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Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression

Coming from the insularity and prejudices of England [. . .] she [Madge Garland] also found something as elusive and enduring as this aesthetic awakening: an instinct for the possibilities of friendship and an understanding of the world as her home. She called it “freedom of thought.”

Lisa Cohen, *For All We Know* (2012)

Introduction

Our ability to use words as we see fit is perhaps the primary measure of our intellectual freedom. Otherwise, we would live in a dream world, largely unexpressed. We form hierarchical classifications of value, create laws by which we function as societies, interpret law and custom, and make decisions that in turn are justified by ethical and moral understandings through words. This essay discusses words and their changing meanings over time as they have referred to sexual orientation and gender expression, and how language generally engages intellectual freedom. How humans have designated meaning by symbols and signs is one of the enduring objects of study. Words conceal as well as reveal meaning too. Minority members invent local *patois* understood only by initiates so that they may communicate with one another without being understood by members of the usually oppressive majority. Sometimes members of minorities also reclaim pejorative terms of oppression by which they own their own socially-constructed identities (Grahn, Smitherman). Such words and phrases become objects of study in the university where the power relations unleashed by words are deconstructed and refashioned into theory. Most importantly, words and their expressive power mutate with poetic license in verse, history, and legend, whether in

print or in performance. As Virginia Woolf declared, words “. . . hate being useful; they hate making money; they hate being lectured about in public. In short, they hate anything that stamps them with one meaning or confines them to one attitude, for it is their nature to change.” (Woolf, 2011, 627) The words associated with sex, sensuality, and gender are among the most mutable, socially charged, and misunderstood of any subset in English. This entry therefore employs many historical examples to illustrate change.

Consider camp usages. While a portion of the educated general public may recognize camp’s origins in the gay community, most of the public probably doesn’t. In addition to Sontag’s seemingly exhaustive notes on sophisticated uses of camp (Sontag, 1964), one may add the much more basic function of discretion, since in addition to its humorous elements, camp provides safety for homosexuals and comfort for oblivious heterosexuals nearby. The use of verbal innuendo or intonation (indirect) or by using “another mother tongue,” for example, by referring to other gay or lesbian people in the room as “family,” or using “festive,” as we did in the fifties and sixties, as a synonym for “gay,” lesbian and gay people historically employed camp usages to avoid being “obvious” homosexuals in conversation. This codification has been habitually referred to in the LGBT community as “discretion” (Cohen, 2012, 329-30). If it is true, as Halperin (2013) suggests, that the greater part of gay identity is in fact cultural association, sensitivities, and humor, then sex eventually assumes a secondary role in gay identity, whether the general public recognizes that fact or not. It is the confusion of sex with the rest of gay life that creates many of the misunderstandings about the import of LGBT issues and identity.

There are performative elements of gay identity that demand intellectual freedom. With greater social acceptance of homosexuality since the AIDS crisis, for example, public performance has provided a creative venue for individuals to negotiate and express their sexual

identity. Bell describes the career arcs of fashion designers John Galliano (b. 1960) and Alexander McQueen (1969-2010), two innovators of the runway show as performance art who express not only sexual (bondage, S&M) but political and autobiographical (cf. “The Widow of Culloden”) themes in their work. One important aspect of their creations has been their own appearances and costumes at the end of the show, Galliano usually as outrageously theme-styled as his models, McQueen in work clothes, outwardly eschewing the queenly celebrity persona. Thus the artist as well as his message is subject to invention, masquerade, interpretation, and such extravaganzas may well be the last gasp of the playfulness of camp in a world of increasingly flat-lined and relentless entertainment (Bell). Such aspects of mass entertainment may in fact be less controversial than more private aspects of gay identity, such as displays of affection in public spaces that would not raise an eyebrow if the individuals were straight.

Throughout this essay, a distinction is made between sex, the reproductive physical attributes with which one is born, and gender, societal expectations of behavior or roles associated with sex. As much as sex and gender have been used interchangeably in recent years (Butler 1990), the polarities of masculinity and femininity remain entrenched in popular consciousness, and some distinction between the terms “sex” and “gender” is as necessary as ever. Intellectual freedom with respect to sexual orientation and gender expression can be usefully discussed in terms of self-determination of sexual identity and gender behavior, access to information, and censorship of information. Associated with these intellectual, spiritual, and expressive dimensions, political engagement and ethical considerations also have an impact on aspects of thought and expression.

Self-Determination: Nomenclature and Dimensions of Identity

Intellectual freedom forms the very core of self-imagining, but it also attends various forms of self-expression in the public sphere. Those whose behaviors and preferences conform to expectations of conventional behavior experience their own conflicts with authority in the course of the life cycle, but those who are “obviously” different in any significant respect – sexuality, race, sex, degree of masculinity/femininity in a given environment—usually feel initially compelled to adapt by either self-segregating with others who appear to be similar, or adjusting their behavior in such a way that they *seem* to exhibit majority characteristics, hence the “closet” (Sedgwick, 1990). While it is true that racial identity is more immediately obvious than one’s sexual orientation, gay and lesbian individuals are not invisible, and are frequently the target of bullying even before they reach puberty. Historically, the social penalties for sexual minorities have included death, criminal incarceration, banishment, and social exclusion. In some cultures, penalties are still severe (Crompton, 2003; Fishman, 1998; Cooper, 1998; Eskridge, 2008; Leavitt, 2006; West 1972, esp. 37-39). As the collective experiences of all minorities attest, however, the moral or spiritual cost of “passing” in the majority culture can be high. Whatever forms of intimidation an individual faces—burning at the stake, murder, brutal beatings, bullying, verbal slurs, shunning, disowning by family, friends, and community, or discrimination in the law or at the workplace—to enjoy the full entitlement to life as defined by that nebulous phrase “pursuit of happiness” in *The Declaration of Independence*, at a minimum, and the entitlement to love proffered to every human being by *The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* at a maximum, those threats must be removed. In terms of the LGBT climate in the United States, the community is comprised of people who have experienced or continue to experience varying degrees of liberation and oppression, both from without and within (e.g., internalized homophobia), and thus, for all the media attention to *the* LGBT community,

especially in television and films, there are in fact multiple LGBT realities based on demographics, experience, and individual responses to life factors.

A Historical Sketch of Politics Surrounding LGBT Nomenclature

In the political and social advancement of sexual dissidents over the past fifty years or so, one must ask whether freedom of expression and the growth of the LGBT community, represented by the exhaustive inclusiveness of its constantly expanding acronym, have in fact clarified the personhood of the individuals it represents beyond their sexual preferences or biological history. A “complete” typology of sexual variance, one greatly expanded since about 1970, has evolved (Greenblatt 2011, 5-6). For the purposes of this essay, the explicit terms *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, *transsexual*, *transgender*, *queer* and the collective term *LGBT* are used depending on context, although many writers prefer the continually expanding inclusive acronym (e.g., *LGBTTIQQA*) which, while thorough and explicit, usually adds precision at the point where individual elements of sexual identity are being defined, defended, or claimed.

LGBT here refers collectively to those not exclusively committed to heteronormative modes of being, namely: gay men or homosexual males, lesbians or female homosexuals, bisexuals, those not attracted exclusively to the opposite sex, transgender people, those whose “gender behavior, expression, or identity does not conform to the sex they were assigned at birth” (Greenblatt 2011, 6), transsexuals, those who are transitioning or have transitioned from their birth sexual identity, and intersex individuals who are born with biological sexual anomalies. *Queer*, a formerly pejorative broad term used to refer to any “non-heterosexual-identified person or act” is also used in several contexts (Greenblatt 2011, 6). *Questioning individuals* refer to those engaged in an exploration of their sexual identity, orientation, or form

of gender expression, and the *allies* of all or some of the above people are included under the acronym “A” although none of these latter categories are the primary focus of this discussion. It should be noted also that “T” has been used to stand for *inquiring*; and that “A” is also used for *asexual*, those individuals who claim antipathy to sex.

Given the desire for acceptance by at least a part of the LGBT community, does the perpetuation of an awkwardly elaborate form of labeling also limit how humans define their own expressive possibilities or simply make the assignment of gender roles less problematic? Or both? One of the informal tenets of LGBT etiquette is not to assume that anyone has a particular identity until that person willingly discloses it. A male who has undergone hormone therapy and wears cosmetics, for example, but has not fully transitioned may prefer to be referred to by masculine pronouns until his transformation is complete, but that is not a given. Perhaps labels do serve an educational purpose for the uninitiated, but the education may come at the point where a label is misapplied. While this opportunity to explain his identity may broaden his social freedom, it may in fact limit his own conception of his own or other gendered possibilities. At the very least, we have categorical preferences not accounted for by the oppressive binary implicit in heterosexuality.

A typology of sexual difference certainly allows for less ambiguity in purely sexual terms, but fails to address the question of why choosing any sexual category, publicly or not, should be a desirable end of the search for not only sexual, but human, identity, especially given the findings of the various Kinsey reports on the ubiquity of same-sex experience. Where is the person behind the label, and do the labels offer more than a means of meeting the exigencies of political correctness or of fending off unwanted sexual attentions? The question in all minority struggles may ultimately be at what price social equality is forged and what limits social equality

places on how individuals imagine themselves. Hence, the ever-expanding acronym reduces the identity of the person to a sexual function or gender identification, as if personhood consisted of little else (Ghaziani 2011, 117-120). To be fair, however, in many historical contexts that is exactly how the law and society treated people whose sexual identity was unmasked.

What people are called, as Michel Foucault's brilliant historical analysis demonstrates, and how they refer to themselves, are both different demonstrations of power (1990). Far from being "the love that dare not speak its name," homosexuality and its variants at times seem like "the love that won't shut up" (Willis 2012). Foucault remarks that a prominent characteristic of modern societies is not so much that they "consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it ad infinitum, while exploiting it as the 'secret'" (1990, 35). Foucault views sexuality as a locus of power exploited by the state, the professions, and society. According to him, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, far from repressing sexuality, denatured it through excessive discourses on sex:

First, there was medicine, via the "nervous disorders"; next, psychiatry, when it set out to discover the etiology of mental illnesses, focusing its gaze first on "excess," then onanism, then frustration, then "frauds against procreation", but especially when it annexed the whole of sexual perversions as its own province; criminal justice, too which had long been concerned with sexuality, particularly in the form of "heinous crimes and crimes against nature" [. . .] and lastly all those social controls, which screened the sexuality of couples, parents and children, dangerous and endangered adolescents [. . .] intensifying people's awareness of it as a constant danger, and this in turn created a further incentive to talk about it. (1990, 30-31)

Foucault demonstrates how, by appropriating the naming and discussion of sexual variants, medical practitioners specializing in sexual disorders stigmatized homosexuality as sexual "deviance." Marcel Proust's father, for example, was a doctor specializing in routine sexual maladies, and that fact may explain why so much attention was paid to young Marcel's

“chronic” masturbation, a trait which would be considered normal today (White, 20). The medical authority by which sexual behaviors were named and classified, whether they were sanctioned or condemned by the state, was eventually assumed by psychiatric practitioners who, ironically, were wedded to the idea of homosexuality as a disease until the late twentieth century. This is where the “scientific” paradigm had led them (Dreischer and Merlino 2007).

The principle of intellectual freedom ultimately suggests that individuals be allowed to describe themselves by whatever term they choose. Such labeling practices as those outlined above do not serve the purposes of government bureaucracy and, in particular, the antiquated classification schemes of the U. S. Census. Recognition of the inadequacy of the categories of race and sex has long been acknowledged by the scholarly community, and limited changes in the past two censuses have not helped. (See also Gates and Ost 2004, who devised a method for estimating the gay and lesbian population in spite of the government’s failure to collect such information). Frank Kameny (1925-2011), the United States astronomer fired for his sexual orientation during the 1949-1953 McCarthy “lavender scare” purge of the federal government (Johnson 2004), frequently reminded his audiences that government consists of *we the people* rather than just the office-holders the people elect. Categories must accommodate people, not people, categories.

The “contested terrain” of LGBT identity since the 1990s has made frictionless discussion of non-heterosexual sex, sexual identity, and expression difficult and some would say, undesirable in the LGBT community, at least within the academy (Lovaas, Elia, and Yep 2006; Berlant and Warner 1995; Morland and Willox 2005; Warner 2012). Gore Vidal, for example, became somewhat of a pariah in the gay community for rejecting the label “gay,” since he did not believe in gay identity, only homosexual acts. His refusal to embrace the stereotyped gay

identities such as the “Castro Street clone” of the 1970s—mustachioed, muscular macho-acting men in regulation tight faded jeans, T shirt or flannel plaid, and Ray Ban aviator glasses—as anything but sexual play-acting, spoke to a more *intellectual* approach to freedom than could be afforded by the sexual abandon of the bath houses and raunchy bars of the pre-AIDS sexual revolution, his own fictional contribution to which, *Myra Breckinridge* (1970), anticipated the trans movement *avant la lettre*. His rejection of the gay party line stung all the more since he was a pioneer of the modern homosexual novel, and had sacrificed critical acceptance of his work by publishing just as the McCarthy era began (Vidal 1948; 1995; and 1999).

Other reasons for the mercurial nature of the LGBT intellectual terrain are complex, but can be explained at the most basic level by individual differences and by the fact that many pioneer gay organizations such as the Gay Task Force of the American Library Association (ALA)¹ had an ‘open-door policy’ for anyone who wanted to attend its meetings, including “hundreds of gay men and lesbians across the United States who [otherwise] wouldn’t dream, of being involved with professional meetings . . . except perhaps to demonstrate against them” (Gittings 1998, 87). Barbara Gittings (1932-2007), long-time leader of the ALA Gay Task Force during its formative years, used the term *gay* to refer to anyone who wanted to join the Task Force, including lesbians (Gittings, quoted in Carmichael 1998, n4). The term also included those, such as bisexuals and transsexuals, whose sexual identities were less comfortably accommodated, if at all, by other existing organizations at the time they became allied with gay/lesbian groups. While there have been complaints of racial and ethnic discrimination by the greater LGBT movement, it is fair to say that individuals of many sorts gradually gained a voice

¹ Recognized as the first gay professional group in the world, the ALA LGBT Round Table was originally formed under the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association in 1970 as the Gay Task Force, and has changed its name periodically as its membership has expanded and the LGBT community has evolved.

in the relatively non-threatening environment of groups such as the ALA Gay Task Force in the early days of sexual liberation. The common ground of all groups within the gay community lay in the articulation of non-normative sexual identity and expression.

The national gay movement of the 1960s and 1970s followed in the wake of the civil rights and second wave feminist movements. Its renegade status made its precise nature more open and fluid within the (heterosexual) sexual revolution already in progress (see, for example, Chesser (1940), which over its successive editions dropped “for Every Married Adult” in its subtitle; Friedan (1963); and *The Sexual Revolution* (1972) that gave some idea of the wider dimension of sexual concerns of gay and straight people at that time). Separatist groups provided asylum and guarantees of exclusivity, anonymity, and safety, especially for lesbians and other women whose experience with men had been physically or emotionally violent (Thistlethwaite 1998). Many aspects of formal sociological analysis of countercultural social movements have not been fully developed, but it is generally understood that the early gay movement and its academic correlate, Lesbian and Gay Studies², gradually expanded to include other aspects of sexuality. The AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, however, and particularly the militant protests of the ACT UP and Queer Nation movements in response to government indifference to the disease at the federal, state, and local level led to a more aggressive critique of sexual convention and incorporated various elements of postmodern theory into a critique of heteronormativity under the academic rubric of “Queer Studies.”

The theoretical concerns of Queer Studies were those of the postmodern era: post-colonialism, interdisciplinarity, deconstructivism, and globalism, what Lyotard calls “incredulity

² The movement achieved academic respectability as an independent entity with the publication of *The Journal of Homosexuality* in 1976, but had existed until that time on the periphery of criminological, psychological, sexological, and medical practice. (See Dynes 1987)

towards metanarratives”—grand historical accounts that treated the rulers, military leaders, and policies of the white western world to the exclusion of women, people of color, lower classes, and of course, sexual minorities (1984, xxiv). While as an academic project, queer theory, like postmodernism generally, has provided insight and—why not?—playfulness into humanist analysis (Eagleton 2003), at its extreme end (as, for example, in interpreting Caravaggio’s “The Sacrifice of Isaac” as a symbolic representation of father/son rape (Hammill, cited in Warnke 2007, 101) its value has been questioned. At least according to such satirical depictions as *The Lecturer’s Tale* (2001) by James Hynes, extremes of queer theory and political correctness have run their course, and the excesses of the modern academy, particularly the threat to academic freedom, make it deservedly ripe for a *Götterdämmerung*, one that seems to have already begun in the gutting of the humanities and the growing proportion of non-tenured faculty and administrative positions (Ginsberg, 2011). Without gay and lesbian studies or queer theory, however, the LGBT community might never have gained respectable academic footholds in the university, and thus, the opportunity to educate upcoming generations about LGBT issues as human issues.

Queer Theory set itself up in generational opposition to Lesbian and Gay Studies, which came to be associated negatively with the post-Victorian modernist project of the first half of the twentieth century and with quantitative research dominated by gay white males, with insufficient attention to qualitative aspects of research and feminist, racial, and class concerns generally. But Queer Studies has also been accused of lack of diversity (Lovaas, Elia, and Yep, 2006; Warner, 2012). It is not the purpose of the present essay to judge the fairness of that appraisal or to dwell on divisions within the LGBT community except insofar as they illuminate the basic concerns of intellectual freedom *vis-à-vis* the greater society, but it is perhaps worth noting that the promise

of LGBT novels, as exemplified by the early twentieth century canon, e.g. “the modernist canon well stocked with homosexuals [. . .] Proust, Mann, Gide, Genet, Forster, Woolf, Stein, Langston Hughes, Djuna Barnes, and Henry James [. . .] Vidal, Isherwood, Baldwin, and Capote” (Glazek, 2013, 25) has not been fulfilled by the return to literary realism in the novels of Michael Cunningham, Alan Hollinghurst, and Cól m T ib n. The creative experimentation of Edmund White’s ambitious but commercially unsuccessful *Nocturnes for the King of Naples* (1978), according to Glazek (25), has been short-circuited by the author’s shift from experimental fiction to the lightly fictionalized memoir and popular literary criticism; he has “graduated from the desperation of the closet to the glamour of life as a gay high society tag-along.” Thus, as with other groups, the avant-garde of the gay world is pressured to mainstream for the popular market. Success, then, in terms of societal acceptance, can itself be an impediment to intellectual freedom.

LGBT issues can’t be easily extricated from issues of race and sex without considerable loss of intellectual integrity. Since at least the eighteenth century due to the slave trade and its after effects, race has led all other minority concerns, from which sex and sexual orientation have gained both momentum and moral force. Sex and gender, however, are more universal concerns: Pharr was the first observer to explicitly tie homophobia to sexism (1988), and one only has to consider the relative invisibility of lesbians in comparison to gay men to perceive how sexism has worked its way through the LGBT community from McCarthyite purges to the AIDS crisis, and not always to male advantage. Punishments, for example, are not always dealt out equally for gay men and lesbians. Robbins’ (1994) study of the purge of gay Library of Congress employees in 1950 found that only men were fired for homosexuality; although statistically it is almost certain that there were more lesbians than gays in the profession. No female employees

were fired. Just as female experience was at that time discounted relative to that of men, so lesbians were considered less of a security risk—less susceptible to blackmail and exposure-- than gay men. Moreover, due to the prevalence of the widely accepted phenomenon of women living together in “Boston marriages” to save living expenses, female companionate relationships were less suspect than male ones (The History Project). Thus, the gender binary is active especially in the LGBT community, and women are subject the same disadvantages that they experience elsewhere. Lesbian caretakers of men with AIDS emerged early in the 1980s, and the experience for women led in some cases to burn out and desertion of the ALA’s Gay Task Force for the Feminist Task Force.

The question of what kinds of identities the LGBT community includes is thus a very complex question because of the differences between the individuals, and the perceptions about those individuals, that constitute it. Whether one believes that there is a quality of being that characterizes all gay and (or) lesbian people—the so-called *essentialist* position—or, like Gore Vidal, one views one’s same-sex sexual activity as merely one feature of one’s identity, depends on all of the factors that have contributed to that individual’s life: socio-economic, cultural, generational, educational, and the accidents of individual fortune. The kinds of pressures these identities exert in turn on society will vary according to time, place, and circumstance, and determine their reception. Hyne’s mysterious Trans (transsexual or transgender) English instructor at the center of *The Lecturer’s Tale* may be the very intellectual force who drives the curriculum of the modern university, or the intellectual weight of postmodern identity politics may drive the university to collapse and revert to vocational schools where tenure is only a distant memory. Scenarios of intellectual freedom for LGBT people have been and will be as

kaleidoscopic as their individual names, and we may therefore expect that the vocabulary used to identify them within and without that community will coalesce and expand with time.

Bending Gender Nomenclature

As discussed in the previous section, homosexuality needs “a more generous vocabulary [. . .] than is provided by the dichotomy of ‘freely chosen’ on the one hand and ‘fated’ or ‘determined’ on the other,” (Card, quoted in Wilkerson 2009, 97). In a sense, gay and lesbian experience reflects the tension found in heterosexual culture between the duality of “rigid aspects of the self like sexuality that seem determined and aspects of the self that seem freely chosen” (Wilkerson 2009, 97). Historically, these tensions have been addressed, or ignored, by religion and the law. The gay and lesbian communities have evolved in spite of the dogged opposition of some churches, synagogues, mosques and councils of government, and its success speaks to its ability—some might even say, genius—for communications, especially through film and television as well as in traditional print media formats (see Streitmatter 1995; Meeker 2006). Expressions of identity and sexuality in the public forums of the parade, the concert, the news, and the stage, and the ubiquitous camp aside in television and film, have ensured progress since the 1960s because of, as well as in spite of, adversity. Much the same may be said to apply of the Trans community.

It seems difficult to remember a time when sexual orientation was not a central political issue, and it may be even harder to remember a time when the physical possibility of sex reassignment surgery was as rare as a successful heart transplant—perhaps more rare. The exemplar for decades was Christine Jorgensen, (1926-1989), although Wikipedia’s article on Jorgensen reminds readers that German doctors had performed successful sex reassignment

surgery by 1930, and two of the residents of the Magnus Hirschfeld Institute in Berlin were transsexuals. The relationship of sex reassignment surgery to sexual orientation is complex and likewise the issues faced by transsexuals can be analogized with those of homosexuals only with difficulty. Their commonality lies in their position as objects of persecution due to their sexual difference. Bisexuality is also much more complex a phenomenon than is commonly depicted as it encompasses not only those who are genuinely attracted to both sexes, but those who have had sexual experiences with both sexes and, while preferring one sex over another, do not exclude the possibility of being attracted to their secondary preference later (Bogle 2012). For some individuals, such attractions may be seamless or fluid.

As Talbot notes , “transgenderism has replaced homosexuality as the new civil rights frontier, and Trans activists have become vocal and organized” (2013, 59). The term transgender, however, is an umbrella category that includes the full range of individuals who resist gender categories, e.g., those who only cross dress or wear makeup or take hormones or “styling their appearance in gender-confounding ways but abstaining from medical procedures” (2013, 62). Yet gender dysphoria, the sense of being in the wrong biological body, is experienced by only one out of every 10,000 for males and females, and “long term studies of children with gender dysphoria have found that only fifteen per cent continue to have this feeling as adolescents and adults” (65), so parents and counselors are waiting longer to resort to radical surgery, and this is true for intersex individuals as well. The progressive idea is to allow individuals the maximum amount of autonomy in determining their sexual identity, and to resist rushing into irremediable surgical procedures. For a complementary perspective, see Padawer 2012.

Yet while a degree of permissiveness with gender bending is generally acceptable to the general public—it has certainly not hurt the popularity of a rock star like David Bowie—Americans seem hard-wired to masculinity and femininity, whether they are gay or straight. “Metrosexualism,” urban sexual sophistication (straight-but-not-narrow), and a loosening of certain symbolic gender rigidities such as the use of cosmetics for males, body building for women, or indifference towards sexual orientation in the heterosexual population, has received a certain amount of attention in the press. There remains resistance to the idea of a sexual continuum among males, however, and this may be the personal limit of intellectual freedom for some individuals. Although research has shown that both straight and gay males are aroused by gay and straight pornography, attachment to the gender binary so far as identity is concerned is adamant. Tye posits that “. . . the myth of the straight male is integral to our culture’s conceptualization of masculinity. Acknowledging the truth is too threatening—both for men and women. Furthermore, keeping the myth alive is essential to social conservatives’ goal of keeping gender and sexuality in check. This is nothing if not a power issue” (2008, 83)

Gender fluidity receives lip service from the educated public, yet men who play female roles in a dramatic production, for example, may resist the idea that it is part of their identity or something more indicative than role play. In the creative realm, it is all very well to insist as Virginia Woolf did, that, “It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be womanly or man-womanly” (Woolf, 1991, 108), but workaday androgyny plays knowingly with the appearances of masculinity and femininity, so that even as we defy the shallowness of gender roles, we are held captive by them, and nowhere more so than on the surfaces of sexual attraction. Medical/psychological publications of the 1930s, especially the two-volume *Sex Variants*, linked homosexuality with cross-gender identification and were responsible for

“perpetuating a clear distinction between masculine and feminine roles” (Minton 1986, 1). These studies succeeded all too well in their aims, for as Ross (2012, 52) noted in his recent review of gay culture, “A Web site devoted to culling obnoxious messages from gay hookup sites included the following: ‘Don’t be gay,’ ‘No fats or fems,’ ‘If you have a broken wrist, keep movin.’ Fleeing stereotypes, gay men too often fall into a deeper conformity—the rigid choreography of the average male.” Such notices don’t speak well for the gender tolerance of these individuals. Much as the gay community may deplore the stereotypes of butch and nelly, Academy Awards go to high camp Trans *Kinky Boots* and hunky queer cowboys in brokeback marriages (Handley, Butler, K). The reality is usually more ambiguous, however.

The importance of the Trans movement is that it has expanded the ways that we think about gender and the words we use to describe gendered experience, although it may also be presumed to have posed a challenge to some aspects of traditional gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities. It is the assumption of this essay that lesbian, gay and bisexual identities may be spoken of separately, i.e., that many if not most gays, lesbians, and bisexuals do not experience gender dysphoria or the sense of being in the wrong body. Nevertheless, the Trans movement has made room for people within the LGBT community who have only partially transitioned, and mandated a customary respect for individual choices with regard to choice of pronoun, appearance, and behavior

Nomenclature and Censorship

Homosexuality and its attendant list of sexual crimes was reduced to an act rather than a feeling (e.g., *love*) well into the twentieth century, and the various acts were euphemized into Latin (*fellatio*) lest the epidemic be spread by use of the vernacular. Over time, it became less

and less mentionable in polite society. The last European public burning for a homosexual, a sodomy case concerning a priest who had also stabbed his victim, occurred in France in 1784. By 1791, France had become the first western country to decriminalize homosexuality under the *Code Pénal de la Révolution*, and became the twentieth century publishing capital for erotic books of all stripes, whatever their literary value (Crompton 2003, 450, 524-528; Kearney 2007). But, in America, literary depictions of homosexuals in mainstream literature were rare in the nineteenth century. They were usually secondary characters, as was the hustler Harry Bolton in Herman Melville's *Redburn* (1849). The Comstock Act of 1873 made the distribution of pornography through the mails illegal and expanded the powers of the Postmaster General. At various times throughout the twentieth century, the subject of homosexuality in a non-medical context was enough to bring a book to court, as was the case with *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall in 1929. In *People vs. Friede* (1955), the American publishers of Hall's novel were found guilty under the New York obscenity statute as it extolled a "female invert" and "unnatural and depraved relationships" in an idealized fashion (Green, 355). During the McCarthy era, affinities with either homosexuals or interracial activities were often conflated with Communism (Johnson). Thus over the course of the nineteenth century, much as Foucault has noted, literary discussion of homosexuality was pushed to the background and the law appropriated proper determination of the terms of discussion through censorship. This in turn affected the ways in which gay and lesbian people thought about the acceptability of their behavior, and molded the codes of etiquette by which homoexuality could (not) be discussed.

The most basic form of suppression after bodily harm and death is censorship. If information about identity and the words that describe and explore it are sequestered or destroyed, the individual can receive no affirmation. If untruths become orthodoxy, lies are

codified. When Barbara Gittings, as a library aide, searched for information on same-sex attraction in her college library, she encountered the full panoply of psychiatric studies that viewed homosexuality as a disease. As an early lesbian activist and editor of the East Coast edition of the Daughters of Bilitis journal, *The Ladder*, she made both psychiatry and librarianship the focus for her activist energies. She promoted positive gay and lesbian literature, developed a gay bibliography that became the first of its kind for library uses, joined a group of founding members of the National Gay Task Force, stormed the 1972 annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in order to protest the disease classification of homosexuality in the American Psychological Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, and "combated the lies in libraries" (Gittings, 1979, 1998; Drescher and Merlino, 2007). Thus, library history provides one of the earliest and richest examples of how misinformation and mislabeling work to the disadvantage of sexual minorities, and how intellectual freedom changes the climate in which oppression operates. LGBT Round Table history is a refreshing founding counter-narrative in a profession in which prudery was often mistaken for literary taste and conflated with censorship (Markun, 621).

The liberality of the Supreme Court of the 1950s and 1960s under the leadership of Justice Earl G. Warren had a positive effect on all erotic literature, whatever its orientation. D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1926) was banned in the United States until 1959; and Jean G net's *Our Lady of the Flowers* had to wait until 1964 for American publication. Meanwhile the illicit pornographic subculture flourished hand-in-hand with the more respectable gay publications, which skirted various prohibitions with regards to male frontal nudity until 1967, when advocates of sexual freedom gained a victory in *United States of America vs. Lloyd Spinar and Conrad Germain* (Sears, 2006, 517-535). Since that time, the courts have tended to employ

the vague standard of community values as a general guide. Community values are, of course, highly determined by the words used to describe them.

The internet and multiplicity of media have stymied the effectiveness of conventional monitoring of content and access to controversial materials, through filtering, for example (Schrader and Wells). However fine the distinctions between erotica and pornography, artistic expression and obscenity (Lawrence, 1953), the best censorship is probably no censorship; let readers outgrow their prurient tastes if they can, for no legislation can curb curiosity (Deacon). While LGBT books have consistently been near the top on the ALA Banned Books lists, particularly those written for youth, no one argues unopposed any more that writings by or about LGBT concerns, or expressions of such sensibilities, are by their very nature obscene. One can be sure that when The British Museum Press offers among its summer books R. B. Parkinson's *A Little Gay History: Desire and Diversity across the World* (*London Review of Books*, 18 July 2013: 33), the climate for LGBT publications has undergone a profound ontological change in the western world.

Nomenclature, Conformity, and Normalization

Conformity to social norms is one of the ways individuals acquiesce their need for attention. It indicates maturity to a certain degree, although conformity acquired negative connotations in periods such as the 1920s and 1960s when upheaval and revolt against social structures and conventions prevailed. Although the LGBT movement was born during a socially conservative era (D'Emilio, 1983), it did not flourish until a revolutionary one (Hirschman) when it acquired its reputation for flamboyant color and outrageousness (dykes on bikes, males dressed as nuns on roller skates, drag generally, hyper-masculine musculature and nudity). The

choice of gay marriage as a unifying focus for the LGBT movement may therefore seem regressive in that it conforms to a conservative social norm, but queering marriage may also be a revolutionary act in the same sense that “living in sin” with a lover was once considered a radical flouting of convention.

Same-sex attachments have been recorded throughout human history in all advanced cultures (Crompton; some notable modern historical examples are described in Malcolm; Muhlstein; Rowbotham; and White) and there is a long tradition of same-sex attachments among aboriginals, repressed by Christian colonization as part of the imperial project (Parkinson). Modern western cultures including American settler culture have no valid ontological basis for appraising or interpreting native same-sex relationships, since as settlers they are also occupiers and invaders; there can’t be rapprochement with the new-age “two spirit” culture (Rifkin, 275 *ff*).

Marriage as a legally binding act among same-sex couples was rare before the twenty-first century, and even heterosexual marriage was limited to the upper classes in England before the eighteenth century and particularly the Marriage Act of 1752 (Boswell, 1994; Callón; Stone). Although it is common today to hear marriage bruted about as a ‘God-given’ institution without any attempt to distinguish among its customary, legalistic and religious elements, Stone (1992, 3) draws attention to the fact that many eighteenth century married couples in England could not be sure if they were married or not due to the prevalence of common-law marriage and defects in the marriage laws.

Since the “decriminalization’ of homosexual acts in *Lawrence vs, Texas* in 2003, the political energies of the LGBT community have been refocused on normalization (Lithwick), although the Supreme Court ruling does not ensure immunity from entrapment on the local level (e.g., Huffman). The current political emphasis on marriage is a product of generational change

within the LGBT community, one which the conservative Right has predictably exploited as an example of LGBT exceptionalism to divert media attention from more substantive issues such as economic inequality and its corrosive social effects (Judt, 2010).

There are LGBT individuals who believe the push for gay marriage is misdirected (for example, Warner 1999, 81-148, and historian John D’Emilio, in a presentation before the ALA LGBT Round Table, Chicago, July 12, 2009). Particularly among members of the generation coming to maturity in the sixties there is no consensus about the role gay marriage will play in social acceptance for the LGBT community as “just like us,” if only because nonconformity was the byword of the sixties. As one Minnesota commentator remarked, to some observers, it seems at times as if the gay marriage movement may be “leading down the aisle to nowhere” (Burns, 8).

Naming, Labeling and Ethical Considerations

Intellectual freedom is literally, free. Freedom of the Press extends only to those who own one; if you have the money to buy the press, the freedom to print what you please extends to you. Where intellectual freedom becomes sticky is in an unequal power relation (e.g., teacher/student, political advertiser/television consumer) in which a person or organization vested with authority uses that authority to intimidate a vulnerable party. The moral or ethical concerns of those who understand non-binary sexual orientation and gender expression as a direct threat to their intellectual freedom and lifestyle, and those whose very identity is inextricably bound to that expression, test the limits of the possibilities of civil discourse in a democratic society. The fact that polarization has characterized that discourse since about 1980 (cf. Anita Bryant, “Family Values,” Reagan, the emergence of the Christian Right in politics, the

AIDS crisis) does not so much reflect the breakdown of society as it does the deafening volume of a partisan debate that is occurring *à haute voix*. For the first time, thanks to the internet and the popular media there are virtually no limits on expression. Mrs. Grundy is not dead, but even she knows that in a world where pornography is available in multiple formats to every person of whatever age with the ability to plug into the internet and pay, the argument is no longer about sex or even national security. The argument is about power, money, diminishing resources, and establishing conventions of engagement. The question then becomes, how does another's *freedom of expression* (verbal or actual) limit one's own *intellectual freedom*?

Outside of a small section of the LGBT community and perhaps philosophy and English departments in universities, the great unwashed do not understand or care about the torturous distinctions made by the intelligentsia of the queer community among shades of meaning between labels, inclusivity *et al.* To such people, whom we may refer to as the general public, individualism may have more to do with conformity and how one votes, while sexual orientation and gender expression may be fancy ways of referring to little more than the sexual activities of those people who frequent same-sex bars. Articulation and elaboration of our identities does not necessarily convert people in the non-LGBT community to a more respectful attitude. The historical problems of queer individualism, stereotyping, and problematical categorization and nomenclature may be as remote to the general public as the intricacies of mathematical reasoning in nuclear science, though they may function in a world that benefits from aspects of both worlds. You don't have to understand how a combustion engine works to operate an automobile, as the saying goes.

Especially within the context of the public-funded university, however, practical aspects of functioning in an era of identity politics and taste-group marketing become obvious. As with

problems of public expression regarding race and sex (e.g., female clergy, a mixed-race President), equitable expression for *all* citizens of the United States is threatened by the current judicial iteration of free speech (*Citizens United vs. Federal Election Committee*, 2010) since the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution forbids the government from limiting the amount of political contributions made by corporations, associations, or labor unions. The ruling means that ordinary interest groups with limited funds will have very little defense against more wealthy groups. More money means more speech. While the case may evoke the Gilded Age with its atmosphere of capitalism run amok, it has direct implications for current day citizens given that many voting Americans are influenced by news media and political advertising on television—at least the economy seems to act as if it does. This is significant in that money not only works against LGBT interests, but for them as well. For example, the most recent study of funders for LGBT issues found that of \$123 million spent for LGBT work across the United States, only \$3.8 went to the South. In North Carolina, where the Amendment One anti-gay marriage measure passed into the Constitution by 61 percent in 2011, follow up interviews with pro-amendment voters found confusion among them about what the amendment actually was about. Funders tend to believe the stereotypes about the region and consider change in the region hopeless. Media-made Dixie extends to negative stereotypes³

There is not always adequate traditional redress available to the citizen who protests. While rallies in Minnesota in 2011 reversed the governor's attempt to outlaw collective bargaining, repeated weekly "Moral Mondays" in North Carolina—incidentally a state in which unions are prohibited by law—seem to have little effect. North Carolinians have demonstrated against cuts in public education and healthcare that target the most vulnerable citizens and have

³ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stuart-campbell/no-region-left-behind-why-the-time-is-now-for-a-southern-strategy_b_3784829.html. Accessed 8/22/13.

been arrested for their trouble. Governor Pat McCrory and other lawmakers have spoken respectfully to the press about the demonstrators, but are not making any adjustments to the budget (Berman). World opinion does not count for much in Washington at present, either, so the United Nations' LGBT-rights declaration in 2011 can not necessarily be relied on to have much effect in Mayberry, let alone the rest of the world, where homosexuality is still illegal in approximately seventy-eight countries, and punishable by death in five of them (Parkinson, 23).

There are clearly ethical issues related to LGBT intellectual freedom that call for more individual responsibility than they do government action. Moshman (147-161) presents three case studies that illustrate practical ways in which to protect the academic freedom of all parties to a discussion of sexual orientation in the classroom environment. Universities are supposed to be relatively safe environments for intellectual freedom, at least according to the charter documents of the American Association of University Professors. There are clearly limits to how far thought may be translated into action, as the notorious case of Pennsylvania State University's assistant coach Jerry Sandusky on eight underage boys in the athletic complex showers illustrates. More troubling for the LGBT community and western culture generally is the ancient Greek legacy conjoining pederasty and pedagogy, by which such associations as the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), which advocates for this ancient inheritance and combats legal age limitations on non-coercive sex, exist on the edge of culturally acceptable practice (Percy). Many people in the LGBT community will not even discuss the issue because it raises the specter that has haunted their efforts to achieve mainstream status within the larger culture, namely the conflation of pedophilia with same-sex desire. In defense, people who do not share attraction to *ephebes* point to statistics that illustrate that most cases of

pedophilia occur between men and girls, but that misses an opportunity to clarify some of the questions that surround ageism and sex.

Jordan's (2012) content analysis of the treatment of homosexual themes in Christian literature – gay and straight—sheds light on the question of youth and sexuality in a refreshing way and deserves to be widely read. He begins his exegesis with discussion of G. Stanley Hall's 1904 *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* [!], whose “scientific” study of youth is nevertheless tinted by Hall's own religious convictions, unveiling an “ephebic decade” from the onset of puberty to “conversion” “rebirth” in the firmly heterosexual institution of marriage. It is a delicate and disordered period of life, subject to the dangers, temptations, and trials which religious teaching will cure. As Rifkin reads Hall,

This “best decade of life” merits “reverence” perhaps more than “anything else in the world.” In adolescence, the divine energies for change are the most active. They align the individual with divine purposes through sex. The “rich and varied orchestration” of sexual life “brings the individual into closest *rapport* with the larger life of the great Biologos [God].” Adolescent desire can alight almost anywhere and then become fixed through habit. (4)

It is not difficult to understand from this beginning point where Jordan is leading the reader in twentieth century discussions of homosexuality and religion. He provides a context through close reading of diocesan literature, texts from the homophile era of the 1950s as well as the Christian Right backlash of the 1970s and the homosexual recovery movement, for the spiritual alienation of gay (i.e., LGBT) youth. Christian thinking about youth and homosexuality led to the establishment by Troy Perry of the Metropolitan Community [LGBT] Church in 1968, now numbering 222 congregations in 37 countries (*Wikipedia*, accessed August 15, 2013). Perhaps Jordan's most poignant reading concerns John Rechy's controversial gay novel about a

Los Angeles teen-aged hustler, *City of Night* (1963), which he brilliantly interprets as a gay *Divine Comedy* “except that in this undivine comedy *Purgatorio* is undistinguishable from *Inferno* because there is no further paradise.” He describes the novel as “one of the great works of gay religion—precisely because it is a prolonged meditation on adolescence” (79). For Rechy, a Catholic author, absolution resides in “recognizing the form of another’s telling,” although the novel itself is far more than autobiography: “self-narration becomes theodicy” (80). In his concluding chapter, aptly titled “How Not to Talk about Sex in Church,” he reminds readers of the important role church rhetoric plays not only in enforcing laws and customs, but also, in spite of explicit teachings to the contrary, in providing a place and inspiration for inventing an “alternate self.” Thus, the institution of the church may ignite musical or artistic aspirations while it restrains expression of queer or non-reproductive sexuality. It comes to symbolize the investiture of meaning in life even while its self-seriousness inspires mockery. “They offer material for that curious queer mimicry known as camp, but they also and inevitably trouble tidy schemes for regulating loves” (213). Thus, spiritual ownership of sexual identity, orientation, and gender expression may provide the most durable foundation of intellectual freedom for those we now refer to as *LGBT*, whatever they are called—whether it comes in the twenty-first century church, an alternate form of enlightenment or a program of recovery, or both, or all three (Borden). Of course, spiritual freedom may also come through agnosticism.

A second very important ethical area relates back to the indispensable value of self-knowledge regarding one’s sexual orientation and sex identity. As Battaly notes, given the constraints of our categorically-inclined culture, and the assumption that sex identity is “exhausted by the concepts of male and female” (151), many people may not discover their true identity until later in life. The news archives are stuffed with examples of politicians, actors, and

other public figures who claim self-ignorance rather than hypocrisy when their sexual apostasy is revealed. The emphasis in the past thirty years on exposing children to information about LGBT issues long before adolescence represents in part an attempt to encourage self-knowledge and ownership of identity before others can exploit the LGBT individual. More importantly, self-knowledge and openness may prevent the LGBT individual from persecuting other like individuals in an attempt to conceal or distance herself from a “hidden” identity, (Battaly, Padawer).

Hidden identities raise still a third very controversial ethical dilemma that concerns the “outing” of public figures, and especially those who are assuming anti-LGBT stances or pursuing anti-LGBT policies, or have done so in the past (Mohr, Stramel, 2008). This strategy is not unique to the queer community: throughout human history, various groups have exacted justice for past persecutions. To the LGBT community, defamation or exposure can in some ways be likened to death-in-life, but in the case of particularly vulnerable individuals (for example Tyler Clementi, a student who committed suicide in 2010 after his college roommate streamed video of him having sex with a man on the internet) it can also lead to death. Outing of public figures by LGBT activists first occurred during the AIDS crisis to engage public discussion about the disease. It has become customary in modern biographical practice both for prurient and explanatory reasons. In the case of Roger Casement, the Irish hero who had exposed the inhumanity of Leopold III’s imperial regime in the Congo, the neutrality of the Irish in World War I, the Irish uprising against Britain in 1916, and Casement’s attempt to recruit Germans to the “Irish Brigade” to fight against the British in Ireland led to his conviction for treason. After the conviction, photographs of his diaries for 1903, 1910, and 1911 including evidence of his homosexuality were circulated by the government to his mainly Irish Catholic supporters.

Needless to say, the evidence undermined the case for commutation, and he was executed (Ó Síocháin).

How words and labels may be used to endanger or harm an individual have in recent years received considerable attention from advocates of the anti-bullying movement, and the LGBT community has benefitted perhaps more than other groups from the focus on the unacceptability of bullying, although it is worth reiterating that silence about the subject characterized previous generations because individual adults were free to punish bullies with impunity, and children who suffered were expected to rise above their travails, which supposedly made them stronger. In the present era, emphasis on ethical behavior seems to focus on protecting those too young, weak, or incapacitated for self-defense, but no doubt in the future a different articulation of social ethics will emerge. It is always well to question where any conventions of ethical behavior leave the interests of individual versus societal intellectual freedom, and how lines between ethical behavior and intellectual freedom are drawn.

Labeling theory has shown how even branding of an individual with a label without her knowledge can create unanticipated consequences. Talking about an unacknowledged alcoholic behind her back can produce more stereotypically alcoholic symptoms. Calling a feminine boy or a tomboyish girl a “faggot” can result in wounds to self-esteem that may take years to heal, and here a caveat is in order, for alcoholism is widely accepted as a disease, while since 1973, homosexuality has been de-stigmatized. Similarly, one may speak of a gay person passing for straight, but in no way should that experience be likened to an African American of the 1950s who passes for white, for the consequences of one who passes as straight (social consequences) and one who passed for white in the Jim Crow era (legal consequences) in no way compare. We can say, however, of a pretty young female who accompanies a (closeted or not) male celebrity

to a function that she is his “beard.” Intellectual freedom demands rigorous responsibility to words, and respect for the individuality of persons who may choose for themselves the words and ideas that most truly express their identities.

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