

political site, and "ReSituations: A detour into the throbbing heart of the mall," as well as by an array of films and videos such as Pratibha Parmar's *Khush* and *A Place of Rage*, Tony Buba's work on African-American steelworkers, and Laura Kipnis's *Marx: The video*.

There was a whole series of sessions on sexuality and queer studies with papers by Eve Sedgwick on "Queer Performativity" in which she explored the "queer" body as a site of unusable social meaning, and Cindy Patton on AIDS discourse. Rosemary Hennessy challenged the left for its silence on queer theory; she critiqued Judith Butler and others who reduce queerness to signifying play and narrative strategies, and looked to a solidly materialist queer theory which challenges the bourgeois subject, but which also comes to terms with patriarchy and capitalism. Meredith Michaels explored the possibilities reproductive technologies such as surrogacy may hold, if women can appropriate them, for assisting in the deconstruction of the heterosexual nuclear family. There were also a number of papers which dealt with sexuality in history: Chrys Ingraham on the Comstock Act of 1873, in which she spoke of middle-class interests in working-class reproduction; Michelle Barale's analysis of the rhetorical strategies of 1950s lesbian pulp novel cover art; and Barbara Epstein and Jennifer Terry, who each examined the marginalized ways in which homosexuality was constructed in the 1950s and 60s, in the popular media and in dominant psychological discourse, respectively.

There were a number of sessions on materialist literary criticism, as well as cultural studies and popular culture. Alan Wald's presentation in the session "Cultural Studies in Late Capitalism" was a very good example of the kind of exciting work that can be done in intellectual history. Arguing that cultural resistance is a good indicator of the strengths and weaknesses of emancipatory movements, Wald traced the various careers and work of a number of now half-forgotten working class, ethnic, gay and lesbian American leftist writers of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. Writers such as Howard Fast, Pietro di Donato, James T. Ferrel, Tilly Olsen, Dorothy Doyle and Josephine Herbst not only contributed to an original non-doctrinaire proletarian literature that interrogated dominant representations, but are themselves inspiring figures whose work — some of it avowedly feminist and anti-racist — recorded the excluded memories and experiences of an oppositional left culture. Wald ended his talk with a critique of contemporary cultural studies for not being sufficiently interested in the cultural history of the American left. Barbara Harlow continued the theme of resistance literature by focussing on the current Irish literary and political scene. During discussion period she also pointed to the shortcomings of British cultural studies for paying scant attention to manifestations of Irish cultural resistance and Irish anti-colonial struggle. Both Harlow and Wald emphasized that there are some counter-productive tendencies in contemporary cultural studies: namely, its emphasis on theoretical abstraction and its lack of historical rootedness and empirical research. There were also several sessions on ecological issues — in some ways the most salient indication of a true paradigm shift on the left — with papers by Alex Wilson and Andrew Ross which examined our uses of the environment in refreshingly concrete and historicized ways.

On the second day of the conference there was a

wide-ranging roundtable, "The History of Modern Feminism," which included Sheila Rowbotham, Lourdes Beneria, Joy James, Cynthia Halpern, Barbara Joseph, Rosalyn Baxandall and Harriet Fraad. The panel raised important questions, even if they could not be fully answered, about different tendencies in feminism, the impact of Third World women's movements and questions of race and ethnicity on Western feminism, the relationship of feminism to other social movements and to socialism, and the integration of different oppressions, race, gender and class, despite the traditional foregrounding of the latter on the left.

### What's Left? The New Internationalism.

The conference left us with a sense that Marxists in North America are living through a problematic historical moment that is simultaneously depressing, challenging and liberating. Many of the speakers stressed that a renewed commitment to internationalism is a crucial part of the solution. There are many problems that confront us today that cannot be addressed at the level of the nation-state, but must be articulated globally and require the active participation of socialists and progressives alike. Public health issues such as AIDS require international coordination and so must be addressed with a global strategy in mind. Women's oppression, as Sheila Rowbotham and Gayatri Spivak made clear, must also be seen within a complex structure of power, property and privilege. Women have a long history of resistance against systematic subordination, but their oppression is tied to global structures and must be perceived in international terms. Critical environmental problems such as the dangers of nuclear power and waste, acid rain, the depletion of the ozone layer and water and air pollution need to be linked by leftists with the labour movement, and it must be made clear that the export of manufacturing jobs and industries to developing countries is motivated not just by corporate desire for lower wages and higher profits, but by the wish to avoid even minimal pollution control and health and safety standards.

Finally, the basic strategy for building socialism, either in the United States or Canada, is inextricably linked with the deeper currents of the social protest movements: the struggles of trade unionists, gay and lesbian activists, peoples of colour, environmentalists, feminists, native peoples and the dispossessed. For the near future, as Manning Marable eloquently argued, the essential debate will not be between socialism and capitalism, but with the character and content of the capitalist social order. Progressives and Marxists should seek to strengthen their own counter-hegemonic movements in order to resist both the systemic racism and the new-found influence of xenophobic groupings. Such a strategy may not be "socialism" and it does have its drawbacks, rooted in "particularism" as Wallerstein pointed out, but it can provide the necessary bridge to the site from which a new socialism, which may take a form inconceivable to us now, can emerge.

*Joe Galbo is a member of the Border/Lines collective; Miriam Jones is a reproductive rights activist with the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics.*



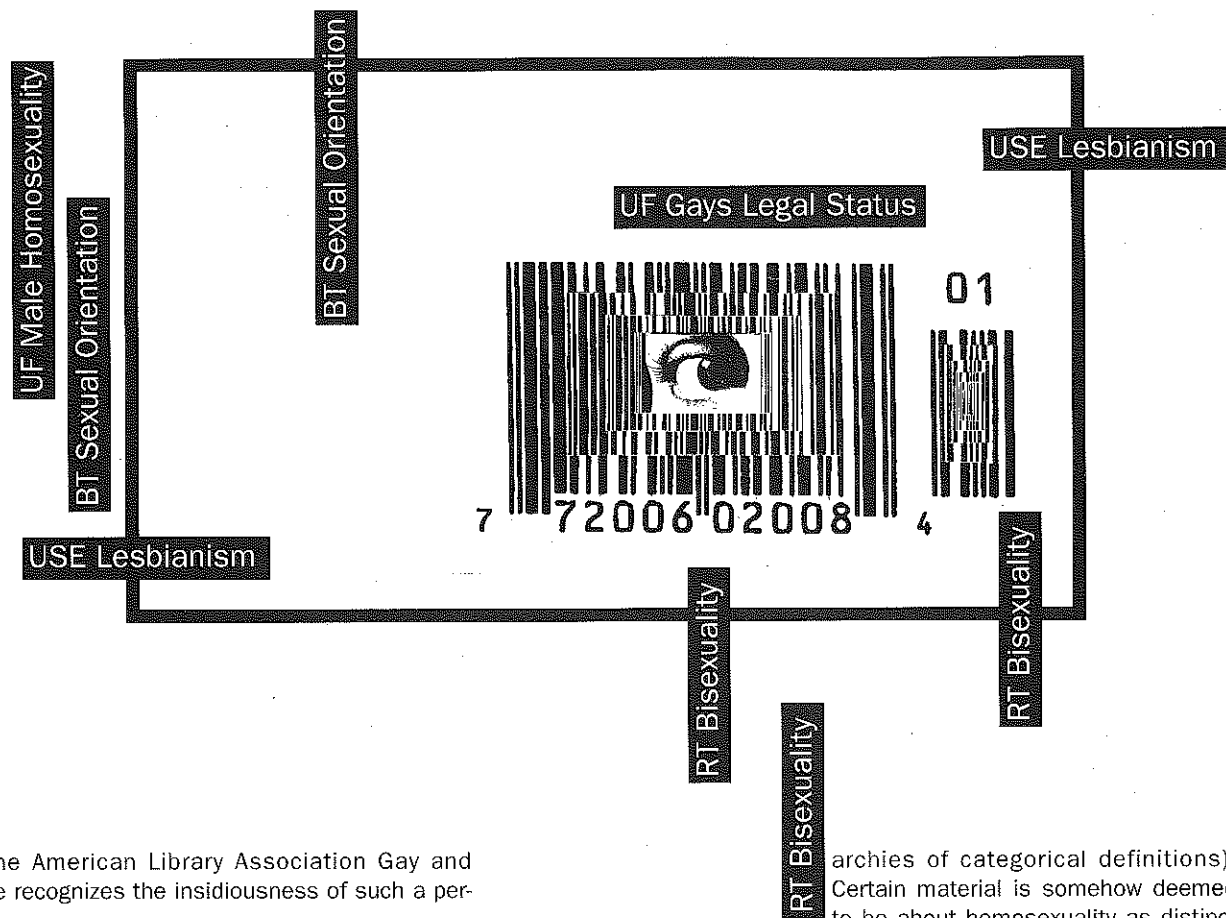
# Browsing the Apparatus: homosexuality, classification, power/knowledge

By Nicholas Packwood

"Browsing" can be a dilettante's pursuit. It can also be a tactic of resistance. It is such an act in its negotiation of the territory of regular categories by extraordinary means. In browsing we have decided to disregard the elaborate systems by which knowledge is usually presented to us. In browsing we need have no specific purpose beyond our own enjoyment. We allow ourselves the luxury of surprise. "What is this?" "Who could have imagined we might find this here?"

I was browsing recently in the Maxwell MacOdrum Library when I had a nasty surprise. Everything that MacOdrum had to say about "homosexuality" seemed to sit on the shelves between everything it had to say about sex crimes on the one hand and prostitution on the other. This is not an accidental (dis)placement.

Ours is still a society which has very specific and unflattering ideas about homosexuality. My browsing did not reveal anything to contradict these constructions. Gay men, after all, are commonly held to be notorious for selling their bodies and for tampering with children.



The founder of the American Library Association Gay and Lesbian Task Force recognizes the insidiousness of such a perspective:

**Today when I speak to gay groups and mention "the lies in the libraries," listeners know instantly what I mean. Most gays, it seems, at some point have gone to books in an effort to understand being gay or get some help in living as gay. What we found was strange to us (I'm the kind of person they're writing about but I'm not like that!) and cruelly clinical (there's nothing about love) and always bad (being this way seems grim and hopeless).**

Barbara Gittings

While this is a common concern for lesbians and gay men, little has been written to challenge the established order either politically or theoretically. Browsing library literature written from 1967 on, I discovered only four articles under the headings homosexual, gay or American Library Association Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Three of these articles concern library services and none concerns reclassification of material related to lesbians or gay men.

What browsing performed for me was more fundamental than the simple assertion that services may usefully be provided to "homosexuals" in a library environment. I found a map of power, a guide through the ordering principles by which power places ideas and experience into categories and rigidifies knowledge. Before me on the shelves were the outlines of an "order of things" where it makes sense to put sex crimes, homosexuality and prostitution together. (This order posits categories as essential in themselves and implicitly imposes hier-

archies of categorical definitions). Certain material is somehow deemed to be about homosexuality as distinct from any other subject. More fundamental still is the constitution of homosexuality as a category which may be defined and delineated. Before me on the shelves this category was made concrete.

My browsing allowed me to become aware of a site. In a closed-stack library the taxonomy of power is less visible than in an open-stack library such as the MacOdrum. This visibility is a function both of access to a place where an order is made manifest on shelves and, further, of the ability to browse through those shelves. The shelves further serve to constrain means of accessing knowledge which do not fall within this taxonomy of knowledge by the way they physically channel bodies through the stacks. With this constraint in mind, though, it may yet be possible that, in browsing, the order of the catalogue may be circumvented and the nature of this ordering by classification be brought into question.

The operation of browsing illuminates an outline of power/knowledge. The shelves of the MacOdrum library represent nothing less than an undertaking to constitute a comprehensive map of the order of knowledge and power. If we take up this map we may liberate ourselves from our dependency upon the catalogue and the librarians who serve as the gatekeepers of knowledge. This is an expedition into the logic of power. Not only in the library are the categories apparent before us, but, with care, we may move through the system by which the library illustrates in microcosm the operations of the apparatus of power/knowledge in society at large.

## homosexuality

The reality of the category of homosexuality is sustained only in a specific social constitution of parallel, oppositional and contiguous categories of gender, sex and sexuality. Outside of a specific historical and social moment there is no homosexuality, but only simple actions and desires which within a given apparatus are understood to be homosexual. MacOdrum inadvertently provides a veritable history of the formation of sexuality in the polyglot nature of material which it classifies as homosexual. Psychoanalytic material shares space with histories of Chinese courtly life and post-Stonewall Gay liberation. By some logic these materials are held to be the same. They are furthermore posited to be so "homosexual" in subject-orientation as to be categorized as homosexual and not as primarily psychological, historical or political. This may be seen as particularly important in a system where a work has to be "very homosexual" to be categorized as such. Material concerning alcoholism and homosexuality, for instance, is categorized with material concerning alcoholism not material concerning homosexuality.

Double entries of this sort enable a researcher to locate some material concerning the category of homosexuality only in subject areas outside of that category. This does not negate the posited stratification of categories, but serves to emphasize a hierarchical relation. In this sense the category of homosexuality is subordinated to other categories within the *dispositif* put forward in the MacOdrum taxonomy. This taxonomy of knowledge is socially contingent while attempting to represent itself as natural. It is hierarchical while making an appeal to common-sense. Moreover, it is a witness to its own prejudices while attempting to feign transparency.

## the Library of Congress Classification Schedule

The Classification Schedule is one of several primary guides to the taxonomy established by the Library of Congress. The Union Catalogue is a comprehensive summary of material designated with a Library of Congress number. The Library of Congress Subject Headings provide signposts by which material ranged within taxonomies may be classified and sought out. Both the Subject Headings and Union Catalogue are readily available to patrons of the MacOdrum library attempting to find specific works or material in a general area of interest. The Classification Schedule is distinct from these other guides in that it is not a guide for research, but an outline of the physical disposition of material as it appears in the stacks. It is this guide that library cataloguers deploy in situating material both within the library physically and within the logic of the Library of Congress.

## the site

The subject area of "homosexuality. lesbianism" - Library of Congress designation, HQ75 - is not only a region within a map of the logic of power, but also a place and time made physically concrete. Here, the discursive taxonomic abstraction is made articulate within a non-discursive institution. An enormous expenditure of resources is necessary for the specific organization of knowledge manifested on the fourth floor of

MacOdrum. This construction is no accident, but the result of a century of the agonizing operation of the logic of the Library of Congress and the circumstance of Carleton University's policy of acquisition in specific subject areas.

Even this is not the entirety of the site outlined by HQ75. An illustration of the moment which this space promotes could take the form of any one of dozens of encounters over my six years in the MacOdrum Library as a patron seeking out material concerning homosexuality. Rounding the corner into the HQ75 section a surprised face will look up at me and quickly down again. Within seconds one or both of us has either scuttled off or is carefully checking the other out.

## ahh! Another queer!

It is ludicrous to pretend that a patron may anonymously peruse the subject area of homosexuality as if this subject had no connection to the violence which characterizes a homosexual life. The homosexual experience is one of subordination and separation from the norm. Any association with this category is potentially incriminating and, still worse, contaminating.

The terms "incriminating" and "contaminating" are not accidental. It is possible for a researcher to ponder material concerning Ukrainian-Canadians without being assumed to be a Ukrainian-Canadian or even sympathetic to Ukrainian-Canadians. This is not the case with material concerning homosexuality. An interest in this subject-area is supposed a deviant interest. This is not coincidental with an apparatus in which homosexual desire and behaviour are first categorized and are then understood to be criminal or pathological:

**The establishment of homosexuality as a separated category goes hand in hand with its repression. On the one hand, we have the creation of a minority of "homosexuals," on the other, the transformation in the majority of the repressed homosexual elements of desire into the desire to repress. Hence sublimated homosexuality is the basis of the paranoia about homosexuality which pervades social behaviour.**

Jeffrey Weeks

A similar case must be made for the categorized material which directly brackets homosexuality. The Library of Congress marks the categories of sex crimes (HQ64) and sadism/masochism/fetishism (HQ79) as being precisely contiguous with homosexuality. Would you take your mother to HQ79? Would you like your picture in the paper next to HQ64?

Clearly these subject-areas are not value-free. The HQ75 designation concerns work which is not culturally neutral, but which is loaded with pejorative denotative and connotative significance. When made concrete in the form of books on shelves this symbolic weight is maintained and serves to constitute a dangerous space in which a patron may be seen to demonstrate a criminal or unhealthy interest.

None of this is lost on the person whose desire is pejoratively categorized in this fashion and who wishes to explore material on lesbian or gay culture. The creation of this shameful site as a reification of legal and medical categories may be seen to be of tremendous importance to the constitution of identity in



those lesbians and gay men who come seeking knowledge of the self. These seekers find themselves in the midst of an institution whose operation systematically subordinates that selfhood. Joseph Harry points out that:

**a significant minority of young gays have learned about homosexuality from books written by psychiatrists. In consequence, the teen-aged gay searching for identity with which to clothe his desires is offered one that is extremely negative. Some may give in to that identity and perceive themselves as mentally ill.**

In this context the valuation of knowledge has direct consequences for those who must seek to understand themselves within an apparatus where certain desires and acts are shameful. In making concrete this form of knowledge and power, the library has further created a space where the person seeking this understanding must risk exposure of an illicit and contagious selfhood.

## — hierarchy and subordination

Very specific and socially contingent assertions concerning sexuality and gender are collapsed in the HQ75 subject-heading of "homosexuality, lesbianism." A nineteenth-century logic is here incorporated into the taxonomy following the distinction between a male homosexual as a homosexual and a female homosexual as a lesbian. This typology is made explicit in the Subject Headings directory where for "Homosexuality, Female" the inquiring researcher is directed to "USE Lesbianism."

The assertion of a category of sexuality not only serves to valorize this category, but in its operation also legitimates the increasingly transparent associated and co-dependent categories of sex and gender. This valorization serves to concretize these categories within a taxonomy of knowledge and power and situates underlying frames of sex and gender within an all too obvious hierarchical relation. Lesbianism follows homosexuality and is subordinated within this category in precisely the fashion that topics concerning women are systematically subordinated to topics concerning men.

This hierarchical relation is regular, rigid and systematic. Its logic serves to assert certain categories of humanity, experience, being and knowledge over others. Under the heading of "Sexual behaviour and attitudes" the category of girl follows the category of boy (HQ27.3-HQ27.5). The category of men (HQ28) is followed by women (HQ29). HQ30 is a catch-all category further subordinated to the preceding categories in which the aged, the handicapped and the sick are conflated.

The category of homosexuality is systematically subordinated following the same logic. Under the subject area of "Sex instruction and sexual ethics" HQ55 is a single classification in which the aged and homosexual men are conflated. Lesbianism does not suffer the same comparison but is simply erased. This precise logic is represented again in general works concerning alcoholism where HV5138 "Alcohol and the aged" is contiguous with HV5139 "Alcohol and homosexuals." The precise logic by which these two categories are arbitrarily associated is a subject

of investigation in itself. It is sufficient for the purposes of this investigation that the Classification Schedule regularly links these categories.



## — browsing as derive and detournement

The Library of Congress Classification Schedule may be understood as a "system of relations that can be established between... elements." Multiple overlapping strata of sex and sexuality, gender and hierarchy are meticulously ordered in nothing less than an attempt to categorize all knowledge. As a representation of our society in its construction of power/knowledge the classification schedule provides an opportunity for substantial archaeological exploration. As a result of it we can move into a space at random and discover meaning in everything we stumble across.

The MacOdrum Library represents a concrete manifestation of the abstract disposition which is the taxonomy of knowledge/power articulated in the Classification Schedule. The physical site is precisely contiguous with the site of multiple *epistemes* and as we meander through the one we do so through the other. For this expedition we are either limited to the strict channels afforded us by the apparatus or we may decide to browse, to wander off the posted route.

Guy-Ernest Debord struggled with parallel restrictions in his *Memoires* of 1957 and his *Society of the Spectacle* of 1967. His "situations" may be understood as parallel to and subversive of the rigid dispositions apparent in the Schedule. Urban architectural forms yield an accurate map of modernity as does the physical institution of the library. Both models constitute maps of an underlying apparatus of rationality and feigned non-aesthetic functionalism. Both reveal a logic of individuation and restriction and of systematic limitation and exclusion.

Debord's "syntax" of society is remarkably post-structural in its acknowledgement of context and emphasis upon a reflexive discourse. With this in mind we may understand the Classification Schedule and urban geography as parallel narratives. Debord's strategy of resistance takes two forms: "the *dérive*," a drift down city streets in search of signs of attraction or repulsion, and "détournement," the theft of aesthetic artifacts from their contexts and their diversion into contexts of one's own device." Might we drift through the stacks without apparent aim and take to ourselves those treasures which luck presents us

with? Might we disregard the organization and simply learn from whatever we find? Do I need to discover myself only in HQ75 - a category of the apparatus and not of my own creation?

Debord's tactic may be understood as "browsing the city" or more fundamentally "browsing the apparatus." We do not ignore the safety promised in the signposts we are offered; we simply disregard it in favour of adventure:

**t hat was the burden assumed by those who committed themselves to a life of permanent novelty. Each day the members of the LI (Lettrist International) would walk the streets not as prisoners of wages and prices, not as employees, shoppers or tourists, but as travellers in a labyrinth revealed by their wish to find it. Each day they would case the spectacles in art and advertising, news and history, pillage bits and pieces, and make them speak in new tongues, in a counterlanguage, in every instance leaving a small hole in the great spectacle of social life, at least as it governed the group's own space and time. Playing a "game of freedom"—"a systematic questioning," Debord said, "of all the diversions and works of a society, a total critique of its ideas of happiness"—the LI would become "the masters and possessors of their own lives."**

Greil Marcus

Alongside this "systematic questioning" we may perform a questioning of the system. As we delve into the syntax of the social life - its underlying epistemological assertions, its tyranny over knowledge and subsequent delineation of our selfhood - we may begin to free ourselves from our allotted disposition and rove the stacks at will.

Nicholas Packwood is a Carleton University M.A. student in cultural anthropology studying the relationship of AIDS to culture.

### Further Reading

- Foucault, Michel. *The Confession of the Flesh In Power/Knowledge*. Colin Gordon, Ed. New York: Pantheon Books.(1980)
- Gittings, Barbara. *Combating the Lies in the Libraries In The Gay Academic*. Louie Crew, Ed. Palm Springs: ETC Publications.(1978)
- Harry, Joseph and William B.DeVal. *The Social Organization of Gay Males*. New York: Praeger Publishers.(1978)
- Marcus, Greil. *Lipstick Traces*. London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited.(1989)
- Weeks, Jeffrey. *Against Nature: Essays on history, sexuality, and identity*. London: Rivers Oram Press. (1991)

Ruth Kaplan

June 26 - July 31

Michelle Van Parys

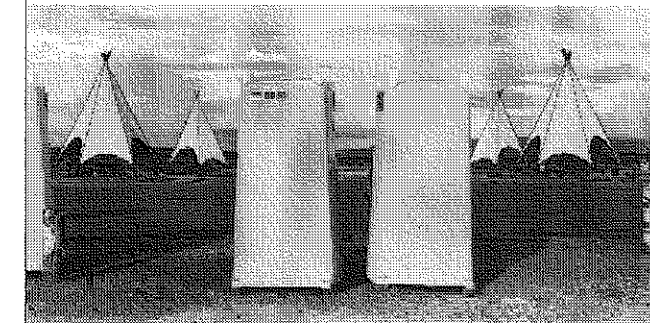
*Human/Nature: Scenes from the New West*

September 11 - October 16

*Refiguring the Landscape*

Panel: Michelle Van Parys, Detlef Mertins, Gary Wilson  
Moderated by Blake Fitzpatrick

September 10, 8 pm



Toronto Photographers Workshop

Gallery TPW

80 Spadina Avenue, Suite 310  
Toronto, Ontario M5V 2J3  
416-362-4242

HARBOUR

Magazine of Art

&

Everyday Life

THIS UNIQUE PUBLICATION  
FEATURES WRITING  
BY ARTISTS ON ART AND  
CULTURAL ISSUES, FICTION,  
AND ARTISTS PAGES.

FOUR ISSUES / ONE YEAR

CANADA \$20

USA or OVERSEAS \$30

INSTITUTIONS \$40

Please send payment to:

HARBOUR 4001 rue Berri Montreal Quebec H2L 4H2

