love you, darling!



Figure 15. The Camp Supplement in *Far From Heaven*

I want to conclude my discussion by turning back to Luciano's treatment of Cathy's lilac scarf as what I would call a cinematic *punctum*-effect, a retrospectorial attachment which bends the conventional chronopolitics of cultural memory and thus marks Haynes's performative labor in creating a queer temporality via pastiche. According to Luciano, Haynes's use of the lilac scarf 'indexes the scarf's function as a marker of temporal surplus'.⁷⁸ It also supplements a mode of gay cinephilia extrapolated to queer ends:

The scarf also carries chronic possibilities not contained in normative developmental models or familiar modes of narrative progression. The use of lavender to mark this difference in a scene that is notably subsequent to the one featuring the bout of loitering that outs Frank to the viewer might then draw

78 Dana Luciano, 'Coming Around Again', p. 261.

our attention to the effect of retrospectively crossing a putatively normal, properly maternal femininity with homosexuality – a question that might, of course, just as well be posed of this film, a gay man's take on a maternally marked genre. The queered femininity ... emphasizes the issue of erotic *aim* over object-choice; separating sex from the generational production of life, it seeks, instead, to proliferate the possibilities of "aliveness." From this perspective, the lavender scarf's spatiotemporal play on color evokes the trajectories a queered femininity might develop – ones that would be, unlike Frank's ultimate path, indeterminate; it appears, that is, not as a signpost marking a known route of sexual deviation but as a gesture toward the potentiality of desiring otherwise.⁷⁹

Recalling the moments of the scarf's return in the film which depict Cathy's socially enforced, irreversible, split-up with Raymond (the scene at the Hartford train station), I would argue that it operates as the embodiment of her emotional crisis and mourning. Luciano argues that the scarf, through Cathy's economy of mourning the loss of 'desiring otherwise', triggers visually 'an ability to at once interrupt continuities and make unexpected connections, allows the rhythms of return that close the film to resonate as something other than the compulsory repetition of sameness'.⁸⁰ In my opinion, this argument embraces Haynes's cinematic project: an enactment of melancholia, a reparative reading of cultural memory, a pastiche whose *erotohistoriographic* excess disrupts the normative (chrono-)politics of desire.

Lovingly Critical: Pastiche, Temporality, Reparative Re-Reading, Paranoid Critique

As Joyrich puts it aptly, Haynes's cinema 'thinks through media, making media forms not only objects of analysis but modes of analysis, mediums of thought and reflection themselves'.⁸¹ As Haynes's performative engagement with cultural memory and genre bears a particular self-consciousness that I would regard, departing from Patricia White, as a gay retrospectatorship, his cinema contains 'both a loving and a critical attitude toward media and consumer culture'.⁸² This *lovingly critical* intellectual position enables Haynes to perform a queer critique which simultaneously *reads* gender and genre with an artistic instinct to disrupt the visual modes of their heteronormative idealization. However, this lovingly critical attitude makes the queer-ness of his practice of cinematic pastiche embrace not a paranoid but a reparative mode of reading. What Freeman, in discussing Isaac Julien's 'erotohistoriographic treatment' of

79 Ibid., p. 261-2.

80 Ibid., p. 267.

81 Lynne Joyrich, 'Written On the Screen: Mediation and Immersion in *Far From Heaven*', *Camera Obscura* 57, p. 191.

82 Ibid., p. 210.

S/M in his *Attendant*, regards as 'reparative criticism' can also be applied to Haynes's cinema: It 'takes up materials of a traumatic past and remixes them in the interests of new possibilities for being and knowing'.⁸³ Freeman's argument of queer temporality in queer cinema departs from Sedgwick's recent critical treatment of Queer. In her critique of Queer as an overwhelmingly paranoid mode of reading, Sedgwick characterizes paranoia as 'a theory of negative affects' and as that which 'places faith in exposure'.⁸⁴ The academic rhetoric of 'unveiling hidden violence' and the contemporary intellectual obsession with readings via parody/demystification, according to Sedgwick, have exhausted themselves and gained a perverse theoretically paranoid fixation blocking any mode of reparative practice:

The paranoid trust in exposure seemingly depends ... on an infinite reservoir of naïveté in those who make up the audience for these unveilings. What is the basis for assuming that it will surprise or disturb, never mind motivate, anyone to learn that a given social manifestation is artificial, self-contradictory, imitative, phantasmatic, or even violent? (...) The monopolistic program of paranoid knowing systematically disallows any explicit recourse to reparative motives, no sooner to be articulated than subject to methodical uprooting. Reparative motives, once they become explicit, are inadmissible in paranoid theory both because they are about pleasure ("merely aesthetic") and because they are frankly ameliorative ("merely reformist"). What makes pleasure and amelioration so "mere"? Only the exclusiveness of paranoia's faith in demystifying exposure.⁸⁵

Although its rhetoric of drag, camp, hyperbole and copy might seem to imply an inevitably paranoid affinity, Haynes's *oeuvre*, in my opinion, gestures to and *repairs* 'difficulties of queer experience [by] develop[ing] a politics of the past'.⁸⁶ Haynes's retrospectatorial practice of what Love would call 'feeling backward' can be regarded as an aesthetic politics of past, a politics of reparative melancholia, a 'historicist model of "allegorization" in which the material by-products of past failures write the poetry of a different future'.⁸⁷ The generic fragmentation sutured to each other by means of the commonality as queer generic 'by-products' in *Poison*, the allegorical excess of AIDS bound with the profoundly marked white racial privilege in [*Safe*], the re-figured pathos in the 'temporal drag' of *Far From Heaven* are products of a 'lovingly critical' reading – of genre/gender bindings – motivated by an erotohistoriographic sensibility.

83 Elizabeth Freeman, 'Turning the Beat Again', p. 41.

84 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, pp. 136-51.

85 *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 144.

86 Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 21.

87 Elizabeth Freeman, 'Packing History', p. 732.

Haynes recycles and rearticulates canons of filmic vision, canons of thought on filmic imagination.

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Taşra kavramı üzerine tartışmalar Taşrada Var Bir Zaman

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3-19 Aralık tarihlerinde Ankara, Artvin ve Ordu kentlerinde gerçekleşecek olan 16. Gezici Festival, Çitlembik Yayınları işbirliğiyle bu yıl sinema kitaplığına çok özel bir kitap hediye ediyor.



Son on yıldır Türkiye sinemasında çok üzerine düşülen, seyirciden ve eleştirmenlerden de büyük ilgi gören bir tema taşra. Kitabın editörleri, Z. Tül Akbal Süalp ve Aslı Güneş bunun sebeplerini araştırmak için yola çıktıklarında, diğer kültür sanat kollarında, hatta toplumsal hayatın genelinde, taşra kavramının popülerliğinden, yoğun bir taşra söyleminin varlığından bahsetmenin mümkün olduğunu fark ederek araştırmalarını genişlettiler. Bunun sonucunda da Jale Parla'dan Tanıl Bora'ya, Fatih Özgüven'den Necla Algan'a, Behçet Gülerüz'den Aslı Kayhan'a kadar pek çok yazarın kültür ve sanattaki taşra imgesini irdeledikleri *Taşrada Var Bir Zaman* adlı kitap çıktı.

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