

QUEER BODIES AND SETTLEMENTS:

The pertinence of queer theory in the fields of queer history and trans politics, disability and 'curative education', quantum physics and experimental art – an interdisciplinary and transnational account of three socio-cultural and filmic research projects

Submitted by Stefan Jack Garel to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film, October 2008-11-14

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

STEFAN GAREL.....

ABSTRACT

What is queer? What is *queer*? What is queer theory? Where can it go from here? This thesis sets out to explore the origins and influences of queer theory before investigating the present and the future spaces (ie, bodies and settlements) it can potentially move into. Three distinct experiments of fieldwork and ethnographic filmmaking test the truths and potentialities of queer theory when relating to queer bodies and settlements. That is to say that each chapter balances a film and its supporting text by embracing the value and urgency of practice led research.

The first chapter questions queer history and details the importance of emerging trans politics in the post-gender, leftist, avant-garde, queer activist and militant space of Bologna. Queer bodies, case one: transgender and transsexual perspectives. Settlements, case one: Bologna and Lido di Classe (Italy).

The second chapter considers the interface between disability theory and queer theory with particular attention paid to the practical theory of 'curative education'. Defined by Rudolf Steiner in 1922 and further developed by Karl König with the foundation of the Camphill movement in 1944, curative education privileges the social model over the medical model in the field of disability so that disability is in fact ability. Queer bodies, case two: learning differences and disabilities perspectives. Settlements, case two: Berlin (Germany), Chatou and La Rochelle (France), Barry and Glasallt Fawr (Wales, United Kingdom).

The third chapter uses queer perspectives to promote the relevance of quantum physics to the human body, thus involving contemporary dance, physical theatre and the arts more generally to address and redress the chiasm between science and technology on the one hand, and arts, humanities and socio-cultural sciences on the other. Queer bodies, case three: the inescapably queer reality of the physical world. Settlements, case three: multiple locations in Tuscany (Italy), and Thamesmead, London (England, United Kingdom).

This thesis brings notions of *queer* and *otherness* deceptively close to notions of the *self*. Otherness and queerness become mirrors in which our own queerness comes into view.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost I wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Susan Hayward, for your patience, guidance, encouragement, scope and inspiration without which I could never have found my way to the end of this thesis. You made me hang on to my passion and intuition and follow them through, allowing me to keep a broad spectrum of investigation until it naturally came to the point. Your understanding means the world.

Many thanks from the bottom of my heart to my parents, Terry and Philippe Garel, for your constant support, good humour and unconditional love. To my brother, Guillaume Garel, for being the funniest, soundest and brightest geezer I know. My deepest appreciation for enduring love goes to my soulmate and sister, Julie Foulon. You opened my eyes in the most celebratory fashion. You are an icon, a queen and a beautiful source of creativity and enthusiasm. I also wish to thank Mery Zourabichvili for reaching inside of us and making it our strength, for constantly stretching my mind and getting me, for always pushing the ongoing art piece that is our lives and friendship. Without you I am nothing.

My renewed gratitude to all the participants and collaborators I have had the privilege and the honour to work with, you know who you are. If not, check the film credits. A special extra mention to Giulio Maria Piantadosi (the time is coming soon), Marcus Albrecht (your generosity is unmatched), Hannah Curtis (for all the good times) and Francesca Duranti (I am in awe of you).

All my gratitude to the United Kingdom for being the right place for me these last nine years. To all the queerlings who have challenged my preconceptions, to all the queerlings who have moved me, to all the queerlings who have shown me a different way. To Jill Hurst – what can I say? It's still our party and we're still on our way to something amazing, somewhere. To the three men whom I fell so desperately in love with once upon a time, for showing me – however unintentionally – that it can happen. To my Exeter family, especially Liz hom (sister queerling), Tam-tam (you!), wuj Tomek (my best straight man), Gigi (the revelation of 2007), Pirate Luke (the lesbian hetero) and Lisa La Frange (the revelation of 2008). You make everyday feel like a hom'agay.

More thankfulness goes to Carlota Bérard for giving me such important recommendations in the last few weeks. To Professor Bill Watson (William Charles) for getting me hooked on Anthropology from the start. To Doctor Saër Maty Bâ for your time, your drive and your perspective.

This thesis could not be dedicated to anyone in particular, it is to all of you who are real, who mean it, who resist, who stand up to be counted but challenge the authority of the person counting.

To what makes it all worth while.

Table of Contents

PROLOGUE	p6
CHAPTER I	BEYOND GENDER PROPAGANDA – from queer to Queer
<i>A study of queer history and the emergence of transgender/transsexual politics in contemporary Bologna, Italy (2004-2005)</i>	p15
1. <u>Theoretical background</u>	
• Beyond gender (propaganda) – an introduction	p17
• What is queer?	P20
• So when did gay replace queer?	P21
• So when did queer separate itself from gay?	p25
• What is/was the norm?	p27
• What is performativity?	p28
• Towards a post-gender reality	p29
• Reservations	p31
• Why documentary? Issues and debates	p34
2. <u>Film project: Tribes of the Queer</u>	p37
• DOCUmenteur	p41
• The illegal body	p42
• Body in transit	p42
• Enculturing the body	p45
• (City)body	p46
• Credits and finishing touches	p47
• Where are the F2M?	p53
3. <u>Conclusion</u>	p53
4. <u>Appendix</u>	p55
5. <u>Bibliography</u>	p56
6. <u>DVD copy of Tribes of the Queer</u>	p74
CHAPTER II	QUEER THEORY IN THE FIELD OF LEARNING DIFFERENCES AND DISABILITIES
<i>'Curative education': alternative psychology, pedagogy and a new grasp on human nature</i>	p75
1. <u>Theoretical background</u>	
• An introduction	p76
• A broader queer	p77
• Interlude	p80
• Normal and abnormal	p81
• Discursive powers of exclusion and stigmatisation	p81
• Anthroposophy	p84
• 'Curative education'	p84
• Mainstream: I'm not so dumb	p87
• We are normal. We have a right to be here	p88
• Understanding	p90

2. <u>Film project: AS IF!</u>	
• Pre-production: context	p93
• Home Anthropology and Shared Anthropology	p94
• Voices of narration	p98
• AS IF! Film structure	p100
• Presenting the film subject	p102
• Into the image	p103
• Point of tension	p106
• Hey, I only want the same as anyone	p108
• Hang around with me, I'm good company	p108
• Part III or the importance of being there	p109
• I am the camera, pleased to meet you	p111
• More talking heads	p111
• <i>Idioterne, Les Maîtres Fous, AS IF!</i>	p113
• Questionable lengths	p117
3. <u>Conclusion</u>	p117
4. <u>Bibliography</u>	p119
5. <u>DVD copy of AS IF!</u>	p126

CHAPTER III QUANTUM PHYSICS AND EXPERIMENTAL ART: BACK TO THE PRE-VERBAL AND INTO THE NON-VERBAL

A cross-artistic collaboration on the topic of quantum physics and its relevance to the human body p127

1. <u>Theoretical background</u>	
• Introduction	p128
• Mind and matter: the coupling of independent individuals?	p132
• Presence: a bodily matter	p136
• Is this dance or is this acting?	p138
2. <u>Film project: In Visibilities</u>	
• Pre-production	p140
• Production – Collaboration: different inputs for a richer collaboration	p143
• Film analysis – New material, new process?	p145
• We are born naked. The rest is drag	p147
• Reading in between the lines	p148
• A film and its parts	p150
• The credits	p155
• Settlements: beyond the urban/rural binary	p156
• A note on music	p157
3. <u>Conclusion</u>	p158
4. <u>Bibliography</u>	p159
5. <u>DVD copy of In Visibilities</u>	p168

EPILOGUE p169

